



# How Life Influences Art

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## HISTORICAL THINKING STANDARDS:

- Standard 3J - Hypothesize the influence of the past
- Standard 4B - Obtain historical data from a variety of sources
- Standard 4C - Interrogate historical data
- Standard 4F - Support interpretations with historical evidence

## LESSON:

This lesson can be used as a class or as individual or group projects to study how an author's life influenced their writing.

Choose a novelist or poet from the 19th or 20th century to study. Students should have a good understanding of the author's works before this lesson.

Read a biography or autobiography about the author to begin to build the framework of his or her life. A full length book, essay or internet research can be used for this step.

- When and where was the author born?
- Who were the author's parents?
- Where did the author live throughout his or her life?
- Did the author marry? Who were the author's spouses?

Using the information from the biography or autobiography, research the author within historical documents. Records to search for the author include: census records, birth records, marriage records, death records, military records, immigration records, city directories, and historical newspapers.

Use the historical documents, biographical information and the author's works to discuss how life influenced the author's writing. Discussion questions can be used in a classroom setting or to steer students in writing or presenting their individual or group projects.

How did the author's life influence his or her writing? Parts of the author's life to discuss include:

- Parent's jobs
- Parent's background
- Births and deaths of siblings, parents and other loved ones
- Author's married life and love interests
- Author's neighborhoods over time
- Tragic events in the author's personal life
- Tragic events in the author's community, country or world
- Author's jobs in addition to writing
- Author's children

Additional discussion questions include:

- What events had the most impact on this author's writing?
- Why might the author have chosen to write what he or she did?
- How does studying an author's life help the reader interpret his or her writing?
- Does writing about what you know create a better author? Why or why not?

**Note:** This lesson can be adapted to research how the work of artists, scientists, politicians and other famous people were influenced by the lives they led.