

Gertrude in 1903, she
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**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Gertrude Stein” I know I am” (Burnett 51). This response from Gertrude Stein was given in answer to the question “ You think you are a genius?” posed to her by the French artist Henri Matisse. This was the epitome of Stein. Born in 1876, in Allegheny, Pennsylvania, Gertrude was the fifth child, and youngest, to Daniel and Amelia Stein, German-Jewish immigrants. She was a bright girl, but was noted for “ her lifelong indifference to rules” (Gombar 41), especially in school. The early death of her mother was the cause of this. Her father was the king of his castle, often acting as a tyrant, and Stein “ credited her lifelong aversion to all authorities and father figures” (Gombar 41) to him.

Gertrude always had a close relationship to her older brother, Leo. They were fast friends throughout their childhood, and into their adulthood. Though she had completed few years of high school, and did not meet the requirements in Latin, when Leo attended Harvard in 1892, Gertrude followed in 1893, in the women’s Harvard Annex. While at Harvard, she was taken under the wing of noted psychoanalyst, William James. James had an effect on Stein’s later writings as well. His method of “ automatic writing, in which subjects wrote down their unedited, free-associative thoughts” (Gombar 42), was often the way Gertrude wrote many of her literary pieces. In 1897, she was denied her bachelor’s degree, but the next year, she graduated magna cum laude with the class of 1898. Because of high recommendations from James and her other professors, she was granted admission to Johns Hopkins Medical School, where her brother was also studying.

They lived together in Baltimore, and Leo would gather friends on the weekends for their infamous salons. Leo, from his familiar post leaning against the bookcase, would direct discussions that lasted five to six hours.

Life was pleasant in their household, and Gertrude failed to notice Leo was changing.

Within weeks, he was packed and on his way to Europe. For a while, Gertrude lived with another roommate, but she, too, got restless, and in 1903, she joined Leo in Europe. After traveling in Europe and Africa, she settled with Leo in France. Their apartment at 27 rue de Fleurus was soon filled with paintings by the new Modernists, such as Pablo Picasso, Paul Cezanne, and Henri Matisse. Being among the first to accept the Modernist paintings, Gertrude and Leo became friends with the artists. Picasso was particularly friendly with Gertrude, and in 1906, he painted a portrait of her that became one of his best known.

Under the rich French culture, Gertrude's works flourished. " From 1906 to 1909, she wrote *The Making of Americans*, a novel based on her own family's cultural history over three generations. She devised a complex narrative style that abandoned formal plotting and adopted a free prose with odd syntax and punctuation" (" Gertrude Stein" 19th Century American History 1). Leo, however, was not at all pleased with his sister's methods.

The Cubist paintings that inspired her work left Leo regarding it with scorn. Regardless of this, the apartment became a literary salon for many artists and writers in Paris, who came to Gertrude for advice and criticism. When Gertrude met Alice Toklas, a young woman from California, in 1909, she found a friend who appreciated her work. She invited Alice to live with her and Leo. The rift between Leo and Gertrude grew, and Leo moved out four years later.

Alice was Gertrude's friend, lover, and confidante for the rest of their lives. She helped Gertrude with typing, and even with publishing when they founded their own publishing company, Plain Edition, many years later. The salons continued, even with Leo's absence. Artists and writers would still flock to Gertrude for advice and help on their work. The regulars would sometimes bring, or introduce by other means, young American writers in need of help.

Ernest Hemingway, one of the young writers most influenced by Gertrude, was part of what she called "the lost generation." Sent to her by Sherwood Anderson, she found him a good listener and a teachable student. Under her critical eye, she helped him realize that his poems were good, and his short stories were acceptable, but