

About the Poets

Rabindranath Tagore

Rabindranath Tagore, also written Ravīndranātha Thākura, sobriquet Gurudev, was a Bengali polymath who reshaped Bengali literature and music, as well as Indian art with Contextual Modernism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Born: May 7, 1861, Kolkata

Died: August 7, 1941, Kolkata

Awards: Nobel Prize in Literature

Parents: Debendranath Tagore, Sarada Devi

Spouse: Mrinalini Devi

Literary movement: Contextual Modernism

Notable Works *Gitanjali*, *Gora*, *Ghare-Baire*, *Jana Gana Mana*, *Rabindra Sangeet*, *Amar Shonar Bangla*.

Award: Noble Prize in Literature - 1913

Quotes

I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy.

Clouds come floating into my life, no longer to carry rain or usher storm, but to add color to my sunset sky.

Faith is the bird that feels the light when the dawn is still dark.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Born: Portland, Maine

Died: 1882

Literary movement: Modernism

Education

Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine

Spouse (s): Mary Potter, Frances Appleton

First publication

He published *Hyperion*, a prose romance, then *Voices of the Night* (1839), his first book of poetry, followed by *Ballads and Other Poems* (1841).

Further publications

He published *Evangeline* in 1847, which achieved broad critical acclaim, and *The Seaside and the Fireside* in 1849. By this time he had begun to feel that his teaching career was hindering his writing, and he resigned from Harvard in 1854. In 1855 he published *The Song of Hiawatha*, followed by the *The Courtship of Miles Standish* (1858).

In 1863 he published *Tales of a Wayside Inn*, then turned to the translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, which he completed in 1867. During his final tour of Europe in 1868/9, he was awarded honorary degrees at both Oxford and Cambridge Universities. His trilogy, *Christus, a Mystery*, dealing with Christianity from its beginnings, and which he thought his best work, was published in 1872, followed by *Ultima Thule* in 1880.

Anna Louisa Walker

Born: 23 June 1836 in Staffordshire

Died: 7 July 1907 in Bath, Somerset

Parents: Robert, Anna Walker

Spouse: Harry Coghill

Literary movement: Modernism

English and Canadian teacher and author. She authored five novels and two collections of poetry, as well as editing one autobiography. Her poem, *The Night Cometh*, serves as the lyrics in the popular hymn *Work, for the night is coming*.

Publishing

She published an anonymous collection of poems entitled *Leaves from the backwoods* in 1861. The volume was printed in Montreal by John Lovell. From this volume the poem *The Night Cometh* was taken and set to music by Ira D. Sankey, who published it as a hymn *Work, for the night is coming* in the collection *Sacred Songs and Solos*.

Walker's first novel, *A Canadian heroine*, was published in 1873. It tells the story of a 16-year-old woman living in a small town along the St. Lawrence, courted by a Canadian man, who has her suitor almost driven off when she becomes enamoured on a visiting English aristocrat. The English aristocrat's interest turns out to be fleeting, and the story is an allegory for what Walker perceived as the naivety of the new world and the corruption of the old.

Walker's second novel, *Hollywood*, was published in 1875.

In 1876, Walker published a collection entitled *Plays for Children*.

Walker's third novel, *Against her will*, was published in 1877. The novel tells the story of how a young woman copes with her father's illness. The protagonist's competence and strength of character evoke the contemporaneously developing idea of the New Woman.

Walker's fourth novel, *Lady's Holm.*, was published in 1878 by Samuel Tinsley & Company. A contemporary review in *The Spectator* praised the novel for its "picturesque descriptions and good incisive delineation of character". W.W. Tulloch's review in *The Academy* praised the story for its character development, descriptive language, and wholesomeness; while criticising the book for its somewhat stale and outdated style.

Walker's fifth novel, *Two rival lovers*, was published in 1881

On 29 January 1884, Walker married Harry Coghill a wealthy widower whose fortune was made manufacturing chemicals. The family settled in Staffordshire.

In 1890, her volume *Oak and maple: English and Canadian verses* was published under her married name, Anna Louisa Coghill. More than half of the poems in the collection were reprinted from *Leaves from the backwoods*. As with her first collection, most poems concern religious or natural themes. *The Night Cometh* is reprinted, and Coghill remarks that she discovered the poem's use in hymn, and it being improperly attributed in the hymnbook. After hearing the hymn at a temperance meeting, she tracked down the source, and subsequent editions appeared with the correct attribution.

Mrs. Coghill published *The trial of Mary Broom; a Staffordshire story*, a sixth novel, in 1894.

In 1899, Mrs. Coghill served as the editor of her second cousin's autobiography, *Autobiography and letters of Mrs. M. O. W. Oliphant*.

Vinayaka Krishna Gokak

Born: 9 August 1909

Died: 28 April 1992

Education: Karnatak College, Dharwad, Karnataka, University of Oxford

He was fifth writer to be honored with the Janpith Award in 1990 for Kannada language, for his epic *Bharatha Sindhu Rashmi*. Bharatha Sindhu Rashmi deals with the Vedic age and is perhaps the longest epic narrative in any language in the 20th Century. In 1961, Gokak was awarded the Padmashree from the Government of India for *Dyava Prithvi*.

He became the principal of Willingdon College, Sangli. He was an ardent devotee of Sathya Sai Baba and served as the first Vice-Chancellor of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning at Puttaparthi, Anantapur District between 1981 - 1985.

His novel *Samarasave Jeevana* is considered one of the typical works of Navodaya literature in Kannada.

Writings

Epics

Bharatha Sindhu Rashmi

Novels

Samarasave Jeevana - Ijjodu Mattu Erilita (vol 1), *Samarasave Jeevana - Samudrayana Mattu Nirvahana* (vol 2)

Poetry collections

Urnanaabha, Abyudaya, Baaladeguladalli, Dhyava Pruthvi (Kannada Saahithya Academy Award), *Samudra Geethegalu, English words*

Other

Sahitya Vimarsheya Kelavu Tatvagalu, Nanna Jeevana Drishti, Jeevana Paatagalu
Kala Siddhantha, India & World Culture, Gokak Kruthi Chintana, Dyava Pruthivi

Translations

Voices of the Himalaya: translated by the authors, Kamala Ratnam, V.K. Gokak and others. [Poems by celebrated poet Ramdhari Singh 'Dinkar']

Walt Whitman

Born: 9 August 1909

Died: 28 April 1992

Education: Karnatak College, Dharwad, Karnataka, University of Oxford

Life and Background

Walt Whitman is both a major poet and an outstanding personality in the history of American literature. He rose from obscurity to monumental fame, coming to be recognized as a national figure. His achievement is great, although it has been sometimes obscured by unfair, hostile criticism — or, conversely, by extravagant praise. He is essentially a poet, though other aspects of his achievement — as philosopher, mystic, or critic — have also been stressed.

Walt Whitman was born in West Hills, Long Island, New York on May 31, 1819. His father, Walter, was a laborer, carpenter, and house builder. His mother, Louisa, was a devout Quaker. In 1823, the family moved to Brooklyn, where Walt had his schooling (1825-30). From 1830 to 1836 he held various jobs, some of them on newspapers in Brooklyn and Manhattan. From 1836 to 1841 he was a schoolteacher in Long Island, despite the paucity of his own education. The division of Whitman's early life between town and country later enabled him to depict both environments with equal understanding and sympathy. He also traveled extensively throughout America, and so could appreciate the various regions of the land.

Between 1841 and 1851 Whitman edited various periodicals and newspapers. It was, apparently, during this period that he began to compose the poems which were later published as *Leaves of Grass*.

In 1862 Walt's brother George was wounded in the Civil War. When Whitman traveled to Virginia to visit him, he saw large numbers of the wounded in hospitals. The Civil War was a major event in Whitman's career, stirring both his imagination and his sensibility and making him a dresser of spiritual wounds as well as of physical ones as he worked as a volunteer in hospitals. Lincoln's assassination (1865) also moved Whitman deeply, and several poems bear testimony of his intense grief.

In 1865 Whitman was fired from his post in the Department of the Interior in Washington because of the alleged indecency of *Leaves of Grass*. He was hired by the Attorney General's office and remained there until 1873 when he suffered a mild paralytic stroke which left him a semi-invalid. In Whitman's last years (1888-92), he was mostly confined to his room in the house which he had bought in Camden, New Jersey. Two friends, Horace Traubel and Thomas B. Harried, attended him. He died on March 26, 1892. Thus ended the lifelong

pilgrimage of the Good Gray Poet (as his contemporary, critic W. D. O'Connor, called him), an immortal in American literature.

Whitman grew into almost a legendary figure, due largely to the charm and magnetism of his personality. Contemporary critics described him as a "modern Christ." His face was called "serene, proud, cheerful, florid, grave; the features, massive and handsome, with firm blue eyes." His head was described as "magedic, large, Homeric, and set upon his strong shoulders with the grandeur of ancient sculpture." These descriptions tend to make Whitman appear almost a mythical personage. But he was very much alive.

Whitman was a being of paradoxes. His dual nature, a profound spirituality combined with an equally profound animality, puzzled even his admirers. John A. Symonds, an English writer, was puzzled by undercurrents of emotional and sexual abnormality in the *Calamus* poems and questioned Whitman on this issue. Whitman's reply (August 19, 1890) is interesting: "My life, young manhood, mid-age, times South, etc., have been jolly bodily, and doubtless open to criticism. Though unmarried I have had six children — two are dead — one living Southern grandchild — fine boy, writes to me occasionally — circumstances . . . have separated me from intimate relations." But no trace of any children of Whitman's has been found, and it is not unlikely that he merely invented them to stave off further questions.

Whitman was truly a representative of his age and reflected its varied crosscurrents. His poetry shows the impact of the romantic idealism which reached its zenith in the years before the Civil War and also shows something of the scientific realism which dominated the literary scene after 1865. Whitman harmonizes this romanticism and realism to achieve a true representation of the spirit of America. The growth of science and technology in his time affected Whitman deeply, and he responded positively to the idea of progress and evolution. American patriotism in the nineteenth century projected the idea of history in relation to cosmic philosophy: it was thought that change and progress form part of God's design. The historical process of America's great growth was therefore part of the divine design, and social and scientific developments were outward facets of real spiritual progress. Whitman shared in this idea of mystic evolution. *Leaves of Grass* symbolizes the fulfillment of American romanticism as well as of the sense of realistic revolt against it.

Whitman visualized the role of a poet as a seer, as a prophetic genius who could perceive and interpret his own times and also see beyond time. The ideal poet, thought Whitman, portrays the true reality of nature and comprehends and expresses his genuine self. He holds a mirror to his self and to nature; he also illuminates the meaning and significance of the universe and man's relation to it. An ideal poet, he believed, is the poet of man first, then of nature, and finally of God; these elements are united by the poet's harmonious visionary power.

Though the poet is concerned primarily with the world of the spirit, he accepts science and democracy within his artistic fold, since these are the basic realities of the modern world, especially that of nineteenth-century America. Recognition of the values of science and democracy is indirectly an acknowledgement of the reality of modern life. Whitman's ideal poet is a singer of the self; he also understands the relation between self and the larger realities of the social and political world and of the spiritual universe. He intuitively comprehends the great mysteries of life — birth, death, and resurrection — and plays the part of a priest and a prophet for mankind.

Leaves of Grass, ever since its first publication in 1855, has been a puzzling collection of poems. It inspires, it enthralls, and it tantalizes-and yet, the problems it poses are numerous and varied. Whitman so completely identified himself with *Leaves* ("This is no book,/Who touches this touches a man") that critics have tried to find reflections of Whitman's own life in all the imagery and symbolism of the poems. Whitman did explore and express many aspects of his personality in *Leaves*. It was he himself who created the illusion that he and his poems were identical. Through these works, he found full expression as a poet — and as a man.

The first edition (1855) of *Leaves of Grass* consisted of ninety-five pages. The author's name did not appear, but his picture was included. By the time the second edition was published in 1856, the volume consisted of 384 pages, with a favorable review by Emerson printed on the back cover. For this edition, Whitman not only added to the text, he also altered the poems which had previously been published. The third edition appeared in 1860 and contained 124 new poems. The fourth edition, published in 1867, was called the "workshop" edition because so much revision had gone into it. It contained eight new poems. The fifth edition (1871) included the new poem "Passage to India." The sixth edition, in two volumes, appeared in 1876. The seventh edition was published in 1881 and is widely accepted as an authoritative edition today, although the eighth and ninth editions are equally important. The last, which is also called the "deathbed" edition because it was completed in the year of Whitman's death (1892), represents Whitman's final thoughts.

Douglas Malloch

Douglas Malloch (May 5, 1877 – July 2, 1938) was an American poet, short-story writer and Associate Editor of *American Lumberman*, a trade paper in Chicago. He became known as a "Lumberman's poet" both locally and nationally. He is noted for writing *Round River Drive* and "Be the Best of Whatever You Are" in addition to many other creations. He was commissioned to write the Michigan State Song.

Life and work

Brother Malloch, as he was called, was born in Muskegon, Michigan which was known as a center of the lumbering industry. He grew up amidst the forest, logging camps, sawmills and lumber yards. He became famous among the people of twentieth century involved in the lumbering industry. He married Helen Miller, a newswoman who was founder of the National Federation of Press Women.

Books

- *In Forest Land* (1906)
- *The Woods* (1913)
- *Tote-Road and Trail: Ballads of the Lumberjack* (1917)
- *Come on Home* (1923)
- *Someone to Care* (1925)
- *The Heart Content* (1927)
- *Live Life Today* (1938)

Poems

This list is incomplete; you can help by expanding it.

- "Ain't It Fine Today?"
- "Always A Mason"
- "Be the Best of Whatever You Are" (also cited as "If")
- "Building"
- "Chaudière"
- "Christmas"
- "Connecticut Drive"
- "Echoes"
- "Father's Lodge"
- "Good Timber"
- "The Little Lodge Of Long Ago"
- "The Love of a Botanist"
- "Make Me Mellow"
- "The Masonry Of Spring"
- "Members Or Masons"

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- "The Road of Masonry"
- "To-day" (also cited as "It's Fine Today")
- "The Way Home"
- "You Have to Believe"

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