



Behold I do not give lectures or a little charity,

*When I give
I give myself.*

Teaching Focus

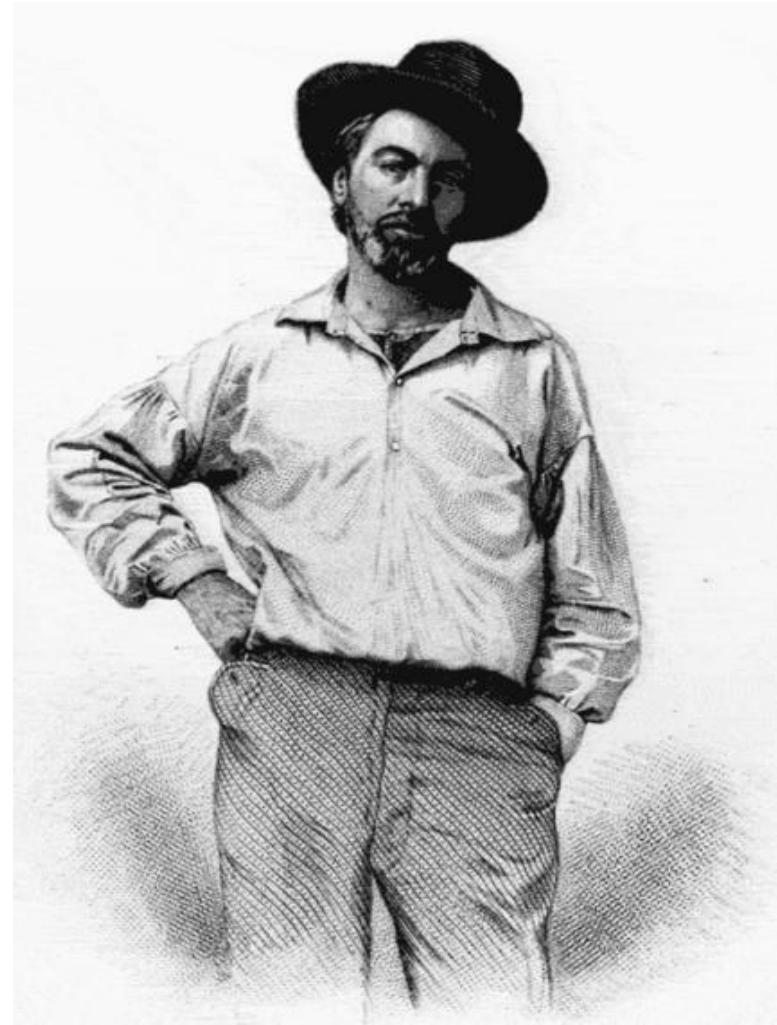
- Life and Career
- Introduction to *Leaves of Grass*
- Whitman's Poetry
- Analysis of *Song of Myself*
- Appreciating *I Hear America Singing*
- *O' Captain! My Captain!*
- Whitman's Contribution and Influence



Walt Whitman(1819 -1892)

(a bridge between Romanticism and Realism)

- American poet, essayist ,journalist, and humanist
- A part of the transition between Transcendentalism and Realism
- The father of free verse



Life and Career

- Born in 1819 on Long Island, **New York**
- Poor & Semiliterate(半文盲的) parents, only 5-6 years formal education, **self-educated**
- Worked as office boy, printing worker, school teacher(1836), free-lance writer



Whitman's birthplace

WALT WHITMAN'S CRYPT IN HARLEIGH CEMETERY



- ✦ In 1842 he was editor of the *Aurora* and from 1846 to 1848 he was editor of the *Brooklyn Eagle*
- ✦ Supported **slavery abolishing**, dismissed from his job
- ✦ Served as a **volunteer nurse** during **the Civil War**
- ✦ Died in 1892, unmarried all his life

Whitman's resting place

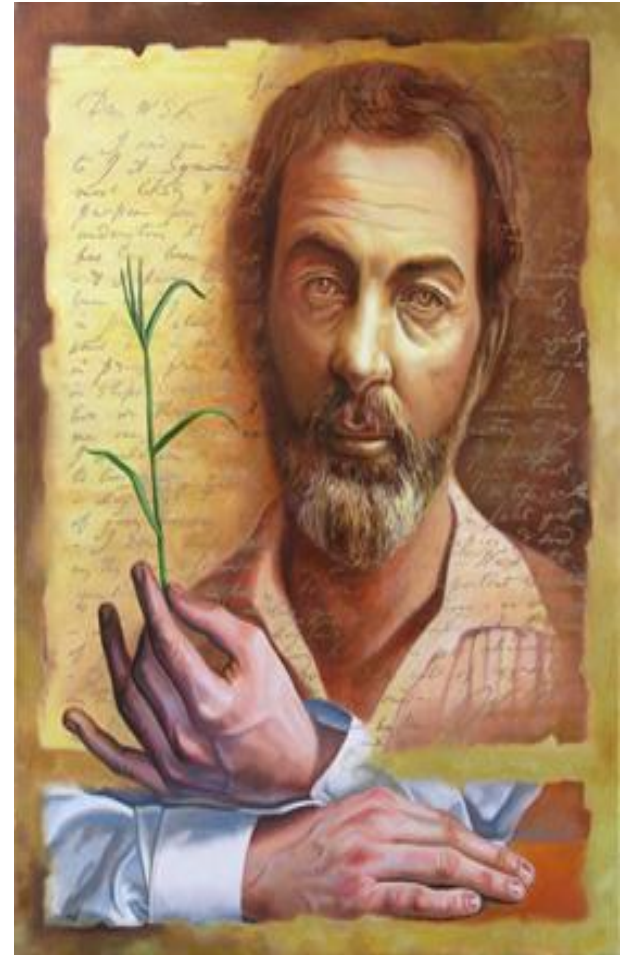
Major Works

- *Leaves of Grass* 草叶集
- *Drum-Taps* 桴鼓集
- *Song of Myself* 自我之歌
- *I Sit and Look Out* 坐观世间
- *O Captain, My Captain!* 船长，我的船长
- *When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd* 最近紫丁香在庭院里开放的时候
- *I hear America Singing* 我听见美国在歌唱



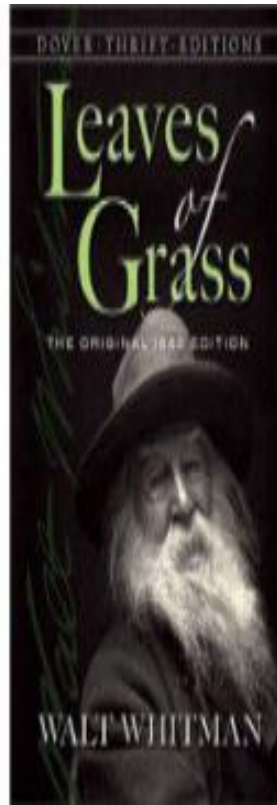
Introduction to *Leaves of Grass*

- **Grass**—the most common thing with the greatest vitality, is an image of the poet himself, a symbol of the then rising American nation and an embodiment of his ideals about democracy and freedom.
- First published **in 1855** with only 12 poems. Nine editions and last edition includes more than 400 poems
- Celebrates the ideals of **equality, democracy, the dignity, self-reliant spirit and joy of common people**
- Written in a new kind of versification called "free verse"—**poetry without a fixed beat or regular rhyme scheme**



Reception of *Leaves of Grass*

- Received harsh criticism because of breaking the poetic convention and its sexuality and exotic and vulgar language
- ("noxious weeds;" "poetry of barbarism;" "a mass of stupid filth;" Whittier throw it into fire.)



- Welcomed by Emerson / "the most extraordinary piece of wit and wisdom that an American has yet contributed."
- With appearance of the 5th edition, Whitman began received recognition in America and England.

Major Themes in His Poetry

- Equality of things and beings
- Divinity of everything
- Multiplicity of nature
- Self-reliant spirit
- Death, beauty of death
- Expansion of America
- Brotherhood and social solidarity (unity of nations in the world)
- Pursuit of love and happiness



Features of Whitman's poetry

1. The use of a certain pronoun "I"
2. Two principles
 - Parallelism or a rhyme of thought
 - Phonetic recurrence (the repetition of words or phrases at the beginning of the line, in the middle or at the end)

E.g.

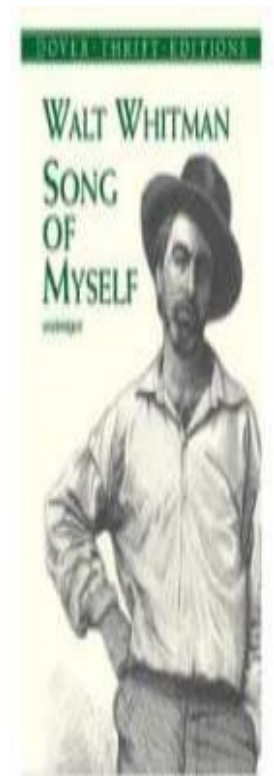
I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you

Analysis of Whitman's "Song of Myself"

- "Song of myself", consisting of 1345 lines, is the longest poem in *Leaves of Grass*. The poet takes for granted the self as **the most crucial element of the world** and thus sets forth two of his principal beliefs: **first, a theory of universality; second, all things are equal in value.**

- Theme:

- "Myself" is the central and principal image in this poem. It refers not only to the poet himself but also to a group of people who had the American national characteristics and the democratic ideals like Whitman. They were pioneers on the American continent: the ironsmiths, the carpenters, the butcher, and the waiters, etc., as listed in the poem.



Song of Myself

自我之歌

1

I CELEBRATE myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

我赞美我自己，歌唱我自己，
我所承担的一切你也得承担起来，
因为属于我的每一个原子都同样属于你。

celebrate: praise; honor.

assume: admit; perceive; undertake a duty.

What words I have used to praise myself would do the same to you.

atom: the least portion of a thing

Each of us is a part of nature, thus, we have the same structure.

I loafe and invite my soul,
I lean and loafe at my ease observing
a spear of summer grass.

我闲游，邀请我的灵魂一起，
我悠闲地俯身观察一片夏天的草叶。

loafe: (=loaf) wander; move freely.

While I am loafing, I invited my soul to go
together, since both are free.

a spear of: a narrow piece of (grass leave)

In my wandering, I stopped and stooped (being
attracted by something)

My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil,
this air,

Born here of parents born here from parents the same, and
their parents the same,

I, now thirty-seven years old in perfect health begin,

Hoping to cease not till death.

我的舌头，我血液中的每个原子，都由这泥土这空气所构成，
我生在这里，我的父母生在这里，他们的父母也生在这里，
我如今三十七岁，身体完全健康，开始歌唱，
希望不停地唱下去，直到死亡。

form'd from: (be) created from.

this air: ... was created or originated from the air.

I was born here; my parents were born here.

from parents the same: ... from the parents who were
born from the same soil and used to take the same air.

begin: so I begin. I am now strong and healthy, I begin to
hope my singing of myself will not stop till my death.

Creeds and schools in abeyance,
Retiring back a while sufficed at what they are, but never
forgotten,
I harbor for good or bad, I permit to speak at every hazard,
Nature without check with original energy.

教条和学派失灵了，
它们从目前的地位暂时后退，但也绝不会被遗忘；
好也罢，坏也罢，我无所畏惧地
让自然尽情地以原始的活力说话。

in abeyance: the condition of not being in use or in force.

sufficed: (I felt) I have had quite enough of creeds or schools.

harbor: v. accept; admit (whatever of nature)

permit to speak: I permit nature to speak

at every hazard: whenever; in any case.

check: a restraint on action

original energy: the real intention (of nature)

I am willing to accept whatever nature provides, good or bad,
without considering the real intention of it.



I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

—❖—
Excerpt from "Song of Myself"

- In **Part I** of the selected sections, the author unfolds the theme of "a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of the stars" by cordially celebrating himself. Meanwhile, he "extols the ideal of equality and democracy and celebrates the dignity, the self-reliant spirit and the joy of the common man."
- ***Web Study Text of "Song of Myself"***
- <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/roots/legacy/whitman/songofmyselfweb.html>



I Hear America Singing

I HEAR America singing, the varied carols I hear;
Those of mechanics—each one singing his, as it should be, blithe and strong;
The carpenter singing his, as he measures his plank or beam,
The mason singing his, as he makes ready for work, or leaves off work;
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat—the deckhand singing
on the steamboat deck;
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench—the hatter singing as he
stands;
The wood-cutter's song—the ploughboy's, on his way in the morning, or at the
noon intermission, or at sundown;
The delicious singing of the mother—or of the young wife at work—or of the
girl sewing or washing—Each singing what belongs to her, and to none
else;
The day what belongs to the day—At night, the party of young fellows, robust,
friendly,
Singing, with open mouths, their strong melodious songs.

南开大学2006年硕士研究生入学考试 《专业英语》

I Hear America Singing (Walt Whitman)

- ❖ Comment on theme of the poem(4p)
- ❖ Define “free verse”(2p)
- ❖ Point out the techniques used by the poet.
(4p)

Appreciation of *I Hear America Singing*

A: **Diction**(the choice and use of words in literature)

Nouns such as: mechanics, mason, work, deckhand, shoemaker, hatter, woodcutter, ploughboy, and mother.

images of the working class society

Verbs: measure, make, singing, sit, stand, sewing, washing

a moving pictures of people performing their different jobs

B: **Main idea**

It presents the picture of the Americans who from all occupations are singing for their work

C: **Tone**

Cheerful , happy, optimistic

D: **Language**

Simple and even rather crude;

Have a tendency to oral English

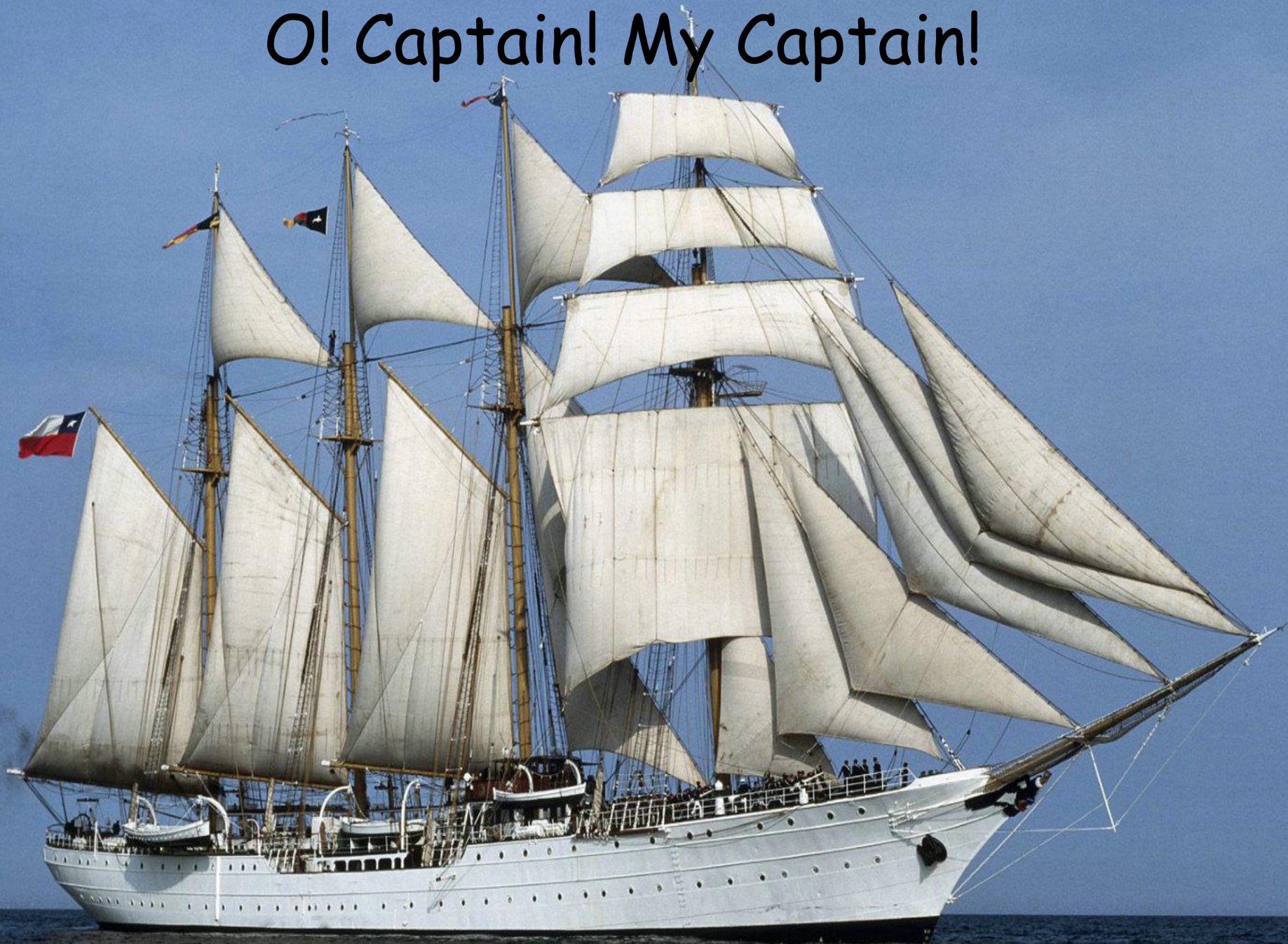
E: **Parallelism and phonetic recurrence**

■ 我听见美洲在歌唱



- 我听见美洲在歌唱，我听见各种不同的颂歌，
技工在歌唱，歌唱他们愉快而强健的歌，
木匠在歌唱，同时量着他的木板或衍木，
泥瓦匠在歌唱，唱在准备上工或下工的时候，
船工在歌唱，唱他船里的一切，水手也站在汽艇的甲板上歌唱、
鞋匠坐在凳上歌唱，帽匠站着歌唱，
伐木工在歌唱，犁田青年也在歌唱，
他们唱在早晨的路上，或唱在午间休息时，或唱在日落时分，
我还听见母亲的美妙歌声，或者年轻的妻子一边工
作一边歌唱，或者姑娘们一边缝一边歌唱或一边洗一边歌唱，
人人都在唱属于他或她而不属于别人的歌，
白天唱属于白天的歌——晚间，年轻人聚在一起，他们强壮
而友好，
放声歌唱他们强健而和谐的歌。

O! Captain! My Captain!



Lead-in Questions

- To whom is this poem dedicated?
What kind of image is he described by Whitman?
- What is the tone of the poem? What helps to contribute the tone?
- What overall metaphor does the poet employ in this poem?



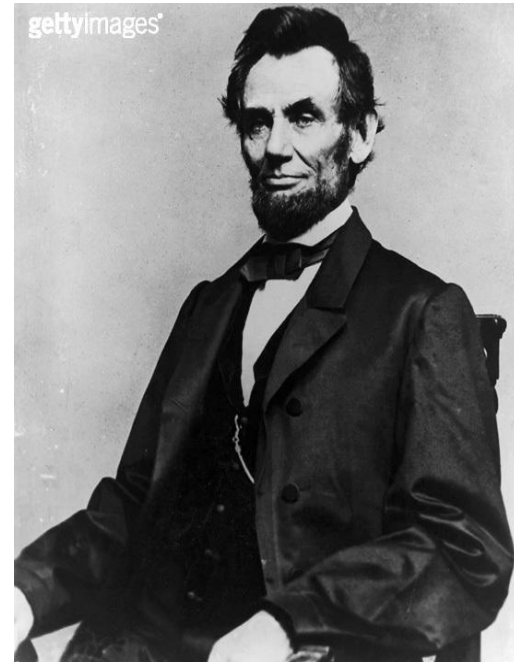
O! Captain! My Captain!



How much do you know about Abraham Lincoln?

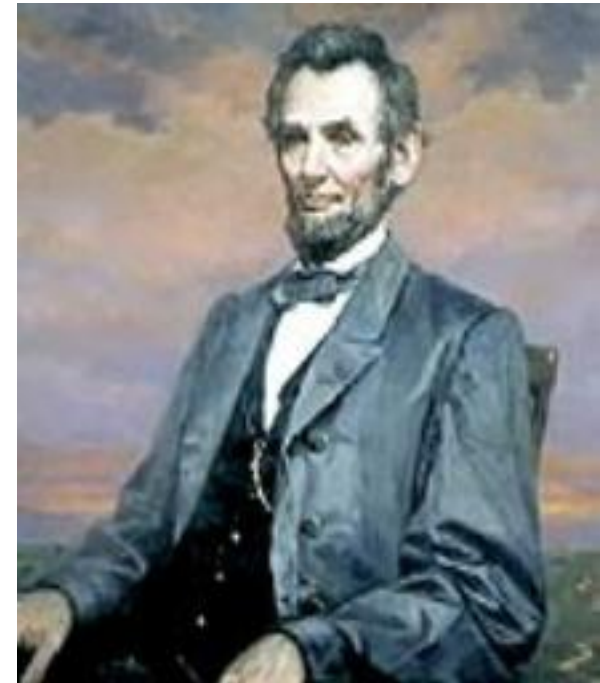


- the 16th president of the United States
- led the Civil War, saving the Union and freeing the slaves
- got assassinated on 14th April, 1865 while attending a special performance of the comedy, "Our American Cousin," and died the next day
- considered by many historians to have been the greatest American president.



Background

- This poem was written when the American Civil War was about to end. The North got the victory over the south under the wise leadership of Abraham Lincoln, who led the North Union against the South slavery and proclaimed the emancipation of slaves. Lincoln was one of the greatest presidents American people loved but he was assassinated in the time when the whole country was celebrating the victory of Civil War. So this is an elegy written in homage to U.S. President Abraham Lincoln.



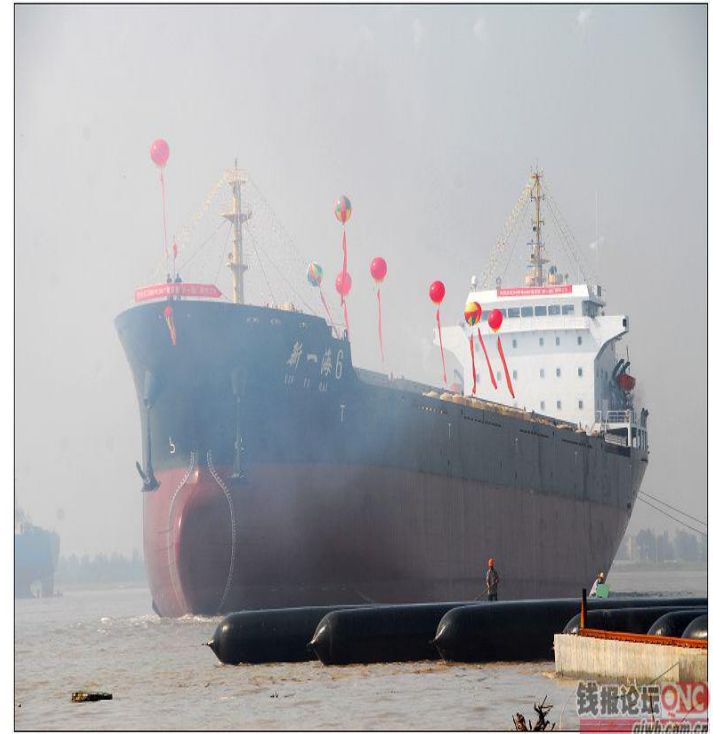
Stanza 1

O Captain! My Captain! **Our** fearful trip is done,
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won,
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring,
But O heart! heart! heart!
O the bleeding drops of **red**,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.



Notes (1)

- Weather'd: undergone
- Rack: intensive shake
- Exulting: cheering
/acclaiming
- Keel: the centre part of a
big ship, referring to a big
ship
- Grim and daring: serious
and brave



Understanding Stanza 1

- What are the rhetorical devices in this stanza? (O Captain! My Captain!, eyes follow..., the vessel..., my Captain lies)
- Metaphor, apostrophe (address to an absent or imaginary person), synecdoche, euphemism, repetition
- What is the pervading atmosphere?
- exciting, cheerful, happy and overjoyed;
- cold and sad
- This forms a sharp contrast, intending to emphasize the sad tone.



Stanza 2

O Captain! My Captain! Rise up and hear the bells,
Rise up —for **you** the **flag** is flung—for you the **bugle** trills,
For you **bouquets** and ribbon'd **wreaths**—for you the shores a-
crowding,
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning,
Here Captain! Dear father!
 This arm beneath your head!
 It is some dream that on the deck,
 You've fallen cold and dead.



Understanding Stanza 2

- Rise up, hear the bells, dream
- **Images:** bell, flag, bugle, bouquet, wreath
- All these indicate that the poet wishes President Lincoln would come to life. His death is a dream to them, which cannot be believed.
- The swaying mass: people move slowly



Stanza 3

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won,
Exult O shores, and ring O bells!
But I with mournful tread,
Walk the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.



Understanding Stanza 3

- tread: footstep
- Notice the last four lines of each stanza (layout)
- The layout mimics the shape of a ship, like a ship approaching its destination.



What kind of image is Abraham Lincoln described by Whitman?

(admirable, paternal, captain-like)

Besides images, what other elements help to express the poet's sorrowful feelings?

the visual effects, the auditory effects,
long vowels, diphthongs, consonants
and apostrophe





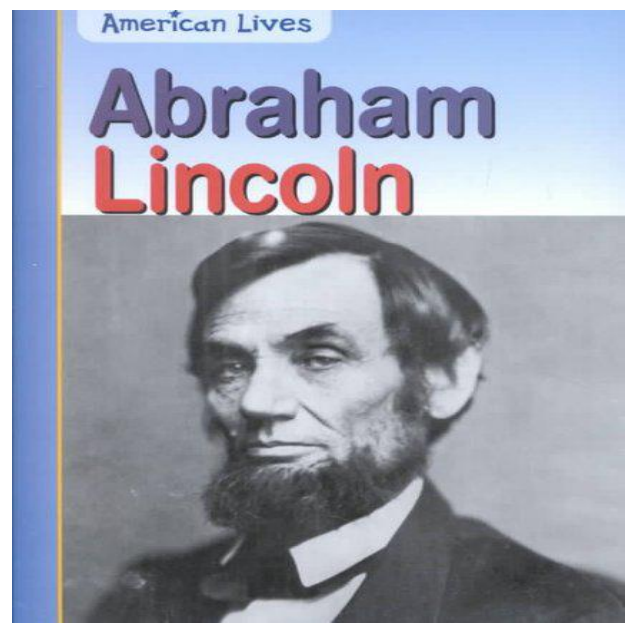
啊， 船长！ 我的船长！

- 啊， 船长！ 我的船长！ 可怕的航程已完成；
- 这船历尽风险， 企求的目标已达成。
- 港口在望， 钟声响， 人们在欢欣。
- 千万双眼睛注视着船——平稳， 勇敢， 坚定。
- 但是痛心啊！ 痛心！ 痛心！
- 瞧一滴滴鲜红的血！
- 甲板上躺着我的船长，
- 他倒下去， 冰冷， 永别。
- 啊， 船长！ 我的船长！ 起来吧， 倾听钟声；
- 起来吧， 号角为您长鸣， 旌旗为您高悬；
- 迎着您， 多少花束花圈——候着您， 千万人蜂拥岸边；
- 他们向您高呼， 拥来挤去， 仰起殷切的脸；
- 啊， 船长！ 亲爱的父亲！
- 我的手臂托着您的头！
- 莫非是一场梦： 在甲板上
- 您倒下去， 冰冷， 永别。



- 我的船长不作声，嘴唇惨白，毫不动弹；
- 我的父亲没感到我的手臂，没有脉搏，没有遗言；
- 船舶抛锚停下，平安抵达；航程終了；
- 历经艰险返航，夺得胜利目标。
- 啊，岸上钟声齐鸣，啊，人们一片欢腾！
- 但是，我在甲板上，在船长身旁，
- 心悲切，步履沉重：
- 因为他倒下去，冰冷，永别。

（杨霖 译）

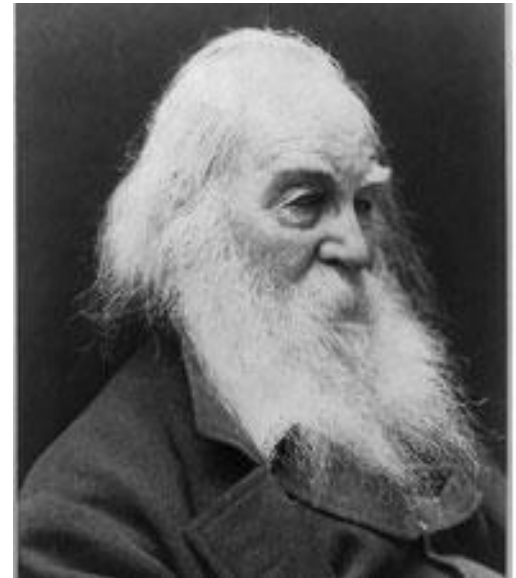


Walt Whitman's Contribution

- He believes the American poets would create both **new forms** and **new subjects matter** for poetry.
- **In terms of poetic form**, he advocated a completely new and completely American form of expression—**free verse**.
- **In terms of contents**, most of his poems are about man and nature, especially common people and ordinary Americans. He wanted his poetry to be for the **common people**.

Whitman's Influence

- Whitman's influence over modern poetry is great in the world as well as in America. Many poets in England, France, Italy and Latin America were in his debt.
- In America modern poets like T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound would not have been what they were without Whitman. Pound recognized him as the father figure who led the break from the past.
- His innovation in diction and versification, his inclusion of the common place and the ugly and his censure of the weakness of the American democratic practice have paved his way to a share of immortality in American literature.



思政启发





敬业

DEDICATED



勤于奉献 勇于承担

Assignment

- Make a comparative study on Abraham Lincoln and other great people.

