

Pablo Neruda

<https://mypoeticside.com/poets/pablo-neruda-poems>

For our next class, we will read four poems by Pablo Neruda. Together, they show how his poetry moves from private emotion to modern city life, political violence, and ordinary objects. Please read the poems themselves before looking for online summaries.

1. Required Reading

1. “Tonight I Can Write the Saddest Lines” - [Read the poem](#)
2. “Walking Around” - [Read the poem](#)
3. “I’m Explaining a Few Things” - [Read the poem](#)
4. “Ode to the Artichoke” - [Read the poem](#)

Optional background: [Pablo Neruda – poems and biography](#)

2. How to Read

First reading: read each poem for the overall movement. Do not worry about understanding every line.

Second reading: annotate the poem. Mark repeated words/images, strong metaphors, changes in tone, contradictions in feeling, moves from personal experience to larger social or historical issues, and one line you do not fully understand.

Key question for every poem: What changes between the beginning and the end?

3. Reading Focus

“Tonight I Can Write the Saddest Lines”: Focus on memory, loss, repetition, night, distance, and contradiction. Ask whether the poem is only about a lost woman, or also about turning loss into poetry.

“Walking Around”: Notice how ordinary city life becomes strange or exhausting. Ask how images of bodies, shops, streets, objects, and decay create alienation.

“I’m Explaining a Few Things”: Watch the movement from everyday life in Madrid to war and destruction. Ask what happens to poetic language when private life is overtaken by history.

“Ode to the Artichoke”: Ask why an ordinary vegetable becomes the subject of an ode. Notice how metaphor makes it comic, serious, political, beautiful—or several of these at once.