

Elizabeth Bishop

Poet Description:

Born in Worcester, Massachusetts, Elizabeth Bishop's childhood was structured around a sequence of tragedies. Her father died when she was less than one year old. Her mother endured a series of emotional breakdowns and was permanently institutionalized when Bishop was five years old; they never saw each other again. At that point, she was living in Nova Scotia, but after a few years her grandparents returned with her to Worcester. Then she lived with an aunt, meanwhile suffering from asthma and other illnesses. After an education at Vassar, she lived in New York and Florida, but on a fellowship to Brazil she decided to stay there with Lota de Macedo Soares, a Brazilian architect, as her partner, which she did for sixteen years, until Soares committed suicide in 1967. In 1970 Bishop began a seven-year teaching career at Harvard.

If other poets of her generation were to exploit their pain, Bishop instead chose restraint in her early work. She practiced exacting description coupled with distinctly unsentimental introspection, but she also discovered a style of frank, but crafted, spontaneity. With her third book, *Questions of Travel* (1965), which focused on her Brazil experience, her technical skills and her unsentimental wit supported her in a journey into boldly unconventional social and cultural commentary of a sort no other American poet has attempted. If anything, the Brazil poems have become more surprising with a few decades distance. It would be hard to imagine anyone writing them now.

Race/Ethnicity:

European ^[1]

Picture:



Gender:

Female ^[2]

Sexuality:

Straight ^[3]

First Name:

Elizabeth

Last Name:

Bishop

Birth & Death Dates:

Wednesday, February 8, 1911 to Saturday, October 6, 1979

School of Poetry:

Confessional [4]

Birth Place:

Worcester , Massachusetts

United States

See map: Google Maps [5]

Massachusetts US

Death Place:

Boston , Massachusetts

United States

See map: Google Maps [6]

Massachusetts US

Group visibility:

Private - accessible only to group members

Tags:

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[3] <http://www.modernamericanpoetry.org/category/sexuality/straight>

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

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