

**ANALYZING POETRY:**

# O Captain! My Captain!



Answer the following questions about the poem.

1. Who is the speaker of the poem?
- a. the ship's captain    **b.** a crew member
  - c. a townsman         **d.** the ship's owner

2. **Part A:** Which word best describes the speaker's tone in the first four lines of the poem?

- a. mournful                     **b.** peaceful
- c. defeated                    **d.** proud

**Part B:** What evidence in the poem supports your answer to Part A?

The speaker announces that "the prize we sought is won" and that "the bells I hear, the people all exulting," indicating victory and pride.

3. How and why does the speaker's tone change in lines 5-8?

In line 5, the speaker turns his attention to his captain, who is lying dead on the ship's deck.

The tone changes from celebratory to mournful.

4. **Part A:** Which of the following best describe the speaker's feelings for the captain? Choose two.

- a. envy    b. suspicion    **c.** admiration
- d. indifference    **e.** anguish

**Part B:** Cite evidence to support your answers to part A.

The speaker calls the captain "dear father," showing the deep respect he has for his leader.

Later in the poem, the speaker says "But I with mournful tread," which demonstrates the sorrow he feels for the loss of his captain.

5. Consider the difference between the speaker's emotions and those of the crowd onshore. What effect does this contrast have on the poem?

While the speaker mourns the death of his captain, the crowd onshore celebrates the ship's safe return.

This contrast creates conflicting emotions as the poem's mood shifts between sorrow and joy.

6. The author repeats the phrase "fallen cold and dead" at the end of each stanza. What does this repetition tell the reader about the narrator's point of view?

The repetition of "fallen cold and dead" at the end of each stanza emphasizes the narrator's shock and despair about the death of his captain, as well as the gravity of the situation.

7. Walt Whitman's "O Captain! My Captain" is an extended metaphor and an elegy, a tribute poem, written about the death of President Abraham Lincoln just days after the Civil War ended in 1865.

Who or what do the following parts of the poem symbolize? Complete the chart below.

Captain	Abraham Lincoln
the ship	the United States
the voyage	the Civil War
the prize	the Union's victory over the Confederacy