**In *The Chocolate War*, Jerry Renault has a poster hanging in his locker that says “Do I dare disturb the universe?” This line comes from the poem “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” by T.S. Eliot. To better understand why this line has meaning to Jerry, we are going to read the entire poem by T.S. Eliot and begin to analyze it. There will be a major project to complete on the poem (details on the larger project will come on Thursday), so today please give your best effort in reading, understanding, and analyzing this poem.

FIRST, read “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” aloud with a partner:**

“The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” by T.S. Eliot

*S’io credesse che mia risposta fosse*

*A persona che mai tornasse al mondo,
Questa fiamma staria senza piu scosse.
Ma percioche giammai di questo fondo
Non torno vivo alcun, s’i’odo il vero,
Senza tema d’infamia ti rispondo.*

Let us go then, you and I,

When the evening is spread out against the sky

Like a patient etherized upon a table;

Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,

The muttering retreats

Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels

And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:

Streets that follow like a tedious argument

Of insidious intent

To lead you to an overwhelming question ...

Oh, do not ask, “What is it?”

Let us go and make our visit.

In the room the women come and go

Talking of Michelangelo.

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,

The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes,

Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,

Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,

Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,

Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,

And seeing that it was a soft October night,

Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.

And indeed there will be time

For the yellow smoke that slides along the street,

Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;

There will be time, there will be time

To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;

There will be time to murder and create,

And time for all the works and days of hands

That lift and drop a question on your plate;

Time for you and time for me,

And time yet for a hundred indecisions,

And for a hundred visions and revisions,

Before the taking of a toast and tea.

In the room the women come and go

Talking of Michelangelo.

And indeed there will be time

To wonder, “Do I dare?” and, “Do I dare?”

Time to turn back and descend the stair,

With a bald spot in the middle of my hair —

(They will say: “How his hair is growing thin!”)

My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,

My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin —

(They will say: “But how his arms and legs are thin!”)

Do I dare

Disturb the universe?

In a minute there is time

For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.

For I have known them all already, known them all:

Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,

I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;

I know the voices dying with a dying fall

Beneath the music from a farther room.

 So how should I presume?

And I have known the eyes already, known them all—

The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,

And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,

When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,

Then how should I begin

To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?

 And how should I presume?

And I have known the arms already, known them all—

Arms that are braceleted and white and bare

(But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!)

Is it perfume from a dress

That makes me so digress?

Arms that lie along a table, or wrap about a shawl.

 And should I then presume?

 And how should I begin?

Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets

And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes

Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows? ...

I should have been a pair of ragged claws

Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.

And the afternoon, the evening, sleeps so peacefully!

Smoothed by long fingers,

Asleep ... tired ... or it malingers,

Stretched on the floor, here beside you and me.

Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,

Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?

But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,

Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald) brought in upon a platter,

I am no prophet — and here’s no great matter;

I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,

And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker,

And in short, I was afraid.

And would it have been worth it, after all,

After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,

Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me,

Would it have been worth while,

To have bitten off the matter with a smile,

To have squeezed the universe into a ball

To roll it towards some overwhelming question,

To say: “I am Lazarus, come from the dead,

Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all”—

If one, settling a pillow by her head

 Should say: “That is not what I meant at all;

 That is not it, at all.”

And would it have been worth it, after all,

Would it have been worth while,

After the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled streets,

After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts that trail along the floor—

And this, and so much more?—

It is impossible to say just what I mean!

But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen:

Would it have been worth while

If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,

And turning toward the window, should say:

 “That is not it at all,

 That is not what I meant, at all.”

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;

Am an attendant lord, one that will do

To swell a progress, start a scene or two,

Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,

Deferential, glad to be of use,

Politic, cautious, and meticulous;

Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;

At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—

Almost, at times, the Fool.

I grow old ... I grow old ...

I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.

Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?

I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.

I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.

I do not think that they will sing to me.

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves

Combing the white hair of the waves blown back

When the wind blows the water white and black.

We have lingered in the chambers of the sea

By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown

Till human voices wake us, and we drown.

1. **Underline any symbolism you see in the poem.**
2. **Highlight imagery that stands out to you.**
3. **In a different color, highlight places where you can identify the setting (Remember that setting can be more than just physical location. Setting can also include social status, weather, historical period, and details about the immediate surroundings.)**
4. **Choose TEN of the following questions to answer. Remember, there aren’t any “right” answers. Find meaning in the poem yourself and determine what you think the answers to these questions are. As long as you can use evidence from the poem to support your answer, you will most likely have a correct answer.

\*Answer the questions in a DIFFERENT COLOR\***

In the opening line, the speaker states, "Let us go then, you and I." Who is the you here?

The speaker (Prufrock) compares the sunset to a "patient etherised upon a table." Why do you suppose Prufrock would compare a sunset to some hospital patient who has been anesthetized and is waiting for an operation?

The speaker refers to the surrounding cityscape as having "one-night cheap hotels" and "sawdust restaurants." What is this part of town like, apparently?

In the second stanza, we have two lines that are disjointed from the earlier stanza. Here, Prufrock's mind appears to flash to a different location, where the "women come and go / Talking of Michelangelo." Who was Michelangelo? If the women are spending all their time talking about high Renaissance art, how must their situation and their location be different from Prufrock's current place of wandering?

The next stanza break flashes away from the room with the women. Where are we now?

Have we returned to the first location? Why or why not?

What is the yellow fog compared to in a simile? How is the fog like such a creature?

What does Prufrock mean when he says, "There will be time, there will be time / To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet"? Have you ever had to "prepare a face" before you have met someone? Why would one try to prepare an artificial face?

Prufrock says "there will be time to murder to create." Is he being literal here, and talking about actually killing people and creating new ones? Or does this connect with the earlier passage about "preparing a face?" Or does it connect with the latter passage about "a hundred indecisions, / And for a hundred indecisions"?

Prufrock says there will be time for all this "Before the taking of a toast and tea." Apparently, Prufrock is trying to boost his courage before undertaking what frightening mission? Why would such a simple task be so terrifying to Prufrock?

After a fifth stanza that flashes back to the room of artsy women, the sixth stanza has Prufrock asking, "Do I dare?" and "Do I dare?" What is that Prufrock is daring himself to do? Why is he so frightened about that room full of brainy women discussing art?

Prufrock reassures himself that there will be "Time to turn back and descend the stair." What does he mean by this, i.e., what can he do if he changes his mind? Why do you suppose T. S. Eliot chooses the verb descend (move downward) rather than ascend (move upward)?

What physical features cause Prufrock anxiety as he imagines going down the stairs?
What does he imagine people will say about him?

What does Prufrock mean, "Do I dare / Disturb the universe?" How can one thin, balding, aging man disturb the entire universe?

Prufrock asks how he can begin to spit out all the "butt-ends" of his days and ways. If a butt-end is the left-over bit of a smoked cigar, what does he imply about how he has spent his life?

Explain the anastrophe in "arms that wrap about a shawl." Think about it for a moment: what's weird about the phrasing?

Why is Prufrock agonizing over how to wear his trousers?

What's odd about the way Prufrock contemplates combing his "hair behind"? Does one normally comb his hair from the rear to cover the forward part of the head? What does this suggest about the aging Prufrock's hair and why he combs his hair forward this way?

Why is Prufrock stymied by the thought of eating peach? Why would eating a peach in public be problematic for him?

Prufrock imagines beautiful mermaids singing along the beach, but what does he fear or doubt in the following line?

Prufrock imagines himself under the water with the mermaids in "chambers of the sea." What happens at the end though when he hears the conversation of human voices around him that awakens him from his daydream?