

4.3 O Captain! My Captain!

Warming up!

Chit-Chat

- Discuss the following with your classmates.
 - What are the important games played in your school?
 - Who are the captains of the various team-games? Name them.
 - What is the role played by a team-games captain? What are his/her responsibilities?
 - What is the role of a Captain of a ship? What are the responsibilities of a Captain of a ship?

- In pairs find as many meaningful words as you can from the following grid within five minutes. You can find words horizontally and vertically. (Hint- The words are related to battles or battle-ships. For example, soldier Achievement Scale.

5 to 6 words	7 to 9 words	10 to 12 words	13 to 15 words	16 or more words
Average	Good	Very Good	Excellent	Genius

a	o	s	u	k	t	u	h	n	r	o	o	x	t	w	y
v	v	o	y	b	g	e	k	p	c	q	u	b	s	l	p
q	s	q	p	c	c	n	u	p	l	s	b	o	a	r	d
n	d	j	b	r	a	v	e	d	g	f	g	z	i	g	n
e	f	p	g	u	a	r	s	k	x	u	r	n	l	t	k
x	n	a	v	i	g	a	t	i	o	n	n	c	o	h	j
s	l	m	q	s	s	a	l	u	t	e	k	r	r	v	s
t	g	n	f	e	x	g	t	y	s	r	p	b	f	i	o
e	j	y	w	h	b	n	t	a	g	a	f	z	t	c	l
e	c	o	m	p	a	s	s	n	a	l	i	g	h	t	t
r	h	c	n	q	t	n	g	c	w	n	i	j	k	o	q
v	t	p	d	n	t	b	c	h	d	n	l	p	c	r	t
r	s	g	n	p	l	t	z	o	j	m	a	r	t	y	r
s	o	l	d	i	e	r	w	r	n	t	w	q	g	c	p

- **weather'd every rack** : overcome every difficulty
- **exulting** : rejoicing and celebrating
- **keel** : the strong base of a boat or ship which supports its entire framework
- **grim** : serious
- ✦ What is the location of the battle ship?
- ✦ How are the people waiting to welcome the captain of the ship?
- ✦ Why is the speaker filled with grief?
- ✦ In what state does the captain lie on the deck?
- **trills** : plays loudly
- **wreaths** : garlands
- **mass** : crowd of people
- **some dream** : here, something hard to believe
- **mournful** : very sorrowful
- **tread** : footsteps

O Captain! My Captain!

Walt Whitman (1819 - 1892) was an American poet, essayist and journalist. He was the most influential poet in the American canon, often called the father of 'free verse'. He breaks the boundaries of poetic form. He also used unusual images and symbols in his poetry.

The poem is an elegy to the speaker's recently deceased captain. While the nation is celebrating the victory of the battle, the speaker is mourning the loss of its great leader. The poem has a direct reference to the assassination of Abraham Lincoln after the American Civil war was won.

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.

— Walt Whitman

1. Pick out from the poem all words related to ‘Ship’. Make a list of them in a Word Register.

- | | |
|-----------|--------------|
| (a) Port | (e) |
| (b) | (f) |
| (c) | (g) anchored |
| (d) | (h) |

2. Read the poem again and complete the following sentences.

- (a) The Captain lies on the deck
- (b) The Captain doesn’t answer as
- (c) Captain does not feel anything
- (d) The bugle and flag are

3. The poem has a direct reference to the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln on 15th April, 1865, after the Civil War was won. Match the symbols/ images in Column A with what they refer to, in Column B.

A	B
1. the ship	(a) victory in the war
2. the fearful trip/voyage	(b) the President of USA
3. the port	(c) United States of America
4. the bells ringing	(d) lifeless/dead
5. Captain	(e) the deathly Civil War
6. anchored safe	(f) celebrating victory
7. no pulse, nor will	(g) peace after winning the war

- (1) (2) (3) (4)
- (5) (6) (7)

4. (A) The Figure of Speech ‘ Apostrophe’ exists throughout the poem. Pick out lines where the poet directly addresses.

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------|
| (a) the dead Captain | 1. |
| | 2. |
| (b) the grief in his heart | 1. |
| | 2. |
| (c) the sea-shore | 1. |
| | 2. |

(B) Find from the poem, one example of each of the following.

- (a) Personification
- (b) Alliteration
- (c) Repetition
- (d) Exclamation
- (e) Tautology
- (f) Antithesis

5. Find and answer in your own words.

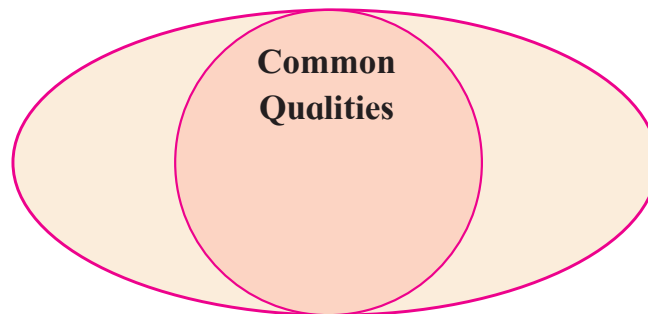
- (a) What are the signs of the people celebrating victory?
- (b) The crowds on the shore are eagerly waiting to felicitate the Captain. How?
- (c) What are the signs that the Captain has passed away?
- (d) ‘.....dear father! This arm beneath your head...’
Why do you think the speaker in the poem puts his arm under the Captain’s head?
- (e) Describe the grief that the speaker in the poem feels at the death of his Captain.

6. Glance through the poem again to find who the speaker addresses in the first two stanzas and the last stanza.

7. Fill the qualities in the diagram given below.

Qualities of a Ship’s Captain

Qualities of a Nation’s Leader



- 1. courage 2. naval expert 3. integrity 4. visionary 5. confidence 6. humane
- 7. self-disciplined 8. sympathetic 9. leadership 10. foresight 11. knowledge of weather signs
- 12. positive attitude 13. role-model 14. selfless service
- 15. good administrator

8. Complete the following choosing from the alternatives.

- (a) The rhyme-scheme of the poem is
(aabbccdd/abcbdede/aabbcded)
- (b) The line repeated in every stanza
(O Captain! My Captain/Fallen cold and dead)

- (c) The steady rhythm in the poem consists of a pattern of beats (Three/Four/Five)
- (d) In thestanza the speaker does not address the captain (First/Second/Third)
- (e) The type of poem isbecause it is composed in memory of a passed away personality. (sonnet, lyric, elegy)
- 9. The feeling of grief and pain of the speaker in this poem are comparable to those of a great Maratha leader, inspite of winning the battle at a fort in Maharashtra. Guess who the great Maratha leader was and the Captain who was killed in the battle. Write down other basic historical facts of the above.**
- 10. The poem describes the sad demise of the Captain. How would you console the son of the Captain? Write a short paragraph using the points given below.**
- (a) Expressing grief on the death.
- (b) An act of God.
- (c) Words/sentences giving strengths and courage to face the situation.
- (d) Add your own points.
- 11. Read the poem. Write an appreciation of the poem in about 12 to 15 sentences. (Refer to page no.5)**

