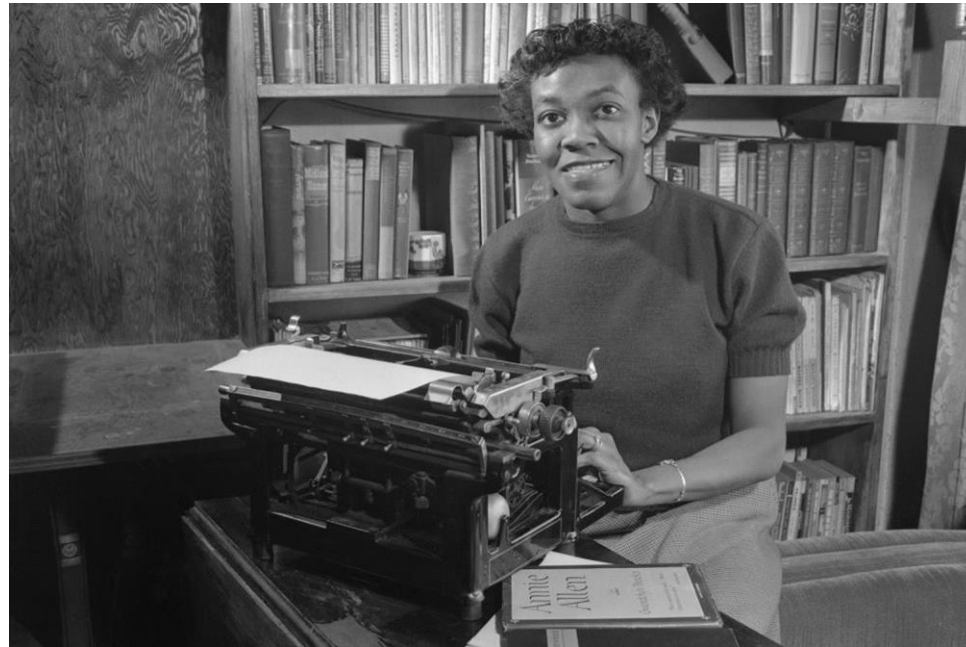


Gwendolyn Elizabeth Brooks (June 7, 1917 – December 3, 2000) was an American poet, author, and teacher. Her work often dealt with the personal celebrations and struggles of ordinary people in her community. She won the [Pulitzer Prize for Poetry](#) on May 1, 1950, for [Annie Allen](#), making her the first [African American](#) to receive the Pulitzer.

Throughout her prolific writing career, Brooks received many more honors. She was appointed [Poet Laureate](#) of [Illinois](#) in 1968, a position she held until her death, and what is now the [Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress](#) for the 1985–86 term. In 1976, she became the first African-American woman inducted into the [American Academy of Arts and Letters](#).

Brooks was born in [Topeka, Kansas](#) and at six-weeks-old was taken to [Chicago](#), where she lived the rest of her life. Her parents, especially her mother encouraged her poetry writing. She began submitting poems to various publications, as a teenager. After graduating high school during the [Great Depression](#), she took a two-year [junior college](#) program, worked as a typist, married, and had children. Continuing to write and submit her work, she finally found substantial outlets for her poetry.



To be in Love

To be in love / Is to touch with a lighter hand.

In yourself you stretch, you are well.

You look at things / Through his eyes.

A cardinal is red. /A sky is blue.

Suddenly you know he knows too.

He is not there but /You know you are tasting together

The winter, or a light spring weather.

His hand to take your hand is overmuch.

Too much to bear.

You cannot look in his eyes /Because your pulse must not say

What must not be said.

When he /Shuts a door-

Is not there_

Your arms are water. /And you are free

With a ghastly freedom.

You are the beautiful half /Of a golden hurt.

You remember and covet his mouth

To touch, to whisper on.

Oh when to declare /Is certain Death!

Oh when to apprise /Is to mesmerize,

To see fall down, the Column of Gold, /Into the commonest ash.