

ENGLISH TEXT SUMMARY NOTES
**“Sylvia Plath’s Selected
Stories”**

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AREA 1:

READING & THE STUDY OF TEXTS:

SYLVIA PLATH'S SELECTED POETRY

Chapter 1

GENRE

The genre of poetry involves a very intense and selective use of language to convey meaning and images figuratively. The word persona, rather than narrator is used to discuss the voice in the poem, which is often given from a first person perspective in the poetry of Sylvia Plath. Also, Plath's poems show a preference for irregular, unrhyming, free verse, thus she tends to abandon traditional, formal metre and rhyme. Figurative language is used extensively in her poetry, including similes, metaphors, personification and alliteration. Emotive adjectives and imagery also characterize Plath's personalised poetic technique.

Chapter 2

STRUCTURE

Sylvia Plath's poems are often structured with uneven lengths of the lines and verses. Two-line couplets serve to increase the speed of the action. The rhyming structure is complex at times, with the inclusion of line rhyme and internal rhyme or alternatively, the omission of rhyming sequences. The intensity of the poetic genre involves the consideration of assonance, which is the repetition of vowel sounds, especially in sequential words. Sylvia Plath's poetic diction is highly personalized and experimental.

Chapter 3

HISTORICAL ISSUES

3.1 Women in the 1950s

Sylvia Plath's poetry is significantly influenced by the war period in which she grew up and her experiences of womanhood in the 1950s. After World War II, the 1950s were a decade of seemingly tranquil politics and progressive industrialization and economy, but the home-orientated life that characterized modern 1950s America had a profound effect on women, which ultimately led to the feminist movement in the 1960s and 1970s. In the 1950s, though women experienced physical luxury and education, their professional and personal aspirations were socially limited. In a world dominated by men, women were increasingly viewed as objects or puppets. As a female artist, Sylvia Plath struggled to imagine future freedom from her mental oppression.

3.2 Literary Influences

Sylvia Plath's marriage to Ted Hughes was a mutual source of artistic inspiration. They shared support and encouragement though their backgrounds and creative styles were very different. Plath idealised Ted Hughes and worked hard to promote Ted's work. Ironically, some of her most acclaimed poems were produced immediately after their separation.

Anne Sexton and Sylvia Plath shared a common bond when they met in Robert Lovell's poetry classes after they had both previously attempted to commit suicide. They shared constructive criticism, thus their poetry demonstrates some stylistic similarities that reflect their artistic confessional tendencies. Anne Sexton also took her own life.

Sylvia Plath's knowledge of Expressionism and Surrealism influenced her work. She shared a German background with these movements of art, which challenged traditional and accepted styles. Plath experimented with the use abstract images and the creative freedom invited by such artistic styles.