

11/12 APRIL 2017



**Walt Whitman**

Portrait from 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass*  
Engraving by Samuel Hollyer,  
from a daguerreotype taken by Gabriel Harrison in NYC, July 1854

Of the day the original daguerreotype was taken, Whitman remembered, “I was sauntering along the street: the day was hot: I was dressed just as you see me there. A friend of mine— ‘Gabriel Harrison (you know him? ah! yes!—he has always been a good friend!)’—stood at the door of his place looking at the passers-by. He cried out to me at once: ‘Old man!—old man!—come here: come right up stairs with me this minute’—and when he noticed that I hesitated cried still more emphatically: ‘Do come: come: I’m dying for something to do.’ This picture was the result.” [...] Though the image portrayed him as he was that summer day, Whitman later worried it sent the wrong message, “The worst thing about this is, that I look so damned

flamboyant—as if I was hurling bolts at somebody—full of mad oaths—saying defiantly, to hell with you!" He also worried about the portrait because "Many people think the dominant quality in Harrison's picture is its sadness," but he nevertheless liked the portrait "because it is natural, honest, easy: as spontaneous as you are, as I am, this instant, as we talk together." [...] The engraving appeared in the 1855 and 1856 editions of *Leaves of Grass*, then again in the 1876 and 1881-1882 (and following) editions [...] In reprinting it in the 1881 edition, Whitman insisted on its facing "Song of Myself" because the portrait "is involved as part of the poem." Some of Whitman's friends did not share his enthusiasm for the image; William Sloane Kennedy, for example, hoped "that this repulsive, loaferish portrait, with its sensual mouth, can be dropped from future editions, or be accompanied by other and better ones that show the mature man, and not merely the defiant young revolter of thirty-seven, with a very large chip on his shoulder, no suspenders to his trousers, and his hat very much on one side." Whitman recalled how, when the 1855 *Leaves of Grass* came out, the portrait "was much hatchelled by the fellows at the time—war was waged on it: it passed through a great fire of criticism." William O'Connor liked it, Whitman said, "because of its portrayal of the proletarian—the carpenter, builder, mason, mechanic," but Whitman didn't share his view.

image and text from <http://whitmanarchive.org/multimedia/image003.html?sort=year&order=ascending&page=1>

Greetings, AMLit Scholars—

It's time for us to move forward and read some new poetry! Here's how we'll roll today!:

**1. WEDGE**—Before the event fades from memory, reflect for roughly ten minutes on the experience of taking the unit test. In retrospect, anticipate your performance on the exercise. What preparation steps helped to make you ready to succeed on the test? If you had it to do over again (you will!) what adjustments would you make to your preparation?

**2. Time Travel**—We're going to pretend it's 1855 and then all freak out together.

**3. Getting Acquainted with Walt Whitman**—We'll work on following these steps:

A. Actively read the brief biography of Walt Whitman and the poems selected in our reading packet.

B. On your section's GoogleSheet, claim one of the poems listed below.

C. Type up and print a hard copy of your poem, from which you will read aloud to your classmates when next we meet.

**N.B.** Cutting-and-pasting a copy of your poem from the interwebs is dangerous because many of these poems were published in multiple versions! You must have the correct version of the poem. Make sure that your version of the poem matches the version on our handout.

D. Practice reading your poem aloud. Your reading will produce a "Participation" mark so make sure you know how to pronounce all the words and can deliver a reading that reveals your understanding of the meaning of the poem.

The poems:

1. "I Hear America Singing"
2. "Once I Passed Through a Populous City"
3. "Recorders Ages Hence"
4. "When I Heard at the Close of Day"
5. "I Saw in Louisiana a Live-Oak Growing"
6. "I Heard It Was Charged Against Me"
7. "On the Beach at Night"
8. "Patroling Barnegat"
9. "The Dalliance of Eagles"
10. "Beat! Beat! Drums"
11. "Bivouac on a Mountain Side"
12. "Oh Captain! My Captain!"
13. "A Noiseless Patient Spider"
14. "Excelsior"
15. "Old War Dreams"
16. "Had I the Choice"
17. "Yonnonidio"

**4. Emulating Walt Whitman**—We'll take a quick look at a handout posted to the Moodle page, consider any questions that arise, and then begin to emulate Old Walt by writing our own poems!

Tappa! Tappa! Tappa!—  
Mr Leo

**Homework:**

**Pearls Before Swine**

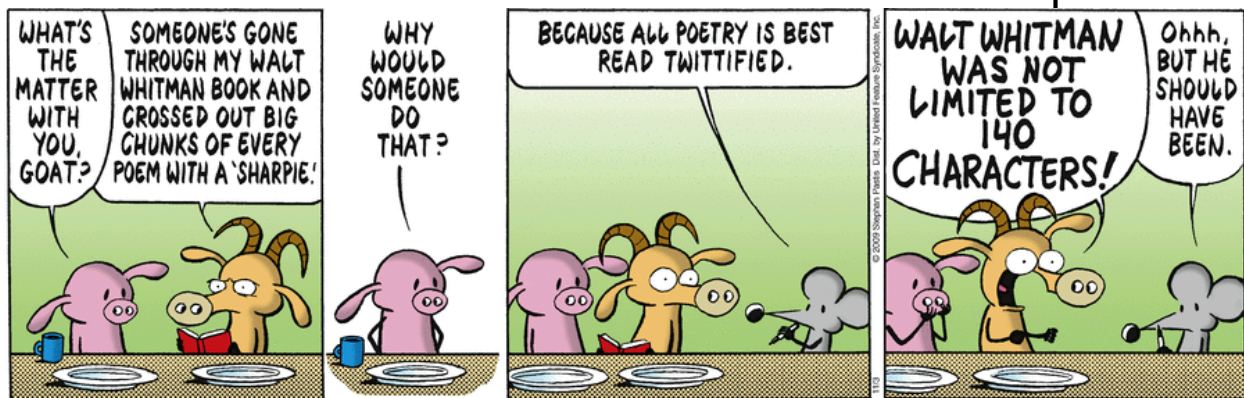


image from <http://www.gocomics.com/pearlsbeforeswine/2009/11/03>

1. Prepare to read your Walt Whitman poem aloud to your classmates. Your recitation will be assessed for your dramatic interpretation of the text.
2. Complete the Emulating Walt Whitman assignment in preparation for the Poetry Workshop that will happen when next we meet.