

“I Hear America Singing” by Walt Whitman (poem on the last page)

Notes on I Hear America Singing

- Define the American Dream

- Info on Walt Whitman

- Define realism and transcendentalism **IN YOUR OWN WORDS**

- What was Whitman’s vision for America?

- When was the poem written

- Setting of the poem

- What style is the poem written in and what is it supposed to sound like

- Why did Whitman write this poem

- What criticism does the poem have in modern day

- **After reading the poem**

- Who is included in Whitman's version of America?

- What kinds of jobs are represented?

- What does Whitman seem to celebrate? Who/What is this celebration for?

- What's missing? Consider everything we talked about the previous week about the American Dream.

Quick Summary Response

Walt Whitman (1819–1892) was a 19th-century American poet known for breaking the rules of traditional poetry. Instead of using rhyme and strict structure, he wrote in free verse—a style that sounds more like natural speech.

Whitman is often called the “**poet of the people**” because he celebrated everyday Americans: the carpenter, the teacher, the farmer, the mechanic. He believed that all kinds of work had dignity and that every voice deserved to be heard.

His most famous collection, *Leaves of Grass*, grew over his lifetime and reflected his big ideas about democracy, individuality, and the American spirit. At a time when the country was divided (especially before and during the Civil War), Whitman wanted to remind people that America was made strong by its diversity and its people.

In poems like “I Hear America Singing,” Whitman creates a kind of musical portrait of the nation—filled with voices, jobs, and lives working together in harmony.

Response:

- In relation to the poem, is it justified to call Whitman the “poet of the people”? Why or why not?
- Which community do you think Whitman is mostly associated with? Can he be considered the poet of all the people?
- Organise your response into 2 paragraphs + 1 line from the poem

Last thing for today:

One word to describe the tone of the poem and one sentence explaining why.

I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,
Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be blithe and strong,
The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam,
The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves off work,
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat, the deckhand
singing on the steamboat deck,
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter singing as he stands,
The wood-cutter's song, the ploughboy's on his way in the morning, or
at noon intermission or at sundown,
The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young wife at work, or of
the girl sewing or washing,
Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,
The day what belongs to the day—at night the party of young fellows,
robust, friendly,
Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.

Vocabulary:

1. Blithe - is an adjective describing a happy, carefree, or cheerful disposition. It can also mean lacking proper thought, concern, or consideration, implying a nonchalant attitude
2. Mason - a skilled craftsman who builds and repairs structures using stone, brick, concrete block, or similar materials
3. Deckhand - a maritime crew member responsible for manual labor, maintenance, and cleaning on ships, boats, and yachts under the direction of a captain
4. Robust describes something or someone strong, healthy, sturdy, or capable of performing without failure under various conditions
- 5.