

Modernism and the Black Atlantic

Heather Colley

Close reading can help us to apply this theory to various pieces of literature. Read through the following excerpt from T.S. Eliot's poem "The Dry Salvages" and work through the following questions. The questions will help you to extract details from the passage which could apply to Paul Gilroy's theory of The Black Atlantic.

*The river is within us, the sea is all about us;
The sea is the land's edge also, the granite
Into which it reaches, the beaches where it tosses
Its hints of earlier and other creation:
The starfish, the horseshoe crab, the whale's backbone;
The pools where it offers to our curiosity
The more delicate algae and the sea anemone.
It tosses up our losses, the torn seine,
The shattered lobsterpot, the broken oar
And the gear of foreign dead men. The sea has many voices,
Many gods and many voices.*

1. According to the speaker, what is the difference between the river and the sea?
 - a. What does this tell you about the speaker's perception of the sea?
2. What are some **verbs** that the speaker uses to describe the behaviour of the sea?
 - a. Based on these verbs, how would you describe the sea in this excerpt?
3. What are some items that appear throughout the sea in the excerpt? Which of these stand out the most to you, and why?
4. In the fourth line, the speaker thinks of the sea as something which contains 'hints of earlier.' Which other phrases from this passage also reflect the sea's 'hints' from an earlier time?
5. What types of historical events might result in 'the gear of foreign dead men' which appear in the sea? (Line 10)
6. How might the speaker be suggesting that the sea reflects a long, complex history?
 - a. What are some words from the passage that reflect this history?
7. How could we connect this historical sea to the histories of Black, Caribbean, African American, and diasporic communities that Paul Gilroy describes in *The Black Atlantic*?