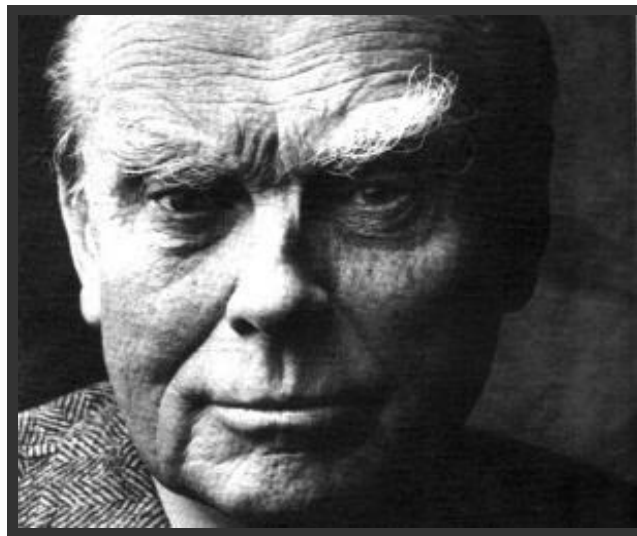


## Czesław Miłosz Biography

Czeslaw Milosz was a prominent Polish-American novelist, translator, essayist and a Nobel laureate. This biography profiles his childhood, life, career achievements and timeline

Quick Facts	
Nick Name	Jan Syruć, John Syruć
Also Known As	Czeslaw Milosz
Famous as	Poet
Nationality	Polish
Religion	Catholicism
Born on	30 June 1911 AD
Zodiac Sign	Cancer
Born in	Šeteniai
Died on	14 August 2004 AD
Place of death	Kraków
Father	Aleksander Milosz
Mother	Weronika Milosz
Siblings	Andrzej Miłosz
Spouses	Janina Miłosz, Carol Thigpen
Children	John Peter Milosz, Anthony Milosz

Quick Facts	
Education	1934 - Vilnius University
Awards	Nobel Prize in Literature - 1980 Neustadt International Prize for Literature - 1978 Guggenheim Fellowship for Creative Arts US & Canada - 1976 Nike Award Jury Award - 1998



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Czesław Miłosz was a renowned poet, novelist, essayist and translator, who influenced the young generation towards the turn of the 20th century through his pre-war and wartime collections. He regarded himself as a Polish poet, simply because it was his native mother tongue and he chose to compose his creations in Polish, despite the fact that he was born in Lithuania and not Poland. While he authored all his prose, poetry and essay collections in Polish language, he also exhibited his caliber in translation, which included the Polish version of 'Psalms' from Greek and Hebrew, apart from translated works of numerous eminent authors into Polish, namely, William Shakespeare, T.S. Eliot, Walt Whitman, and Charles Baudelaire. Moreover, his works have been translated into over 42 languages, by various poets, such as Robert Hass, Robert Pinsky, and Peter Dale Scott. His literary works won him several prestigious awards, including the Nobel Prize in 1980,

besides a number of honorary doctorate degrees from American and Polish universities. His most notable works are 'Zniewolony umysl' (The Captive Mind, 1953), 'Zdobycie wladzy' (The Seizure of Power, 1955), 'Traktat poetycki' (A Poetical Treatise, 1957), and 'Rodzinna Europa' (Native Realm: A Search for Self Definition, 1959)

### **Childhood & Early Life**

- Czeslaw Milosz was born on June 30, 1911, in Szetejnie, Kovno Governorate, Russian Empire (now Lithuania), to civil engineer Alexander Milosz and Weronika nee Kunat.
- He spent his early years traveling across Russia with his father, who served in the Czar's army during World War I.
- After returning to Lithuania in 1918, the family settled in the then Polish Lithuanian capital, Wilno (now Vilnius), where his formal schooling commenced.
- He completed his secondary schooling from Sigismund Augustus Gymnasium in 1929 and graduated from Stefan Batory University with a law degree in 1931.
- He received a Masters degree in law from Stefan Batory University in 1934 after which he went to Paris on a one-year fellowship sponsored by the National Cultural Fund.

### **Career**

- After earning his law degree, he traveled to Paris in 1931 where he met his distant cousin Oscar Milosz, a Lithuanian French-language poet, who became his inspiration for poetry.
- In 1931, he established the Polish avant-garde poetic group 'Zagary', along with other poets, namely, Aleksander Rymkiewicz, Jozef Maslinski, Jerzy Zagorski, Teodor Bujnicki, and Jerzy Putrament.
- He released his first book of poems titled 'Poemat o czasie zastyglym' (Poem of the Frozen Time) in 1934.
- In 1936, he started working as a literary commentator at Radio Wilno, but was dismissed a year later for his leftist

views. He published his second poetry collection 'Trzy zimy' (Three Winters), which was well-received by literary critics.

- He moved to Warsaw in 1937 where he took up a job with Polish Radio and spent the entire World War II writing for various underground presses and working as a janitor at the University Library.
- When the War ended, he joined the newly formed Polish communist government as a diplomat, first in New York City and then Washington DC. However, he defected in 1951 and received political asylum in Maison-Lafitte, outside Paris.
- He released 'Ocalenie' (Rescue) in 1945 as a collection of pre-war and wartime poems, which went on to become one of the most notable works of 20th century Polish poetry.
- During his defection in Paris, he worked as a freelance writer, authoring novels 'The Captive Mind' (1953), 'The Seizure of Power' (1955), 'The Issa Valley' (1955), and autobiography 'Native Realm: A Search for Self Definition' (1959).
- He completed two volumes of poetry, namely, 'The Light of Day' (1954) and 'A Poetical Treatise' (1957), which were banned in Poland and later published by the Instytut Literacki in Paris.
- He relocated to the United States in 1960 to work as a lecturer in Polish literature at the University of California, Berkeley. A year later in 1961, he became a professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures.
- He continued to publish poetry collections in America, some being 'King Popiel and Other Poems' (1962), 'Gucio Enchanted' (1965), 'City Without a Name' (1969), and 'Where the Sun Rises and Where it Sets' (1974).
- He received American citizenship in 1970.
- For years, his works were banned in Poland and were circulated only through underground sources, but after he

received the Nobel Prize in 1980, the communist government relented and his works started getting issued legally.

- His popular prose works include 'The History of Polish Literature' (1969), 'Visions from San Francisco Bay' (1969), 'Private Obligations' (1974), 'The Land of Ulro' (1977), 'The Witness of Poetry' (1983), and 'Starting from My Streets' (1985).
- Among his renowned poetry collections are 'Unattainable Earth' (1984), 'Chronicles' (1989), 'Facing the River' (1994), 'Orpheus and Eurydice' (2003), and 'Last Poems' (2006).
- Apart from authoring a diverse range of prose and poetry works, he also translated works of other Polish writers into English and released a Polish version of the Old Testament 'Psalms'.
- His translations into Polish included works of other distinguished writers, such as William Shakespeare, Charles Baudelaire, Walt Whitman, John Milton, T.S. Eliot, and Simone Weil.

## **Awards & Achievements**

- He received the Prix Littéraire Européen (European Literary Prize) for his novel 'The Seizure of Power' from the Swiss Book Guild, in 1953.
- In 1971, he won an award from the Polish P.E.N. Club, Warsaw, for his poetry translations.
- He won a Guggenheim Fellowship for poetry and received an honorary Doctor of Letters degree from the University of Michigan, in 1977.
- In 1978, he was bestowed with the Neustadt International Prize for Literature and received the Berkeley Citation (equivalent to honorary PhD) from the University of California, Berkeley.
- He was honored with the prestigious Nobel Prize for Literature in 1980.

- He was awarded with the U.S. National Medal of Arts and received an honorary doctorate degree from Harvard University, in 1989.
- In 1989, he won a 'Righteous among the Nations' medal in Yad Vashem, Israel, towards his active participation in the "The 'Freedom' Socialist Pro-Independence Organization" during the Holocaust.
- He was granted honorary citizenship of Lithuania in 1992 and of Krakow city in 1993.

### **Personal Life & Legacy**

- He married Janina Dluska in 1944, with whom he fathered two sons – Anthony (1947) and John Peter (1951). Janina died from Alzheimer's disease in 1986.
- In 1992, he re-married Carol Thigpen, a US-born historian and associate dean at Emory University, Atlanta. She died in 2002.
- He died on August 14, 2004, at his residence in Krakow, Poland, at the age of 93.
- He was interred at the ancient Skalka Roman Catholic Church, Krakow, in the presence of thousands of his admirers, including prominent figures from the Polish cultural and political life.
- His works have been translated into several languages by various popular translators, such as Peter Dale Scott, Robert Hass, Jane Zielonko, and Robert Pinsky.
- The Czeslaw Milosz Award was established by the Lithuania National Artists Association, Journalists' Union in Lithuania and Polish Institute in Vilnius to award unique and finest literary works in Poland and Lithuania.
- The year 2011 was declared as 'The Milosz Year', which saw a conference on his relations with America at the Yale University, an exhibition of his works by the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, and a large conference in Krakow

