

O Captain! My Captain! Literary Device

Writer: Walt Whitman | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

Symbols

- **Captain:** The Captain is a symbol of President Abraham Lincoln. The poet imagines Lincoln as the captain of the ship. The Captain's death represents the death of the great leader of the nation.
- **Ship:** The ship symbolizes the United States or the whole nation. The end of the ship's voyage means the Civil War has ended. The ship reaches the harbor safely, but the Captain is dead, so victory is mixed with grief.
- **Fearful Trip:** This symbolizes the American Civil War. The war was terrifying and bloody. Although it ended successfully, Lincoln's death afterward filled the nation with sorrow.
- **Bells and Exulting Crowd:** These symbolize the national celebration of victory. People rejoice because the war is over. But the poet cannot join this joy due to his personal grief. Thus, they show the contrast between joy and mourning.
- **Deck:** The deck symbolizes both reality and national life. The Captain's dead body lying on the deck means that the leader died at the very center of the nation.
- **Bleeding Drops of Red:** These symbolize Lincoln's sacrifice and assassination. To the poet, they present a dreadful image of grief and loss.

Main Message - O Captain! My Captain!

- Death comes even in victory.
- Leaders may die, but their spirit remains.