



COMPREHENSION



1 READ the lines and write down words and phrases referring to:

- 1 time;
- 2 place;
- 3 inhabitants of the city;
- 4 other characters.



2 ANSWER these questions.

- 1 What are the two most significant details illustrating the frustration and sterility of routine for office workers in the City?
- 2 Who is Stetson? What does he represent?
- 3 How would you explain the reference to Roman history?
- 4 What is the essential background to these lines? Does the poet refer to it directly?
- 5 What do you think the corpse symbolises?
- 6 What does it mean if a corpse begins to sprout?
- 7 Why do you think 'Dog' is written with a capital letter? What could it stand for?
- 8 Why does Eliot call the reader '*mon semblable – mon frère!*'?



The Burial of the Dead (II)

T.S. Eliot

The Waste Land (1922)

Section I, The Burial of the Dead

The following extract is the end of the first section of The Waste Land.



1.10

[...] Unreal City',
 Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
 A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
 I had not thought death had undone so many.²
 Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,³
 And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.
 Flowed up the hill and down King William Street⁴,
 To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours⁵
 With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine⁶.
 There I saw one I knew⁷, and stopped him, crying: 'Stetson!
 'You who were with me in the ships at Mylae⁸!
 'That corpse⁹ you planted last year in your garden,
 'Has it begun to sprout¹⁰? Will it bloom this year?
 'Or has the sudden frost¹¹ disturbed its bed?
 'O keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men¹²,
 'Or with his nails he'll dig it up again!
 'You! *hypocrite lecteur! – mon semblable, – mon frère!*'¹³

1 **Unreal City.** Città irreal (citazione dal poeta francese Baudelaire).
 2 **I had ... so many.** "Ch'io non avrei mai creduto che morte tanta n'avesse disfatta" (citazione dal Canto iii dell'*Inferno*, vv. 55–57).
 3 **Sighs ... exhaled.** Sospiri, corti e rari, ne esalavano (*Inferno*, iv, vv. 25–27).
 4 **King William Street.** Una strada della City.
 5 **kept the hours.** Segnavano le ore.

6 **nine.** L'ora d'inizio del lavoro nella City.
 7 **There I saw ... knew.** Là vidi uno che conosco (il poeta riconosce amici tra la folla, come Dante nell'*Inferno*).
 8 **Mylae.** Battaglia navale nella prima guerra punica (260 a.C.).
 9 **corpse.** Cadavere (allusione al rito della sepoltura di immagini del dio della fertilità).
 10 **Has ... sprout?** Ha cominciato a germogliare?

11 **frost.** Brina.
 12 **keep ... men.** "Tien lontano di qui il cane, che è amico dell'uomo" (citazione da *The White Devil*, 1611, di J. Webster, drammaturgo elisabettiano).
 13 **You! ... frère.** Tu! Lettore ipocrita! – mio simile – mio fratello! (citazione dalla prefazione di *Fleurs du Mal* di Baudelaire).

ANALYSIS



3 FOCUS on how the lines are organised and answer these questions quoting from the text.

- 1 Do these lines have a regular rhyme scheme? Is the metre traditional?
- 2 Is there a classical division into stanzas? Are the lines of the same length?
- 3 Is there any alliteration?
- 4 What is this type of line called?



4 LOOK for repetitions of sounds and words and explain their function. What kind of atmosphere do they create?



5 UNDERLINE the different personal pronouns. Identify the role played by these narrative voices by completing the scheme below. Some examples have been provided.

- I (line 4): *passive actor*
 (line 6): *a common man*
 (line 11):
 You (line 12): *an accomplice*
 (line 18):

6 READ the footnotes carefully; then quote examples of objective correlatives highlighting the feelings they convey. **The objective correlative is a sequence of events, a cluster of images, a setting, used to express a certain emotion and evoke it in the reader.** What picture of contemporary life emerges in these lines?

7 SAY whether T.S. Eliot presents a realistic picture of London after World War I (⊕13.3).

