

English Literature Activities



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Read the text about the poet's life and fill in the missing words:

translated genre adult mental pills novelist posthumous several receiving

Sylvia Plath (1932–1963) was an American poet,....., and short-story writer. Born in Boston, Massachusetts, she studied at Smith College and Newnham College at the University of Cambridge, beforeacclaim as a poet and writer. She married fellow poet Ted Hughes in 1956; they lived together in the United States and then England, and had two children. Plath was clinically depressed for most of herlife. She committed suicide in 1963. Before her death, she had triedtimes to take her own life. In 1953 she overdosed onin the cellar of her mother's home, and in 1962 she drove her car off the side of the road, into a river. On the morning of February 11, 1963, Plath was found dead of carbon monoxide poisoning. She was 30 years old. Plath is credited with advancing theof confessional poetry and is best known for her two published collections, *The Colossus and Other Poems*, and *Ariel*. In 1982, she won aPulitzer Prize. *The Bell Jar* is her only novel. Originally published under the pseudonym "Victoria Lucas" in 1963, the novel is semi-autobiographical, with the names of places and people changed. The protagonist's descent intoillness parallels Plath's own experiences with what may have been clinical depression. The novel was published under Plath's name for the first time in 1967 and was not published in the United States until 1971, in accordance with the wishes of both Plath's husband, Ted Hughes, and her mother. It has beeninto nearly a dozen languages and, though dark, it is often read in high school English classes.



Do you like reading poetry? Why/why not? What makes poetry different from other genres?


 Watch the video and complete the text below. This is the fig tree scene, an extract of Plath's "The Bell Jar"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oFwaeb3a3NA>

I saw my life branching out before me like the green fig tree in the.....From the tip of every branch, like a fat purple fig, a wonderful..... beckoned and waited. One fig was a.....and a happy home and.....and another fig was a famous poet, and another fig was a brilliant professor, and another fig was Europe and Africa and South America, and another fig was Constantine and Socrates and Attila and aof other lovers with queer names and offbeat.....And above and beyond these figs were many more figs I couldn't quite make out. I saw myself sitting in the crotch of this fig tree, starving to death, just because I couldn't make up my.....which of the figs I would choose. I wanted each and every one of them, but choosing one meant losing all the rest, and, as I sat there.....to decide, the figs..... to wrinkle and go black, and, one by one, they plopped to the ground at my feet.



What is the problem that the narrator faces?

 Pretend you are the poet's friend and this is part of the last letter she sent you. Respond to her letter commenting on her situation and providing advice. Your letter should be 150-200 words.

Dear Sylvia,

Sylvia Plath Teacher's B2

Biographical text:

Sylvia Plath (1932–1963) was an American poet, **novelist**, and short-story writer. Born in Boston, Massachusetts, she studied at Smith College and Newnham College at the University of Cambridge, before **receiving** acclaim as a poet and writer. She married fellow poet Ted Hughes in 1956; they lived together in the United States and then England, and had two children. Plath was clinically depressed for most of her **adult** life. She committed suicide in 1963. Before her death, she had tried **several** times to take her own life. In 1953 she overdosed on **pills** in the cellar of her mother's home, and in 1962 she drove her car off the side of the road, into a river. On the morning of February 11, 1963, Plath was found dead of carbon monoxide poisoning. She was 30 years old. Plath is credited with advancing the **genre** of confessional poetry and is best known for her two published collections, *The Colossus and Other Poems*, and *Ariel*. In 1982, she won a **posthumous** Pulitzer Prize. *The Bell Jar* is her only novel. Originally published under the pseudonym "Victoria Lucas" in 1963, the novel is semi-autobiographical, with the names of places and people changed. The protagonist's descent into **mental** illness parallels Plath's own experiences with what may have been clinical depression. The novel was published under Plath's name for the first time in 1967 and was not published in the United States until 1971, in accordance with the wishes of both Plath's husband, Ted Hughes, and her mother. It has been **translated** into nearly a dozen languages and, though dark, it is often read in high school English classes.

Video

I saw my life branching out before me like the green fig tree in the...story.....From the tip of every branch, like a fat purple fig, a wonderful...future..... beckoned and waited. One fig was a.....husband.....and a happy home and.....children....and another fig was a famous poet, and another fig was a brilliant professor, and another fig was Europe and Africa and South America, and another fig was Constantine and Socrates and Attila and a.....pack.....of other lovers with queer names and offbeat.....professions.... And above and beyond these figs were many more figs I couldn't quite make out. I saw myself sitting in the crotch of this fig tree, starving to death, just because I couldn't make up my.....mind.....which of the figs I would choose. I wanted each and every one of them, but choosing one meant losing all the rest, and, as I sat there.....unable.....to decide, the figs.....began..... to wrinkle and go black, and, one by one, they plopped to the ground at my feet.

MORE ABOUT DEPRESSION

<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/9290-depression>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/depression/in-depth/depression/art-20045943>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/depression/self-care/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/tips-and-support/cope-with-depression/>





The poet

[Sylvia Plath](#) was an American poet, novelist, and short story writer. She is credited with advancing the genre of [confessional poetry](#) and is best known for [The Colossus and Other Poems](#) (1960), [Ariel](#) (1965), and [The Bell Jar](#), a semi-autobiographical novel published shortly before her [suicide](#) in 1963.

(information from Wikipedia-the vocabulary exercise is based on this text)

The book

[The Bell Jar](#) is the only novel written by the American writer and poet [Sylvia Plath](#). Originally published under the pseudonym "Victoria Lucas" in 1963, the novel is supposedly semi-autobiographical with the names of places and people changed. The book is often regarded as a [roman à clef](#) because the protagonist's descent into mental illness parallels Plath's experiences with what may have been [clinical depression](#) or [bipolar II disorder](#). Plath died by suicide a month after its first United Kingdom publication.

(information from Wikipedia)

The video

The scene of the video comes from the TV show "[Master of None](#)" an American [comedy-drama](#) television series, which was released for streaming on November 6, 2015, on [Netflix](#). The series was created by [Aziz Ansari](#) and [Alan Yang](#), with the first two seasons starring Ansari in the lead role of Dev Shah, a 30-year-old actor. The first season is set in [New York City](#), and consists of ten episodes. This is a scene from the final episodes.

(information from Wikipedia)



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