

Elegy for Lincoln: Walt Whitman's Poem

President Abraham Lincoln shot by John Wilkes Booth and died on April 15, 1865 in Washington, D.C. The Civil War had ended just six days earlier when Confederate General Lee surrendered to Union General Grant.

Later in 1865 Walt Whitman, a poet and journalist, wrote the poem "O Captain! My Captain!" about Lincoln and his tragic death. The poem is an elegy, which is a serious poem usually about someone's death.

O Captain! My Captain!

by Walt Whitman

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.

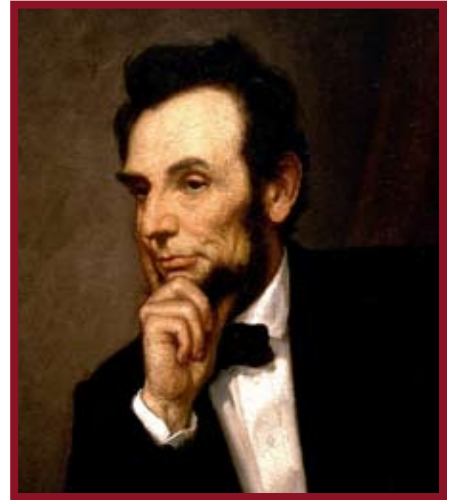
O Captain! My Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills;
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for you the shores a-crowding;
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;

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.

Name: _____



Short Answer

1. Who does the Captain represent in the poem?

2. What does the ship represent in the poem?

3. What do bells and "bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths" represent in the poem?

4. Give two examples of alliteration in the poem.

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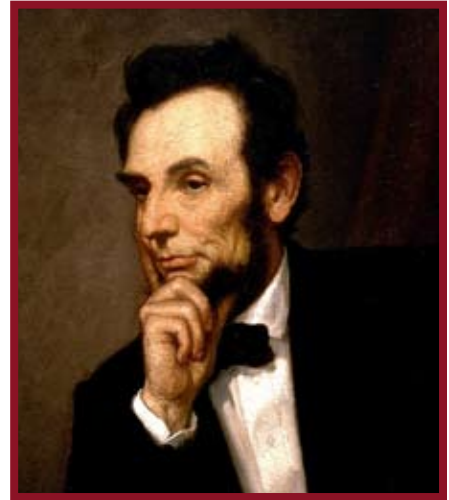
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Name: _____ **Key**



**Student's answers will vary;
example of correct answers:**

Short Answer

1. Who does the Captain represent in the poem?

Abraham Lincoln

2. What does the ship represent in the poem?

the United States

3. What do bells and "bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths" represent in the poem?

**the celebration honoring the
victory in the Civil War**

4. Give two examples of alliteration in the poem.

flag is flung

safe and sound