

ANALYZING POETRY:

O Captain! My Captain!

BY WALT WHITMAN

Read the poem by Walt Whitman. Then, answer the questions on the following page.

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;

5

But O heart! heart! heart!
O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

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;

10

Here Captain! dear father!
This arm beneath your head!

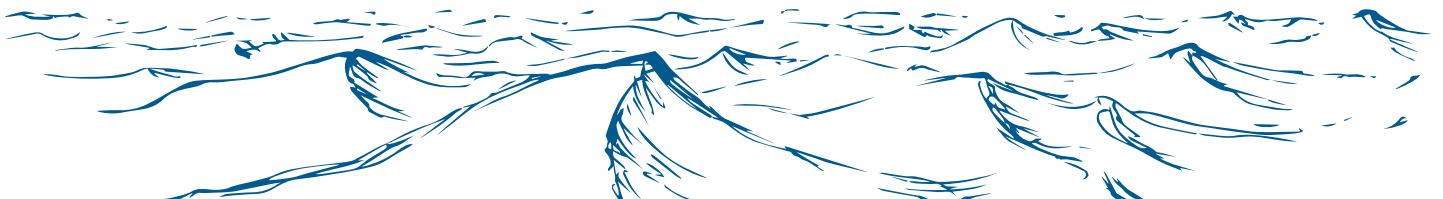
15

It is some dream that on the deck,
You've fallen cold and dead.

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;

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Exult O shores, and ring O bells!
But I with mournful tread,
Walk the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.



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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?

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

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.

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

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?

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	
the ship	
the voyage	
the prize	