

“O Captain! My Captain!”

VOCABULARY

weather’d: an archaic way of saying “weathered,” which means “to survive” an event

sought: past participle of the word “seek”

keel: part of the underside of a boat

vessel: a large boat

trills: repeating high-pitched sound from the instrument

eager: very interested or enthusiastic

mournful: full of sorrow, sadness or grief

tread: walk or step

[Walt Whitman wrote this poem about the assassination of President Lincoln after the Civil War. In its powerful imagery, the United States is portrayed as a ship that has just weathered the most terrible storm of the Civil War.]

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done;
 The ship has weather’d every rack, the prize we
 sought is won;
 The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
 While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim
 and daring;
 But O heart! heart! heart!
 O the bleeding drops of red,
 Where on the deck my Captain lies,
 Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
 Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills;
 For you bouquets and ribbon’d wreaths—for you the shores a-crowding;
 For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;
 Here Captain! dear father!
 This arm beneath your head;
 It is some dream that on the deck,
 You’ve fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still;
 My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will;
 The ship is anchor’d safe and sound, its voyage closed and done;
 From fearful trip, the victor ship, comes in with object won;
 Exult, O shores, and ring, O bells!
 But I, with mournful tread,
 Walk the deck my Captain lies,
 Fallen cold and dead.

- Walt Whitman