Sylvia Plath

Poet Description:

Born in Boston, Massachusetts, Sylvia Plath grew up in Winthrop. She was raised by her mother after her father died of complications from diabetes when she was eight. Plath was educated at Smith College and at Newnham College of Cambridge University. In 1953, after serving a month as a college guest editor at the New York fashion magazine *Mademoiselle*, she had a breakdown, and was unwisely subjected to electric shock therapy. She then attempted suicide and was hospitalized for six months, events she later adapted for her novel *The Bell Jar* (1963). It was while in England two years later, from 1955-1956, that she met her husband, the poet Ted Hughes, who has been the controversial shepherd of her posthumous career.

Plath and Hughes came to the U.S. in 1957, and she taught at Smith for a year, also taking a poetry writing seminar offered by Robert Lowell at Boston University; Anne Sexton was enrolled as well. The couple returned to England in 1959 and she published her first book of poems the following year, but the marriage was in difficulty, with their individual ambitions sometimes putting them at odds with one another despite willingness to support each other's careers. In the fall of 1962, after Plath learned that Hughes had been unfaithful, they separated and she began writing with an astonishing intensity, shaping nearly overwhelming emotions into flawlessly crafted poems. Into a crucible went details of her own life and the horrors of modern history; she fused them into a harrowing, ironic persona, an archetype of a modern woman in an ecstatic crisis of gendered self-recognition amid the ruins of history. In a few short months these astonishingly lucid poems?furious, sardonic, defiant, and exquisitely musical?established a benchmark against which every American poet wishing to tell a brutal truth would have to measure himself or herself. Then, apparently, she broke through into a kind of icy calm, or so some of the final poems suggest. In December, she moved from Devon to a London apartment with her two children. The whole experience had overwhelmed her, and she took her own life in February 1963.

Race/Ethnicity:
European [1]
Picture:

Gender:
Female [2]
Sexuality:
Straight [3]
First Name:

Sylvia
Last Name:
Plath
Birth & Death Dates:
Thursday, October 27, 1932 to Monday, February 11, 1963
School of Poetry:
Confessional [4]
Birth Place:
Boston , Massachusetts
United States
See map: Google Maps [5]
Massachusetts US
Death Place:
London
United Kingdom
See map: Google Maps [6]
GB
Group visibility:
Private - accessible only to group members
Tags:
Boston [7]
Smith College [8]
The Bell Jar [9]
Robert Lowell [10]
Ted Hughes [11]

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