

## ALLEN GINSBERG (Newark, New Jersey 1926 - NYC, 1997)

Allen Ginsberg wrote "Howl," his landmark poem, shortly after moving from New York City to San Francisco. Ginsberg had left New York after being released from eight months of incarceration in a psychiatric ward.

This experience, along with the influence of the other writers who made up the Beat Generation, provided the conditions necessary for Ginsberg's poem. More than anything, "Howl" is a fierce cry of lament for the decay of the American imagination.



The speaker announces this theme in the poem's famous opening line, where he declares: "I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked."

As the words "I saw" suggest, the speaker of "Howl" offers an elaborate and apocalyptic vision of America on the verge of collapse. In particular, the speaker laments how mainstream culture has curtailed the spirit of freedom and creativity.

The result is that those who most fully embody this spirit have been reduced to little more than madmen, bums, and "angelheaded" (line 3) mystics.

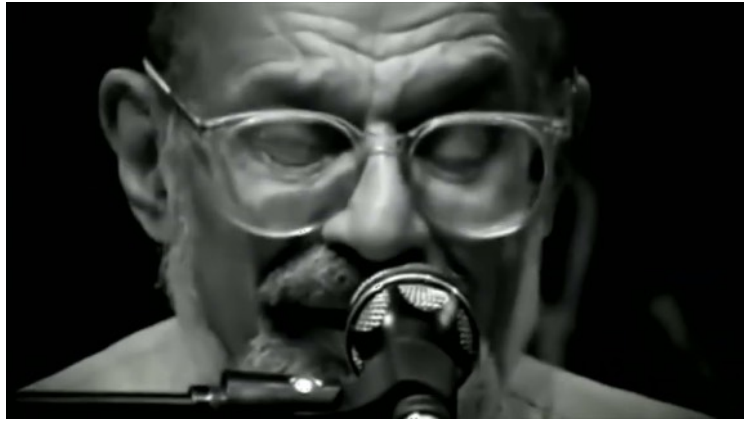
Yet even as the speaker laments what has been lost, he also offers a celebratory prayer for all those artists, intellectuals, and activists who resist the calcifying effects of normative American morality.

### HOWL (1956)

I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked,  
dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn looking for an angry fix,  
angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo in  
the machinery of night,  
who poverty and tatters and hollow-eyed and high sat up smoking in the supernatural  
darkness of  
cold-water flats floating across the tops of cities contemplating jazz,  
[...]

Ho visto le migliori menti della mia generazione distrutte dalla follia, affamate isteriche  
nude,  
trascinarsi nei quartieri negri all'alba in cerca di un sollievo astioso,  
alternativi dalle teste d'angelo in fiamme per l'antica celeste connessione con la dinamo  
stellata nel  
meccanismo della notte,  
che in povertà e stracci e occhi vuoti e fatti sedevano fumando nell'oscurità oprannaturale  
di  
appartamenti con acqua fredda galleggianti tra le cime delle città contemplando il  
jazz,

- Who are the BEST MINDS of our generation?
- What is "Madness"?
- What do you "contemplate"?



## ANOTHER FAMOUS “HOWL”

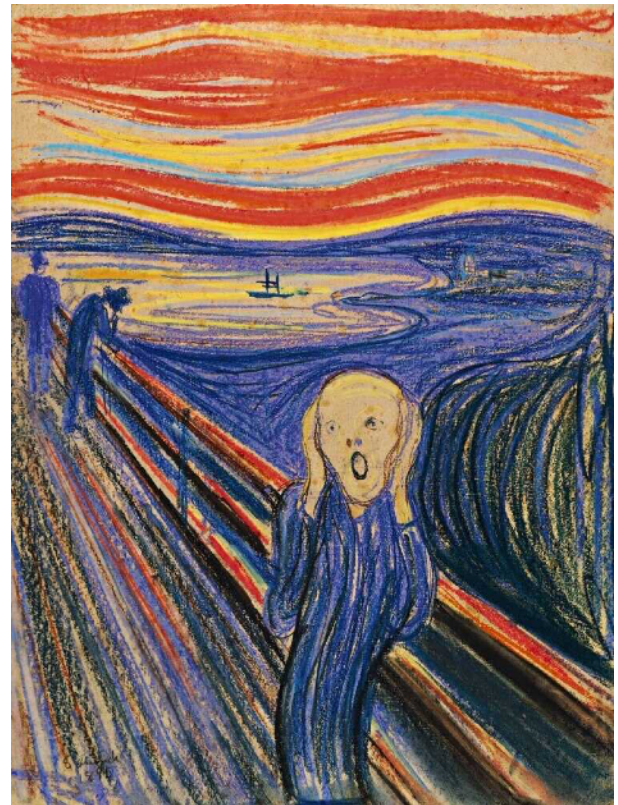
Beneath a boiling sky, aflame with yellow, orange and red, an androgynous figure stands upon a bridge. Wearing a sinuous blue coat, which appears to flow, surreally, into a torrent of aqua, indigo and ultramarine behind him, he holds up two elongated hands on either side of his hairless, skull-like head.

His eyes wide with shock, he unleashes a bloodcurdling shriek. Despite distant vestiges of normality – two figures upon the bridge, a boat on the fjord – everything is suffused with a sense of primal, overwhelming horror.

This, of course, is *The Scream*, by the Norwegian artist Edvard Munch – the second most famous image in art history, after Leonardo’s *Mona Lisa*.

There are different interpretations made for this painting but according to what Munch himself explained in his diary in an entry headed “Nice 22 January 1892”:

“One evening I was walking along a path; the city was on one side and the fjord below. I felt tired and ill. I stopped and looked out over the fjord—the sun was setting, and the clouds turning blood red. I sensed a scream passing through nature; it seemed to me that I heard the scream. I painted this picture, painted the clouds as actual blood. The color shrieked. This became *The Scream*.”



- Can the poem and the painting somehow be compared? Explain



## THE BEST MINDS OF A GENERATION

New York Post journalist Al Aronowitz introduced Allen Ginsberg, the legendary Beat author, to the folk singer-songwriter, Bob Dylan in 1963, and a creative friendship like no other began.

However, Dylan's introduction to Ginsberg's – and the work of other Beat poets – happened before then. It was part of the

reason why Dylan found his way to the city by 1961. "I came out of the wilderness and just naturally fell in with the Beat scene, the bohemian, Be Bop crowd, it was all pretty much connected," Dylan said in 1985.

Dylan shared that same hunger for the sacred and the mad. "There was nowhere to go but everywhere, so just keep on rolling under the stars," Kerouac wrote in the book. If Kerouac was the heart of the Beats, then Ginsberg was the brain. Dylan would never get to meet the former, and grew out of touch with Kerouac's writing as he couldn't relate to its machismo and self-destruction; by the mid-1960s, Kerouac began his slow but painful process of death by alcoholism. "I didn't start writing poetry until I was out of high school. I was eighteen or so when I first discovered Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, Philip Whalen, Frank O'Hara and those guys," Dylan said about his early influence of beat poetry.

After Ginsberg and Dylan met, the two hit it off instantly. They naturally became a dual face of a new underground New York City counterculture, a beat generation of the '60s. "If Dylan was beginning to provide the soundtrack for the counter-culture, Ginsberg gave it both a face and the networks which were essential in sustaining its momentum."



## SUBTERRANEAN HOMESICK BLUES (1965)

Johnny's in the \_\_\_\_\_  
Mixing up the medicine  
I'm on the pavement  
Thinking about the \_\_\_\_\_  
The man in the trench coat  
Badge out, laid off  
Says he's got a bad cough  
Wants to get it paid off  
Look out kid  
It's somethin' you did  
\_\_\_\_\_ knows when  
But you're doin' it again  
You better duck down the alley way  
Lookin' for a new \_\_\_\_\_  
The man in the coon-skin cap  
By the big pen  
Wants eleven dollar bills  
You only got ten

Maggie comes fleet foot  
Face full of black soot  
Talkin' that the heat put  
Plants in the \_\_\_\_\_ but  
The phone's tapped anyway  
Maggie says that many say  
They must bust in early \_\_\_\_\_  
Orders from the D.A.  
Look out kid  
Don't matter what you did  
Walk on your tiptoes  
Don't try "No-Doz"  
Better stay away from those  
That carry around a fire hose  
Keep a clean \_\_\_\_\_  
Watch the plain clothes  
You don't need a weatherman  
To know which way the \_\_\_\_\_ blows

Get sick, get \_\_\_\_\_  
Hang around a ink well  
Ring bell, hard to tell  
If anything is goin' to sell  
Try hard, get barred  
Get back, write braille  
Get jailed, jump bail  
Join the \_\_\_\_\_ if you fail  
Look out kid  
You're gonna get hit  
But users, cheaters



Six-time losers  
Hang around the theaters  
Girl by the whirlpool  
Lookin' for a new fool  
Don't follow \_\_\_\_\_  
Watch the parkin' meters

Ah get born, keep warm  
Short pants, romance, learn to dance  
Get dressed, get blessed  
Try to be a success  
Please her, please him, buy gifts  
Don't steal, don't lift  
\_\_\_\_\_ years of schoolin'  
And they put you on the day shift  
Look out kid  
They keep it all hid  
Better jump down a \_\_\_\_\_  
Light yourself a candle  
Don't wear \_\_\_\_\_  
Try to avoid the scandals  
Don't wanna be a bum  
You better chew gum  
The pump don't work  
'Cause the vandals took the handles

## **PATTI'S POWER**

Patti Smith has always had a reputation for saying exactly what she thinks. The American punk-poet laureate emerged from New York City's downtown new wave and punk scene in the mid-1970s, quickly establishing herself as one of the most influential figures of that pioneering underground world.

After working on a factory assembly line on arrival to New York, she took to performing spoken word poetry in small clubs and venues, later forming the Patti Smith Group. She is an essential part of New York and, indeed America's, complex musical DNA. Not only did she help introduce the world to punk, but she also toured with Bob Dylan on his Rolling Thunder Revue Tour, a carnivalesque, self-generating musical road trip unlike any the world had seen until that point.

1. *I was dreaming in my dreaming*
2. *Of an aspect bright and fair*
3. *And my sleeping it was broken*
4. *But my dream it lingered near*
5. *In the form of shining valleys*
6. *Where the pure air recognized*
7. *And my senses newly opened*
8. *I awakened to the cry*
9. *That the people have the power*
10. *To redeem the work of fools*

11. *Upon the meek the graces shower*
12. *It's decreed the people rule*
13. *The people have the power*
14. *The people have the power*
15. *The people have the power*
16. *The people have the power*
17. *Vengeful aspects became suspect*
18. *And bending low as if to hear*
19. *And the armies ceased advancing*
20. *Because the people had their ear*
21. *And the shepherds and the soldiers*
22. *Lay beneath the stars*
23. *Exchanging visions*
24. *And laying arms*
25. *To waste in the dust*
26. *In the form of shining valleys*
27. *Where the pure air recognized*
28. *And my senses newly opened*
29. *I awakened to the cry*
30. *The people have the power*
31. *The people have the power*
32. *The people have the power*
33. *The people have the power*
34. *Where there were deserts*
35. *I saw fountains*
36. *Like cream the waters rise*
37. *And we strolled there together*
38. *With none to laugh or criticize*
39. *And the leopard*
40. *And the lamb*
41. *Lay together truly bound*
42. *I was hoping in my hoping*
43. *To recall what I had found*
44. *I was dreaming in my dreaming*
45. *God knows a purer view*
46. *As I surrender to my sleeping*
47. *I commit my dream to you*
48. *The people have the power*
49. *The people have the power*
50. *The people have the power*
51. *The people have the power*
52. *The power to dream, to rule*
53. *To wrestle the world from fools*
54. *It's decreed the people rule*
55. *It's decreed the people rule*
56. *Listen*
57. *I believe everything we dream*
58. *Can come to pass through our union*
59. *We can turn the world around*
60. *We can turn the earth's revolution*
61. *We have the power*
62. *People have the power*

63. *The people have the power*
64. *The people have the power*
65. *The power to dream, to rule*
66. *To wrestle the world from fools*
67. *It's decreed the people rule*
68. *It's decreed the people rule*
69. *We have the power*
70. *People have the power*
71. *We have the power...*

**Read the first stanza up to line 4. What sort of experience is the song about?**

**Lines 4 to 12: what did the artist picture and feel?**

**Lines 17 to 29: underline the images of peace.**

**Lines 34-47: what does the artist believe in?**

- Our dreams never come true
- Our dreams are beautiful but Can't Change the world
- Our dreams Can Change the world if we Can Charge nature
- Our dreams Can Change the world if we work al together

