

## The Life of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz: Key Years and Events

### 1648 (?)

Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz is born on December 2, in San Miguel de Nepantla (a small village south of Mexico City). This is the more widely accepted birth date, as the exact date of her birth (day and year) is uncertain due to lack of documentation.



Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, by Miguel Cabrera, [courtesy of Wiki Commons](#)

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### 1651

Sor Juana (age 3) follows her sister to a school for girls known as *Amigas* where she learns how to read and write.

### 1654

She begs her mother to send her disguised as a man to the university in Mexico City. Her mother refuses. She writes her first dramatic composition.

### 1656

Having read all the books in her grandfather's library, Sor Juana is sent to live with her maternal aunt's family in Mexico City. She sets goals to learn Latin, and when she fails to meet them, she later recalls in the [Respuesta a la Ilustre Sor Filotea de la Cruz](#): “Sucedía así que él crecía y yo no sabía lo propuesto, porque el pelo crecía aprisa y yo aprendía despacio, y con efecto le cortaba en pena de la rudeza, que no me parecía razón que estuviese vestida de cabellos cabeza que estaba tan desnuda de noticias, que era más apetecible adorno.”

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## 1664

Sor Juana is taken to the Viceregal Court where she is declared a prodigy by the Viceroy, the Marquis de Mancera, and his wife, Vicereine Leonor Carreto. The Vicereine takes Sor Juana as a lady-in-waiting of the Viceregal Court.



Portrait of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz painted in 1666, while she's a lady-in-waiting for the Viceregal Court, courtesy of [Wiki Commons](#)

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## 1667

Sor Juana enters the austere convent of the Order of the Discalced Carmelites of Saint Joseph, but leaves after three months.



[Painting of Our Lady of Carmel and Saints, by Pietro Novelli](#). The order of Our Lady of Carmel is the austere Order of the Discalced Carmelites.

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## 1668

Sor Juana enters the Convent of Saint Paula of the Order of San Jerónimo where she remains for the rest of her life. This Convent is wealthy, and she amasses a library of over 4,000 volumes (by some scholars' estimates), collects musical and scientific instruments, and receives guests at intellectual gatherings.



Page of the *Book of Vows*, with the Declaration of Faith dated 1669, bearing Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's signature. This is her official acceptance into the order of San Jerónimo and her taking the veil. Courtesy of [The Cervantes Virtual Library](#).



Convent of San Jerónimo in Mexico City, the convent where Sor Juana lives after taking her vows until she dies in 1695. Today, the convent is the University of the Cloister of Sor Juana. [Courtesy of Wiki Commons](#).

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## 1673

The Marquis and Marquise de Mancera, end their Viceregal term.



Viceroy Antonio Sebastián de Toledo y Salazar, Marquis de Mancera, Viceroy 1664-1673, and husband of Vicereine and Marquise Leonor María de Carreto. [Courtesy of Wiki Commons](#)

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## 1680

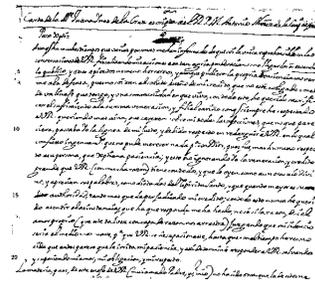
The new Viceregal couple, the Marqués de la Laguna and his wife, María Luisa, the Condesa de Paredes, arrive in New Spain. Sor Juana is very close to the Marqués and his wife, María Luisa, the Condesa de Paredes, who she refers to as Lisi or Lísida in many of her love poems.



Marqués de la Laguna, or Conde de Paredes, Viceroy of New Spain, [courtesy of Wiki Commons](#)

## 1681

Writing to her confessor, Antonio Núñez de Miranda of the Society of Jesus, Sor Juana defends her right, as a woman, to be learned: “The cause of your anger . . . has been none other than the ability that God has given me in creating these wretched verses without asking permission from Your Reverence” ([Spiritual Self-Defense \(Autodefensa spiritual\)](#)).



Page of the letter to the confessor of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Jesuit Antonio Núñez de Miranda, discovered in 1980, [bearing Sor Juana's handwriting](#).



Confessor of Sor Juana, Jesuit Father Antonio Núñez de Miranda, [courtesy of the Cervantes Virtual Library](#).

**1688**

The Marquis de la Laguna and his wife return to Spain, leaving Sor Juana vulnerable.



Marqués de la Laguna, or Conde de Paredes, Viceroy of New Spain, courtesy of [Wiki Commons](#)

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**1689**

The first edition of her work, *Inundación Castálida* (*Castalian Flood*), is published in Madrid, Spain. Second and third editions follow in 1692 and 1700.



"*Inundación Castálida* of the Only American Poet; The Tenth Muse: Soror Juana Inés de la Cruz," First Edition, of 1689, courtesy of [the Cervantes Virtual Library](#).

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**1690**

The Bishop of Puebla, Manuel Fernández de Santa Cruz asks Sor Juana to put her critique of a sermon by the eminent [Jesuit Antonio de Vieira](#), in writing. *La carta atenagórica*, or *Letter Worthy of Athena*, is published along with a warning to women of worldly or intellectual pursuits by a "Sor Philotea de la Cruz," a curious pseudonym for the Bishop of Puebla.

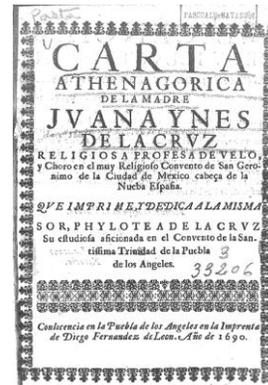


Bishop of Puebla, Manuel Fernández de Santa Cruz (alias Sor Philotea de la Cruz), courtesy of [The Cervantes Virtual Library](#).

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## 1691

The *Respuesta a la Ilustre Sor Filotea de la Cruz* (*Reply to the Illustrious Sor Philotea de la Cruz*), is finished on March 1, and in it Sor Juana defends her right, as a woman, to have intellectual freedom, to be a writer and a scholar, and she defends the values of having learned women in society.



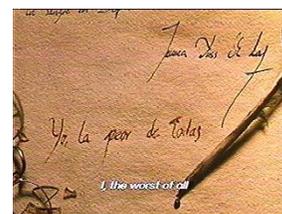
Cover of the Letter Worthy of Athena, *La Carta Atenagórica*, published in 1690 by the Bishop of Puebla, alias Sor Philotea de la Cruz, courtesy of [The Cervantes Virtual Library](#)

## 1694

On March 5, Sor Juana writes her repentance on *El libro de profesiones de la fé* (*Book of Vows*) in her own blood (as was the custom), and repents of “having lived so long without religion in a religious community.” Her books, scientific, and musical instruments are all taken away, and all appears to indicate that she gives up her intellectual pursuits. Her pen is silenced.



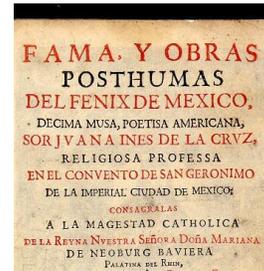
Courtesy of: [Cinergía](#), [Penn State University](#)



Courtesy of: [Cinergía](#), [Penn State University](#)

**1695**

Severe floods, famine, and an epidemic, perhaps the plague, arrive to Mexico City. The disease arrives to the Convent of San Jerónimo and Sor Juana falls ill while taking care of her sisters. She dies on April 17, and the date is recorded according to her wishes. Her work is published [posthumously](#) across the Spanish-speaking world, an unusual event for a woman from New Spain in this time period.



“Fame and Posthumous works by the Phoenix of Mexico, Tenth Muse, American Poet, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz Professed Nun from the convent of Saint Jerome of the Imperial City of Mexico” published in Madrid in 1700. Courtesy of: [University Library of Bielefeld](#) (note: you can visit the library site of the University of Bielefeld, Germany, and look at the book interactively, page by page).

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