

## TEACHER'S GUIDE

Compiled by Meera Sriram

*children's author and advocate of diverse bookshelves*

**TITLE:** BETWEEN TWO WORLDS: The Art & Life of Amrita Sher-Gil

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**ILLUSTRATOR:** Ruchi Bakshi Sharma

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**AUTHOR, Meera Sriram**



As an Indian American, Meera has lived equal parts of her life in both countries. Previously an electrical engineer, she now writes for children and advocates for diversifying bookshelves. Meera is the author of several picture books including *THE YELLOW SUITCASE* and *DUMPLING DAY*. Her book, *A GIFT FOR AMMA*, received the 2021 South Asia Book Award and the Foreword Reviews Indies Silver Award, and was named Best Book Of The Year by School Library Journal and Bank Street College. Meera has also co-authored several kids' books published in India. She believes in the transformative power of stories and likes to write about people, places, and experiences less visible in children's literature. For more information, please visit: <http://www.meerasriram.com>

**ILLUSTRATOR, Ruchi Bakshi Sharma**



Ruchi Bakshi is a filmmaker, artist, and toymaker. She studied Communication Design at the National Institute of Design and has several award-winning live-action and stop-motion shorts to her credit. Her picaresque characters, often based on outlandish folklore and equipped with supernatural powers, seem to inhabit a strange and wonderful world of myth and fancy. Ruchi works with a variety of media, ranging from optical toys, animating wonder turns, lenticulars to jointed paper puppets, zines, and illustrated puzzles. Play and motion are dominant elements in her work. For more information, please visit: <https://spark.adobe.com/page/leX7ojNS2Re3C/>

### **SYNOPSIS:**

Amrita Sher-Gil was always making art—as a little girl in Budapest, as a young woman in Northern India, and as an art student in Paris, she filled up notebooks with sketches and drawings—but what kind of artist would she grow up to be? Amrita was rebellious, brave, curious, and bold in her short life and in her paintings, and she became an important figure in the 20th century modern art movement.

### **THEMES IN THE BOOK:**

- ❖ IDENTITY
- ❖ MIXED PARENTAGE
- ❖ INDIAN (PRE-INDEPENDENCE) HISTORY
- ❖ MIGRATION
- ❖ 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY INDIAN AND EUROPEAN ART
- ❖ MODERN ART/ARTISTS IN INDIA
- ❖ FEMINISM

### **BEFORE READING THE BOOK:**

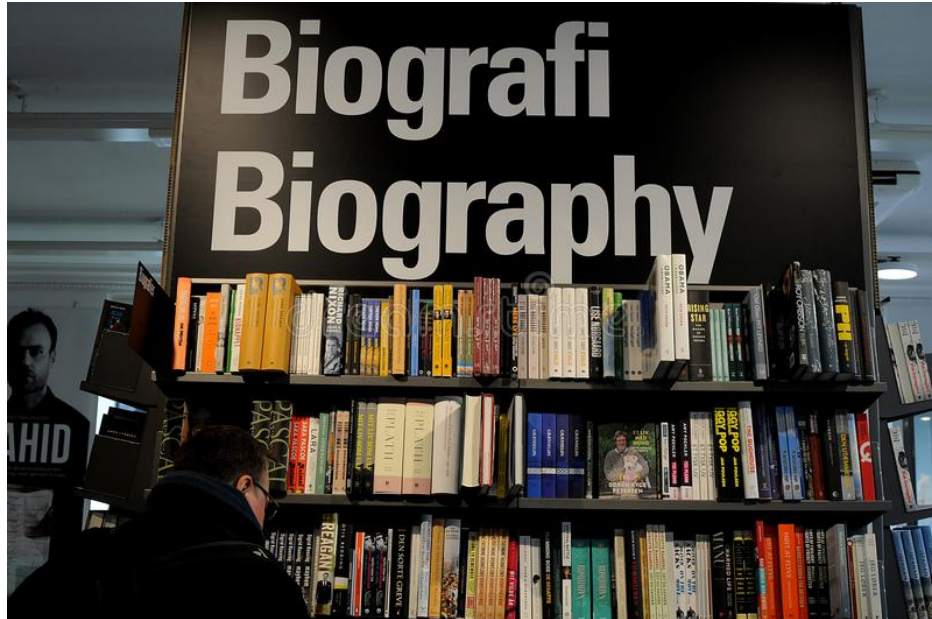
- ❖ Talk about the cover: What do we see? Do you see a connection between the title and the image on the cover? What do you expect to read in the story?
- ❖ Discuss the terms NONFICTION, BIOGRAPHY, AUTHOR, ILLUSTRATOR, PUBLISHER

### **AFTER READING THE BOOK:**

- ❖ SETTING: List the places where the story happened?
- ❖ PROBLEM: What is the central conflict in Amrita Sher-Gil's life-story in this narrative?
- ❖ RESOLUTION: How did Amrita find a solution for her conflict?
- ❖ Read and further research the historical facts and art related information in the back matter

## LANGUAGE ARTS

### BIOGRAPHY STUDY



- What is the difference between fiction and nonfiction?
- What is a biography?
- What are some key details that make up a biography?  
*Example: birth date, place of birth, achievements*
- Have you read any other biographies?
- Can you think of names of people whose life story you would like to read or write about?
- What is narrative nonfiction?
- What is the difference between a biography and an autobiography?

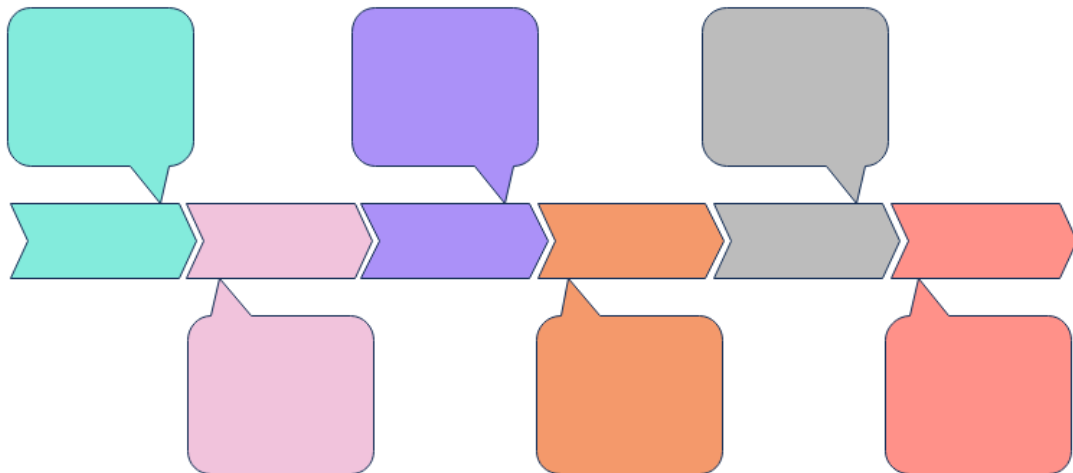


## WRITING & CREATIVE EXERCISE

- Pick a person you like and research their life and achievements.
- Write a short biography about the person.
- Now, narrate it like a story – is there a problem around the main character's life and how did they resolve it in the end?
- Rewrite the biography in any form you like – free verse, prose, or poetry.
- Create a timeline drawing with their life's milestones.

Name:

TIMELINE FOR:



## TEMPLATE FOR BIOGRAPHY RESEARCH NOTES

Name:

# Biography Research

Persons Name:

Picture:

Early Life:

Family Life:

Major Accomplishments:

3 Interesting Facts:

## SOCIAL STUDIES

## GEOGRAPHY

- ❖ Identify the continents, countries, and cities where Amrita Sher-Gil lived or visited on a world map.
- ❖ What oceans did Amrita cross in her travels across continents?
- ❖ What is the river in Hungary that flows near the town Amrita was born?
- ❖ How do the maps of British India and Free India differ – what has changed?
- ❖ Where did Amrita's relatives on her father side live?
- ❖ What are the places in South India Amrita visited on her artistic journey?
- ❖ Mark the sea routes Amrita's ship would have traveled on a map.



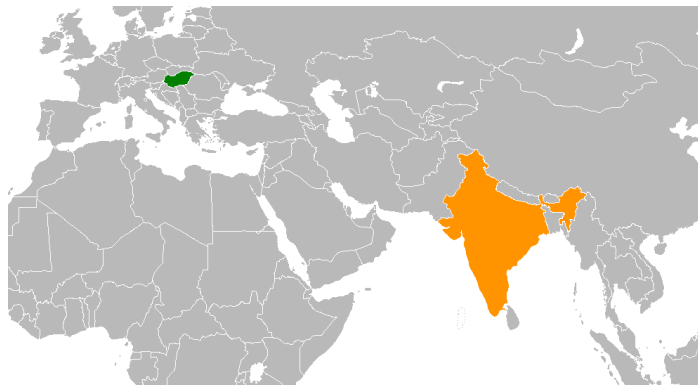
## HISTORY

### World War I and World War II

Amrita Sher-Gil was born in 1913 during the period leading up to the start of the World War I in 1914. She died in 1941, a few years before World War II ended. Having lived during the time between the two wars, how do you think these two significant historic world events affected Amrita's life events?



Image credit. RitiRiwaz

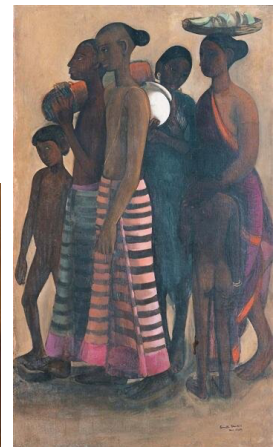
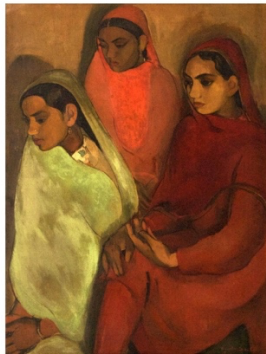




## PRE-INDEPENDENCE INDIA



- ❖ Which country colonized India?
- ❖ How and when did the colonization happen?
- ❖ What made Amrita Sher-Gil return to India?
- ❖ What did Amrita Sher-Gil's paintings capture in India?
- ❖ When did India become a free country?



## ART

### DISCUSSION: The art of Amrita Sher-Gil

- What did Amrita draw as a kid?
- What changed in her creations as a young adult?
- What did Amrita try to portray in her paintings as a woman?
- How would you describe Amrita's art?
- What was unique about her art?
- Where did Amrita travel in India for inspiration? What did she see?

### ACTIVITY

- Recreate any one painting of Amrita Sher-Gil
- Draw on Amrita's art for inspiration in terms of color palette or technique or subject and create a painting
- Pick one work of Amrita Sher-Gil and analyze what Amrita tried to communicate through it. Also, find out when and where she painted it.

### DISCUSSION: Art & Artists of the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century

- What were the different style of art that existed and evolved in Europe during this time period?
- Talk about the western artists that inspired Amrita's art while in Europe?
- Who were Amrita's mentors in Paris?
- What was the art scene in India in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century?
- What defined modern art in India in the early 20th century?

### ACTIVITY

- Make a list of artists in different countries around the world during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century
- Make a list of female painters around the world
- Compare and contrast Amrita's art with the art of other artists in India around the same time period like Ravi Varma and Rabindranath Tagore

## DISCUSSION: Frida Kahlo and Amrita Sher-Gil

- What are the similarities and differences in the lives and art of Amrita Sher-Gil and Frida Kahlo?



Image Credit: My Art Point.

## SELF-PORTRAIT

- **CREATE YOUR SELF PORTRAIT**
- How would you describe your own art style?
- What do you like to draw?
- What mediums do you like?
- Who are your favorite artists?
- How would do you like to grow as an artist?



## IDENTITY & EMOTIONAL LEARNING

### CLASSROOM DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What makes YOU?
- What is IDENTITY?
- Describe who you are and how you feel about it?
- Has your family lived anywhere else in the world?
- Did your family immigrate from a different country?
- If you could travel anywhere in the world where would you go?
- What are some of the challenges of belonging to two different cultures?
- Who is a global citizen?
- Create a family tree with the places where they lived.





## TEMPLATE FOR FAMILY TREE

The template features a central tree graphic with a thick trunk and a circular node at the base. The trunk is labeled 'Me'. The tree branches out to the left and right, with labels for 'Grandmother', 'Grandfather', 'Mother', and 'Father'. The branches further out to 'Great-Grandmother' and 'Great-Grandfather'. The entire template is enclosed in a decorative border with floral motifs in the corners.

Great-Grandmother  
Grandmother  
Great-Grandfather  
Mother  
Great-Grandmother  
Grandfather  
Great-Grandfather

Me

Grandmother  
Grandfather  
Great-Grandmother  
Great-Grandfather

# FAMILY TREE

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