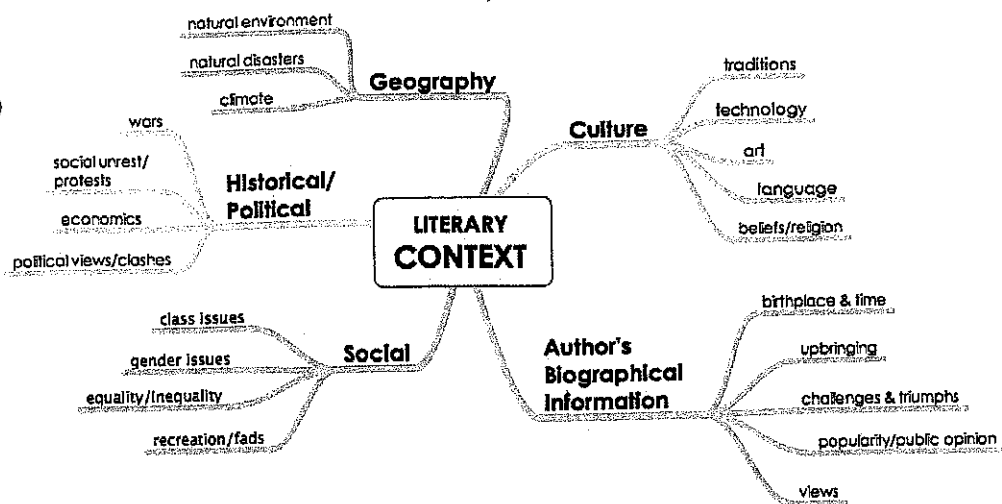


# Understanding Context



Context can be defined as the circumstances that form the setting for an event or an idea. The context of a literary work includes what was happening in the society, culture, and time period in which the author wrote the work. This includes, but is not limited to, the geography, politics, social issues, and cultural aspects of the writer's life and times.

Literature is not written in a vacuum; it is impossible to ignore historical, culture, and social aspects of society when writing and when reading. It is therefore crucial to understand the context of a piece of writing in order to have a deeper understanding and appreciation of themes and the author's purpose. It is impossible to understand Wilfred Owen's poetry, for example, without having a solid understanding of World War One.

## Introductory Context Task

Before we begin reading poems from our unit, you will research the life and times of our poets. You will create a short PowerPoint or Keynote presentation (4-6 slides) to present to the rest of the class and teach them about our poet and their collective contexts.

Look into where and when your poem was written and/or published and research that time period in that location. Look into:

1. The poet's biographical information (where he/she was born, what his/her upbringing was like, what issues/challenges he/she faced, and major influencing factors in his/her works)
2. Political issues (Who was in power? What were the prevailing political views? Any wars? Protests? Social unrest?)
3. Culture & Science (What was going on at the time in the arts? Scientific/technological advancements?)
4. Society (What were average people's lives like? Economics of the country? Divide between the rich and the poor? Women's and men's roles? Social unrest? Minority group issues?)

\*How might these biographical features and socio-historical aspects have influenced the poem?

*Always keep the context in mind when you are reading; it will undoubtedly shed light on the themes, the author's purpose, the message, and how the work was received at the time of writing.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Poetry Unit  
Understanding Context

Directions: For each category listed below, attempt to find information that will better help your classmates understand your poet and how the world around him/her may have influenced his/her poetry.

### The Task

You will summarize your findings in a digital presentation (Keynote, PowerPoint, Google slides). To do so you will need to print your sources, **summarize** information and place it on your slide(s). Most categories may require more than one slide.

When you have done this for all categories, you will need to **paraphrase** one slide and provide an overview **in your own words** about the information you gathered. This slide may be placed at the beginning or end of your presentation. Your final slide should be your **Works Cited** slide.

We will return to your Works Cited slide throughout the unit to ensure proper MLA citation.

### The Presentation

#### 1. Poet's biographical information:

- Where he/she was born
- What his/her upbringing was like
- What issues/challenges he/she faced
- Major influencing factors in his/her works

#### 2. Political issues:

- Who was in power?
- What were the prevailing political views?
- Any wars?
- Protests?
- Social unrest?

#### 3. Culture & Science:

- What was going on at the time in the arts?
- Scientific/technological advancements?

#### 4. Society:

- What were the average people's lives like?
- Economics of the country?
- Divide between the rich and poor?
- Women's and men's roles?
- Social unrest?
- Minority group issues?