

UNIT 7 The American Dream
Postwar Era 1945 to 1960

A STEIN WOOD
FROEBEL
BILINGUAL SCHOOL
Home of the Space Generation



FROM ON THE ROAD

WITH
JIM SOTO

SPEAK YOUR MIND

Reckless behavior in teens isn't unusual, without a fully functioning prefrontal cortex you may tend to be impulsive, insensitive to other people's feelings and take unnecessary risks.

Sounds like fun, right?

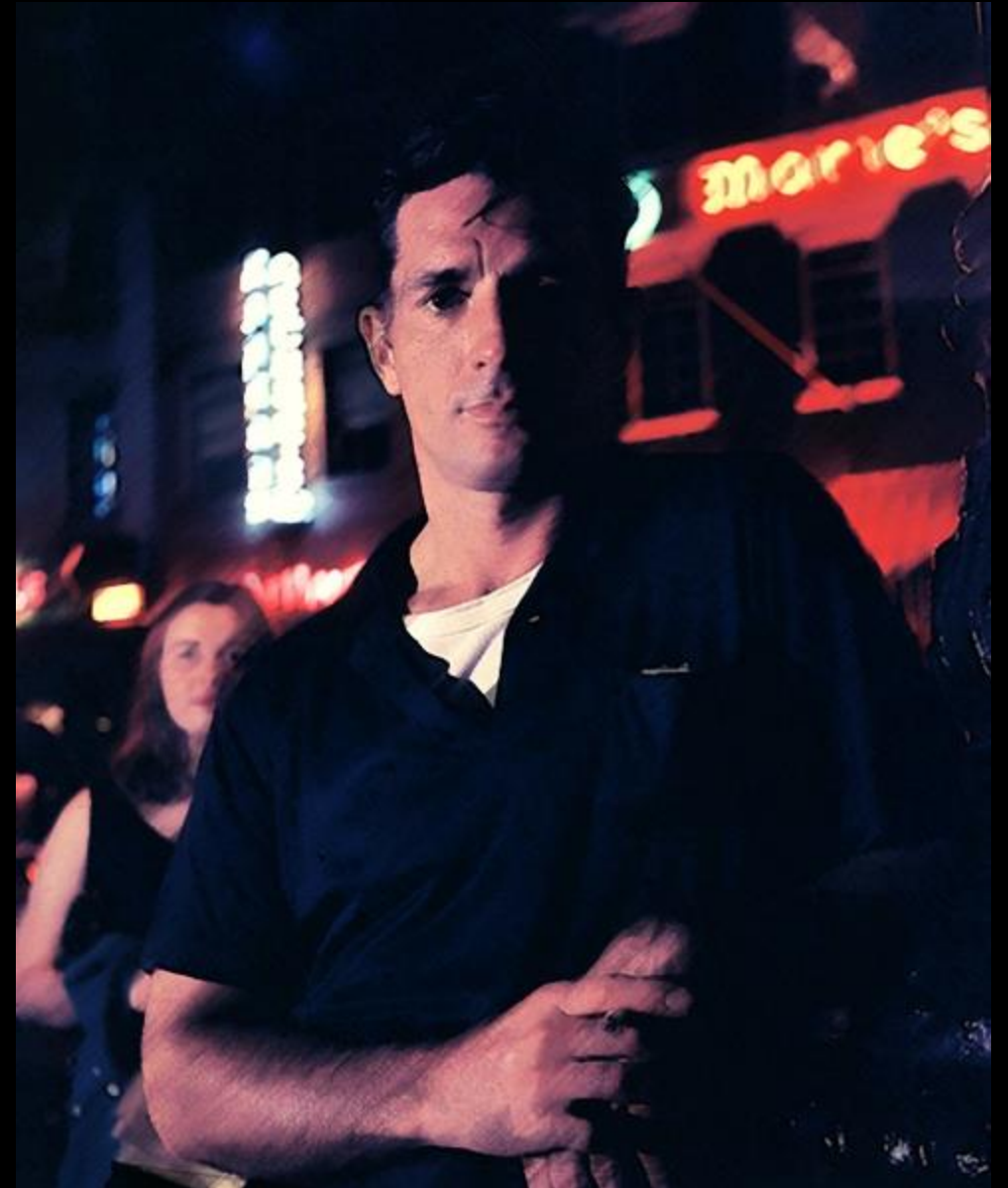
Describe the last time you did something adventurous and carefree.

What emotions did you feel? What risks were involved?

Take a minute to consider and answer the question.

A HOT MESS

Jack Kerouac (1922–1969) was born in Lowell, Massachusetts, to parents of French-Canadian descent. The youngest Kerouac was a bright and serious child. The devastating loss of his 9 year-old brother, followed by the failure of his father's business during the Great Depression, contributed to Kerouac's need to find deeper meaning in what seemed an otherwise joyless life.



Jack Kerouac was a hot mess. His contradictory views, his duality in many things gave him clout. Brought up a Catholic, he adopted a cherry-picked hybrid Buddhist spirituality.

He advocated freedom, abandonment of responsibility, heading out into the mystic night of a magical America where the land bulged on the horizon into infinity, yet he never cut the apron strings, eventually dying while living with his mother. Although ever the dutiful son, he was an absent father to his daughter Jan, even denying his paternity.

Kerouac was married three times, and his portrayal of women in his works is derisory at best, reducing them to cardboard cutouts to facilitate sex or express maternalism. Yet he is widely thought to have had same-sex liaisons, and repressed his feelings for men all his life.

INTO THE WILD BLUE YONDER



Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957) generally is considered the quintessential representation of life inside the Beat movement. Kerouac, the man who reportedly coined the term Beat, wrote this fictional travel journal in just three weeks on a single scroll of paper 120 feet long.

Largely autobiographical, the story covers the travels of Dean Moriarty (a pseudonym for Kerouac's friend Neal Cassady) and Sal Paradise (Kerouac) as they travel to Chicago, San Francisco, Mexico, and places in between. The excerpts that follow describe two episodes from early in the trip, during which Sal rides a bus and hitchhikes from the East Coast to mid-America. In 2005, Time magazine included *On the Road* on its list of the best English-language novels.





LITERARY ELEMENTS

Narrator

Is the related experience of the narrator — not that of the author. The writer's choice of narrator is important in determining the amount and type of information readers are given in the story.

Diction

When applied to writing, refers to the author's choice of words. Much of a writer's style is determined by his or her diction.



Sal Paradise, the narrator of *On the Road* who chronicles his cross-country trip by way of public transportation and hitchhiking, is believed to be Kerouac's alter ego. As you read, develop a brief profile of Sal and evaluate his effectiveness as a narrator. Also evaluate what seems to be Kerouac's preferred style of speaking. Record two or three examples of diction that illustrate his style.

ASSESSMENT

After reading pages 690-693 in your book, complete the following activities:

1. REFER TO TEXT &

2. REASON WITH TEXT

3. & ANALYZE LITERATURE

- **Narrator and Diction** - What can you infer about the narrator based on the information he provides? Is he an effective narrator for this travel narrative? How would the story have been different if told in the third person, rather than by the subject himself?
- Review the words and phrases you recorded. Use them to characterize Kerouac's written style. How does his style fit the subject about which he's writing?



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