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# Kahlil Gibran

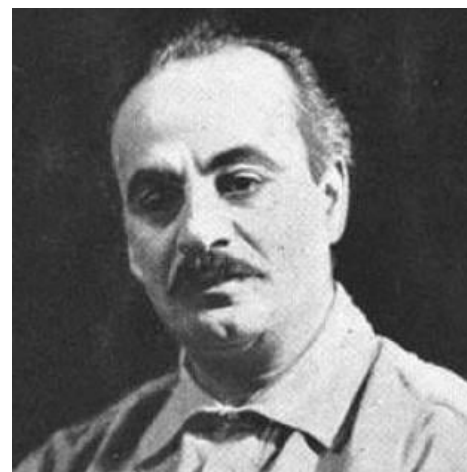
1883–1931

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Kahlil Gibran, known in Arabic as Gibran Khalil Gibran, was born January 6, 1883, in Bsharri, Lebanon, which at the time was part of Syria and part of the Ottoman Empire. He was the youngest son of Khalil Sa'd Jubran, a tax collector eventually imprisoned for embezzlement, and Kamila Jubran, whose father was a clergyman in the Maronite Christian Church.

In 1885, Gibran emigrated with his mother and siblings to the United States, where they settled in the large Syrian and Lebanese community in Boston, Massachusetts. It was there that Gibran learned English and enrolled in art classes. His mother supported the family as a seamstress and by peddling linens.

At the age of 15, Gibran was sent by his mother to Beirut, Lebanon, to attend a Maronite school. He returned to Boston in 1902. In that year and the one that followed, Gibran's sister, Sultana, half-brother,



Kahlil Gibran

Bhutros, and mother died of tuberculosis and cancer, respectively. His remaining living sister, Marianna, supported herself and Gibran as a dressmaker.

In 1904, Gibran began publishing articles in an Arabic-language newspaper and also had his first public exhibit of his drawings, which were championed by the Boston photographer Fred Holland Day. Gibran modeled for Day, who was known for his photographs of boys and young men. It was through Day that Gibran's artwork attracted the attention of a woman nine years his senior named Mary Haskell, who ran an all-girls school. Haskell became Gibran's lifelong patron, paying for him to study art at the Académie Julian in Paris in 1908. There, Gibran met the sculptor August Rodin, who reportedly once called him "the William Blake of the twentieth century." Gibran's hundreds of drawings and paintings remain highly regarded.

Haskell also enabled Gibran's move to New York City in 1911, where he settled in a one-room apartment in bohemian Greenwich Village. At a lunch in the Village, Gibran met Alfred Knopf, who would become his publisher. In 1918, Gibran's book of poems and parables *The Madman* was published. In 1923, Knopf published what would become Gibran's most famous work, *The Prophet*. Though not met with critical praise or early success—the book was never reviewed by the *New York Times*, for example, and sold only twelve hundred copies in its first year—the book became a phenomenon. *The Prophet* has now sold more than ten million copies, making Gibran one of the best-selling poets in the world. Three years later, Gibran published [Sand and Foam](#) (Alfred A. Knopf), a book of poems and aphorisms.

The Biblically inspired *The Prophet* was especially popular in the 1960s. About this, the translator and Middle East historian Juan Cole said, "Many people turned away from the establishment of the Church to Gibran. He offered a dogma-free universal spiritualism as opposed to orthodox religion, and his vision of the spiritual was not moralistic. In fact, he urged people to be non-judgmental."

Gibran was active in a New York-based Arab American literary group called the Pen League, a subset of the [Mahjar movement](#), whose members promoted writing in Arabic and English. Throughout his life he would publish nine books in Arabic and eight in English, which ruminates on love, longing, and death, and explore religious themes.

He died of cirrhosis of the liver on April 10, 1931, in New York City.

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YEAR	TITLE
1923	<i><u>On Children</u></i>
1923	<i><u>On Love</u></i>
1923	<i><u>On Joy and Sorrow</u></i>
1923	<i><u>On Death</u></i>
1923	<i><u>On Friendship</u></i>
1923	<i><u>On Pain</u></i>
1923	<i><u>On Self-Knowledge</u></i>
1923	<i><u>The Coming of the Ship</u></i>
1923	<i><u>On Teaching</u></i>
1923	<i><u>On Marriage</u></i>

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