

# BEAT CULTURE & THE GRATEFUL DEAD

# LONG STRANGE TRIP



On The Road  
Jack Kerouac  
1947-1957

Traveled  
car hitchhiking  
stopping points

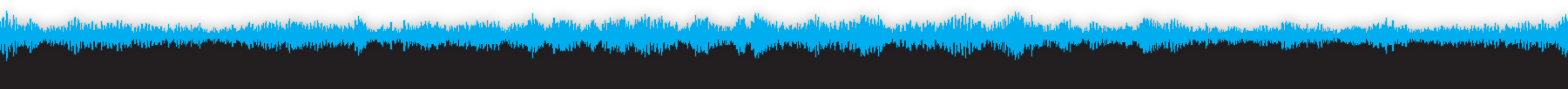
Est. Time: 60 minutes  
Subjects: English  
Age Range: High School  
See the full lesson [here!](#)

★ *TEACHROCK* ★



How did beat writers like Jack Keuroac influence the band the Grateful Dead?

In this lesson you will:

- Be introduced to Jack Kerouac and the Beat movement
  - Discover the band Grateful Dead and the influence that Beat writers had on them
  - Explore how Jack Kerouac and the Grateful Dead rejected social norms
- 

As we rode in the bus in the weird phosphorescent void of the Lincoln Tunnel we leaned on each other with fingers waving and yelled and talked excitedly and I was beginning to get the bug like Dean. He was simply a youth tremendously excited with life, and though he was a con-man, he was only conning because he wanted so much to live and to get involved with people who would otherwise pay no attention to him. He was conning me and I knew it (for room and board and “how-to-write,” etc.), and he knew I knew (this has been the basis of our relationship), but I didn’t care and we got along fine—no pestering, no catering; we tiptoed around each other like heartbreaking new friends. I began to learn from him as much as he probably learned from me. **-Chapter 1**

No, sir, I never gave a man more than two chances." I sighed. Here we go. We went to the offending room, and Sledge opened the door and told everybody to file out. It was embarrassing. Every single one of us was blushing. This is the story of America. Everybody’s doing what they think they’re supposed to do. So what if a bunch of men talk in loud voices and drink the night? But Sledge wanted to prove something. He made sure to bring me along in case they jumped him. They might have. They were all brothers, all from Alabama. We strolled back to the station, Sledge in front and me in back. **-Chapter 11**

“Where do you live, Ponzio?” I asked.

“Nowhere, man. I’m supposed to live with Big Rosey but she threw me out last night. I’m gonna get my truck and sleep in it to-night.”

Guitars tinkled. Terry and I gazed at the stars together and kissed. “Mañana,” she said. “Everything’ll be all right tomorrow, don’t you think, Sal-honey, man?”

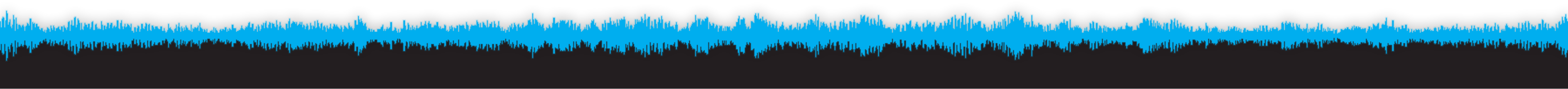
“Sure, baby, mañana.” It was always mañana. For the next week that was all I heard—mañana, a lovely word and one that probably means heaven. **-Chapter 13**

## ON THE ROAD

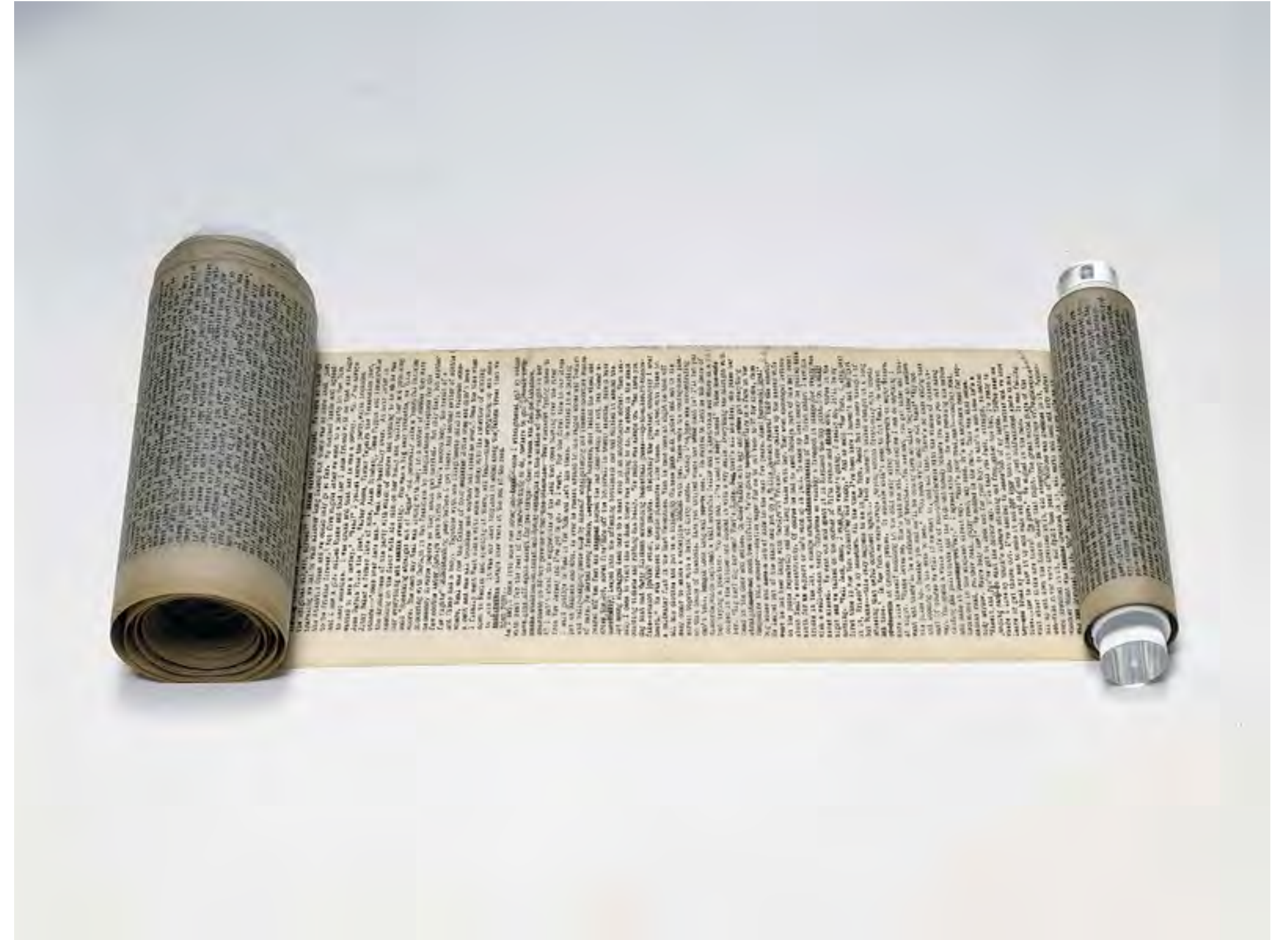
Read the above excerpts from the Jack Kerouac Novel *On The Road*.



Consider or ask a friend:

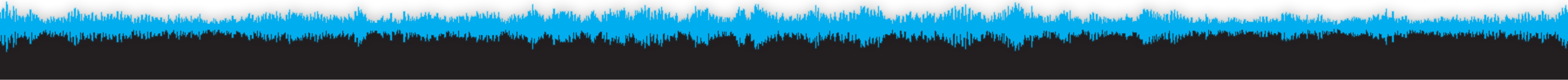
- Jack Kerouac is often credited as writing in a style known as “spontaneous prose.” What might characterize this style, based on the excerpts you read?
  - Kerouac was part of a group of writers known as “The Beats.” Based on the excerpts you read, what are some of the values that you think were important to Beat writers?
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Kerouac's first draft of *On The Road* was written on a long scroll, pictured here.





Think about or ask a friend:

- Do you think this is how most authors create a first draft? Why or why not?
  - How might have writing onto a continuous scroll reinforced Kerouac's idea of "spontaneous prose"? How might it affect a writer's approach?
  - In what ways might Kerouac's notion of "spontaneous prose" inspire other means of expression, such as art or music?
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## DENNIS MCNALLY, JACK KEROUAC, AND JERRY GARCIA

Watch [this video](#) on the connection between Jack Kerouac, Dennis McNally, and the Grateful Dead.



Think about or ask a friend:

- Based on what you learned in this clip, who are the Grateful Dead?
  - How did Dennis McNally become involved with the band?
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**“BEING ALIVE MEANS TO CONTINUE TO CHANGE”**

Watch [this video](#) on Grateful Dead singer/guitarist Jerry Garcia’s approach to performing.



Consider or ask a friend:

- In the clip, how does Jerry Garcia define “being alive?”
  - Based on Garcia’s emphasis on change and spontaneity, what might have a Grateful Dead concert sounded like?
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<p><b>01/02/70, Early Show Fillmore East (NYC)</b> Mason's Children Casey Jones Black Peter Mama Tried Hard To Handle Cumberland Blues Cryptical Envelopment Drums The Other One Cryptical Envelopment Cosmic Charlie</p>	<p><b>01/02/70, Late Show Fillmore East (NYC)</b> Uncle John's Band High Time Dire Wolf Easy Wind China Cat Sunflower I Know You Rider Good Lovin' Me And My Uncle Monkey And The Engineer Dark Star St. Stephen The Eleven Turn On Your Love Light</p>	<p><b>01/03/70, Early Show Fillmore East (NYC)</b> Morning Dew Me And My Uncle Hard To Handle Cumberland Blues Cold Rain And Snow Alligator Drums Jam And We Bid You Goodnight Jam Jam Alligator Reprise Caution (Do Not Stop On Tracks) Jam Feedback</p>	<p><b>01/03/70, Late Show Fillmore East (NYC)</b> Casey Jones Mama Tried Big Boss Man China Cat Sunflower I Know You Rider Cryptical Envelopment Drums The Other One Cryptical Envelopment Cosmic Charlie Uncle John's Band Mason's Children Black Peter Dire Wolf Good Lovin' Drums Good Lovin' Dancin' In The Streets St. Stephen Midnight Hour</p>
<p><b>Selected Comment:</b> Mason's, h2h, Cumberland, all great. TIFTOO&gt;cosmic Charlie total acid rock.</p>	<p><b>Selected Comment:</b> Fantastic show to kick off one of my favorite years. . .Nearly had one of those flashbacks they've been promising us during this DARK STAR, one of the best you'll ever hear.</p>	<p><b>Selected Comment:</b> My first Grateful Dead show, on my birthday! One thing you missed. They played Saint Stephen-Midnight Hour, for the encore. You left out St. Stephen. Pigpen was incrdible!</p>	<p><b>Selected Comment:</b> Im starting my archive i have a good number of things but really no early stuff can any one point me in a direction i know of torrents already.</p>

## GRATEFUL DEAD SETLISTS

Examine this series of setlists performed by the Grateful Dead in January 1970. A setlist is a list of songs a band plays during a concert. Make a note of the variations you see across all four concerts.



Consider or ask a friend:

- What do you notice about the songs presented between these three concerts?
  - How might this approach to performance exemplify the ideals of Kerouac and other Beat writers?
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# SUMMARY

- Jack Kerouac is a writer best known for the book *On The Road*. He is considered the pioneer of the “spontaneous prose” style of writing, and one of the main members of the “Beat” movement, which embraced change and experimentation.
- Jack Kerouac was a great influence on Jerry Garcia of the Grateful Dead, who created music with the same sense of spontaneity that Kerouac drew upon in his writing.



# BE CREATIVE

- Try creating a work of “spontaneous prose” yourself. Free write without worry of edits or planning, and see where your writing leads you.
- One of Beat writer William Burroughs’ preferred writing strategies involved the “cut-up,” a creative writing project perhaps first described by 20th Century Romanian poet Tristan Tzara. Following Tzara’s instructions in the next two slides, create your own cut-up poem:



# BE CREATIVE

To make a Dadaist poem:

- Take a newspaper.
- Take a pair of scissors.
- Choose an article as long as you are planning to make your poem.
- Cut out the article.
- Then cut out each of the words that make up this article and put them in a bag.



# BE CREATIVE

- Shake it gently.
- Then take out the scraps one after the other in the order in which they left the bag.
- Copy conscientiously.
- The poem will be like you.
- And here are you a writer, infinitely original and endowed with a sensibility that is charming though beyond the understanding of the vulgar.



# BE CURIOUS

Learn about other Beat writers by exploring **this handout**. (Note that the handout contains descriptions of drug use.)



# CONNECT

Share your work with us! Either you or an adult in your life can share your spontaneous prose or cut-up writing piece with TeachRock on **Instagram** or **Facebook**, email to **info@teachrock.org**, or Tweet it to **@TeachRock**



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