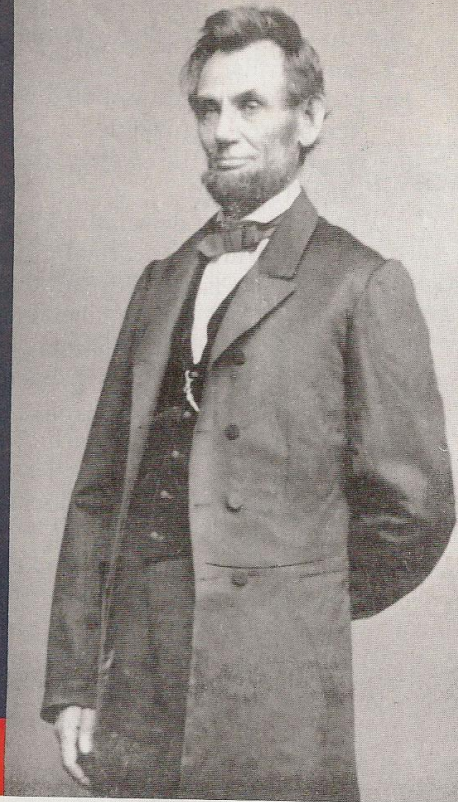


# O CAPTAIN! MY CAPTAIN!

Walt Whitman



O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,  
The ship has weather'd every rack,<sup>1</sup> the prize we  
sought is won,  
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all  
exulting,  
While follow eyes the steady keel,<sup>2</sup> 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.

1. **rack** *n.* great stress.

2. **keel** *n.* chief structural beam extending along the entire length of the bottom of a boat or ship and supporting the frame.

**▲ Critical Viewing** In what ways does Lincoln, as depicted in this photograph, exhibit leadership qualities? **[Interpret]**

**exulting** (ig zult' in) *v.* rejoicing

**✓ Reading Check**

Why is the speaker upset?



O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;  
 10 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!  
 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,  
 20 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.

tread (tred) n. step

### Walt Whitman

(1819–1892)



Walt Whitman, one of America's greatest poets, began his career as a printer and journalist. In 1848, he began working on *Leaves of Grass*, a collection of poems about America. Because of its unusual style, commercial publishers refused to publish the book. However, Whitman printed a first edition with his own money in 1855. Since then, the style of Whitman's poetry has greatly influenced poets around the world.

During the Civil War, Whitman worked in military hospitals in Washington, D.C. Although he never formally met President Lincoln, he often saw the President at a distance in Washington. Lincoln's death moved Whitman to compose two famous poems, "O Captain! My Captain!" and "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd."

## Review and Assess

### Thinking About the Selection

1. **Respond:** How does this poem affect you?
2. (a) **Recall:** What has happened to the Captain?  
 (b) **Infer:** Why does the timing of this event make it doubly unfortunate? (c) **Interpret:** How does the mood of the poem reflect what has happened?
3. (a) **Recall:** What words related to the sea and to sailing does the speaker of the poem use? (b) **Compare and Contrast:** In what ways does Lincoln's leadership of the country resemble a captain's role on a ship?
4. (a) **Recall:** What is the ship's destination? (b) **Interpret:** What is the "fearful trip" that the ship has "weathered"?
5. (a) **Recall:** How do the crowds of people respond to the Captain's arrival? (b) **Recall:** What feats has the Captain accomplished before the ship arrives? (c) **Draw Conclusions:** What kind of a leader does the speaker consider Lincoln?