

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—or 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 anchored 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.

T An ode or praise to a leader

P The ship has weathered the storm; all are happy. But the speaker finds the Captain bleeding and dead on the deck.

The speaker urges the Captain to hear the celebration, which is for him. But the Captain is unable to. The ship has safely landed, but the Captain's is dead.

C *Exulting, rise up, swaying mass* portray a celebratory feeling. *Bleeding drops of red, cold and dead, pale and still, and mournful tread* indicate sadness and loss.

A The speaker alternates between joyful and mournful, joyful that the ship has arrived safely, but mournful, because the Captain is dead.

S No shift in speaker, but a shift in attitude in first two stanzas: opening lines are happy, while the last four lines are sorrowful. The final stanza is full of grief.

T Not just praising a leader, but mourning his passing.

T Even the greatest victories involve tragedy.

A good leader gives of himself for the well-being of his followers.