

Poet:

Whitman

Form:

Elegy

What are the key traits of this form?

- somber lament for the dead
- serious / formal

Title

O Captain! My Captain!

Is the title significant to the poem's meaning if so, how?

metaphor (Lincoln = Captain)

[intense emotion]

personal reaction to Lincoln's death

Paraphrase

Go stanza by stanza, writing in your own words what happens in the poem.

Break up your paraphrase by starting a new paragraph for each new stanza.

① Coming home victorious on a battleship, the speaker realizes the captain is dead.

② the crowds are gathered to celebrate; the speaker cannot believe the captain is dead.

③ He reveals that the Captain is his father + accepts his death; but makes clear that the celebration of victory is tinged w/ sadness.

Connotations

How do poetic devices contribute to the poem's meaning/effect? It is not necessary to identify all poetic devices present. Focus on poetic devices that help support the conclusions drawn about what the poem does and means.

Speaker of ^{Whitman} Persona

"Son" despairing over

"Father's" death
Lincoln

Setting

a ship coming into port, returning from war

Dominant Images

bells, cheers, crowds, hugs, blood, pale corpse, flowers

Diction

celebratory words

grief / mournful words

Figurative & Rhetorical Language →

→ Apostrophe - Addressing someone dead

→ extended metaphor

Captain = Lincoln

Ship = America

tearful trip = Civil War

Sound Devices

* repetition

"heart heart heart" "for you"

"rise up"

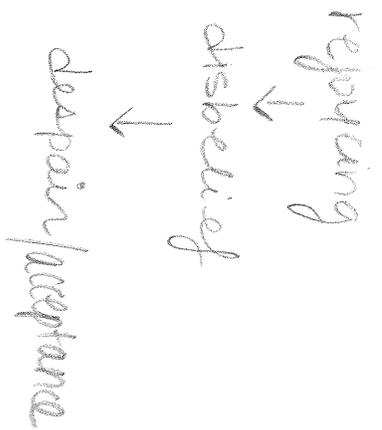
"does not"

"fallen cold + dead"

Attitude

Determine the **tone** of the poem.

What attitude toward the subject comes through in the speaker's words? Diction, imagery, and other details can help one figure out the speaker's tone. Use your tone words list. Remember, tone is often multi-layered and can shift!



Shifts

Often, a poem shows the speaker gaining understanding or insight through experience or contemplation. Shifts may be indicated by transition words, punctuation, stanza divisions, changes in line/stanza length, changes in sound, and changes in diction. Often, tone shifts indicate a shift in perspective or message.

If the poem is written in a standardized form, like a sonnet or a ballad, breaking from that form's conventions can also indicate a shift in subject, tone, perspective, or message. Look for changes or variations from the poem's normal meter, rhythm, and rhyme scheme.

- ① 1st 4 lines of each octave are long + iambic; last 4 are short + change to "amphibrachs" (v-v) (suggests agitation + intense grief)
- ② Tone goes from triumph to sadness to acceptance

Theme

What does the poem do?

Choose a verb (or a few verbs) to accurately state what the poem does. Is it meant to describe, compare, examine, narrate, argue, expose, reveal, depict, or show something?

- Shows America's deep sorrow of Lincoln's death
- mourns Lincoln's death

What does the poem mean?

What is the message (**theme**) of the poem?
What is it saying about people or about life?
What is the reader meant to learn about the subject(s) of the poem?

- The war is over, but the wounds are not healed.
- Americans are both rejoicing over the victory + mourning the loss of life / Lincoln.