



# The Bell Jar

Sylvia Plath

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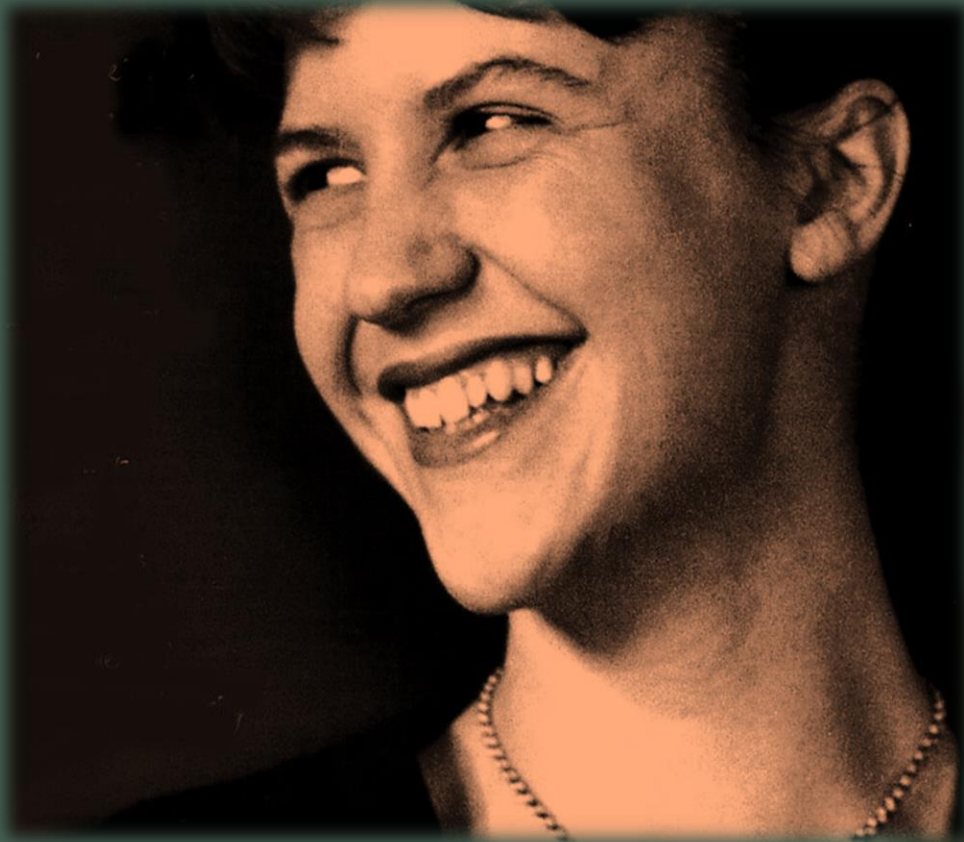


# Sylvia Plath



- **Born in 27 October 1932 – Massachusetts**
- **An American poet and a novelist**
- **One of the most dynamic and admired poets of the 20th century**
- **Wrote more than 400 poems**
- **Won Mademoiselle short story contest at the age of 20**
- **Took her life at the age of 30**
- **Died in 11 February 1963**





*I took a deep  
breath and listened  
to the old brag of  
my heart. I am, I  
am, I am.*

*"Sylvia Plath"*



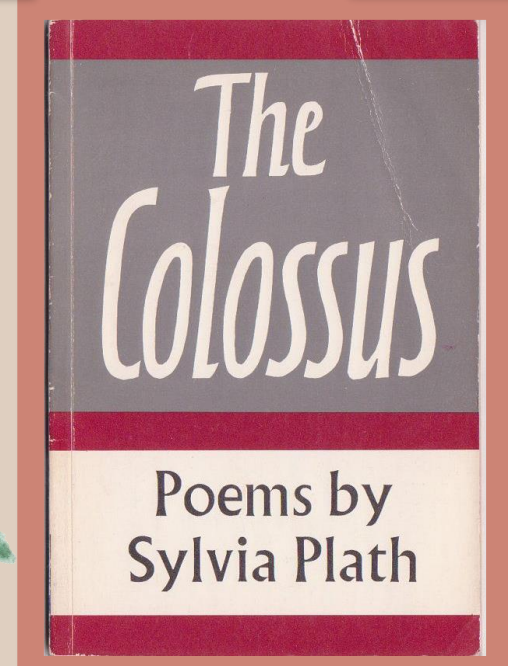
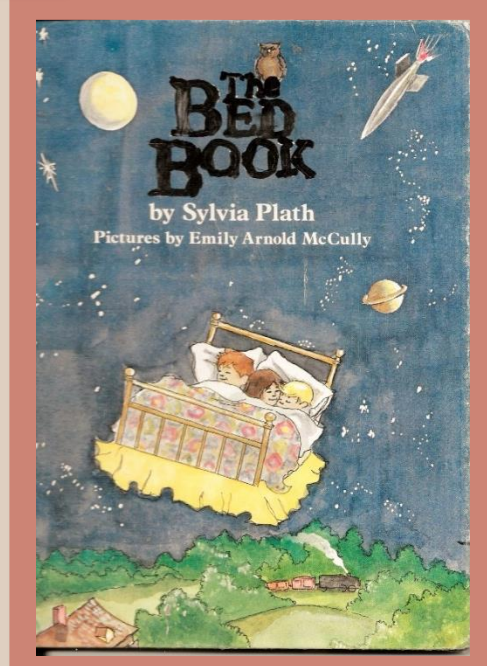
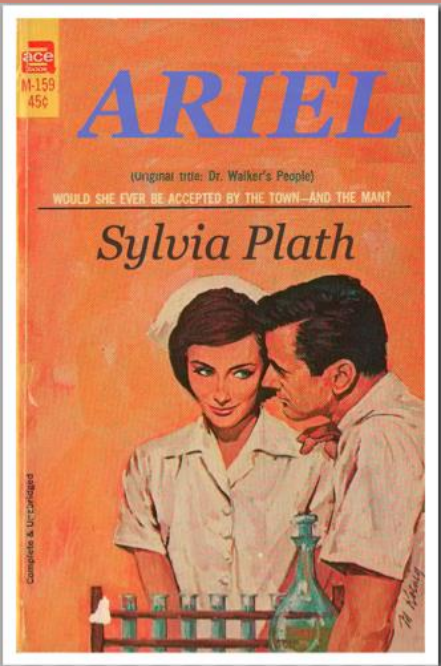
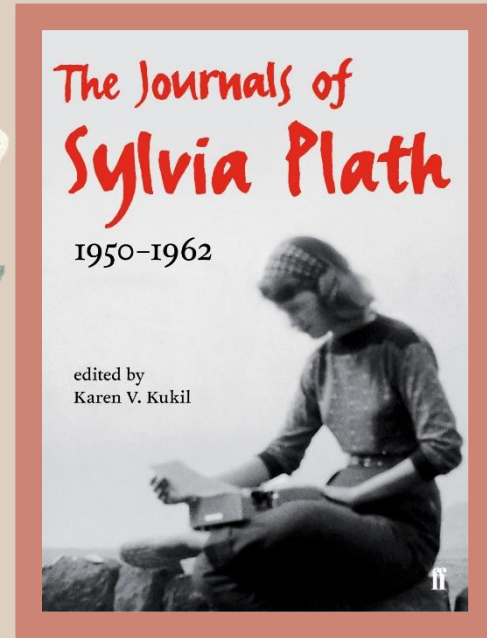
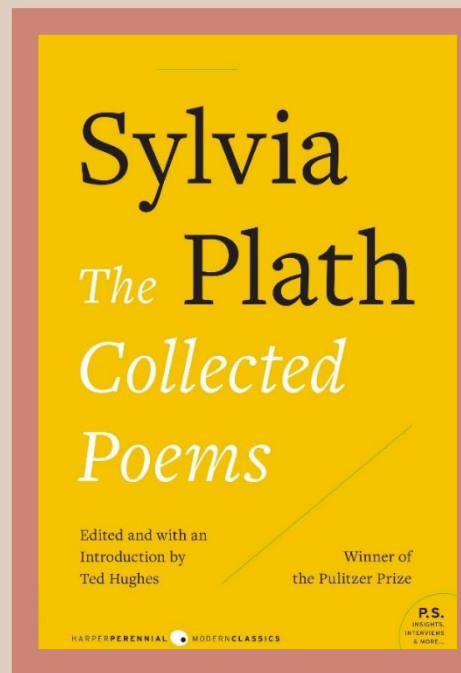
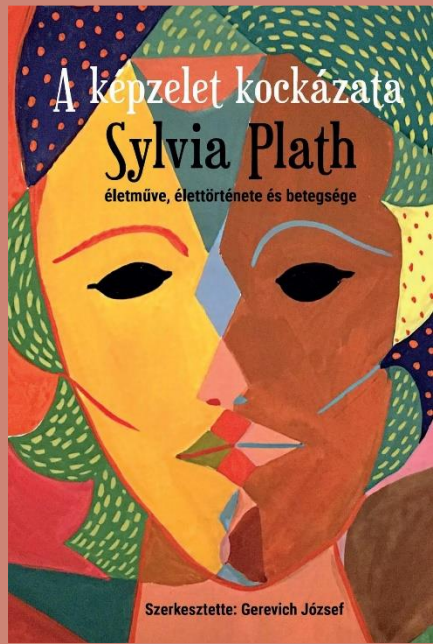




,

*works*





# Sylvia Plath's Writing Style

- ✓ powerful symbolism
- ✓ hidden meanings to win the hearts of the people.
- ✓ filled with sarcastic observations
- ✓ self-depicting sense of humor
- ✓ realistic
- ✓ vivid imagery

Something text here





The image shows the cover of the book 'The Bell Jar' by Sylvia Plath. The cover features a black and white photograph of a woman sitting in a field of tall grass and flowers. She is wearing a white short-sleeved blouse and a dark skirt. The text 'SYLVIA PLATH' is printed in large, bold, white capital letters at the top, and 'THE BELL JAR' is printed in the same style at the bottom. The background of the slide is a dark green color with a faint leaf pattern in the top right corner.

**SYLVIA  
PLATH**

**THE  
BELL  
JAR**

- *Published in 1963*
- *Under pseudonym; Victoria Lucas*
- *A month later Sylvia committed suicide*
- *Reprinted with Plath's name on the cover in 1966*



# The Bell Jar

- It is not regarded as a novel in a traditional sense, because it is not a piece of fiction. Instead, it is considered to be a deep work of slightly fictionalized autobiography.
- It became most influential in its style: straightforward, earnest, and almost painfully honest.
- Many critics admired the parallel between Plath's fight to become a well-known writer (a predominantly male profession) and women's fight for equality in the larger scale.



# Summary



The Bell Jar opens in the summer of 1953. Esther Greenwood is a bright nineteen-year-old working as an editorial intern at a popular women's magazine in New York City. Despite her academic promise and ambition, Esther feels isolated from society and discouraged about her future. These early symptoms of depression are aggravated by the pressure she feels to conform to social expectations of what a young woman should be – a virgin until marriage, and after marriage, a wife and a mother. Chided by her boss for not having a clear career focus, Esther goes on a series of dates, the last of which ends with her date attempting to assault her. Esther escapes, and returns home the next morning to her mother's house in the suburbs outside Boston.

As the events of the summer unfold, Esther frequently flashes back to her problematic relationship with her on-and-off boyfriend Buddy Willard, a medical student. Through these flashbacks, we learn that while Esther idolized Buddy at first, she became disillusioned when he revealed that he had a sexual affair. Later, Esther visited Buddy while he was confined to a sanitarium for tuberculosis. After rejecting his proposal of marriage, Esther followed Buddy to the ski slopes, where she had an accident and broke her leg.

Back with her mother, Esther finds out that she did not get accepted into a summer creative writing program, after which she quickly spirals down into a suicidal depression. Esther consults Dr. Gordon, but he botches her electroshock therapy, after which Esther's behavior grows increasingly erratic. Finally, Esther decides to end her life. She hides away in a crawlspace under her home and swallows a bottle of sleeping pills. Fortunately, she is rescued a few days later. After staying at a couple of hospitals, Esther is taken to a private psychiatric institution, where she meets Dr. Nolan, a compassionate female doctor. While there, Esther undergoes a series of successful electroshock and insulin therapy sessions. At the institution, she encounters Joan, a high school friend who also dated Buddy. However, Esther's life is again threatened when, after a sexual encounter with a professor she meets in Cambridge during a visit out of the institution, she hemorrhages. Joan, who is now living in Cambridge, helps Esther to the emergency room, and Esther returns to the institution the next day. Joan also returns to stay at the institution, and commits suicide near the institution's grounds soon after. Esther's condition, on the other hand, improves. The novel ends in the winter of 1954 as Esther enters her exit interview, which will determine if she's ready to leave the institution.



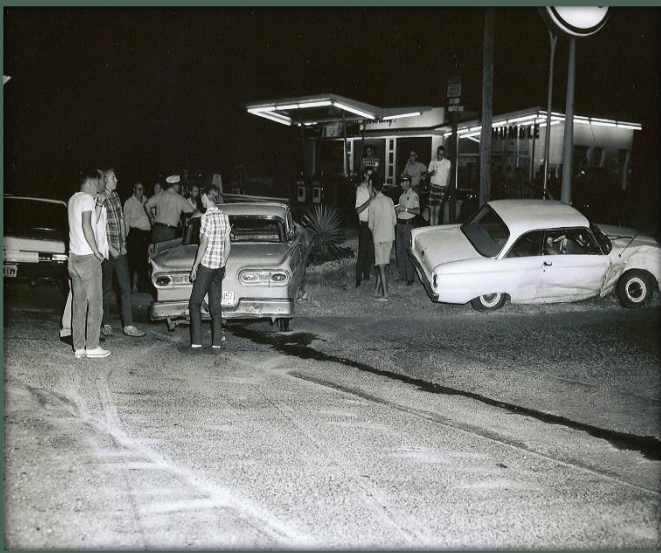
1950s America

New York important because Sylvia first begins to experience her depression here also is where the majority of the characters are introduced

## *Setting*



The asylum: important because as there goes through many changes there and recalls on events that makes for a depressed woman she has come to be



# Characters



## Esther Greenwood:

The protagonist and narrator of the novel

## Mrs. Greenwood:

Esther's mother

## Buddy Willard:

Esther's college boyfriend

## Doctor Nolan:

Esther's psychiatrist at the private mental hospital

## Doreen:

Esther's companion in New York

## Joan Gilling - Valerie:

Esther's companion in the mental hospital

## Jay Cee:

Esther's boss at the magazine

## Constantin-Marco:

who takes Esther on a date

## Doctor Gordon:

Esther's first psychiatrist

## Irwin:

Esther's first lover

## Betsy:

Esther's friend

## Dodo Conway:

The Greenwoods' neighbor

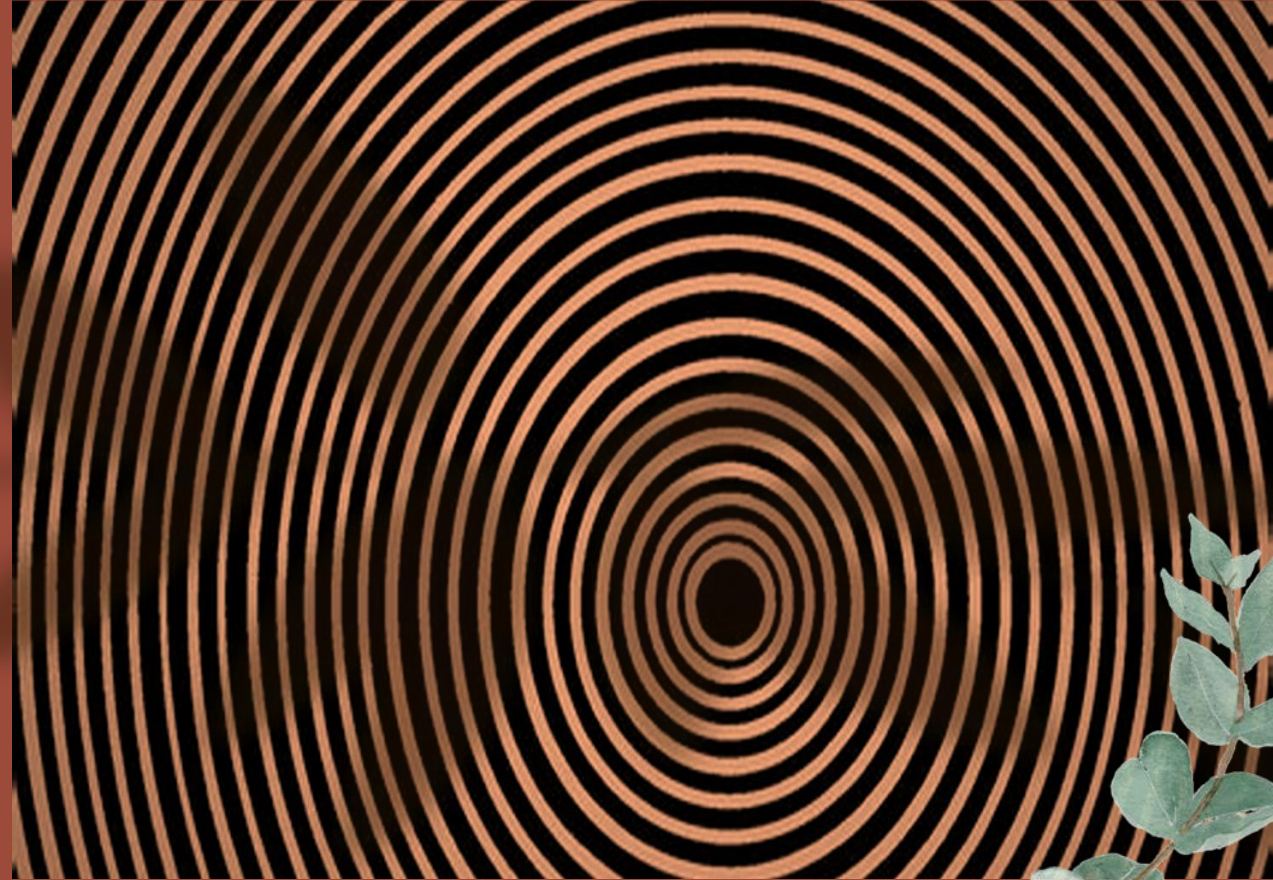
## Lenny Shepherd:

Doreen's love interest



# Theme

- Confusion and Insanity
- Death and Rebirth
- Women (especially their role in ever-changing society)
- Maternal Relationships
- Sexuality
- Violence
- Depression



# Motifs



- Darkness
- Blood
- God
- Glory
- Outdoor setting
- Colors (black, white, red)





# Symbolism

- The bell jar as a trap, of Esther's own mind which she cannot escape.
- Blank and stopped as a dead baby, the world itself is a bad dream."
- Mirrors, symbolizes Esther's inability to understand, to recognize her own self,.
- Blood, is used as a symbol of violence in her mind.
- Figs, comparing them to what she wants in her life, she must choose one fig but she wanted all.
- Headlines, a symbol for the effect Esther's actions have on the world.
- Beating heart, is the symbol for death as she repeats with her heartbeat, "I am. I am. I am."



# Analysis:

The novel is not only the reflection of the writer's situation but also the impact of her mental problem on her relationship with society. At first, a normal situation is presented in the first chapter of the novel which makes the reader expect a happy life for the main character; Easter, but in the next chapter it reveals that she is not satisfied with her situation and society. She feels that society is going to ruin her future and life. There's a conflict in the novel when she gets fired from the summer writing program and it leads to feeling alienated and depressed, Plath herself had these psychological problems which prove that the book is somehow auto-biography about Plath's life. Here's this part in the book where Easter commits suicide, and Plath herself committed suicide. I find it really poetic that she wrote a semi-autobiography and showed the world how her life will end in a novel.



There are some characters during the novel who help her get out of her depressed mood and feel better, in my opinion, she wanted to say if she had someone like them in her real-life it would help her to escape her depression, she did not probably have a best friend or someone close to her.

As a feminist theme is the major theme of the novel, Plath shows her dissatisfaction with the society of America at that time by indicating the different difficulties and problems that the main character, Esther faces because of her gender, the responsibilities, and restriction of a woman in the male-dominant society of that time.

How incapable she was to the problems around her and also in her own mind, is mentioned in the last chapter of the book, "...wherever I sat-on the deck of a ship or a street café in Paris or Bangkok I would be sitting under the same glass bell jar stewing, in my own sour air" and this bell jar illustrates her suicidal thoughts and pressure of isolation and loneliness on her life





*"... wherever I sat-on the deck of a ship or a street café in Paris or Bangkok I would be sitting under the same glass bell jar stewing, in my own sour air".*

*Sylvia Plath*



# Resources:

The bell jar book  
phdessay.com  
britannica.com  
ivypanda.com  
patrushka.net  
poetryfoundation.org  
biography.com  
poets.org  
historyextra.com  
Youtub.com  
litpriest.com  
reference.com  
literarywonders.com  
smallwritingdesk.com  
study.com  
biblio.com

liquisearch.com  
litcharts.com  
brightsummaries.com  
Prime-dissertations.com  
studycorgi.com  
interpretingliterature.com  
gupea.ub.gu.se/bitstream  
thebestnotes.com  
gradesaver.com  
enotes.com  
thebelljarsylviaplath.weebly.com  
m  
bartleby.com

Sylvia  
*The* Plath



*Thank You So Much*

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