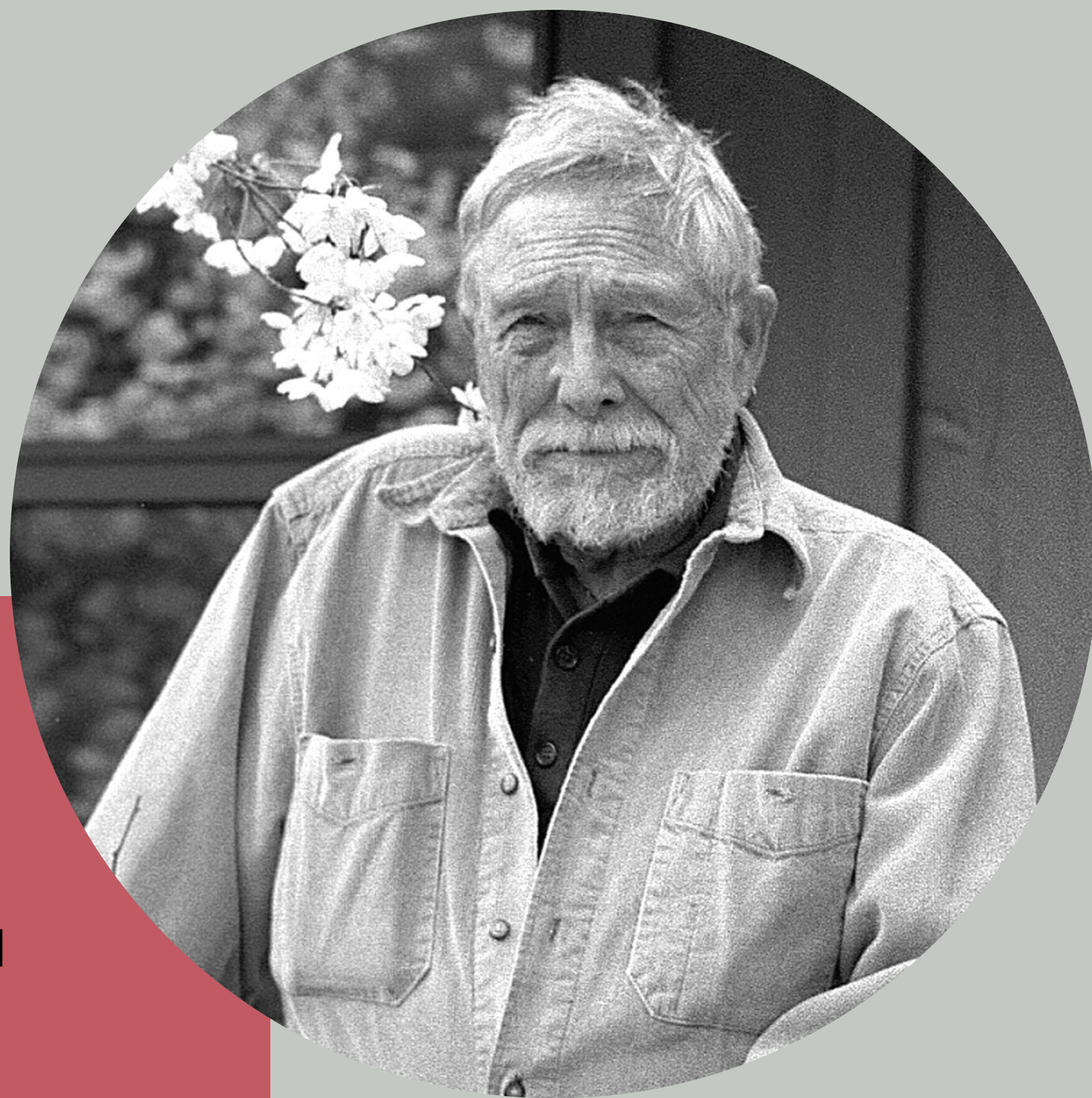


# GARY SNYDER



Gary Snyder was born in 1930 in San Francisco. He grew up on a Farmstead with his mother and father Harold and Lois Hennesy Snyder. His family was impoverished by the Great Depression and moved to King Country, Washinton.



At the age of seven, he suffered a debilitating accident which kept him in bed for 4 months. His parents brought him piles of books from the Seattle public library. That was when he learned to read. By the end of those 4 months, he had read more books than kids had by the time they were eighteen, and he didn't stop. Around the same age, Snyder became aware of the presence of native Americans and their relationship with nature.

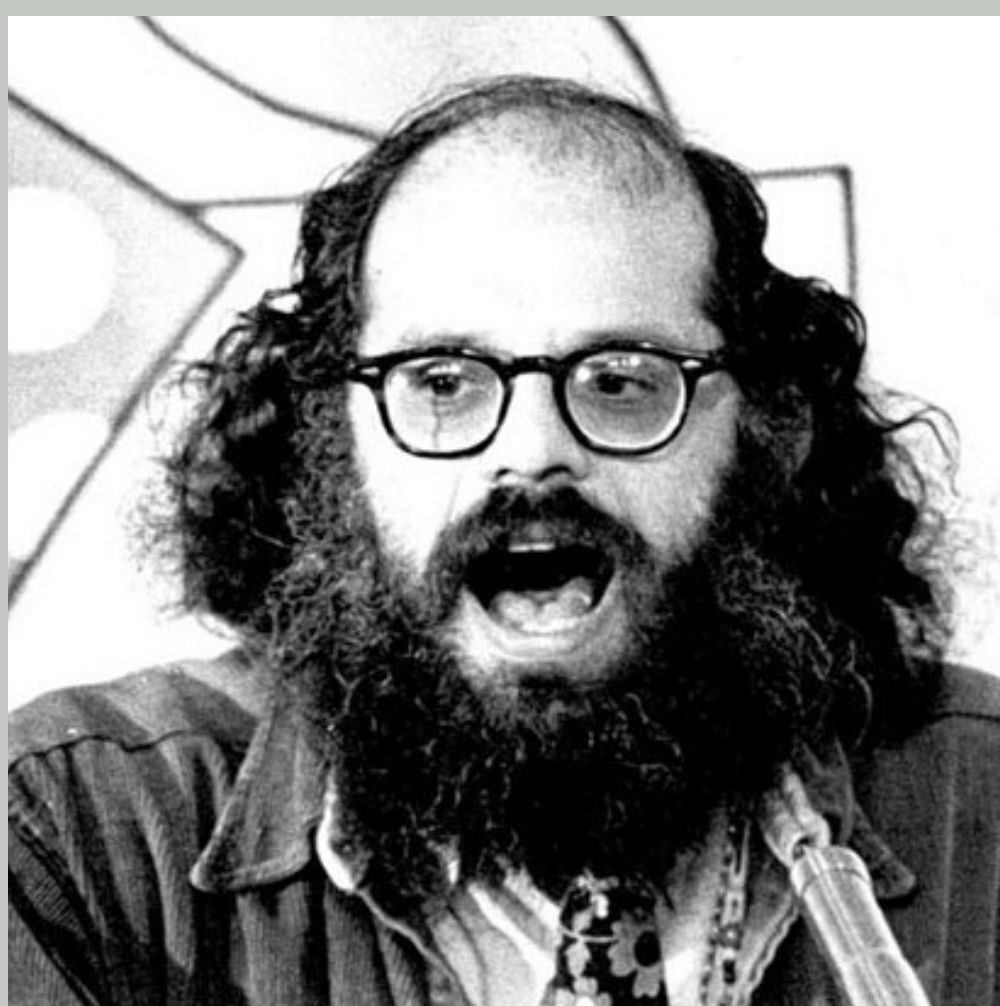
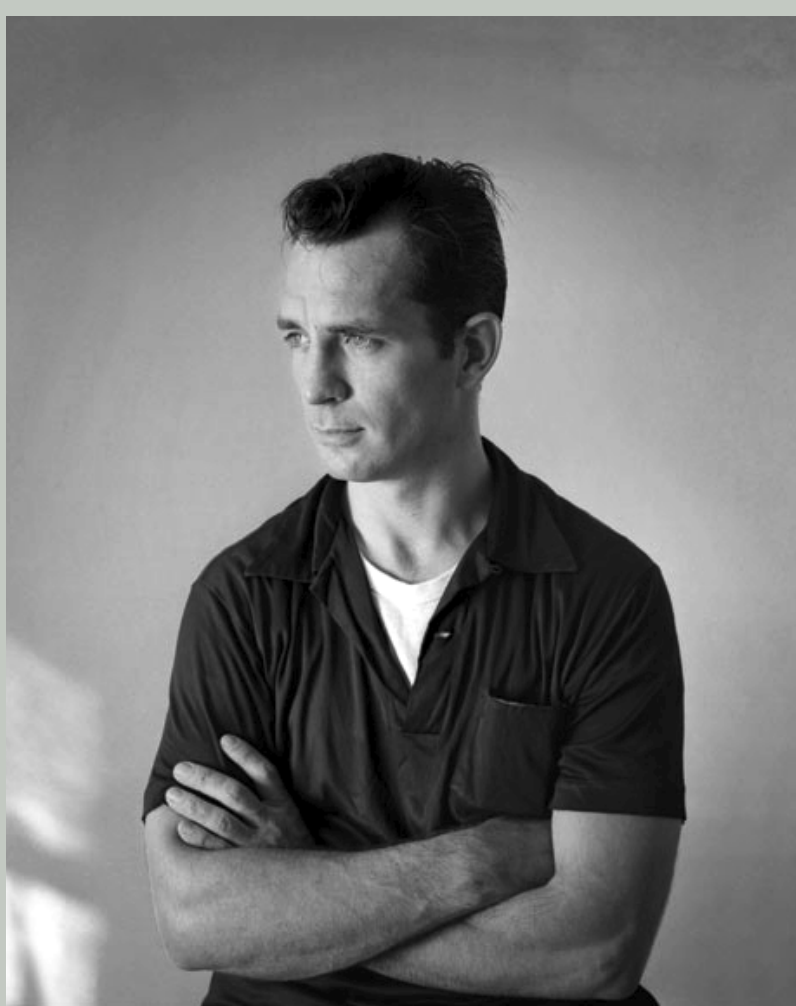
After the divorce of his parents, he moved to Oregon with his mother and sister Athena. His mother worked as a reporter for the local newspaper *The Oregonian*. He attended Lincoln High school and spent his summers working as a camp counsellor and mountain climbing. Climbing was an interest of his even into his twenties and thirties. In 1947 he attended Reed College and graduated with a dual degree in anthropology and literature in 1951.







**In 1952, Snyder moved to the San Francisco Bay area to study Oriental languages at Berkeley. He began to write poetry that was influenced by his wilderness experience and his practice of Zen Buddhism. While there he became involved with a group of writers including Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac and Philip Whalen, who would become the faces of the counterculture revolution of literature known as the beat generation. Snyder was taken not for a poet. He dressed like a lumberjack and looked as far from other poets as you could get. Jack Kerouac describes other poets as either too dainty in their aesthetics or too hysterically cynical.**



**The Beat movement was launched in 1955 when a poetry reading featuring Allen Ginsberg and Snyder was held at San Francisco's Six Gallery. There, Snyder read his poem, "The Berry Feast".**



# THE BERRY FEAST

Delicate blue-black,  
sweeter from meadows  
Small and tart in valleys, with light blue dust  
Huckleberries scatter through pinewoods  
Crowd along gullies, climb dusty cliffs, Spread through the  
air by birds;  
Find them in droppings of bear.  
Stopped in the night  
Ate hot pancakes in a bright room  
Drank coffee, read the paper  
In a strange town, drove on,  
singing, as the drunkard swerved the car  
Wake from your dreams, bright ladies!  
Tighten your legs, squeeze demons from the queynt with  
rigid thighs  
Young red-eyed men will come  
With limp erections, snuffling cries  
To dry your stiffening bodies in the sun!

## Poem Analysis

Gary Snyder's poetry often relates to nature. His experiences in the natural world and his connection to it through Zen are always blended into his work. Snyder goes beyond the human focus that most Beats speak about. He brings in elements of the natural world, of Huckleberries, Pinewood and gullies. After doing some research on the poem and looking at other peoples thoughts I learned that most people, myself included notice the theme of the circle of life and how all creature experience it. Humans try to ignore death by distracting themselves with bad foods, and desires. But we must wake from that dream and appreciate the beauties of the natural cycle. Huckleberries have an infinite life, and continue to feed the earth. They are carried by birds, and found in animal dropping and their seeds continue to spread. Mother nature goes through so much work to keep herself fed and I think Gary Snyder is trying to remind us of that in this poem. I find Snyder's poems intriguing because he is not complaining about suburbia and other human problems. Its refreshing and I think that is what made him such a well known memeber of the beat generation.