



# SAPPHO

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Date of birth: 650 before JC

Places of birth and living: Mytilen, Lesbos Island, Greece

Family, Husband(s) and/or romantic relationship:

We know that Sappho and his family belonged to the oldest Aeolian aristocracy. His father was a prosperous wine merchant and had three other sons, these men. Sappho's mother was called Cleis, as was Sappho, who changed her name at the beginning of her poetic activity. It is believed that at the age of eleven, she was separated from her parents and three younger brothers to be consecrated as a priestess of Artemis.

We also know that Sappho had a daughter, but it is unknown with whom, although in some writings the name of Kérkilos of Andros appears, a rich merchant.

On the other hand, also circulated a legend that spoke of the romance of the poet with the sailor Faón and the despair that led her to throw herself into the sea from a promontory of the island of Leucades, this story has fallen into disrepute and, Now, it is attributed to a courtesan also called Sappho.

Physical characteristics:

The physical description of Sappho changes according to who describes her, thus the Papyrus of Oxyrhynchus shows her as "of negligent appearance and almost hideous because she had dark skin and her size was too small". However, for Theodore Reinach she was "a petite, tanned, lively woman, of beautiful character and pleasant talk, vibrating under all the emotions of nature and of the heart; mischievous with grace, a fiery lover, expert in music and innovator". She was described by Socrates as "beautiful", counting among her attributes "the charm of the delicate, the exquisite and refined and a lucid intelligence which culture had not falsified to the point of concealing and dissimulating the tenderness of her soul".

Personality: She was lively, mature, calm, intelligent, with natural authority

Hobbies:

She has always been presented as a teacher at a school of poetry founded by her, which is difficult to certify, although it is true that she lived with her classmates in a relaxed atmosphere conducive to contemplation and recreation in art and beauty.



**Experiences:** 1. is considered like «tenth Muse» was already from Greece a reference of indisputable authority for the literature created by women. His discourse on eros-subtle and disturbing-, the stylized immediacy of his language and his metric and formal inventiveness have fascinated readers and writers of all time.

2. Sappho was recognized in her own life: while Homer was known as "The Poet", Sappho was called "The Poet". In fact, she was one of the few women to be portrayed in ceramics.

3. wrote her poems for women and girls belonging to the cult of Aphrodite, and which would have celebrated feminine milestones such as puberty, marriage and childbirth.

4. Sappho is considered an icon of lesbianism, but the poet wrote about her desire for both women and men. Sappho's expression of fluid sexuality has much in common with the way many choose to express their sexual identity today.

#### **Texts where she appears (Title, author, date):**

These are some of the significant texts that mention Sappho or contain her fragments:

1. "Odes" by Pindar - Author: Pindar, Date: 518-438 BC (approximately);
2. Comedies by Aristophanes - Author: Aristophanes, Date: 446-386 BC (approximately);
3. "Parallel Lives" by Plutarch - Author: Plutarch, Date: 46-120 AD (approximately);
4. "Lives of the Philosophers" by Diogenes Laërtius - Author: Diogenes Laërtius, Date: 3rd century AD (approximately);
5. "Fragments of the Greek Lyric Poets" - Date: Collection of fragments from various authors, including Sappho;
6. "Palatine Anthology" - Date: 3rd century AD (approximately);
7. "Metamorphoses" by Ovid - Author: Ovid, Date: 43 BC - 17/18 AD (approximately);
8. "Epitaph of Bion" - Author: Moschus, Date: 3rd century BC (approximately)

#### **How did she change the life of ancient women?:**

Sappho changed the lives of women in ancient Greece through her cultural and poetic influence. As one of the first poets of the Greek world, she showed women a new way of expressing themselves and thinking, beyond the roles traditionally assigned to them by patriarchal society. Furthermore, her involvement in the tiaso, a religious association that provided women with an environment of autonomy and

education, helped create a space for their personal and intellectual development. Her poetry, which dealt with love in all facets of her, including female homosexuality, gave voice to women's experiences and feelings, giving them a more complete and human representation in the Greek culture of the time.  
(caterina I.)

### [Aphorisms and quotes related to her \(+ Sources\).](#)

"There are those who say it's an army of knights, there are those who say it's an army of infantry, there are those who say it's a fleet of ships, the most beautiful thing on the black earth, but I say it's what you love ."

Love according to Sappho, an ancient Greek poet, was often characterized by passion and desire. The emotional and physical bonds between individuals, the amorous emotions, the physical beauty, and the profound connection between lovers are what make life more beautiful. Sappho particularly celebrated affection and passion between women, being one of the first poets to show non-heterosexual love in her works. (Alessia N.)

### [Communication: Artworks where she appears \(Tittle, artist, year\)](#)

Here is the list of artistic works featuring Sappho, along with their respective titles, authors, and years:

1. "Abandoned Sappho": This marble sculpture, created by Italian sculptor Giovanni Dupré between 1857 and 1861, is housed at the National Gallery of Modern Art in Rome.
2. "Sappho and Phaon": French painter Jacques-Louis David portrayed this legendary scene depicting the love between Sappho and Phaon. The artwork is preserved at the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg.
3. The Greek Poet Sappho and the Girl from Mytilene:



Nicolai Abildgaard

4. Sappho: Amanda Brewster, 1891
5. Sappho giving Anacreon a Feather from in Cupid's Wing: Antonio Zucchi
6. Sappho: Ary Renan , 1893
7. Sappho: Bela Čikoš Sesija
8. Sappho: Arnold Böcklin, 1862
9. "Sappho" - Sculpture by Auguste Clésinger - Year: 1852
10. Sappho and Alcaeus: Lawrence Alma-Tadema, 1881
11. Other Literary and Musical References: Sappho has

been the subject of legends, dramas, novels, and musical works. For instance, Italian poet Giacomo Leopardi wrote "The Last Song of Sappho" in 1822, and various composers like Gioachino Rossini and Charles Gounod have created musical pieces inspired by her figure.

### Sitography

<http://mujeresinstrumentistas.blogspot.com/2010/08/safo-composicion.html>

<https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-47881298>

<https://www.acantilado.es/catalogo/poemas-y-testimonios/>

<https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Safo>

<https://www.thecollector.com/who-was-sappho-of-lesbos/>  
(caterina l.)

<https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/59712.Sappho>  
(alessia n.)

### Questions for a kahoot : (don't forget the suggested answers)

What is one of the main reasons why Sappho is considered one of the greatest poets in history?

Answers:

1. For her ability to weave mythological plots into her poems. ✗
  2. For her influence on women as a priestess in the thiaso. ✓
  3. For her expertise in ancient Greek politics. ✗
  4. For her exceptional skills in ancient Greek pottery craftsmanship. ✗
- (Caterina L.)

What is the most beautiful thing on the black earth?

- a fleet of ships ✗
  - an army of knights
  - a lot of money ✗
  - what you really love ✓
- (alessia n.)

What we know about Sappho's physical characteristics?

- A) shewasa tall and strong women ✗
- B) shewas short and not much strong ✗
- C) she had long brown hair ✗
- D) we don't have enough sources ✓

(Giovanni S.)