**France Prešeren**

France Prešeren was a Slovenian poet who is now best known for his poem “Zdravljica” (“A Toast”) which became the national anthem of Slovenia in 1989.

He was born to Šimen and Mina Prešeren in 1800, as the third of eight children and the first son in the family. His mother, who was quite well-educated, taught him to read and write, and soon he was sent to his uncle who was a Catholic priest

Prešeren showed incredible talent even as a child, so his parents provided him with a good education. After finishing elementary school he attended the State Gymnasium in Ljubljana. He earned his law degree in 1828 in Vienna and got a job as a law clerk.

During his schooling in Ljubljana, he met Matija Čop, who later became his intimate and tutor. Čop was a linguist, literary historian, critic and a polyglot who spoke over 15 languages. Prešeren followed his advice and so Čop had a great influence on his poetry.

Prešeren’s love life was a tragedy. In 1833, he met a young woman named Julija Primic, the daughter of a rich merchant. It was love at first sight for him and she became his muse. One of Prešeren’s most brilliant poems, “Sonetni venec” (“Wreath of Sonnets”), is dedicated to her. But unfortunately, his love was unrequited. He finally realised that around 1836 and started a relationship with Ana Jelovšek, who he met the same year. Jelovšek had three children with him, but he never married her. Although Prešeren spent his whole life with Jelovšek he never forgot Julija Primic.

In 1846, Prešeren moved to Kranj, which is northwest of Ljubljana, with his family where he finally started his own law firm. He died there three years later.

Prešeren is one of the leading poets of Slovene literature and ranks among Europe’s greatest Romanticists. He produced more than 100 pieces of writing which include “Krst pri Savici” (“Baptism on the Savica”), “Sonetje nesreče” (“Sonnets of Misfortune”) with famous “O, Vrba”, “Sonetni venec” (“Wreath of Sonnets”), “Zdravljica” (“A Toast”), “Povodni mož” (“The Water Man”) and “Slovo od mladosti” (“A Farewell to Youth”). Those are some of the most beautiful examples of Slovenian literature.

His importance to Slovene culture is visible in many other ways. His birth house in Vrba, a small village the Upper Carniolan region of Slovenia, has been turned into a museum. The central square in Ljubljana is named Prešeren Square and a monument to him is located there. The day he died, 8. February, has been a national holiday celebrating Slovenian culture since 1945 and his birthday, 3. December, is slowly becoming a holiday too. Since 2007, his image has been on the Slovene two-Euro coin and his effigy was also on the Slovene 1000-tolar banknote. There is also an award named after him, the Prešeren Award, which is the highest Slovene prize for artistic achievement.