

МІНІСТЕРСТВО ОСВІТИ ТА НАУКИ УКРАЇНИ  
ЗАКАРПАТСЬКИЙ УГОРСЬКИЙ ІНСТИТУТ ІМЕНІ ФЕРЕНЦА РАКОЦІ П.

КАФЕДРА ФІЛОЛОГІЇ

Реєстраційний № Б

Бакалавська робота

Нове творчості в Волт Вітмена

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Студент 5-ому курсу  
Спеціальність 7.010103 „Педагогіка і методика середньої освіти. Мова і література  
(англійська) та історія

Тема затверджена на засіданні кафедри  
Протокол №

Науковий керівник:

Рецензент:

Робота рекомендована до захисту на засіданні  
кафедри Протокол №\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_.

Завідуючий Кафедрою філології:

д.ф.н. Ковтюк І.

Робота захищена на оцінку \_\_\_\_\_, „\_\_\_\_\_” \_\_\_\_\_ 2008 року

Протокол № \_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_.

Голова Державної екзаменаційної комісії

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Берегово 2010

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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE OF UKRAINE  
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DEPARTMENT OF PHILOLOGY

**The Novelty of Walt Whitman**

(Bachelor's thesis)

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Beregszász, 2010

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## Introduction

There are many great poets in the history of America, but only a few that had such creativity and sensibility that innovated the way of thinking for a whole nation and introduced novelties to America and Europe alike. One of these important poets that had a huge impact on modern literature was Walt Whitman, who is one of the most innovative and influential American poets of the nineteenth century. Whitman is an experimental poet, a radical democrat, and a historical personality in the era of the American Civil War, the growth of the great cities, and the westward expansion of the United States. He is known as the poet of the common people and also as the poet of democracy.

This paper tries to introduce us to the life of the poet of common man, Walt Whitman. We aim to present those events of his life that gave the possibility for him to develop those feelings that we can see in his works, we try to emphasize the events that lead to the creation of America's first "poet of democracy". We tell about what novelties Walt Whitman created that influenced both the context and form of modern poetry. We will try to emphasize the novelty of thinking that Walt Whitman seeded into the minds of his readers. We will analyse and present the essences of his work that spread not just through America but also across the ocean to the European readers. To understand better the way of thinking and the life of the nineteenth century Americans, we will also make a de route to show the major historical events that influenced both the life and the thinking of the American people. We will show how the Civil War influenced the course of America and what effect it had on Walt Whitman's inner world. We will also try to introduce the life, that the nineteenth century "Negroes" had and what the general thoughts were about slavery, and how Walt Whitman saw this pressing matter, presiding the thinking of the fellow Americans of his time.

As to the sources used for compiling the thesis it must be mentioned that all available resources that can be found on the world wide web, different article material, books by different authors on American history and literature, Whitman's original verses were used.

The material of the thesis would be useful to all who are interested in teaching and learning material of Walt Whitman

## I. The Era of Walt Whitman

In 1800, America was ready for change. Under Washington and Adams, the Federalists had established a strong government, but sometimes failing to honor the principle, that the American government must be responsive to the will of the people. In 1800 the presidential election was due and resulted in the election of Thomas Jefferson who had steadily gathered behind him a great mass of small farmers, shopkeepers and other workers, and they asserted themselves as Democratic-Republicans. Thomas Jefferson's Presidency of the United States, from March 4, 1801 to March 4, 1809, carried out what Jefferson called the "Revolution of 1800", as he attempted to put into action the principles of his Democratic-Republican Party. In domestic affairs Jefferson tried to weaken Federalist influences, especially in the judiciary, and succeeded in limiting the size of government by reducing taxes and the national debt. In foreign affairs the major developments were the acquisition of the gigantic Louisiana Purchase, an embargo against trade with either England or France, and worsening relations with Britain as the nation tried to remain neutral in the midst of a great war that engulfed Europe. The following election resulted in James Madison being the new president (1809–1817) he is considered one of the Founding Fathers of the United States. The "Father of the Constitution," he was the principal author of the Federal papers and had much influence on the Constitution. He was also known as the "Father of the Bill of Rights". Madison supervised the Louisiana Purchase, doubling the nation's size and sponsored the ill-fated Embargo Act of 1807 a bill that banned trade between the United States of America and other nations. The bill also prevented any ships from leaving American ports thus hindering exploration efforts. In he's time, he led the nation into the War of 1812 against Great Britain. The war lasted from 1812 to 1815. It was fought chiefly on the Atlantic Ocean and on the land, coasts and waterways of North America. James Madison was followed by James Monroe (1817–1825). His administration was marked by the acquisition of Florida in 1819. The Missouri Compromise, in which Missouri was declared a slave state. After the next election the new president became John Quincy Adams.<sup>1</sup>

During Adams' administration, new party alignments appeared. Adams' followers took the name of "National Republicans", later to be changed to "Whigs". Though he governed honestly and efficiently, Adams was not a popular President, and his Administration was marked with frustrations. Adams failed in his effort to institute a national system of roads and canals, known as the American System. His years in office appeared to be one long campaign for re-election, and his

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<sup>1</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_the\\_United\\_States\\_%281865%E2%80%931918%29#Industrialization](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_United_States_%281865%E2%80%931918%29#Industrialization)

coldly intellectual temperament did not win friends.

Andrew Jackson, by contrast, had enormous popular appeal, especially among his followers in the newly named Democratic Party that emerged from the Democratic-Republican Party, with its roots dating back to Presidents Jefferson, Madison and Monroe. In the election of 1828, Jackson defeated Adams.

In 1830, Congress passed the Indian Removal Act, which authorized the President to negotiate treaties that exchanged Indian tribal lands in the eastern states for lands west of the Mississippi River. In 1834, a special Indian territory was established in what is now the eastern part of Oklahoma. In all, Native American tribes signed 94 treaties during Jackson's two terms, ceding thousands of square miles to the Federal government. The Cherokees, whose lands in western North Carolina and Georgia had been guaranteed by treaty since 1791, faced expulsion from their territory when a faction of Cherokees signed the Treaty of New Echota in 1835, obtaining money in exchange for their land. Despite protests from the elected Cherokee government and many white supporters, the Cherokees were forced to make the long and cruel way to the Indian Territory in

1838. Many died of disease and privation.<sup>2</sup>

Toward the end of his first term in office, Jackson was forced to confront the state of South Carolina on the issue of the protective tariff. The protective tariff passed by Congress and signed into law by Jackson in 1832 was milder than the previous one, but it further embittered many in the state. In response, several South Carolina citizens endorsed the "states rights" principle of "nullification". South Carolina dealt with the tariff by adopting the Ordinance of Nullification, which declared both the Tariff of 1828 and the Tariff of 1832 null and void within state borders. Nullification was only the most recent in a series of state challenges to the authority of the federal government. In response to South Carolina's threat, Jackson sent seven small naval vessels and a man-of-war to Charleston in November 1832. On December 10, he issued a resounding proclamation against the nullifiers. Senator Henry Clay, though an advocate of protection and a political rival of Jackson, piloted a compromise measure through Congress. Clay's 1833 compromise tariff specified that all duties more 20% of the value of the goods imported were to be reduced by easy stages, so that by 1842, the duties on all articles would reach the level of the moderate tariff of 1816. The rest of the South declared South Carolina's course unwise and unconstitutional. Eventually, South Carolina rescinded its action. Jackson had committed the federal government to the principle of Union supremacy. South Carolina, however, had obtained many of the demands it sought and had demonstrated that a single state could force its will on Congress.

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<sup>2</sup>[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_the\\_United\\_States\\_%281849%E2%80%931865%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_United_States_%281849%E2%80%931865%29)



The First Bank of the United States had been established in 1791, and had been chartered for a 20-year period. Though the government held some of its stock, it was not a government bank; rather, the bank was a private corporation with profits passing to its stockholders. It had been designed to stabilize the currency and stimulate trade, but it was resented by Westerners and working people who believed that it was granting special favors to a few powerful men. When its charter expired in 1811, it was not renewed. For the next few years, the banking business was in the hands of state-chartered banks, which issued currency in excessive amounts, creating great confusion and fueling inflation and concerns that state banks could not provide the country with a uniform currency. In 1816, a Second Bank of the United States, similar to the first, was again chartered for 20 years. From its beginning, the Second Bank was unpopular in the newer states and territories and with less prosperous people everywhere. Opponents claimed the bank possessed a virtual monopoly over the country's credit and currency, and reiterated that it represented the interests of the wealthy few. Jackson, elected as a popular champion against it, vetoed a bill to recharter the bank. In his message to Congress, he denounced monopoly and special privilege, but the effort to override the veto failed. In September 1833, Jackson ordered that no more government money may be deposited in the bank and that the money already in its custody be gradually withdrawn in the ordinary course of meeting the expenses of government. Carefully selected state banks, stringently restricted, were provided as a substitute.

Spurred on by the Second Great Awakening, Americans entered a period of rapid social change and experimentation. New social movements arose as well as many new alternatives to traditional religious thought. This period of American history was marked by the destruction of some traditional role of society and the erection of new social standards. As the Second Great Awakening challenged the traditional beliefs of the Calvinist faith, the movement inspired other groups to call into question their views on religion and society. Such groups emerged as: The eightpence in which members of a community hold all of their possession in "common" and live in a self-supporting society, the millennialism which prophesied the return of Christ and the beginning of a new age, or spiritualism which provided a means of communing with the dead. A movement by the poet Ralph Waldo Emerson began the transcendentalist that promoted self-reliance and better understanding of the universe through contemplation of the over-soul. Some of Walt Whitman's poems follow this movement as we can see in he's work leaves of grass.

Education in the United States had long been a local affair with schools governed by locally elected school boards. As with much of the culture of the United States, education varied widely in the North and the South. In the New England states public education was common, although it was

often class-based with the working class receiving little benefits. Instruction and curriculum were all locally determined and teachers were expected to meet rigorous demands of strict moral behavior. Schools taught religious values and applied Calvinist philosophies of discipline which included corporal punishment and public humiliation. In the South, there was very little organization of a public education system. Public schools were very rare and most education took place in the home with the family acting as instructors. The wealthier planter families were able to bring in tutors for instruction in the classics. While there was a huge push for education at all levels, including the establishment of hundreds of colleges and universities during this time period, citizenship began a transformation away from a model of local civic participation and towards an understanding of citizenship as a legal status.<sup>3</sup>

Following the end of the American Revolution and the birth of the new republic, American women were able to gain a limited political voice in what is known as republican motherhood. Under this philosophy women, such as Abigail Adams, were seen as the protectors of liberty and republicanism. Mothers were charged with passing down these ideals to their children through instruction of patriotic thoughts and feelings. By the turn of the 19th century, the role of women had changed significantly. In what is known as the cult of domesticity or “cult of true womanhood” middle class women lost much of their political voice. Under the doctrine of two spheres, women were to exist in the “domestic sphere” at home while their husbands operated in the “public sphere” of politics and business. Women took on the new role of “softening” their husbands and instructing their children in piety and not republican values, while men handled the business and financial affairs of the family. The coverture laws of ensured that men would hold political power over their wives. By the mid-1800s women associated with the abolition movement began to question their legal status in the United States as well. Leaders such as Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton broke from the cult when they organized the Seneca Falls Convention to call for women's rights.

As time passed the Western expansion was pressing even stronger. American leaders paid less attention to European trade and more to the internal development in North America. With the end of the wartime British alliance with Native Americans east of the Mississippi River, white settlers were determined to colonize indigenous lands beyond the Mississippi. In the 1830s, the federal government forcibly deported the southeastern tribes to less fertile territories to the west.

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<sup>3</sup> Herber Attila, Martos Ida, Moss László, Tisza László, *Történelem 5 kötet*, Nándorfehérvár, 2005. 269-271.old

## 1. 2 The American economy

By the 1840s, the American economic system was undergoing a vast change. Following the vision of Alexander Hamilton, America was on the road to becoming an industrialized power. Henry Clay's American System had revolutionized transportation with federal funding for the National Road and other projects such as the Erie Canal. In this time a transportation revolution occurred in which the new railroads began to compete directly with the canals, and the new railroad companies could move goods much cheaper and quicker than the canal systems. Additionally, railroads were not tied to water sources to construct new lines of transportation. Many legislatures were eager to bring the economic success of the industrial revolution into their states by selling railroads public land cheap and purchasing stock in railroad companies with state money. Soon the federal government also began working with the railroads on land deals to foster the growth of transportation. Another revolution occurred in the production of materials to be sent to market. In the early days of the nation, skilled craftsmen manufactured each item individually in their own shop. In the 1840s, this individual system was replaced by the putting-out system in which the pieces of a manufactured produce were assembled in different places and then brought together for completion. The putting-out system would allow each location to become more efficient at producing one part of the product. With the use of interchangeable parts popularized by Eli Whitney, the factory system began in which workers assembled at one location to produce goods. The early factories such as those in Lowell, Massachusetts employed mainly women. By the 1860s, the time of the individual skilled craftsman had vanished and the rising of the factory system begun. The transportation revolution spurred economic development and industrialization in the North. The development of steamboats and, what is more important, railroads helped further this economic expansion. This process of industrialization largely ignored the South which remained primarily based in agriculture. Slavery drove Southern economic life. As a result, the two geographic regions were constantly at odds in the Senate and House.<sup>4</sup>

The election of 1848 produced a new President from the Whig Party, Zachary Taylor. President Polk did not seek reelection because he gained all his objectives in his first term and because his health was declining. From the election emerged the Free Soil Party, a group of abolitionists who supported Wilmot's Proviso. The creation of the Free Soil Party foreshadowed the collapse of the Second party system; the existing parties could not contain the debate over slavery for much longer. The question of slavery became all the more urgent with the discovery of gold in

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<sup>4</sup> Herber Attila, Martos Ida, Moss László, Tisza László, *Történelem 5* Nándorfehérvár, 2005, 209-213. old

California in 1848. The next year, there was a massive influx of prospectors and miners looking to strike it rich. Most migrants to California (so-called: „Forty-Niners”) abandoned their jobs, homes, and families looking for gold. It also attracted some of the first Chinese Americans to the West Coast of the United States. Most Forty-Niners never found gold but instead settled in the urban center of San Francisco or in the new municipality of Sacramento.

A significant difference in economy of the 19<sup>th</sup> century America is in the use of slavery that was commonplace in the South and was objected in the North. About the slavery in America we may say that the debate has several sides. Abolitionists grew directly out of the Second Great Awakening and the European Enlightenment and saw slavery as an affront to God and/or reason. Abolitionism had roots similar to the temperance movement. The publishing of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in 1852, galvanized the abolitionist movement. Most debates over slavery, however, had to do with the constitutionality of the extension of slavery rather than its morality. The debates took the form of arguments over the powers of Congress rather than the merits of slavery. The result was the so-called "Free Soil Movement." Free-soilers believed that slavery was dangerous because of what it did to whites. The "peculiar institution" ensured that elites controlled most of the land, property, and capital in the South. The Southern United States was, by this definition, undemocratic. To fight the "slave power conspiracy," the nation's democratic ideals had to be spread to the new territories and the South.

### **1.3 Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War**

The Democratic National Convention for the Election of 1860 was held in Charleston, South Carolina. When the convention endorsed the doctrine of popular sovereignty, 50 Southern delegates walked out. The inability to come to a decision on who should be nominated led to a second meeting in Baltimore, Maryland. At Baltimore, 110 Southern delegates, led by the so-called "fire eaters," walked out of the convention when it would not adopt a platform that endorsed the extension of slavery into the new territories. The remaining Democrats nominated Stephen A. Douglas for the presidency. The Southern Democrats held a convention in Richmond, Virginia, and nominated John Breckinridge. Both claimed to be the true voice of the Democratic Party. Former Know Nothings and some Whigs formed the Constitutional Union Party which ran on a platform based around supporting only the Constitution and the laws of the land. Abraham Lincoln won the support of the Republican National Convention after it became apparent that William Seward had alienated certain branches of the Republican Party. Moreover, Lincoln had been made famous in the Lincoln-Douglas Debates and was well known for his eloquence and his moderate position on

slavery. Lincoln won a majority of votes in the Electoral College, but only won two-fifths of the popular vote. The Democratic vote was split three ways and Lincoln was elected as the 16th President of the United States. Unfortunately Lincoln's election in November led to a declaration of secession by South Carolina. Before Lincoln took office in March 1861, six other states had declared their secession from the Union: Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana and Texas. Men from both North and South met in Virginia to try to hold the Union together, but the proposals for amending the Constitution were unsuccessful. In February 1861, the seven states met in Montgomery, Alabama, and formed a new government: the Confederate States of America. The first Confederate Congress was held on February 4, 1861, and adopted a provisional constitution. On February 8, 1861, Jefferson Davis was nominated President of the Confederate States.<sup>5</sup>

On April 12, 1861, after President Lincoln refused to give up Fort Sumter, the federal base off the coast of Charleston, South Carolina, the new Confederate government under President Jefferson Davis ordered General Beauregard to open fire on the fort. It fell two days later, without casualty, spreading the flames of war across America. Within two months, four more states declared their secession from the Union, these are: Virginia, Arkansas, Tennessee, and North Carolina. The four remaining slave states, Maryland, Delaware, Missouri, and Kentucky, under heavy pressure from the Federal government of Washington, D.C, did not secede.

Each side had its relative strengths and weaknesses going into the campaign. The North had a far greater population and more industry and railway lines. The South, however, had a strong military tradition and was more prepared for war. Even before Fort Sumter, the Confederate Congress had authorized a 100,000 strong volunteer army. Furthermore, the nature of the struggle meant that it would be a defensive war for the South and an offensive one for the North. In order for the North to emerge victorious, it would have to conquer and occupy the Confederate States of America. The South, on the other hand, only had to keep the North at bay until the Northern public lost the will to fight.

One of the major battles that decided the war was after General McClellan found Lee's Special Order 191 and defeated a divided Confederate Army at the Battle of Antietam on September 17, 1862. This was the single bloodiest day in American history. Confederate pleas for diplomatic recognition from the European nations, specifically France and England, were dashed with the defeat at Antietam. The other major loss for the Confederate was the loss of Kentucky after the Battle of Perryville. The Civil War ended in the defeat of the Confederacy at Petersburg where General Grant surrounded and took prison the leader of the Confederacy.

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<sup>5</sup> John A. Garraty, *The Story of America*, Columbia 1991. 542-581. old

On April 14, 1865, four days after the news of Lee's surrender reached Washington, an air of celebration pervaded the capital. That evening, President Lincoln attended a performance of *Our American Cousin* at Ford's Theatre. During the third act, a Confederate sympathizer named John Wilkes Booth shot and killed Abraham Lincoln. John Wilkes Booth was tracked, twelve days later, and killed by Union Army Sergeant Boston Corbett.

#### **1.4 Reconstruction**

Reconstruction is known as the period after the American Civil War when the Southern states of the defeated Confederacy, which had seceded from the United States, were reintegrated into the Union. The attempt to establish civil rights for the Freedmen caused lasting bitterness among white Southerners toward the federal government. Before his assassination, Abraham Lincoln had endorsed moderate plans for reconstruction. However, the immense human cost of the war and the social changes wrought by it led Congress to resist readmitting the rebel states without first imposing preconditions, including protection for the freed blacks. The obstinacy of Lincoln's successor Andrew Johnson in opposing the wishes of the Republican majority in Congress led to Radical Reconstruction. From 1867 to 1869, Congress passed a series of laws establishing the conditions and procedures for reintegrating the Southern states. These included Civil Rights Acts, Reconstruction Acts, and Constitutional Amendments.

The end of Reconstruction marked the demise of the brief period of civil rights and civil liberties for African Americans in the South, where most lived. The South then created a segregated society, with the Southern white elites in firm political and economic control under a dominant - party system, called "The Solid South". Local law enforcement was weak in rural areas, allowing outraged mobs to use lynching to redress supposed crimes committed by blacks.

From 1865 to about 1913, the U.S. grew to become the world's leading industrial nation. The availability of land and labor, the diversity of climate, the ample presence of navigable canals, rivers, and coastal waterways filling the transportation needs of the emerging industrial economy, and the abundance of natural resources all fostered the cheap extraction of energy, fast transport, and the availability of capital that powered this Second Industrial Revolution.<sup>6</sup>

Production was shifted from artisans to factories; the Second Industrial Revolution pioneered an expansion in organization, coordination, and the scale of industry, spurred on by technology and transportation advancements. Railroads opened up the West, creating farms, towns

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<sup>6</sup> John A. Garraty, *The Story of America*, Columbia 1991. 581-590. old

and markets where none had existed. The First Transcontinental Railroad, built by nationally oriented entrepreneurs with British money and Irish and Chinese labor, provided access to previously remote expanses of land. Railway construction boosted opportunities for capital, credit, and would-be farmers.

Native American tribes were generally forced onto small reservations so that white farmers and ranchers could take their lands. Abusive industrial practices led to the violent rise of the labor movement in the United States. The United States began its rise to international power in this period with substantial population and industrial growth domestically, along with numerous imperialist ventures abroad. By the late nineteenth century, the United States had become a leading global industrial power, building on new technologies (such as the telegraph), an expanding railroad network, and abundant natural resources to usher in the Second Industrial Revolution.

## II. The life of Walt Whitman

Walt Whitman was born into a working class family in West Hills, New York, a village near Hempstead, Long Island, on May 31, 1819. Walt Whitman was named after his father, a carpenter and farmer. Walter Whitman Sr. trained as a carpenter but struggling to find work, he had taken up farming by the time Walt was born, but when Walt was just about to turn four, Walter Sr. moved the family to the growing city of Brooklyn, across from New York City. One of Walt's favorite stories about his childhood concerned the time General Lafayette visited New York and, selecting the six-year-old Walt from the crowd, lifted him up and carried him. Walter Whitman Sr. named three of his seven sons after American leaders: Andrew Jackson, George Washington, and Thomas Jefferson. The oldest was named Jesse and another boy died unnamed at the age of six months. The couple's sixth son, the youngest, was named Edward. Walter Whitman Sr. was of English stock, and his marriage in 1816 to Louisa Van Velsor, of Dutch and Welsh stock. Whitman's father was a stern and sometimes hot-tempered man, whom Whitman respected but for whom he never felt a great deal of affection. His mother, on the other hand, served throughout his life as his emotional touchstone. The Whitman family moved around Brooklyn a great deal as Walter Sr. was unsuccessfully at speculating in real estate. Walt loved living close to the East River, where as a child he rode the ferries back and forth to New York City, imbibing an experience that would remain significant for him his whole life: he loved ferries and the people who worked on them.<sup>7</sup>

While in Brooklyn, Whitman attended the newly founded Brooklyn public schools for six years. In Whitman's school, all the students were in the same room, except African Americans, who had to attend a separate class on the top floor. Whitman hated corporal punishment, a common practice in schools and one that he would attack in later years in both his journalism and his fiction. Visiting his grandparents on Long Island was one of Whitman's favorite boyhood activities, and during those visits he developed his lifelong love of the Long Island shore. One of Whitman's greatest poems, "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" is a reminiscence of his boyhood on the Long Island shore. Whitman's experiences as a young man alternated between the city and the Long Island countryside, and he was attracted to both ways of life.

At age eleven Whitman concluded formal schooling. He then sought employment for further income for his family and he began his life as a laborer, working first as an office boy for some prominent Brooklyn lawyers, who gave him a subscription to a circulating library, where his self-

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<sup>7</sup>[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walt\\_Whitman#Early\\_life](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walt_Whitman#Early_life)



education began. As an autodidact, Whitman absorbed a wide-ranging education through his visits to museums, nonstop reading, and his penchant for engaging everyone he met in conversation and debate. While most other major writers of his time enjoyed highly structured, classical educations at private institutions, Whitman forged his own rough and informal curriculum of literature, theater, history, geography, music, and archeology.

In 1831, Whitman became an apprentice on the Long Island *Patriot*, a liberal, working-class newspaper, where he learned the printing trade. He began writing poetries during this period, which were anonymously published in the New York Mirror. Whitman's first signed article, in 1834, expressed his amazement at how there were still people alive who could remember "the present great metropolitan city as a little dorp or village. In 1833 he's family moved back to the West Hills area, leaving fourteen-year-old Walt

behind. Whitman learned how to set type under the Patriot's foreman printer William Hartshorne. Whitman was gaining skills and experiencing an independence that would mark his whole career. These early years on his own in Brooklyn and New York remained a formative influence on his writing, for it was during this time that he developed the habit of close observation of the ever-shifting panorama of the city, and a great deal of his journalism, poetry, and prose came to focus on catalogs of urban life and the history of New York City, Brooklyn, and Long Island.

Walt remained separated from his family and furthered his education from a variety of sources: various circulating libraries (where he read Sir Walter Scott, James Fenimore Cooper, and other romance novelists), theaters, and lectures. By the time he was sixteen, Walt was a journeyman printer and compositor in New York City. His future career seemed set in the newspaper and printing trades, but then two of New York's worst fires wiped out the major printing and business centers of the city. Thanks to this Whitman retreated to Long Island, joining his family at Hempstead in 1836.<sup>8</sup>

He knew he did not want to become a farmer, and he rebelled at his father's attempts to get him to work on the new family farm. So he began to teaching as an escape but this also was a job he was forced to take in bad economic times, and some of the unhappiest times of his life were these five years when he taught school in at least ten different Long Island towns, rooming in the homes of his students, teaching three-month terms to large and heterogeneous classes, getting very little pay, and having to put up with some very unenlightened people. Whitman employed what were then progressive techniques encouraging students to think aloud rather than simply recite, refusing

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.poemhunter.com/walt-whitman/biography/>

to punish by paddling, involving his students in educational games, and joining his students in baseball and card games. He permitted his students to call him by his first name, and devised learning games for them in arithmetic and spelling.

By 1841, Whitman's second career was at an end. He had interrupted his teaching in 1838 to try his luck at starting his own newspaper "The Long Islander" devoted to covering the towns around Huntington. He bought a press and type and hired his younger brother George as an assistant, but despite his energetic efforts to edit, publish, write, and deliver the new paper, it folded within a year, and he returned to the classroom. Newspaper work made him happy, but teaching did not. Two years later, he quit his job as a schoolteacher. Whitman decided to become a fiction writer. About twenty different newspapers and magazines printed Whitman's fiction and early poetry. His best years for fiction were between 1840 and 1845 when he placed his stories in a range of magazines, including the *American Review* and the *Democratic Review*, one of the nation's most prestigious literary magazines. The success he had as a Fiction writer made Park Benjamin, editor of the *New World*, conclude that Whitman was the perfect candidate to write a novel. This is when Whitman wrote *Franklin Evans* that had sold approximately 20,000 copies. Although at older age he described *Franklin Evans*. During the time he was writing fiction, Whitman remained a generally successful journalist. The *Long Island Star* recognized his value as a journalist and, once he resettled in Brooklyn, quickly arranged to have him compose a series of editorials, two or three a week, from September 1845 to March 1846. With the death of William Marsh, the editor of the Brooklyn *Eagle*, Whitman became chief editor of that paper (he served from March 5, 1846 to January 18, 1848). He dedicated himself to journalism in these years and published little of his own poetry and fiction. Whitman lost his position as editor of the *Eagle* because the publisher, Isaac Van Anden, as an "Old Hunker," sided with conservative pro-slavery Democrats and could no longer abide Whitman's support of free soil (which was an anti slavery party).<sup>9</sup>

Fortunately, on February 9, 1846, Whitman met, between acts of a performance at the Broadway Theatre in New York, J. E. McClure, who intended to launch a New Orleans paper, the *Crescent*, with an associate, A. H. Hayes. In a short time McClure struck a deal with Whitman and provided him with an advance to cover his travel expenses to New Orleans. Whitman's younger brother Jeff, decided to travel with Walt and work as an office boy on the paper. In Orleans Whitman experienced at first hand how slaves are treated at the local slave-market. This experience

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<sup>9</sup><http://www.notablebiographies.com/We-Z/Whitman-Walt.html>

will later also lead to he's change of view on slavery. In Orleans Jeff was sick with dysentery and also home sick, so William and Jeff traveled back home. Whitman's stay in New Orleans lasted only three months. Then after another abortive attempt at Free Soil journalism, he built houses and dabbled in real estate in New York from about 1850 until 1855.

Whitman paid out of his own pocket for the first edition of his book and had only 795 copies printed, which he bound at various times as his finances permitted. He's book *Leaves* was issued in late June. His joy at getting the book published was quickly diminished by the death of his father a few weeks after the appearance of *Leaves*. Walter Sr. had been ill for several years, and though he and Walt had never been particularly close, they had only recently traveled together to West Hills, Long Island, to the old Whitman homestead where Walt was born. His father's death meant that Walt would become the father-substitute for the family, the person his mother and siblings would turn to for help and guidance. But even given these growing family burdens, he managed to concentrate on his new book and oversaw all the details of its composition and printing. Even though Whitman claimed that the first edition sold out, the book in fact had very poor sales. He sent copies to a number of well known writers but only one responded, and that, was Emerson, who recognized in Whitman's work the very spirit and tone and style he had called for and so wrote Whitman a letter. Though it was no secret who the author of *Leaves of Grass* was, the fact that Whitman did not put his name on the title page was an unconventional and suggestive act. But opposite the title page was a portrait of Whitman, an engraving made from a daguerreotype that the photographer Gabriel Harrison had made during the summer of 1854.<sup>10</sup>

Within a few months Whitman was already hard at work on the second edition. While in the first, he had given his long lines room to stretch across the page by printing the book on large paper, in the second edition he sacrificed the spacious pages, this was an attempt to create a pocket-size edition. On the cover of this edition, published and distributed by Fowler and Wells, Whitman without asking Emerson's permission, printed in gold the opening words of Emerson's letter to him: "I greet you at the beginning of a great career," followed by Emerson's name. And he added to the volume a group of reviews of the first edition including three he wrote himself along with a few negative reviews and called the second book *Leaves-Droppings*. At the back of the book, he printed Emerson's entire letter (again, without permission) and wrote a long public letter back. With four times as many pages as the first edition, the 1856 *Leaves* added twenty new poems to the original twelve in the 1855 edition. Those original twelve had been untitled in 1855, but Whitman was

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<sup>10</sup>[http://whitmanarchive.org/biography/walt\\_whitman/index.html](http://whitmanarchive.org/biography/walt_whitman/index.html)

doing all he could to make the new edition look and feel different, small pages instead of large, a fat book instead of a thin one, and long titles for his poems instead of none at all. But, despite his efforts to re-make his book, the results were depressingly the same. The sales of the thousand copies that were printed were even poorer than for the first edition. After publishing the second edition of *Leaves* several well-known writers admired the work enough to visit Whitman, including Bronson Alcott and Henry David Thoreau. During the first publications of *Leaves*, Whitman had financial difficulties and was forced to work as a journalist again, specifically with Brooklyn's *Daily Times* starting in May 1857. As an editor, he oversaw the paper's contents, contributed book reviews, and wrote editorials. He left the job in 1859, though it is unclear if he was fired or chose to leave.<sup>11</sup>

In 1860, while the nation seemed to be moving inexorably toward a major crisis between the slaveholding and free states, Whitman's poetic fortunes took a positive turn. In February, he received a letter from the Boston publishers William Thayer and Charles Eldridge, whose aggressive new publishing house specialized in abolitionist literature; they wanted to become the publishers of the new edition of *Leaves of Grass*. Whitman, readily agreed, and Thayer and Eldridge invested heavily in the stereotype plates for Whitman's idiosyncratic book—over 450 pages of varied typeface and odd decorative motifs, a visually chaotic volume all carefully tended to by Whitman, who traveled to Boston to oversee the printing. Whitman's time in Boston was the first extended period he had been away from New York since his trip to New Orleans and it was a transforming experience. He was surprised by the way African Americans were treated much more fairly and more as equals than was the case in New York, sharing tables with whites at eating houses, working next to whites in printing offices, and serving on juries. He also met a number of abolitionist writers who would soon become close friends and supporters, including William Douglas O'Connor and John Townsend Trowbridge, both of whom would later write at length about Whitman. He returned to New York at the end of May.

Just as suddenly as Whitman's fortunes had turned so unexpectedly good early in 1860, they now turned unexpectedly bad. The deteriorating national situation made any business investment risky, and Thayer and Eldridge compounded the problem by making a number of bad business decisions. At the beginning of 1861, they declared bankruptcy and sold the plates of *Leaves* to Boston publisher Richard Worthington, who would continue to publish pirated copies of this edition for decades, creating real problems for Whitman every time he tried to market a new edition.

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<sup>11</sup><http://www.notablebiographies.com/We-Z/Whitman-Walt.html>

Because of the large number of copies that Thayer and Eldridge initially printed, combined with Worthington's ongoing piracy.

In 1861 the Civil War broke out and it had huge effects on Whitman and he's entire family. Whitman's brother George immediately enlisted in the Union Army and would serve for the duration of the war, fighting in many of the major battles; he eventually was incarcerated as a prisoner-of-war in Danville, Virginia. George had a distinguished career as a soldier and left the service as a lieutenant colonel; his descriptions of his war experiences provided Walt with many of his insights into the nature of the war and of soldiers' feelings. Whitman's chronically ill brother Andrew would also enlist but would serve only three months in 1862 before dying. Whitman began visiting wounded soldiers who were moved to New York hospitals, in this time Whitman developed an interest in informal personal nursing.

Whitman and his family daily checked the lists of wounded in the newspapers, and one day in December 1862 the family was frightened by the appearance of the name of " G. W. Whitmore" on the casualty roster from Fredericksburg. Fearful that the name was George Washington Whitman's, Walt immediately headed to Virginia to seek out his brother. Changing trains in Philadelphia, Whitman's pocket was picked, and penniless, he continued his journey to Washington, where, he ran into William Douglas O'Connor, the writer and abolitionist he had met in Boston, who loaned him money. He finally found George in Fredericksburg who had only received a superficial facial wound. While Whitman spayed wit he's brother he got shocked from the bloody war and the wounded soldiers and decided to stay with George and help the wounded. He was running errands for them, writing letters for them, encircling them in his arms, Whitman tried, the best he could.<sup>12</sup>

While treating and comforting the soldiers Whitman decided to stay with the wounded solders who were moved to Washington. Here he got a room in the boarding house of William Douglas O'Connor and, through the efforts of Charles Eldridge he got a part-time job as a copyist in the Paymaster's office. In addition to his exhausting daily hospital rounds, he continued his job in the Paymaster's office. This work usually took up only a few hours a day, though occasionally Whitman had to go on trips to visit troops, as when he traveled to Analostan Island in July of 1863 where he was struck by the names of the black soldiers as the role was called "George Washington, John Quincy Adams, Daniel Webster, James Madison, John Brown". Whitman realized, that the African American soldiers, like Whitman's own brothers, bore the names of the nation's proud dead.

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<sup>12</sup><http://www.biography.com/articles/Walt-Whitman-9530126?part=1>

Meanwhile, the news from Whitman's family was not good. His brother Andrew was extremely ill, his brother Jesse was increasingly violent, his sister Hannah was miserable in a disastrous marriage to an abusive husband, and Whitman's mother wanted Walt home to help sort things out. Whitman did go back to New York for a visit and saw Andrew for the last time; Andrew died at age 36. The family problems were a deep concern to Whitman, but he nonetheless felt compelled to return to Washington and his soldier-friends there, to whom he wrote regularly during the weeks he was in New York. While in Washington Whitman met John Burroughs and this led to one of the most enduring friendships of Whitman's life; he spent most Sundays at the home of John Burroughs and his wife Ursula who also became one of Whitman's closest friends. During all the time of his hospital service, Whitman was writing poems, a new kind of poem for him, poems about the aftereffects of warfare. This was called *Drum-Taps*, the title evoking both the beating of the drums that accompanied soldiers into battle as well as the beating out of "Taps," the death march sounded at the burial of soldiers (originally played on the drums instead of the trumpet).<sup>13</sup>

In 1864 Whitman's brother George was captured by Confederate troops. During the early summer, Whitman began to complain of a sore throat, dizziness, and headache. Physician friends convinced him to go back to New York for a rest. Soon after he left Washington was attacked by the Confederates. In Brooklyn, Whitman could not stop doing what had now become both a routine and a reason for his existence: he visited wounded soldiers in New York-area hospitals. By the beginning of 1865, Whitman returned to Washington, which he now considered to be his home. Friends there had been working on getting him a better government position, and O'Connor helped arrange a clerkship in the Indian Bureau of the Department of the Interior. Whitman carried his *Drum-Taps* manuscript back to Washington, hoping that his increased income might allow him to publish the book. He moved to a new apartment and he began work in the Indian Bureau; his desk was in the U.S. Patent Office Building. As a clerk there, he met delegations of various Indian tribes from the West, and, just as he had come to know the geographical range of America through his hospital visits, so now he came to experience Native Americans. Whitman began the new appointment on January 24, 1865. A month later, on February 24, 1865, George was released from capture. By May 1, Whitman received a promotion to a slightly higher clerkship and published *Drum-Taps*.

Whitman's life was undergoing many changes in the weeks and months following the end of the war. Whitman met a twenty-one-year-old Irish immigrant and former Confederate soldier

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<sup>13</sup><http://www.biography.com/articles/Walt-Whitman-9530126?part=2>

named Peter Doyle and they became friends though Whitman felt more than friendship towards Doyle. This friendship would last for the rest of Whitman's life, and it was the most intense and romantic friendship the poet would have.

In May 1865 a new Secretary of the Interior, James Harlan set out to clean up his department, when he saw Whitman's working copy of the 1860 *Leaves of Grass* he was appalled and Whitman received a dismissal notice. Harlan also wanted to prevent Whitman from getting work in any other governmental agency. This led to O'Connor writing "The Good Gray Poet," that was published at the beginning of 1866 and had a major impact on the changing public perception of Whitman. His reputation was further restored with the release of his poem O Captain! My Captain!, a poem to Abraham Lincoln. Whitman became a clerk in the Attorney General's Office and held the job until 1874, when he forfeited it because of ill health.<sup>14</sup>

In August 1866, he took a month off in order to prepare a new edition of *Leaves of Grass* which would not be published until 1867 after difficulty in finding a publisher. In February 1868 *Poems of Walt Whitman* was published in England thanks to the influence of William Michael Rossetti, with minor changes that Whitman approved. The edition became popular in England,

especially with the aid of the highly respected writer Anne Gilchrist. In 1870 Whitman published *Democratic Vistas* and *Passage to India*. Whitman's celebration of engineers, architects, and machinists in "Passage to India" no doubt prompted the organizers of the 1871 exposition of the American Institute to invite him to deliver the opening poem. Thanks to this Whitman got \$100 payment and the publicity that would follow from distribution of a pamphlet through Roberts Brothers, a Boston publisher.

As early as in 1873, Whitman suffered from a paralytic stroke. His mother, whom he had been unusually close, passed away in the same year. Depressed and broken, Whitman moved to New Jersey to be with his brother George. Throughout the Camden years, the poet published steadily. Not long after his stroke, he expanded and reworked journalism and notebook entries in composing *Memoranda During the War* (1875-1876). The book was published at the end of Reconstruction. Whitman also released the so called "Author's Edition" or "Centennial Edition" of *Leaves of Grass*.

The English support of Whitman marked a culmination of interest that had been building since the publication of Rossetti's *Poems by Walt Whitman*. Of the many readers drawn to Whitman through this book, Anne Burrows Gilchrist was among the most important. They began to write to

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<sup>14</sup><http://www.thefamouspeople.com/profiles/walt-whitman-29.php>

each other and after a time she decided to meet the poet. After her arrival in Philadelphia in September 1876, they developed a warm friendship.

Whitman's work, repeatedly endorsed by English readers and by other European admirers, especially in France and Germany, received a further boost in 1881 when a mainstream Boston publisher, James R. Osgood & Co., decided to issue *Leaves of Grass* under its imprint in 1881-1882. But there was quite some trouble with the book as some parts had to be censored. But strangely, the "Calamus" section and other poems treating male-male love raised no concern. After some lines and words were replaced the books sales were low. In the 1880s George retired and moved to a farm outside of town, Walt refused to leave

Camden. With money saved from royalties from the 1881-1882 edition of *Leaves* combined with a loan from publisher George W. Childs, the poet bought a house at 328 Mickle Street. In March 1884 he moved into the only home he ever owned. Here he continued to write poems. He wrote the last version of leaves called: The Deathbed edition, that was technically a reissue of the 1881-1882 *Leaves* with supplemental material, appeared in Whitman's final year of life. In this volume, *Leaves* took its final shape as authorized by the poet. The first printing was a paperback copy to make sure it reached the poet before his death. Whitman was in very sick. For some time, he had been making preparations for the end. He had a large mausoleum built in Camden's Harleigh Cemetery, on a plot given to him in 1885, shortly after the cemetery was opened. The large tomb was paid for in part by Whitman with money donated to him so that he could buy a house in the country and in part by Thomas Harned, one of his literary executors. On December 24, 1891, the poet composed his last will and testament. Whitman was nursed in his final illness by Frederick Warren Fritzing, a former sailor. Walt Whitman died on March 26, 1892 the cause of death was miliary tuberculosis, with other contributing factors.



### III. Walt Whitman's Novelty

Truly American poetry, both in form and idea, is usually traced back to Walt Whitman, whose 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass* brought on the new type of poetry called free verse. This verse form took the blank verse of ten syllables, a line made of the King James' version of the Bible is full of free verse. It would be inaccurate to say that Whitman invented it. But he did popularize it and made it an important verse form for Americans.

This free verse poetry of Whitman is in many ways an expression of Whitman's democratic beliefs. Each line is a unit in itself, with end punctuation, a separate entry free of rhyme and set meter, just as he viewed each individual American as separate and free. The lines like the individuals in a democracy, work together to form a unit. These lines have a rhythm resembling the roll of the sea, which to Whitman represented a kind of freedom. He delighted in walking along the seashore, chanting lines from *Home* and *Virgil*, feeling the power of the sea. Also, his diction is that of the common man or woman, whom Whitman considered to be the bulwark of democracy.

If there is no set meter or rhyme, what, then, distinguishes this free verse of Whitman's from prose? First of all, the rhythms that he uses represent the ebb and flow of emotion: the sound fits the sense. He also uses repetition – repetition of words, of phrases, of initial sounds (alliteration), and of vowel sounds (assonance) – in addition to the usual metaphors and similes found in poetry. And, although there is no formal metric pattern, there is meter. Whitman often uses the device of writing one line of conventional poetry followed by a longer line in which we hear echoes of the meter of the conventional line.

In the following lines from "Song of Myself", a poem published in *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman expresses his idea of the role of the poet as a prophet, or seer. He uses the metaphor of the grass to indicate his belief in continuity, the relationship of all things, and the divine nature of all people and things. For him, everything is a manifestation, or symbol, of God. The controlled lines, the repetition, the various kinds of parallel construction, the metaphors, the assonance, and the alliteration all place these lines in the realm of poetry, not prose.

“Song of Myself”

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,  
And what I assume you shall assume,  
For every atom belongs to me as good belongs to you.

I loafe and invite my soul,  
I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass.

A child said: What is the grass? Fetching it to me with full hands;  
How could I answer the child? I do not know what it is any more than he.

I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of hopeful green stuff woven.

Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord,  
A scented gift and remembrances designedly dropt,  
Bearing the owner’s name someway in the corners,  
that we may see and remark, and say Whose?

And now it seems to me the beautiful uncut hair of graves.

What do you think has become of the young and old men?  
And what do you think has become of the women and children?

They are alive and well somewhere;  
The smallest sprout shows there is really no death,

All goes onward and outward – nothing collapses...

In the face of men and women I see God, and in my own face in the glass,  
I find letters from God dropt in the street, and every one is sign’d by God’s  
name, And I leave them where they are, for I know that wheresoe’er I go,  
Others will punctually come for ever and ever.

I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love; If  
you want me again look for me under your boot-soles.

You will hardly know what I am or what I mean,  
But I shall be good health to you nevertheless,  
And filter and fiber your blood.

Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged.  
Missing me one place search another.  
I stop somewhere waiting for you.

### **3.2 Heroes of Walt Whitman**

Walt Whitman separates himself from other writers of his time in that his heroes aren't of noble blood nor are they persons that are in high ranks. His heroes don't do huge acts of bravery nor honor; none of Whitman's main characters fight epic battles or save a princess from the claws of a mighty dragon. Whitman writes about the common workers and lets us see the beauty of trades and professions of his time, he writes about the life of the citizen and about the joy and beauty of everyday life. We can see this quite clearly in the next quotations from *Leaves of Grass*:

#### ***I 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.”

### 3.3 Free Verse

Whitman’s verse is known now as Cadenced verse which is one of the three categories of free verse. The Cadenced verse is today based on rhythmical phrases that are more irregular than those of traditional poetic meter. The type of Cadenced verse Whitman used was long verse-paragraphs composed of very long lines, the whole having a chanting, cumulative effect, as if of a poetic catalogue; indeed, the whole is reminiscent of the King James Version of the Bible. Whitman believed that the age of regular meter was over.<sup>15</sup>

When it is used, it tends to follow a looser pattern than would be expected in formal verse. Free verse does away with the structuring devices of regular meter and rhyme schemes.<sup>16</sup> Many people consider free verse to be a modern form of poetry. The truth is that it has been around for several centuries; only in the 20th century did it become one of the most popular forms of poetry. Its popularity stems from the belief that free verse is poetry without rules; after all, it doesn't rhyme, and it doesn't have a meter. However, what separates poetry from prose is the arrangement of carefully chosen words into verses.

There's more to free verse than a sudden thought recorded on paper. It is not that no rules apply to free verse; rather, the poet makes up the rules for each poem. Free verse that is done well will have rhythm, though it may not have a regular beat. A variety of poetic devices may be woven throughout the piece. There may be patterns of sound and repetition. Free Verse is more difficult to write than any other form, simply because the poet has more decisions to make. While in the traditional form, you know the exact measurement of the poem and so your task is easily defined. You need only follow the rules of the pattern. With free verse, there is

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<sup>15</sup><http://home.ca.inter.net/~grantsky/laterpoetry.html>

<sup>16</sup>[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free\\_verse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_verse)

no pattern until the poet creates one. For example Whitman broke his poems into stanzas where one would take a breath if it was read aloud.<sup>17</sup>

### 3.4 Equality of sexes

In the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the women's rights movement had not occurred, they had no rights and were treated according to the traditional model. They could only select from a limited number of work places and had to perform much more than an average male worker did to get the same salary. They were not allowed to vote and take part in politics altogether. Then in 1848 the first women's rights convention was held in Seneca Falls, New York. Where, after two days of discussion and debate, 68 women and 32 men signed a Declaration of Sentiments, which outlined grievances and settled the agenda for the women's rights movement. Here a set of twelve resolutions was adopted that called for equal treatment of women and men under the law and voting rights for women. The next step for the rights of women occurred in 1850 when the first National Women's Rights Convention took place in Worcester, Mass., attracting more than 1,000 participants. In 1869 Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton form the National Woman Suffrage Association that after a long struggle gives the right of voting for women and also allows women to take part in governmental work.<sup>18</sup>

Unlike as it was common place in the 19<sup>th</sup> century we can see in the poetry of Walt Whitman that he always saw women and men as equals. Whitman has a very unique approach to sexes and race as well. For Whitman neither sex, race or skin color has any negative prejudice as he loves the human body and says that all the bodies of humanity are perfectly made by Mother Nature. We may see this very clearly if we look at the following poems:

Extracts from: *I Sing the Body Electric*

“The love of the body of man or woman balks account, the body  
itself balks account,  
That of the male is perfect, and that of the female is perfect.”

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<sup>17</sup>[http://edhelper.com/ReadingComprehension\\_31\\_14.html](http://edhelper.com/ReadingComprehension_31_14.html)

<sup>18</sup><http://www.infoplease.com/spot/womenstimeline1.html>

“A man's body at auction,  
(For before the war I often go to the slave-mart and watch the sale,)  
I help the auctioneer, the sloven does not half know his business.”

“Have you ever loved the body of a woman?  
Have you ever loved the body of a man?  
Do you not see that these are exactly the same to all in all  
nations and times all over the earth?”

### ***Unfolded out of the Folds***

“Unfolded out of the folds of the woman man comes unfolded, and  
is always to come unfolded,  
Unfolded only out of the superbest woman of the earth is to come  
the superbest man of the earth,  
Unfolded out of the friendliest woman is to come the friendliest man,  
Unfolded only out of the perfect body of a woman can a man be  
form'd of perfect body,  
Unfolded only out of the inimitable poems of woman can come  
the poems of man, (only thence have my poems come;)  
Unfolded out of the strong and arrogant woman I love, only  
thence can appear the strong and arrogant man I love,  
Unfolded by brawny embraces from the well-muscled woman  
love, only thence come the brawny embraces of the man,  
Unfolded out of the folds of the woman's brain come all the  
folds of the man's brain, duly obedient,  
Unfolded out of the justice of the woman all justice is unfolded,  
Unfolded out of the sympathy of the woman is all sympathy; A  
man is a great thing upon the earth and through eternity, but  
every of the greatness of man is unfolded out of woman;  
First the man is shaped in the woman, he can then be shaped in himself.”

### **3.5 Leaves of Grass**

Few works have been as influential and important in American literature as the book of poems titled "Leaves of Grass," written by Walt Whitman. This book was the only one that Whitman ever published, and in it contains a great many poems spanning most of Whitman's adult life. The poems string together and can be seen as a long epic concerning Whitman's life and identity as a proud American. Whitman's poems range in topic from war and peace, to slavery and freedom, to sexuality and love. The setting is America, shown to us in great detail throughout many of the poems as Whitman perceived it, as a place of nature and a place for everyone. Reading this work allows one to enter the time and place of America in the late 1800's and feel what Whitman felt. In his poems he attempts to share the reason of his happiness with the reader through his descriptions of how perfect nature is, and how he appreciates all that is given to him by life. With the word grass Whitman addresses this through which he says grows everywhere for everyone and shows how we are all equal and the same.<sup>19</sup>

For Whitman, spiritual communion depends on physical contact, or at least proximity. The body is the vessel that enables the soul to experience the world. Therefore the body is something to be worshipped and given a certain primacy. Eroticism, particularly homoeroticism, figures significantly in Whitman's poetry. The erotic aspects of his poetry are meant to symbolize the intense but always incomplete connection between individuals. The affection Whitman shows for the bodies of others, both men and women, comes out of his appreciation for the linkage between the body and the soul and the communion that can come through physical contact. Whitman's style uses few metaphors or other kinds of symbolic language. Anecdotes are another favored device. By transmitting a story, often one he has gotten from another individual, Whitman hopes to give his readers a sympathetic experience. The kind of language Whitman uses sometimes supports and sometimes seems to contradict his philosophy. He often uses obscure, foreign, or invented words. This is meant to signify Whitman's status as a unique individual. Democracy does not necessarily mean sameness. The difficulty of some of his language also mirrors the necessary imperfection of connections between individuals. Whitman largely avoids rhyme schemes and other traditional poetic devices.<sup>20</sup>

Whitman addresses his sympathy for slaves through a scene that he describes himself allowing a slave to take refuge with him for a few days. To believe in the equality of slaves was not a popular idea in Whitman's time, and shows one of the topics of his poetry that could have been considered controversial. Whitman seems to have written his poetry without thought to the consent

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<sup>19</sup><http://www.freeessays.cc/db/18/edo267.shtml>

<sup>20</sup><http://www.sparknotes.com/poetry/whitman/analysis.html>

of all the social norms of his time period. He writes about nakedness being part of nature, and about loving men and women the same, and a great deal about war, death, past and future.

Walt Whitman takes as his model himself. The stated mission of his poetry was, in his words, to make an attempt to put a Person, a human being freely, fully, and truly on record. A truly democratic poetry, for Whitman, is one that, using a common language, is able to cross the gap between the self and another individual, to effect a sympathetic exchange of experiences. This leads to a distinct blurring of the boundaries between the self and the world and between public and private. Whitman prefers spaces and situations: like journeys, the outdoors, cities that allow for ambiguity in these respects.

As the poems progress, Whitman's tone seems to become more downcast with the onslaught of war and the state of the nation. He is obviously unhappy with the nature of so many young been dying in such horrible fashions and sympathizes with the soldiers by showing the reader the experience of a soldier. Whitman sees death as a natural thing not to be feared, but instead just as joyous and amazing as the idea of sudden life, but he still hates the idea of war tearing apart the country and destroying a generation of young men.

The techniques include such as extensive parallel structure, line breaks that emphasize a constant beat or sound of the poems, and very descriptive imagery. Along with these techniques, he demonstrates a great use of language that helps illustrate and specify exactly what he is trying to say. Although he shows a great knowledge of language, it can sometimes be difficult as a reader to follow the meaning of every line and every thought, as there are so many details and many words that are not commonly used.

Through “Leaves of Grass” the reader is given a truly American collection of poems that shows what was great about America, along with its problems, yet leaves us with a tone of optimism and happiness overall. Whitman shows us he was happy to be alive and live quietly among everything else. He shows us that we are really all the same, and that love is more important than hate or war. We see that death is not a bad thing in itself, but the horrific deaths that come with any war are not necessary.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>[http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/90875/literary\\_analysis\\_of\\_leaves\\_of\\_grass.html?cat=38](http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/90875/literary_analysis_of_leaves_of_grass.html?cat=38)



## I.V The Free Soil Party

In 1847 the New York State Democratic convention did not approve the Wilmot Proviso, an act that would have banned slavery in any territory belonging to the United States in the Mexican War. This caused half the members, known as "Barnburners" to walk out after denouncing the national platform. Lewis Cass, the Democratic Party's 1848 presidential nominee, supported popular sovereignty for determining the status of slavery in the United States territories. This stance encouraged the New York State democrats to join with anti-slavery Whigs and the majority of the Liberty Party to form the Free Soil Party, which was formalized in the summer of 1848. The Free Soilers nominated former Democratic President Martin Van Buren for president, along with Charles Francis Adams for vice president. The main party leaders were Salmon P. Chase of Ohio and John P. Hale of New Hampshire. The Free-Soilers' historic slogan calling for "free soil, free speech, free labor, and free men", this attracted small farmers, debtors, village merchants, and household and mill workers, who resented the prospect of black-labor competition.<sup>22</sup> The Free Soil candidates won 10% of the popular vote, but no electoral votes.

An interesting thing is that the free soil party didn't oppose slavery because it believed in the equality of man, but downplayed abolitionism and avoided the moral problems implicit in slavery. Members emphasized instead the threat slavery would pose to free white labor and northern businessmen in the new western territories. Although William Lloyd Garrison called the party's philosophy as "white manism", the approach appealed to many moderate opponents of slavery. The 1848 platform pledged to promote internal improvements, work for a homestead law, pay public

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<sup>22</sup><http://www.history.com/topics/free-soil-party>

debt, and support moderate tariffs for revenue only.

The Compromise of 1850 temporarily neutralized the issue of slavery and undercut the party's no-compromise position. Most Barnburners returned to the Democratic party, and the Free Soil Party became dominated by ardent anti-slavery leaders. The party ran John P. Hale in the 1852 presidential election, but its share of the popular vote shrank to less than 5%. However, two years later, after enormous outrage over the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, the remains of the Free Soil Party helped form the Republican party.<sup>23</sup>

## 4.2 Walt Whitman and abolitionism

Whitman's attitudes toward slavery and abolitionism can best be understood by tracing the development of his thinking from the mid-1840s until the Civil War. Whitman began his journalistic career as a Free-Soiler, but within several years his poetry changed to a much different and more sympathetic attitude toward slaves. In the 1855 *Leaves of Grass* Whitman's passages on slaves and slavery show a desire of equality for Africans, while at the same time argue for popular political positions, such as opposition to the Fugitive Slave Law. Whitman's attitude towards slavery evolves as time passes and slavery plays an important part in his development as a poet. Whitman consistently supported the Wilmot Proviso and the free-soil movement, beginning with his first editorials at the Brooklyn *Daily Eagle* until the 1850 Compromise. In his *Eagle* editorials in 1846-1847 Whitman argues, that the introduction of slavery into new territories would discourage, whites from migrating to those areas because white labor could not economically compete with slave labor. Whitman's opposition to slavery was directly connected to his dreams for the settlement and expansion of democracy into the West. "The voice of the North proclaims that labor must not be degraded," Whitman writes in a 27 April 1847 editorial. "The young men of the free States must not be shut out from the new domain by the *introduction* of an institution which will render their honorable industry no longer respectable" (*Gathering* 1:205-206). Whitman did not directly criticize the institution of slavery in the South and in fact opposed abolitionism, which he considered the work of radical extremists to destroy the compact of the Union. Whitman's seeming indifference to the plight of blacks in his journalism and early fiction reflects a standard attitude of

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<sup>23</sup>[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free\\_Soil\\_Party](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_Soil_Party)

many white Northerners, including the New York Democratic party's Barnburner faction, of which Whitman was a member.<sup>24</sup>

In 1848 Whitman became more active in the free-soil movement, he serving as a local delegate to a national convention in Buffalo, when the Free Soil party was born, and editing a short-lived free-soil newspaper, the *Brooklyn Freeman*. The Free Soil party could only elect a few members to Congress, but it was successful at forcing the Whigs and Democrats to consider slavery as the primary issue on the national agenda. By 1850, however, compromises between North and South weakened the free-soil movement so much that Whitman abandoned his free-soil journalism. The congress passed a series of resolutions that came to be known as the 1850 Compromise. Free-Soilers were outraged by several of these resolutions, including the organization of some Western territories without restrictions on slavery and a stringent Fugitive Slave Law. Yet Unionist sentiment prevailed, and Whitman, who had focused much of his journalistic writing on slavery, wrote three letters to the free-soil journal *National Era*.

As time passed Whitman was experimenting with an altogether different voice and attitude toward slavery. In 1847, this poetry shows a link between Whitman's sense of a poetic self and he's attitude toward slaves and slavery which are unlike of his free-soil journalism so far. Whitman's writing claiming to represent both slaves and their masters. Whitman adds: "I go with the slaves of the earth equally with the masters . . . Entering into both so that both will understand me alike" (*Notebooks* 1:67). Neither Whitman's radical egalitarianism nor his identification with slaves could have been anticipated by his free-soil journalism, with its focus on white labor. How Whitman achieved such a vision is not known clearly. One possibility is that reading Emerson, may have prompted Whitman toward a sense of his own divinity which he connected to the divinity of all others, including slaves. He may also have been touched by the experiences he got during a four-month stint as editor of the *New Orleans Crescent* in 1848, when he wrote about persons of color he witnessed on slave auctions. By the late 1840s Whitman had established a pattern of opposing the extension of slavery as a Free-Soiler. Whitman was not heard from as a journalist or a poet in the early 1850s. Yet when two national events in 1854 radically altered Northern attitudes about slavery, Whitman discovered an audience that would now be receptive both to his free-soil concerns and his new poetry about slaves. The passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in May infuriated many Northerners because it violated the fragile trust between North and South that had emerged with the 1850 Compromise. Northern reaction was further lifted when Anthony Burns, an escaped slave from Virginia, was arrested in Boston and placed under federal guard. When anger fomented by the

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<sup>24</sup>[http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/whitman/more/e\\_race.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/whitman/more/e_race.html)

Kansas-Nebraska bill inspired an attempt to rescue Burns in an attack on the courthouse, federal troops were called in to ensure Burns's return to his master. By June 1854 these two events ignited an explosion of antislavery sentiment in the North. Several Northern state legislatures called for the immediate repeal of both the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the Fugitive Slave Law. With the public mood shifting, Whitman published his poems in 1855. In the wake of recent events, *Leaves of Grass* portrays both the suffering and the dignity of African Americans, seen in the present as victims of slave-catchers.

Elsewhere in *Leaves of Grass* Whitman displays African Americans with great depth and sensitivity. In the portraits of the "negro" drayman in "Song of Myself" or of the slaves at auction in "I Sing the Body Electric," Whitman celebrates African-American beauty, dignity, and strength in contrast to popular stereotypes, and he demonstrates the centrality of black persons to the democratic future of America. "Examine these limbs, red, black or white," ("I Sing," section 7) Whitman says of the auctioned slave, figuring him as emblem of a multiracial body politic. In the 1855 poem Whitman gives voice to the slave's desire for vengeance which most Americans wished not to acknowledge: "I have been wronged . . . I am oppressed . . . I hate him that oppresses me, / I will either destroy him, or he shall release me" (1855 *Leaves*).<sup>25</sup>

After 1855 Whitman starts to move away from abolitionism, as none of the new poems in 1856 or 1860 contain passages longer than two lines on slavery. Moreover, Whitman's prose writings in these years appear to apologize for slavery and disavow any humane commitment to slaves. Whitman's seeming change of heart is due to the effect of historical circumstance on his fundamental understanding of slavery. Whitman consistently believed that slavery was to be judged according to its threats to democracy. In the late 1840s Whitman's free-soil writings respond to the threat to democracy posed by the extension of slavery into the West. By the late 1850s Whitman's antislavery rhetoric turns conciliatory in response to the threat to the very existence of the Union.

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<sup>25</sup>[http://www.whitmanarchive.org/criticism/current/encyclopedia/entry\\_51.html](http://www.whitmanarchive.org/criticism/current/encyclopedia/entry_51.html)

## **Conclusion**

There are many great poets in the history of America, but only a few that had such creativity and sensibility that innovated the way of thinking for a whole nation and introduced novelties to America and Europe alike. One of these important poets that had a huge impact on modern literature was Walt Whitman, who is one of the most innovative and influential American poets of the nineteenth century. Whitman is an experimental poet, a radical democrat, and a historical personality in the era of the American Civil War, the growth of the great cities, and the westward expansion of the United States. He is known as the poet of the common people and also as the poet of democracy.

In our work we introduced what kind of life Walt Whitman had. From this we may conclude that Whitman's life was full of challenges starting from his childhood in which he had to support his family from an early age continuing in that he had only minimal institutional education thanks to this. Whitman's knowledge of the world as well as his poetry comes from his own experiences and from his self education, and this greatly separates him from poets of his time, who have mostly second hand experience about how the working class citizens of the country live their lives. Whitman was a working class man who had several jobs and he also took part in the Civil War as a nurse.

Walt Whitman's poetry is collected in one book *Leaves of Grass*, to which new poems are added that, ranges in topic from war and peace, to slavery and freedom, to sexuality and love. We show in what Whitman's work differs from that of other poets of his time and what makes him outstanding and unique in his works. Whitman was a part of the transition between Transcendentalism and realism, incorporating both views in his works.

Truly American poetry, both in form and idea, is usually traced back to Walt Whitman, whose 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass* brought on the new type of poetry called free verse. This verse form took the blank verse of ten syllables, a line made of the King James' version of the Bible is full of free verse. It would be inaccurate to say that Whitman invented it. But he did popularize it and made it an important verse form for Americans.

This free verse poetry of Whitman is in many ways an expression of Whitman's democratic beliefs. Each line is a unit in itself, with end punctuation, a separate entry free of rhyme and set meter, just as he viewed each individual American as separate and free. The lines like the individuals in a democracy, work together to form a unit. These lines have a rhythm resembling the roll of the sea, which to Whitman represented a kind of freedom. He delighted in walking along the seashore, chanting lines from Homer and Virgil, feeling the power of the sea. Also, his diction is that of the common man or woman, whom Whitman considered to be the bulwark of democracy.

If there is no set meter or rhyme, what, then, distinguishes this free verse of Whitman's from prose? First of all, the rhythms that he uses represent the ebb and flow of emotion: the sound fits the sense. He also uses repetition – repetition of words, of phrases, of initial sounds (alliteration), and of vowel sounds (assonance) – in addition to the usual metaphors and similes found in poetry. And, although there is no formal metric pattern, there is meter. Whitman often uses the device of writing one line of conventional poetry followed by a longer line in which we hear echoes of the meter of the conventional line.

## Conclusion

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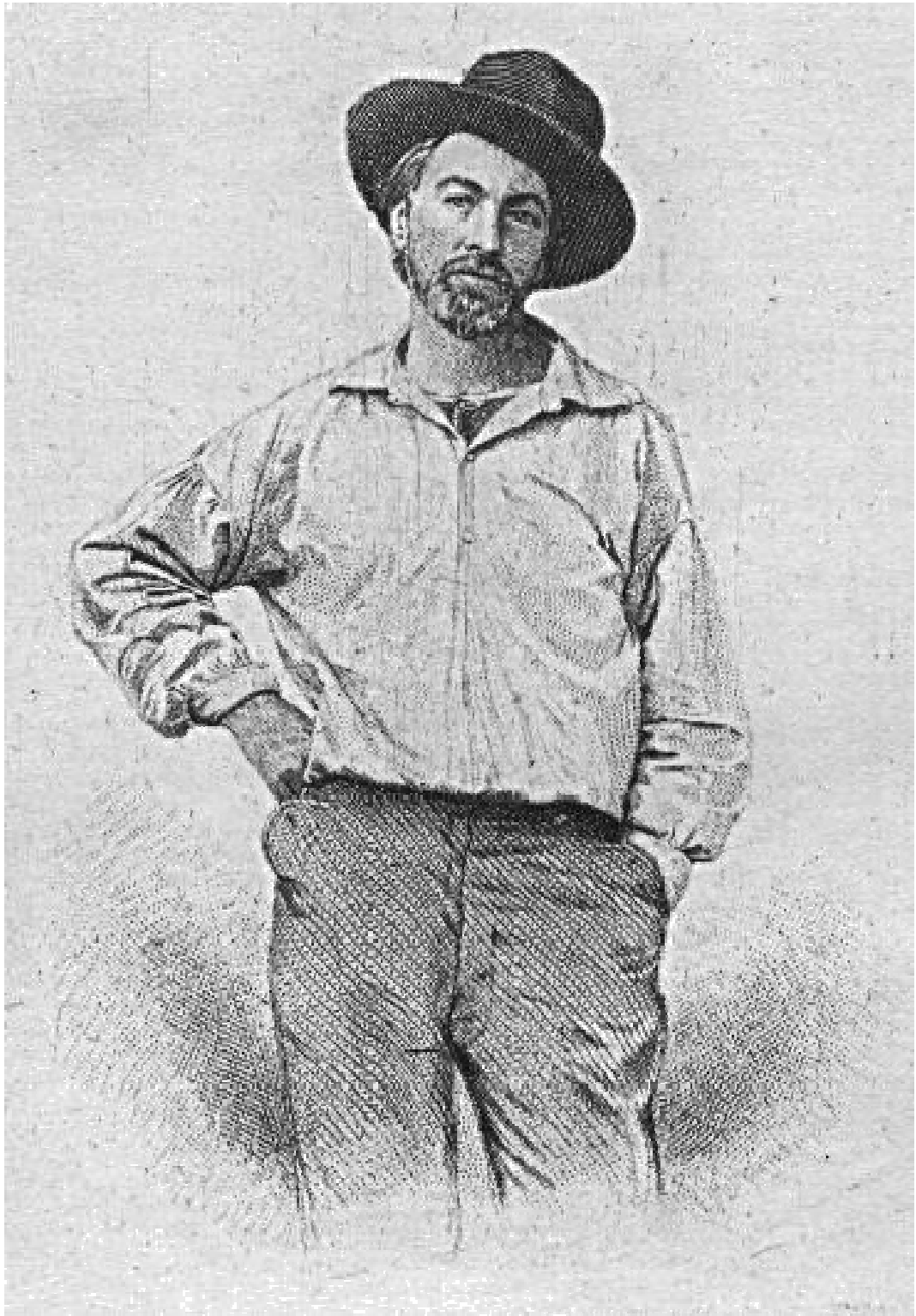
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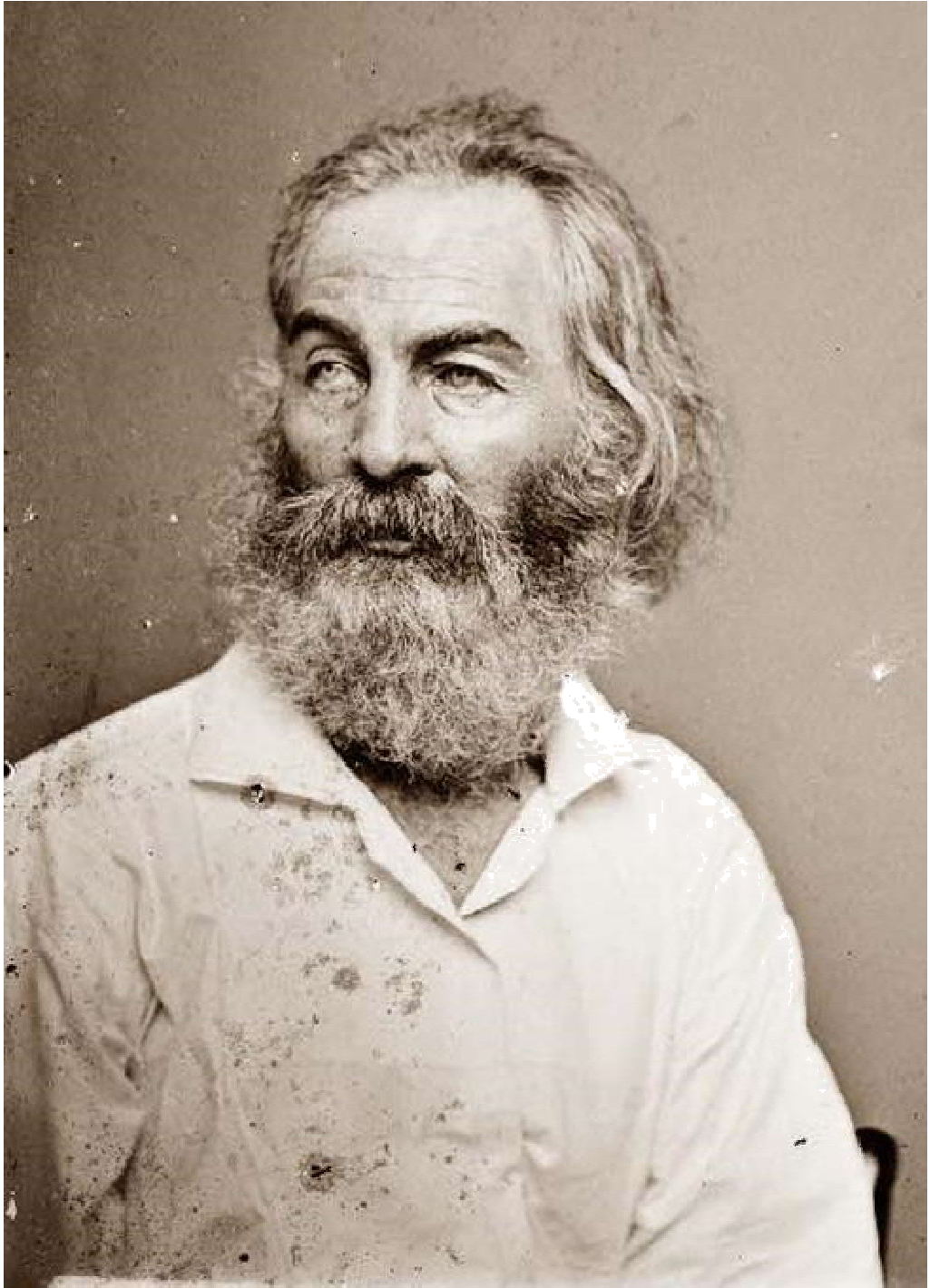
**Walt Whitman thought the ages**



1848. Photographer unknown. Courtesy Walt Whitman House, Camden, New Jersey. This daguerreotype was made in New Orleans, during Whitman's residence there between February and May, 1848, while he worked on the New Orleans Crescent.



Walt Whitman, age 37, frontispiece to *Leaves of Grass*, Fulton St., Brooklyn, N.Y., steel engraving by Samuel Hollyer



About 1862. Mathew Brady, New York. Courtesy Alderman Library, University of Virginia.



About 1866. Mathew Brady, Washington. Courtesy Ohio Wesleyan University, Bayley Collection.<sup>26</sup>

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26 [http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/s\\_z/whitman/photos.htm](http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/s_z/whitman/photos.htm)



1887 New York, by photographer George C. Cox. The image is said to have been Whitman's favorite from the Cox photo-session; there were about seven images made at that time.<sup>27</sup>

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27 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Walt\\_Whitman\\_edit\\_2.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Walt_Whitman_edit_2.jpg)

## Резюме

В історії Америки було багато поетів, але тільки деякі з них володіли такою креативністю і чутливістю щоб змінити мислення нації як в Америці та і в Європі. Волт Вітмен – один із найвпливовіших і прогресивніших поетів XIX століття. Вітмен був новатором, радикальним демократом одим із історичних особистостей в одній особі. Волт Вітмена називають ще називають демократичним поетом, а також поетом простого народу!

Наша робота показала життя Вітмена. Помітно, що його життя було наповнене труднощами і викликами, ще з дитинства. Вітмен мав невеликий шкільний досвід. Його розумові здібності і поезія походить з особистого досвіду і самоосвіти.

Це виділяє його серед поетів часу, яким не відомо життя робочого класу. Вітмен був працюютою людиною, яка за своє життя займала чимало посад, і приймав участь у Громадянській війні як медбрат.

Поезія Вайта Вітмена знаходиться в одній книзі, яку він доповнював на протязі життя. Ця книга «Leaves of grass» яка містила в собі теми: кохання, сексуальності, війни, миру, свободи і рабовласництва. Ця робота показала в чому відрізняються роботи Вітмена, в яких він був неперевершений, від робіт інших поетів.

Справжню американську історію можна звести до Волт Вітмена, який і формою і змістом оновив літературу вільного вірша. Помилково вважати, що В.Вітмен винайшов вільний вірш, але він був тим хто прославив його. В кожному рядку окрема сутність, без будь-якої привязаності до рими і від цього ніби то окрема цілісність, як і кожна вільна людина-окрема особистість. Рядки як і демократія-люди співпрацюють, щоб створити єдину цілісність. Ритм рядків подібний до хвиль моря, які для Волт Вітмена означають свободу. Волт Вітмена любив прогулянки біля моря, цитуючи рядки Віргілуса. Стиль Волт Вітмена - це стиль простих людей, яких він вважав головною ізоюинкою демократії.

Крім відсутності ритму у вірші, що відрізняє вільний вірш від прози? Насамперед те, що ритм рядків керується ритмом мислення. Крім цього Волт Вітмен використовує повторення, слова, терміни, початкові літери повторюються біля звичних метафор і порівнян, при написанні віршів. Хоча нема формальної рими, але є уявлення, картинка - сутність



вірша. Волт Вітмен часто писав рядки з звичайною римою, які продовжував довшим рядком в якому розкривав сутність звичайного рядка.

## **Nyilatkozat**

Alulírott, Popovics János angol nyelv és irodalom szakos hallgató, kijelentem, hogy a dolgozatom a II. Rákóczi Ferenc Kárpátaljai Magyar Főiskolán, a Filológiai Tanszéken készítettem, angol nyelv és irodalom diploma megszerzése végett.

Kijelentem, hogy a dolgozat más szakon korábban nem védtem meg, saját munkám eredménye, és csak a hivatkozott forrásokat (szakirodalom, eszközök stb.) használtam fel.

Tudomásul veszem, hogy dolgozatomat a II. Rákóczi Ferenc Kárpátaljai Magyar Főiskola könyvtárában a kölcsönözhető könyvek között helyezik el.