

Kerouac is best known for his novels, especially *On the Road*. When it was first published, *On the Road* immortalized Kerouac as a wandering soul searching for meaning. The book was first deemed unpublishable due to its experimental prose, which Kerouac labeled as "sketching." Kerouac found himself excited by "letting himself go on paper, just as a jazz musician blew riff after riff of a solo following whatever direction his own mind and immediate emotions led him." This style would continue in *The Dharma Bums* and *The Subterraneans*. While the popularity of *On the Road* attracted readers to his other novels, its publication put Kerouac on the map in a way that he couldn't escape. His fame was also the beginning of his end, driving him further into alcoholism. As Ann Charters said, "To this generation Jack Kerouac became a romantic hero, an archetypal rebel, the symbol of their own vanities, the symbol of their own romantic legend. He never understood this." This lack of understanding and the pressure of fame would sink him.

While Jack Kerouac is well known for his novels, he also produced books of poetry. In 1955, just before the famous Six Gallery reading, Kerouac composed a book of poetry in Mexico City entitled *Mexico City Blues*. This work of poetry, Kerouac hoped, would help him break into the poetry world. It could be argued that Kerouac was truly a poet at heart. Ginsberg said that his prose had, "the density of poetry, and the beauty of poetry, but most of all the single elastic rhythm running from the beginning to end of the line." Kerouac carried that style into his poetry composition, writing it like his prose with jazz as an inspiration. Written in three weeks, *Mexico City Blues* is a collection of jazz poetry worth examination. Kenneth Rexroth, who had severed his relationship with Kerouac, gave the book a scathing review stating "the naive effrontery of this book is more pitiful than ridiculous." However, *Mexico City Blues* scholar James T. Jones stated that Rexroth's review "is a model of unethical behavior in print."

Kerouac's poetry was largely overlooked. James T. Jones, published a study of *Mexico City Blues* stated, "Kerouac's reputation as a novelist may prevent him from being considered an important poet." However, Kerouac's poetry offers us another viewpoint into the meaning of his famous prose. Drawn to Mexico for the opportunity of a fresh start in a more lawless setting, as well as the alien beauty of a new country, Kerouac composed his poetry during a period which Allen Ginsberg called, "the height of his romantic sense of himself". Jones also sees the close affiliation of poetry and prose: "[Kerouac] takes what might be called a complementary approach: both/and... He arrays fiction against poetry, memory against egolessness, society against solicitude, sign against sound, Catholicism against Buddhism..." Kerouac valued every moment of his life and expressed them all in his writing.

Kerouac developed a writing technique that he described as Spontaneous Prose and wrote a set of rules for any writer attempting to develop this technique. An example of one of these rules is as follows: "MENTAL STATE If possible write 'without consciousness' in semitrance (as Yeats' later 'trance writing') allowing subconscious to admit in own uninhibited interesting necessary and so 'modern' language what conscious art would censor, and write excitedly, swiftly, with writing-or-typing-cramps, in accordance (as from center to periphery) with laws of orgasm, Reich's 'beclouding of consciousness.' Come from within, out-to relaxed and said." Kerouac used this method when drafting *On the Road*. He taped sheets of paper together so that he could write without stopping, producing the draft in an incredible three weeks. A partial recreation of that manuscript can be seen [here](#).