

# DOROTHY PARKER (1893-1967)



# DOROTHY PARKER



# **DOROTHY PARKER**

- ▣ "prolific writer of verse, short stories, literary and dramatic criticism, articles,**
- ▣ eloquent war reporting, polemical essays, sketches,**
- ▣ song lyrics, dramas, and screen plays**



# DOROTHY PARKER

- ▣ Her output, across half a century, was vast.
- ▣ Still, this wasn't enough for her.
- ▣ 'Real writers, she repeatedly reminded herself, write novels'.



## DOROTHY PARKER

- American poet, short story writer, critic and satirist, best known for her wit, wisecracks, and eye for 20th-century urban foibles.



## DOROTHY PARKER

□ “*Sarcastic, raw and deep*” describe many of Dorothy Parker's satirical poems, short stories, articles and journalism pieces.



# DOROTHY PARKER

- **born in New Jersey on August 22, 1893**
- **to J. Henry and Elizabeth Rothschild**
- **grew up on Manhattan's West Side and attended a Catholic grade school and then a finishing school**
- **at 14 her education halted**



## DOROTHY PARKER

- ▣ She moved to New York City,
- ▣ where she wrote during the day polishing her writing skills
- ▣ and earned money at night playing the piano in a dancing school
- ▣ her sharp and acerbic wit





## DOROTHY PARKER

- “If you have any young friends who aspire to become writers, the second greatest favor you can do them is to present them with copies of “The Elements of Style.” The first greatest, of course, is to shoot them now, while they’re happy.”



## PROFESSIONAL CAREER

- In 1914 she sold her first poem to ‘Vanity Fair’,
- and then in 1916 at 22 she took a job as Editor for ‘Vogue’
- and continued to write for magazines and journals including ‘The New Yorker’



## PROFESSIONAL CAREER

- a member of the Algonquin Round Table group
- became known for her "biting wit" and intense poetry.
- The group itself was an informal gathering of somewhat well known writers that resided in New York City
- Definitely an interesting group of amazing, yet dark writers



# PROFESSIONAL CAREER

- ❑ In 1917: working at Vanity Fair as an editor
- ❑ In 1922: published her first short story, "A Pretty Little Picture,"
- ❑ In 1925: was on the Editorial Staff for 'the New Yorker'
- ❑ She continued contributing poems and critiques for many years to the publication



# DOROTHY PARKER

- ❑ first poetry collection 'Enough Rope' in 1926
- ❑ a bestseller
- ❑ The next two collections, 'Sunset Gun' in 1928 and 'Death and Taxes' in 1931 also very popular
- ❑ In 1930 a collection of fiction was published, 'Laments for the Living'
- ❑ In 1937: "A Star is Born", an Academy Award for it
- ❑ In 1942 : Hitchcock's "Saboteur."



# DOROTHY PARKER

- During the 1920s Parker had extra-marital affairs,
- drank heavily and attempted suicide three times
- but maintained the high quality of her texts



## DOROTHY PARKER

- She flung herself headlong into a series of romantic affairs
- used these experiences as inspirational fodder for her writing:

*'By the time you swear you're his,  
Shivering and sighing,  
And he vows his passion is  
Infinite, undying,  
Lady, make a note of this-  
One of you is lying.'*



## DOROTHY PARKER

- She had a great sense of dark humor that combined her depressive temperament and her brilliant intelligence.





# PROFESSIONAL CAREER

- ❑ In the 1930s Parker moved with her second husband, Alan Campbell, to Hollywood.
- ❑ worked there as a screenwriter, including on the film 'A Star Is Born' (1937),
- ❑ directed by William Wellman and starring Janet Gaynor, Fredric March, and Adolphe Menjou.
- ❑ The film received an Oscar for Best Original Story



# PROFESSIONAL CAREER

- ❑ **With Lillian Hellman and Dashiell Hammett, helped found the Screen Writers' Guild**
- ❑ **Reported on the Spanish Civil War, and collaborated on several plays**
- ❑ **Temptations of Hollywood did not make Parker any softer, which a number of film stars had to face.**



## PROFESSIONAL CAREER

- **1959: inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters**
- **a visiting professor at California State College in Los Angeles in 1963**



## DOROTHY PARKER

- ▣ **suffered tremendously from depression, addiction and even a suicide attempt**



# DOROTHY PARKER

□ experienced much  
turmoil and chaos



## PERSONAL LIFE

- **married a stock broker named Edwin Parker in 1917**
- **later they divorced in 1928 after a difficult marriage**



## PERSONAL LIFE

- ❑ befriended many other writers of her time including Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald.
- ❑ was seen as a socialite of sorts and traveled often to Europe.
- ❑ in 1934 she married Alan Campbell and they moved to California
- ❑ they spent time together writing for MGM and Paramount



## POLITICS

- **a self-declared socialist and member of the Communist party**
- **blacklisted because of her association with it,**
- **continued to write and be a political woman throughout this rough time**
- **also a staunch civil rights believer**





## LEGACY

- a true leader for women, writers, thinkers and activists
- definitely walked the walk
- courageously survived many losses in her life
- lived on both American coasts, traveled extensively and had a robust personal and professional life



# LEGACY

- **prolific collection of her work**
- **innovative and creative**
- **continues to show incredible genius and imagination to writers today**
- **although for Parker life was a constant transition of ups and downs, she had the consistency of her talent and voice to pull her through,**
- **even the darkest of times**



DOROTHY PARKER

- **“The cure for boredom is curiosity.**
- **There is no cure for curiosity.”**



## DOROTHY PARKER

- her first poetry volume  
“Enough Rope” (1926)
- two more volumes of her  
verses under the titles of  
“Sunset Gun” in 1928 and  
“Taxes” in 1931



## DOROTHY PARKER

- story collections: “After Such Pleasures” (1932)
- “Here Lies” (1939)



# DOROTHY PARKER

- sharp understanding of human nature
- 'A Big Blonde', (O. Henry Prize)
- the soliloquies:
  - 'A Telephone Call'
  - and 'The Waltz'



## DOROTHY PARKER

- her literary output was tremendous:
- book reviews, play reviews, social commentary, screenplays, poems
- all remarkable for their high quality and devastating wit
- Dorothy was no softie, and her writing makes you wince as much as laugh



# STYLE

- ▣ **developed it into seriousness**
- ▣ **used themes of middle-class complacency and unrequited love**
- ▣ **expressed insightful humor, a sense of sadness, and serious attempts through satire**





## STYLE

- Her romantic lyrical ballads are rich with imagery and symbolism.
- Critics often described her poetry as sentimental, trivial, and melodramatic because of its sharp humor.



## STYLE

- Her poems were sardonic, usually dry, elegant commentaries on departing or departed love, or shallowness of modern life



# STYLE

- **"This is not a book to be tossed aside lightly. It should be thrown with great force."**
- **Her barbs made writers quake and non-writers chuckle.**
- **She got a huge fan following.**



## DOROTHY PARKER

- "Why is it no one sent me  
yet / One perfect  
limousine, do you suppose?  
/ Ah no, it's always just my  
luck to get / One perfect  
rose." (1926)



## QUOTATIONS

- Four be the things I'd have been better without: love, curiosity, freckles and doubt



## QUOTATIONS

- Drink, and dance and laugh and lie, love the reeling midnight through, for tomorrow we shall die! (But, alas, we never do.)



## QUOTATIONS

- It serves me right for putting all my eggs in one bastard.



## QUOTATIONS

- A little bad taste is like a nice dash of paprika.





## QUOTATIONS

- If you want to know what god thinks of money, just look at the people he gave it to.

