

About Gabriela Mistral

Gabriela Mistral was born in 1889 as Lucila de María del Perpetuo Socorro Godoy Alcayaga, she was a Chilean poet, educator, diplomat and feminist and was the first Latin American to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature, in 1945. Gabriela Mistral was born and raised in poor areas of northern Chile where, from early on in her life, she was in close contact with the poor. Gabriela started helping her family as an assistant teacher in the public school system, later developing a career as a teacher while composing the poetry that made her internationally famous. She taught at schools throughout the country and developed a deep love and commitment to the poor — especially to children— of her country. Her literary successes led her international recognition. In 1922 she accepted an invitation from the President of Mexico to work on the creation of the first public school system. She also toured extensively and gave lectures in Europe and the United States. As many other educators at the time, she was also appointed Consul in many different cities, including Madrid, Lisbon, Nice, Petrópolis, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, Veracruz, Mexico, Naples, and New York, where she taught at Barnard College of Columbia University. She resided in Roslyn Heights, New York until her death of cancer in 1957.

Biographical Note by Doris Dana, published in the book *Selected Poems of Gabriela Mistral*, a bilingual edition translated and edited by Doris Dana (1971):

Gabriela's life and work is a tribute to her country and its people, especially the children and the poor for which she cared dearly. The Gabriela Mistral Foundation is committed to continue her work and vision helping people and organizations from her beloved Chile that contribute to alleviate the suffering of the poor and advance opportunities for the children.

Gabriela Mistral was the first Latin American writer to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature. Loved and honored throughout the world as one of the great humanistic voices of our time, Gabriela began her long relationship with the United States with the publication of her first book, *Desolacion*, in New York. She taught at four American Colleges—Barnard, Middlebury, Mills and Vassar—and served on the Committee for Women's Rights. It was to Gabriela that the United Nations turned in 1946, asking her to make the first worldwide appeal for funds for poor children, and with her "Appeal for Children" UNICEF came into being.