

Name _____ Date _____

Walt Whitman

Learn more about this topic! Each section gives more detail on one of the lyrics from the song. Read each section, and then respond by answering the question or taking notes on key ideas.

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Notes

Though he received little **formal** schooling, Walt Whitman became one of the most prolific and influential American poets. First published in 1865, "O Captain! My Captain!" appears in Drum-Taps, Whitman's poetry collection inspired by his experience **tending** to wounded soldiers during the Civil War. An admirer of Abraham Lincoln and his **democracy**, Whitman wrote this poem as an **elegy** for the assassinated president.

\n

O Captain! My Captain!

\n

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.

\n

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,

\nYou\ue2\x8o\x99ve fallen cold and dead.

\n

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,

\nMy father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,

\nThe ship is anchor\ue2\x8o\x99d safe and sound, its voyage closed and
done,

\nFrom fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won;

\nExult O shores, and ring O bells!

\nBut I with mournful tread,

\nWalk the deck my Captain lies,

\nFallen cold and dead.

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Inspired by the **transcendentalist** movement, "Hear America Singing" was first published in the 1860 edition of Whitman's poetry collection *Leaves of Grass*. In it, Whitman writes of a harmonious, idyllic United States in which the work of every individual is celebrated. Whitman went on to **revise** *Leaves of Grass* multiple times during his lifetime.

"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 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 him or 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.

"

Originally part of a longer poem titled \xe2\x80\x9cWhispers of Heavenly Death,\xe2\x80\x9d \xe2\x80\x9dA Noiseless Patient Spider\xe2\x80\x9d was reprinted as its own poem in Whitman\xe2\x80\x99s 1871 collection, Passage to India.

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\xe2\x80\x9cA Noiseless Patient Spider\xe2\x80\x9d

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A noiseless patient spider,
\nI mark\xe2\x80\x9d where on a little promontory it stood isolated,
\nMark\xe2\x80\x9d how to explore the vacant vast surrounding,
\nIt launch\xe2\x80\x9d forth filament, filament, filament out of itself,
\nEver unreeling them, ever tirelessly speeding them.

\n

And you O my soul where you stand,
\nSurrounded, detached, in measureless oceans of space,
\nCeaselessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking the spheres to
\nconnect them,
\nTill the bridge you will need be form\xe2\x80\x9d, till the ductile anchor
hold,
\nTill the gossamer thread you fling catch somewhere, O my soul.

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