


# *The Life Of L S Lowry*

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# Early Years in Manchester

**Laurence Stephen Lowry's beginnings** were rooted in the industrial heartlands of Northern England, providing a backdrop that profoundly influenced his art. Born on November 1, 1887, in Barrett Street, Stretford, Manchester, Lowry's early environment was shaped by the relentless hum of industrial life. His father, Robert Lowry, worked as a clerk in an estate agency, while his mother, Elizabeth, was an accomplished pianist. The family eventually moved to the leafy suburb of Victoria Park. However, financial issues forced them to relocate to the more modest area of Pendlebury in 1909, which would become a significant influence in Lowry's artwork.

**Life in Manchester** at the turn of the century was characterized by rapid industrialization. The city was a sprawling urban landscape dominated by factories, mills, and warehouses. For young Lowry, this environment was both captivating and oppressive. Despite the grime and smog, or perhaps because of it, he developed a keen observational eye, absorbing the grim realities around him. Pendlebury, where Lowry spent much of his life, was the epicenter of his inspiration, filled with the imagery that would dominate his paintings: terraces of houses, factory chimneys billowing smoke, and streets populated by bustling crowds.

**Lowry's school years** were somewhat uneventful. He was not particularly academic, nor did he excel in sports or other extracurricular activities. Instead, he found solace and fascination in drawing. As a child, he was often found sketching scenes from his window overlooking the industrial landscape. These formative experiences laid the groundwork for his distinct style of art. Lowry later reflected that he felt an intrinsic connection to the somber and gritty essence of Manchester, describing the scenes as 'subject matter that nobody had handled before'.

**His initial exposure to art** came from illustrations in a book of Shakespeare's plays, which he found at his aunt's house. Enchanted by the illustrations, he began to experiment with sketching himself, albeit without any formal training. It wasn't until 1905 that Lowry took his first serious step towards becoming an artist by studying at the Municipal College of Art in Manchester. Under the tutelage of Pierre Adolphe Valette, a French Impressionist painter, Lowry learned the techniques that would later evolve into his unique style. Valette's influence was significant; he introduced Lowry to the portrayal of urban scenes and the use of light and shadow, which became evident in Lowry's work.

**Despite his growing passion for art**, Lowry's life was not without its challenges. His mother, who he shared a close yet strained relationship with, was chronically ill and often bedridden. Lowry devoted much of his time to caring for her, balancing his burgeoning art career with the demands of his personal life. His father's death in 1932 further compounded his responsibilities, leaving him as the main caretaker for his ailing mother.

**The struggle and perseverance** of his early years in Manchester were not just a backdrop but a critical element in shaping Lowry's artistic voice. The industrial environment, the financial hardships, and his roles within his family all contributed to the depth and authenticity found in his paintings. These elements provide a poignant glimpse into the world that molded one of Britain's most iconic artists, setting the stage for the remarkable legacy that Laurence Stephen Lowry would leave behind.

