**France Prešeren**

France Prešeren is Slovenia's most talented poet. He was born on 3 December 1800 in Vrba na Gorenjskem, a small village in the north of the country. His family was poor, but because he showed talent and intelligence, he was sent to his uncle to attend school there. He was an excellent student and his name was written in the school's »golden book« (a book where the names of all the straight A students were written). After his graduation, he began studying at the secondary school in Ljubljana, where he studied philosophy for three years, and then, in 1821, moved to Vienna, where he enrolled in law school, wanting to become a lawyer. His parents (his mother in particular) weren't thrilled with the idea, as they had wanted him to become a priest, so they and his uncle stopped supporting him financially. Still, he managed to live off of scholarships and work as a private teacher and in 1828 he finished his studies, returned to Ljubljana, and began work as an apprentice to a lawyer.

He first started writing poetry around the year 1824. His poems were simple at first, but he later started to adopt Roman and eastern forms, which were introduced to him by Matija Čop, a literature historian, critic and linguist and dear friend of his. The time from 1828 to 1840, when he became a Romanticist, is considered to be his most productive. The poetry he wrote in this period is his finest, and most well known. The poems »Sonetje nesreče«, »Sonetni venec« and »Krst pri Savici« were all created at this time.

While his poetry may be great, his life wasn't. He lived in poverty and misery, failing to achieve the position of lawyer, which would've given him the respect and appreciation he craved. He often turned to alcohol to drown the pain. He even wrote in his poem »Glosa«, that poets are foolish for writing and that a poor man has no chance of success in life.

This depression was quickly swept away when he met Julija Primic, the daughter of a wealthy merchant family, and instantly fell in love with her. She became his muse and his greatest work, »Sonetni venec«, is dedicated to her. »Sonetni venec« is a collection of 15 sonnets, where the last verse of a sonnet repeats as the beginning verse of the next sonnet and then again in the 15th one, which is made up entirely from verses that were used in the previous sonnets. The initial letters of the verses in the 15th sonnet also spell p-r-i-m-i-c-o-v-i-j-u-l-j-i (»to Primiceva Julija«). This complicated structure is why this is his best work.

Prešeren loved Julija, but she was out of his reach, and while he never got married, he had three children with Ana Jelovšek, a young servant. Only one of them, Ernestina, survived childhood, and she later wrote a book with memories of her father.

In 1835 Matija Čop drowned and Prešeren was devastated. He dedicated a few poems and the beginning sonnet of his historic epic, »Krst pri Savici«, to him.

In the year 1846 he finally got the job of a lawyer he wanted. He moved to Kranj, a city north-west of Ljubljana. He also published his collection of poems, Poezije, something he had difficulties with because of censorship. The poem »Zdravljica«, which contains our national anthem, wasn't published until 1848.

His talent started to fade, as did his productivity, with his health taking a turn for the worst. He died on 9 February 1849 and was buried in Kranj.