

# The Ultimate Guide to Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral: A Comprehensive Study Guide for Course Hero

T.S. Eliot's "Murder in the Cathedral" is a powerful and thought-provoking play that explores the themes of martyrdom, faith, and the conflict between church and state. Written in 1935, the play is set in 12th-century England and tells the story of the assassination of Thomas Becket, the Archbishop of Canterbury, by four knights loyal to King Henry II.



## Study Guide for T. S. Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral (Course Hero Study Guides) by Course Hero

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 1212 KB

Screen Reader: Supported

Print length : 24 pages

Lending : Enabled



This comprehensive study guide will provide you with all the information you need to understand and appreciate "Murder in the Cathedral." We will explore the text of the play, discuss the characters, examine the themes, and place the work in its historical context.

## The Text

The play is divided into two parts. The first part, "The Tempters," introduces the four knights who will eventually murder Becket. The knights are all

motivated by different reasons, but they are united in their belief that Becket is a threat to the king's authority.

The second part of the play, "The Murder," depicts the assassination of Becket. The knights enter the cathedral and confront Becket, who refuses to renounce his faith. The knights then murder Becket, and the play ends with a chorus of lament.

## **The Characters**

**Thomas Becket:** The Archbishop of Canterbury and the protagonist of the play. Becket is a complex and contradictory figure. He is a devout Christian who believes in the authority of the Church, but he is also a proud and ambitious man who is willing to stand up to the king.

**Henry II:** The King of England. Henry is a powerful and ruthless monarch who is determined to assert his authority over the Church. He is jealous of Becket's popularity and influence, and he ultimately orders his murder.

**The Four Knights:** The knights who murder Becket. The knights are all motivated by different reasons, but they are united in their belief that Becket is a threat to the king's authority.

**The Chorus:** The chorus provides commentary on the action of the play. The chorus is made up of women from Canterbury who are horrified by the murder of their archbishop.

## **The Themes**

**Martyrdom:** The play explores the theme of martyrdom through the character of Thomas Becket. Becket is a martyr because he is willing to die

for his beliefs. His death is a powerful reminder of the importance of standing up for what you believe in, even in the face of adversity.

**Faith:** The play also explores the theme of faith. Becket's faith in God is tested throughout the play, but he never wavers. His faith is a source of strength for him, and it helps him to endure the challenges that he faces.

**Conflict between Church and State:** The play explores the conflict between church and state through the relationship between Thomas Becket and King Henry II. Becket believes that the Church should be independent of the state, while Henry believes that the Church should be subject to the authority of the king. This conflict leads to a power struggle between the two men, which ultimately results in Becket's murder.

## **Historical Context**

The play is set in 12th-century England, a time of great conflict between the Church and the state. The Church was a powerful institution in medieval England, and it often clashed with the monarchy over issues of authority and control. The murder of Thomas Becket was a major event in English history, and it had a profound impact on the relationship between the Church and the state.

"Murder in the Cathedral" is a complex and challenging play, but it is also a rewarding one. The play offers a deep exploration of the themes of martyrdom, faith, and the conflict between church and state. It is a play that will stay with you long after you have finished reading it.

We hope that this study guide has been helpful. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions.



## Study Guide for T. S. Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral (Course Hero Study Guides) by Course Hero

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 1212 KB

Screen Reader: Supported

Print length : 24 pages

Lending : Enabled



## The Routledge Handbook of Feminist Peace Research: A Comprehensive Guide

The Routledge Handbook of Feminist Peace Research is a groundbreaking and comprehensive collection of essays that examines the intersections of...



## Unveiling the Lyrical Mastery of Henri Cole's "Blizzard Poems"

In the realm of contemporary poetry, Henri Cole's "Blizzard Poems" stands as a testament to the transformative power of language and imagery. Through a...