

How to...

Consider the Author for Poetry Analysis

Not every poem analysis requires reporting on the poet, and some instructors will explicitly request for you to NOT include information on the poet. However, for students new to the study of poetry, knowing a little about the writer, and what may have inspired them, can help generate content for an analysis, especially when you feel “stuck” and need a place to start.



Writers will typically draw from their life experiences to share insights about human nature, art, or curiosities in life; they almost always challenge how we think about things.

A good place to start any investigation is with a “background check” on the author, in these areas:

**Time Period
& Location**

**Personal
Life**

Upbringing

**Emotional
History**

Some Literary Time Periods & Their Most Common Themes

- Classical (1200 BCE - 455 CE) honour & bravery; humans & the divine; societal values; epic narratives
- Renaissance (1485-1660) courtly love; unrequited love; fleeting nature of time; commitment; loyalty
- Romantic (1790-1830) nature; imagination; mortality; individuality
- Modern (1914-1945) existentialism; conflict/war; trauma; perseverance; family & gender roles
- Postmodern (1945-onward) more perspectives from non-Caucasian writers; plurality; fragmentation; diversity; dystopia; challenging the Western canon; challenging the patriarchy; challenging colonial systems

Your course syllabus will present a reading list or a schedule of texts to be studied. You can use this schedule to become informed prior to class time.

Poetry is an elite literary art. Poets will write about things they are passionate about, and life experiences shape their creative interests. Knowing something about the author can help you analyze and appreciate their work.

Check out our related resources:

“How to Create 6 Smart Habits for Analyzing Poetry” and “How to Quote Poetry”