

1819

Birth of Whitman



Whitman's birthplace. Library of Congress

Walter Whitman is born on May 31 in Long Island, New York, to Louisa and Walter Whitman.

1836-55

Early Career

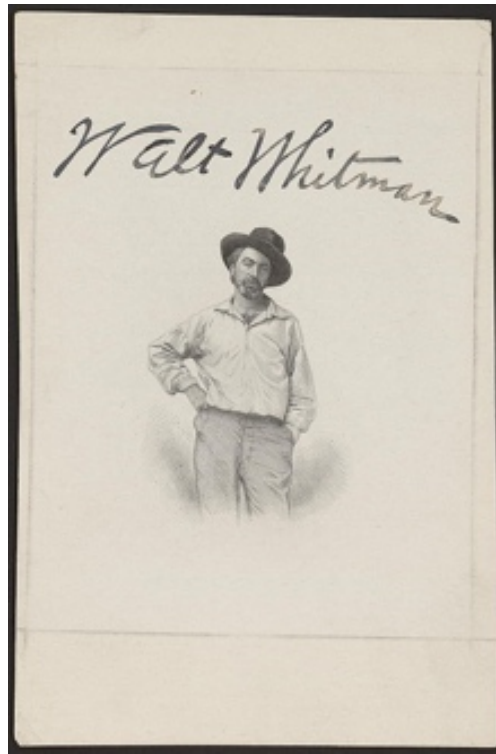


Whitman in 1848 pbs.org

Whitman teaches school and runs a newspaper on Long Island. In 1841 he moves to New York city. While there, he attends an opera performance and is inspired by the passion and power of the music. He goes on to write for several newspapers, including music criticism.

1855

Landmark publication

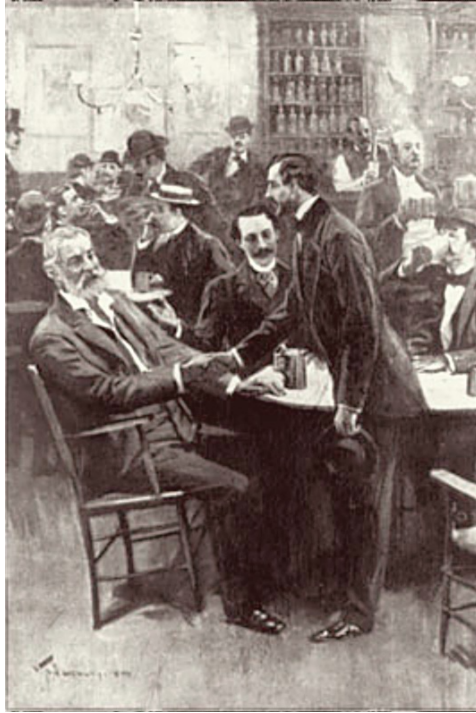


Library of Congress

The first edition of *Leaves of Grass* is printed in Brooklyn.

1857-9

A New York Bohemian



Walt Whitman, seated. Library of Congress

Walt Whitman spends time at Pfaff's restaurant
with a circle of writers and artists.

*The vault at Pfaffs where the drinkers and laughers meet to eat and drink and carouse
While on the walk immediately overhead pass the myriad feet of Broadway
As the dead in their graves are underfoot hidden
And the living pass over them, recking not of them,
Laugh on laughers!
Drink on drinkers!
Bandy the jest!
Toss the theme from one to another!*

1862-64

Civil War Service

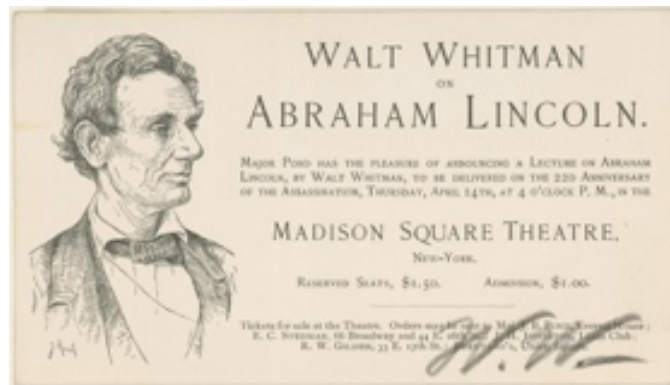
Walt Whitman moves to Washington, DC to nurse wounded soldiers. The experience moves him profoundly and inspires some of his most expressive poetry.

*The hurt and the wounded I pacify with soothing hand,
I sit by the restless all the dark night — some are so young;
Some suffer so much — I recall the experience sweet and sad;
(Many a soldier's loving arms about this neck have cross'd and rested,
Many a soldier's kiss dwells on these bearded lips.)*

— Walt Whitman, "The Dresser" (1867, later titled "The Wound-Dresser")

1865-1885

Mature Writer and Public Intellectual



"Ticket of admission to an 1887 lecture by Walt Whitman on Abraham Lincoln,"
initialed by Whitman at lower right. New York Public Library

Whitman continues to revise *Leaves of Grass*
and enjoys an international reputation as
author and lecturer.

1892

Death of Walt Whitman



Tomb of Walt Whitman (Library of Congress)

Walt Whitman dies on March 26. Thousands view his body and his funeral was a major public event.