

# The beat generation

Family



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He produced many works, most notably *Howl*, which will be my main focus in showing a glimpse of the way these writers spoke to the world and were vying to be heard. Ginsberg wrote in 1955 and finished in 1956, it was his first major work to be published and to be performed in public. The poem gained a lot of popularity in San Francisco in the Beatnik scene. The title itself tells you that the poem will be loud, it's meant to be heard. It will not be an ode or a sonnet, but a ferocious howl of all the artistic energy, pent up frustration and solidification that his generation was struggling with.

The central theme is often of the struggle of not being conformed to the American culture and society of the 1950s, the suffocating need to find their true identity and not be smothered into obedience. Starting off the poem he says, "I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked [sic]" (Ginsberg 1), and how he believed his generation was brilliant, artistic, yet were driven to madness by society and left vulnerable. They were desperate in "poverty and tatters" (Ginsberg 1) and were full "with dreams, with drugs, with waking nightmares, alcohol and cocaine and endless balls" (1).

These people, this whole generation, who refused to conform, who rebelled with their writing and art and drugs and soulful jazz, but "the noise of wheels and children brought them down shuddering untracked and battered bleak of brain all drained of brilliance [sic]" (1). The noise of such a domestic scenario is not only a symbol of the "normal" life they are trying hard to escape, but also the death of their brilliance and artistic notions. To this generation sex was also highly intertwined with their work and their way of life "waving genitals and manuscripts" (3).

It was important to this generation to be liberal, to express everything they felt without dampening the way it was felt, raw and powerful and loud. They wanted to be heard and " subsequently presented themselves on the granite s tepees of the madhouse with shaven heads and harlequin speech of suicide, demanding instantaneous s lobotomy" (5). I think one of the most astounding lines in Howl is when Ginsberg says, " who cut their wrists three times successively unsuccessfully, gave up and were forced to pop en antique stores where they thought they were growing Old and cried" (4).