

# Plath's Background

Plath's father died in 1940, when she was only eight years old.

Married poet Ted Hughes in 1956. Had two children, one born in 1960, the other in 1962.

- Her first collection of poems, coincidentally called "The Colossus," was published in 1960.
- Hughes left Plath for another woman in 1963.
- Plath died in 1963 by suicide.

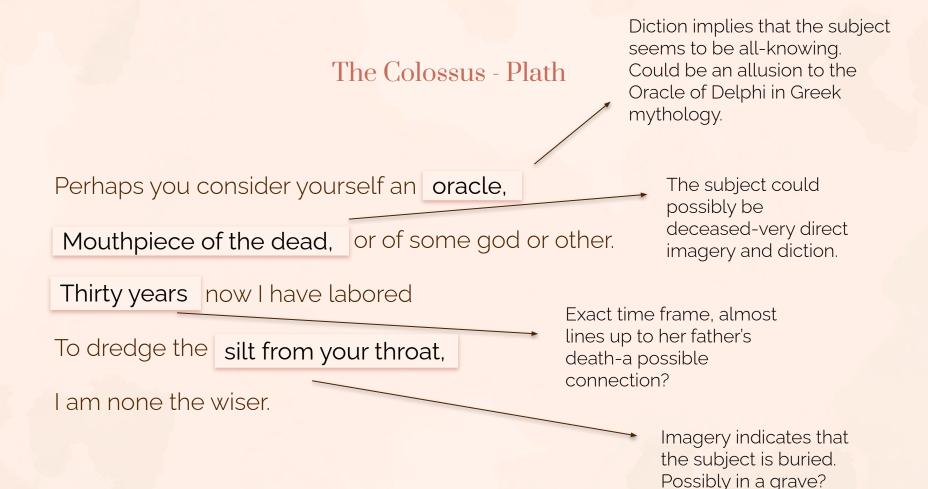
## Time to challenge your knowledge!

You have all received a copy of Sylvia Plath's poem "The Colossus." You will have 5 minutes to do the following:

- Read through the poem with a partner
- Pick out and annotate as many poetic devices as you can identify
- Try to identify a further meaning below the surface level of the words

You don't have to be incredibly thorough, we will discuss as a class after 5 minutes.





Alliteration of 'P'-draws the audience's attention to the immense cleanliness.

Scaling little ladders with glue pots and pails of lysol,

I crawl like an ant in the morning

Over the weedy acres of your brow

To mend the immense skull plates and clear

The bald, white tumuli of your eyes.

Simile demeans the persona's presence, compares them as if they were tiny as an ant.

This imagery depicts the subject as being something bigger than human, one with nature.

An allusion to Aeschylus's greek tragedy in which Electra mourns her father Agamemnon A blue sky out of the Oresteia Phrasing almost implies worship, and directly mentions the Arches above us. O father, all by yourself persona's father, or higher power. You are pithy and historical as the Roman Forum. Simile and allusion combined allow for I open my lunch on a hill of black cypress. the declaration of how impactful this individual is. Your fluted bones and acanthine hair are littered Metaphorical imagery compares to the acanthus

plant/leaves- further connects to nature.

In their old anarchy to the horizon-line.

It would take more than a lightning-stroke

To create such a ruin.

Nights, I squat in the cornucopia

Of your left ear, out of the wind,

Hyperbole exaggerates the amount of power that the loss of the subject has upon the persona.

The cornucopia is symbolic of abundance, in this case it could represent the abundance of knowledge lost with this subject.

Furthers imagery of this individual being one with nature.

Imagery indicates the importance of the words that were said by the subject.

Counting the red stars and those of plum-color.

The sun rises under the pillar of your tongue.

My hours are married to shadow,

Metaphor indicates that the persona is only experiencing dark times.

No longer do I listen for the scrape of a keel

On the blank stones of the landing.

Imagery through diction allows for the persona to display the great loss that was experienced through the loss of the subject.

Do you have any thoughts on the deeper meaning of this poem? Is there one?

## Possible Connections:

- The Colossus could represent the lost hope of the persona for finding love/happiness
- This poem could also indicate the loss of the persona's sense of self after losing the subject of the poem
- The subject of this poem is almost certainly a father-figure, as it is implied that there was great knowledge and impact, with allusions to parental forces
- The most reasonable connection to Plath's personal life is the loss of her father and the impact that it had on her life in the following years.

**\*** 

# Supporting Research

- ★ Dissertation written by Stephanie Fowler for the University of South Carolina in Summer 2019
- ★ This study examined the impact of annotation on students' critical thinking skills
  - The sample population 8 high school juniors and seniors enrolled in an English IV-Honors course
- ★ The data was derived from surveys taken both before and after the study, interviews, student work, teacher observation, rubrics and responses to specific questions regarding the topic of poetry annotation
- The outcome of this particular research was stated as the following: "The data revealed that practice, collaborative opportunities, and reflection led to growth in participants' self-efficacy, confidence, use of poetry annotations, and critical thinking skills as reflected in the rubrics."

### References

- Academy of American Poets. (n.d.). Sylvia Plath. Retrieved October 31, 2020, from <a href="https://poets.org/poet/sylvia-plath">https://poets.org/poet/sylvia-plath</a>
- Fowler, S. J. (2019). The Impact of Poetry Annotations on the Critical Thinking Skills of High School Juniors and Seniors at a School in a Southeastern State. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <a href="https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd/5466">https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd/5466</a>

# **slides**go