

## Adrienne Rich

### Poet Description:

Adrienne Rich grew up in Baltimore and was educated at Radcliffe College. After early work that had the controlled elegance and formality characteristic of some poets in the first years of the 1950s, she began to adapt the open forms that have been central to the American tradition since Whitman. Since then, she became one of the most widely read and influential poets of the second half of the twentieth century. That impact has grown not only from her poetry but also from a number of groundbreaking essays, including "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision" and "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence."

Rich's position now is in many ways unique. She was our foremost contemporary feminist poet and an important theorist of the social construction of gender, but that dual status sometimes overshadows, and even obscures, the range of her most ambitious work. She wrote a number of unforgettable short poems, variously visionary, historical, political, and polemical. Some of these, along with longer poems like "Diving into the Wreck," have helped to define the personal and social understanding of a generation. Yet her many long poem sequences are inevitably more complex aesthetically and philosophically, and they demand extended reading and reflection. It is in these poem sequences especially that her recurring topic of several decades—the relationship between individual experience, contemporary political and social life, and historical memory—receives its most innovative treatment. Devoted like so many other poets to understanding the burdens of national identity, she has tried to uncover at once the texture and the governing principles of the lesson Americans are least willing to learn: that we are intricately embedded in and shaped by social life. Rich is unusual in tracking these intersections with a keen sense for their temporal intricacy; in Rich social life and politics and the lives of earlier women (like that of Marie Curie in "Power") are registered on the pulses.

### Race/Ethnicity:

European <sup>[1]</sup>

### Picture:



### Gender:

Female [2]

**First Name:**

Adrienne

**Last Name:**

Rich

**Birth & Death Dates:**

Thursday, May 16, 1929 to Tuesday, March 27, 2012

**School of Poetry:**

Feminist [3]

**Birth Place:**

Baltimore , Maryland

United States

See map: Google Maps [4]

Maryland US

**Death Place:**

Santa Cruz , California

United States

See map: Google Maps [5]

California US

**Group visibility:**

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[1] <http://www.modernamericanpoetry.org/category/race-ethnicity/european>

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[4] <http://maps.google.com?q=46.880607+-87.363281+%28%2C+Baltimore%2C+MD%2C+%2C+us%29>

[5] [http://maps.google.com?q=36.974117+-](http://maps.google.com?q=36.974117+-122.030796+%28%2C+Santa+Cruz%2C+CA%2C+%2C+us%29)

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