

# MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL

**T.S. ELIOT**

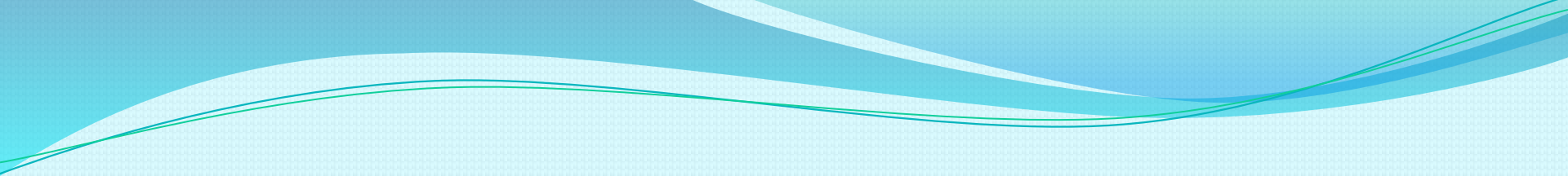
# **HISTORY**

- **PLAY**

- **ABOUT THE  
MURDER OF  
THOMAS BECKET**

- **Thomas Becket – born in London in 1118.**
- **In 1142, became a clerk to the Archbishop of Canterbury**

- **Performed his duties well , so following the year King Henry appointed him Chancellor of the realm**
- **This post was second to the king.**



● In 1154, rose to the  
position of  
Archdeacon of  
Canterbury

- **Initially, the king and Becket seemed to be good friends.**
- **Becket worked hard and effectively**

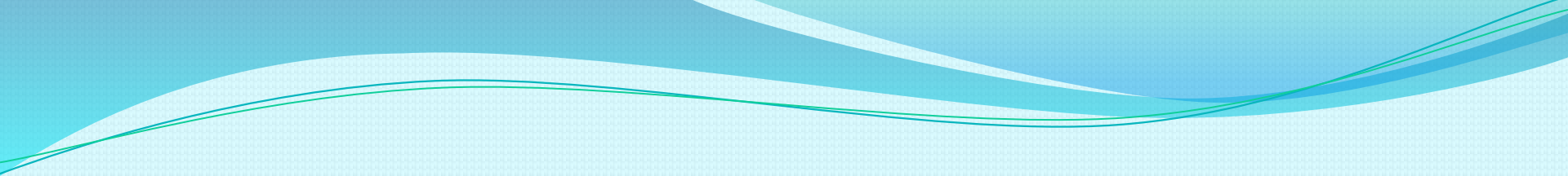
- In 1162, king Henry appointed him Archbishop of Canterbury
- Becket refused and thought this post might bring him into opposition to the King

- **King wanted to have authority over church.**
- **Becket opposed this.**



- **A lot of pressure was built on Becket to sign his consent but he declined to put his seal.**

- **In 1170, King Henry decided to hold the coronation for his eldest son Prince Henry and persuaded the Archbishop of York and London.**



- **It was the right of the Archbishop of Canterbury to crown the Kings of England.**



● Becket saw this an infringement of his rights .

● The King gave him an exile.

- **After exile, he reached Canterbury to preach his Christmas sermon for the year 1170.**

- **Murdered on 29<sup>th</sup>  
December in his  
Cathedral by four Knights  
– Reginald Fitz Urse,  
William de Traci, Hugh de  
Morville and Richard  
Britto.**

# MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL

● Based on this incident, the play is composed.

# MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL

- **T.S. Eliot**
- **Full name – Thomas Stearns Eliot**
- **Born in St. Louis, Missouri on 26<sup>th</sup> September, 1888.**



- **Father – Henry Ware Eliot**
- **Mother – Charlotte Champe Stearns (School teacher and a social worker and advocated women's rights.)**

## MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL

- Geroge Bell, the Bishop of Chichester saw The Rock (play) and admired it.
- Asked Eliot to write a play for the Canterbury festival of 1935.
- He write Murder in the Cahtedral.

- **The play deals with the martyrdom of Thomas Becket- one of the greatest of english saints- who was the Archbishop of Canterbury from**



**CHARACTERS**

- A Chorus of Women of Canterbury

- Three Priests of the Cathedral

- A messenger

- Archbishop Thomas Becket

- Four Tempters

- Four Knights

- Attendants

## SETTING

- The first scene is the Archbishop's Hall on December 2, 1170.
- The second scene is in the Cathedral on December, 29, 1170.

# MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL

- **The play begins – early December, 1170 with the chorus which comprises of the poor women of Canterbury.**

- **Archbishop had returned after seven years of exile in France (1164-1171).**
- **Chorus feared of something terrible would be happened**

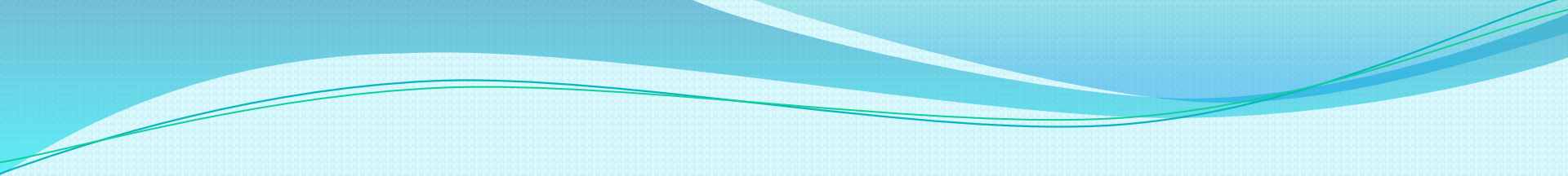
# MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL

- **Becket was aware of the dangers in his return to Canterbury**
- **Four tempters came to tempt him.**



## ● Tempters

**First tempter – tempts Becket with the time of his past and tells him to go back to those days and forget about his spiritual intensity.**

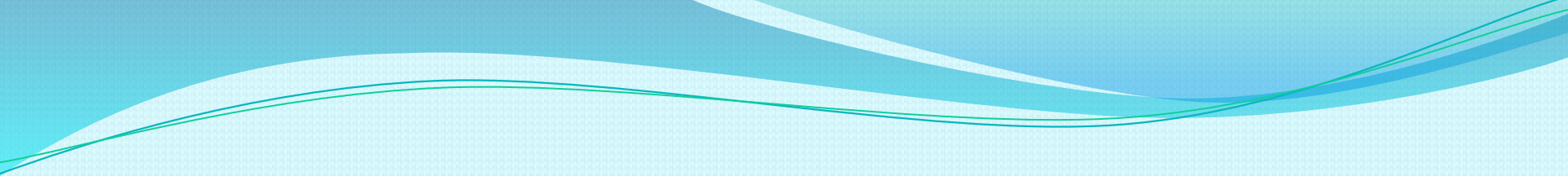
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- The second tempter – tempts Becket with the time when he was the Chancellor to the King and enjoyed secular and political power.**
- Tells Becket that real power is in this world and not in the next.**

## Tempters

- The third tempter – tells Becket to team up with the church and the Barons against monarchy.
- Becket's reply – no one shall say that I betrayed a King

# Tempters

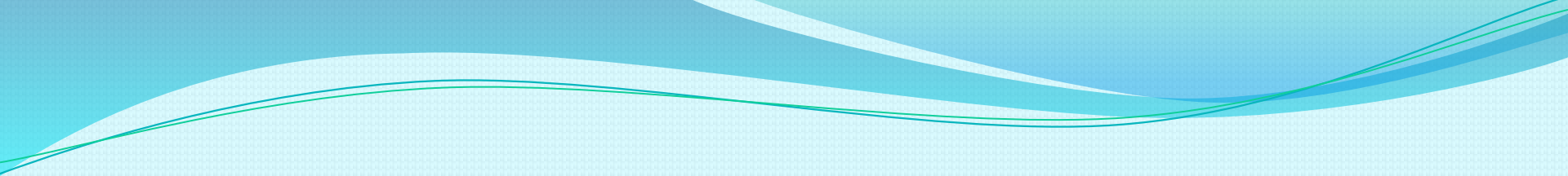
- **The fourth tempter –  
tempts Becket with his  
own pride and pride of  
achieving martyrdom.**
- **Becket's reply – Who are  
you tempting with my own  
desires?**



● **After the fourth temptation, Becket sinks into despair and says: “Is there no way, in my soul’s sickness, Does not lead to damnation in pride?”**


5 ● **Our Knights** They came from France claiming that they have urgent business with the king.

● They accused Becket of ingratitude to King Henry II who made him the Archbishop



Becket's reply

- **Becket politely defends himself by arguing that loyalty to God does not imply disloyalty to the King.**



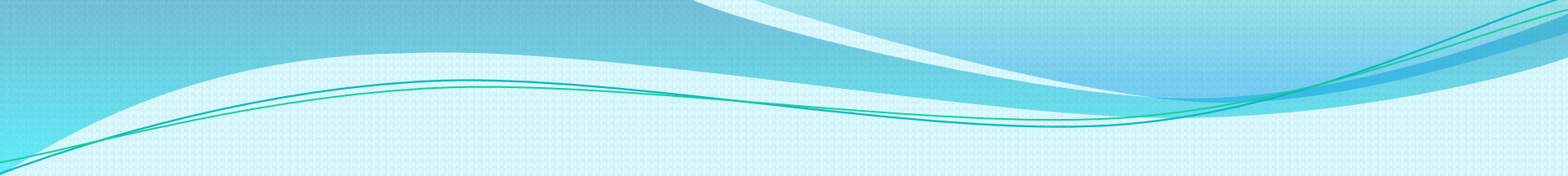
● **The Knights ask Becket to leave England but he refuses saying that he has the sanction of the Pope in Rome.**





- **The Knights went away.**

- **The priests request Becket to hide in the Cathedral in case the knights return again**

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- **Becket refuses to do so and states that God will protect him.**
  - **The knights murder Becket and the chorus laments along with the priests.**

- **The priests feel that the church is strengthened by Becket's martyrdom**



**The Knights**

- **The knights address the audience arguing that their loyalty to the king made them implement their act.**

The Priests

● The priests  
dismiss the  
knights as “lost  
souls”.



 **Thank you**