



SHIRLEY JACKSON

Early Life

- Shirley Jackson was born on December 14, 1916, in San Francisco, California.
- She grew up in Burlingame.
- Her mother was a housewife, and her father was an employee of a lithographing company.
- As a child, she was obsessed with writing, keeping journals to chart her progress.

Young Adult Years

- She attended the University of Rochester in upstate New York
 - *After suffering from mental depression that was to recur periodically throughout her life, she left school to concentrate solely on writing.*
- She lived quietly at home, writing prolific amounts of material
 - *she diligently churned out a thousand works of prose a day.*
- In 1937, she entered Syracuse University
 - *she published stories in the student literary magazine.*
- It was there that she met her future husband, Stanley Edgar Hyman.

After College

- After graduating in 1940, Jackson moved to New York City. She began to write professionally, her works appearing in *The New Yorker*, *Redbook*, *The Saturday Evening Post* and *The Ladies' Home Journal*.
- Her first novel, *The Road Through The Wall*, was published in 1948.
 - Her husband became a highly respected literary critic.
- They had four children and settled their family in a large Victorian house in Vermont, where Hyman taught literature at Bennington College.
- Jackson and Hyman hosted many of the leading literary figures of the 20th century at their home, including Ralph Ellison, J.D. Salinger, and Dylan Thomas.
- In 1965, Jackson died of heart failure in her sleep, at her home in North Bennington, at the age of 48.
- At the time of her death, she was a heavy smoker who had suffered throughout her life from various neuroses and mental illnesses.

Her Writing Career

- Jackson's works cover a wide range of themes from psychological horror to family.
- According to writer, Jonathan Lethem, Jackson was “one of this century's most luminous and strange American writers whose forté was psychology and society, people in other words - people disturbed, dispossessed, misunderstanding or thwarting one another compulsively, people colluding absently in monstrous acts”.

- For example, in her American Gothic novel We Have Always Lived in the Castle, Jackson brilliantly isolates the two aspects of her psyche into two odd, damaged sisters: one hypersensitive, afraid, and agoraphobic, the other a squalid demon prankster who may or may not have murdered the rest of her family for her fragile sister's sake.
- In addition to her horror stories, Jackson also wrote humorous stories about her chaotic domestic life in such works as Raising Demons and Life Among the Savages

- Shirley Jackson was an important author because she wrote about horrific subjects as if they were normal everyday life.
- She also published several collections of stories. The tone of most of her works is odd, with an impending sense of doom, often framed by very ordinary settings and characters.
- Her writing has influenced other writers of the macabre like Stephen King.