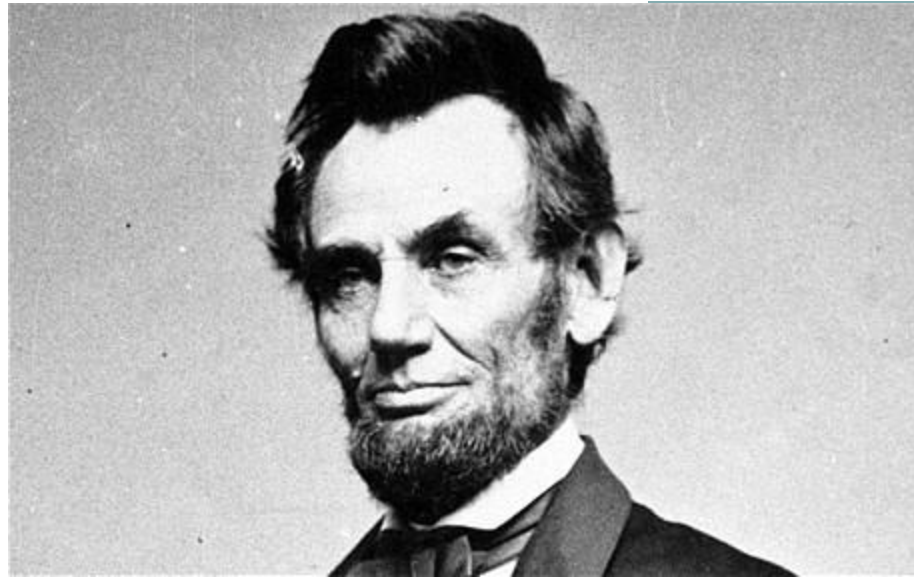


“O Captain! My Captain!”
by Walt Whitman
Genre Focus: Elegy



Walt Whitman



- Walt Whitman was a teacher and a journalist before he self-published his first volume of poetry, *Leaves of Grass*.
- The plight of the soldiers during the Civil War haunted Whitman so much that he spent most of his time working with them and most of his money buying supplies and necessities for them.

Structure and Sound

- **Elegy**—is a mournful or melancholy poem that honors someone who is dead. **Elegies** often express both joy and sorrow. They proudly honor their subject's extraordinary achievements and also express sorrow related to losing this exceptional person.
- Three stanzas
- Repetition: *Captain*

Imagery

- *Fearful trip*-symbolizes the Civil War, which devastated countless soldiers and families
- *Captain*- Abraham Lincoln
- *My father*- Whitman views Lincoln with love like a father
- Lincoln guides the country and people like a captain guides a ship and its crew
- Last stanza: Whitman asserts that other people celebrate the end of the Civil War; he will walk the deck on which the Captain (Lincoln) died, implying he will mourn Lincoln's passing for the rest of his life.
- Whitman values both the joy that people feel over the end of the war and his grief as well. He remarks on both aspects throughout the poem.

Summary

- Whitman eulogizes Abraham Lincoln, who died as the Civil War was coming to an end. Whitman compares Lincoln to the captain of a ship and states that although people are rejoicing over the end of the war; he, Whitman, will continue to mourn Lincoln.

Theme

- The death of a beloved and respected person is noteworthy of sorrow for their passing and joy for their great contributions to society.

