

# The Voice of the Rain



**Walt Whitman**

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A faded, grayscale portrait of Walt Whitman, showing his face and a wide-brimmed hat, serves as the background for the text.

# Walt Whitman

## May 31, 1819-March 26, 1892

- **A celebrated American poet and an icon**
- **His themes included democracy, nature, love, and friendship.**
- **He remained a printer, schoolteacher, reporter, and editor.**
- **Acclaimed Works: Leaves of Grass, Drum-Taps, Democratic Vistas**

# The Two Voices

Who art  
thou?

And who art thou? said I to the soft-falling shower,

Which, strange to tell, gave me an answer, as here translated:

I am the Poem of Earth, said the voice of the rain,

I am the Poem  
of Earth.

- It appears that a dramatic conversation between the poet and the soft drizzles of the rain begins:
- The poet as if in the middle of a conversation asks the rain who he is.
- It is quite strange that the poet receives an answer. The poet attempts to interpret it for the reader:
- It is interpreted as the rain replying to the poet that he is the “Poem of Earth”.

# A Dramatic Dialogue

- The poem opens up with a direct address to the Rain which engages in a conversation with a human.
- The poet asks rain as to who he is.
- It's so strange that the rain has understood and even replies in a language comprehensible to the poet.
- The poet attempts to construe the soft falling tone of the rain for the reader.
- It is interpreted as saying that he is the “Poem of the Earth”.

# Use of Archaic language

The readers may notice that the poem is sparse with archaic expressions: such as, who art thou?, whence, drouth and so on.

The poet chose to use them perhaps, in order to bring in authenticity.

Here are some archaic expressions for your reference:

**Thou:** You in subject position( as in You are my friend.)

**Thee-** You in object position. (as in I gave it to you.)

**Thy –** Your ( for a noun that begins with a consonant sound)

**Thine –** Your ( For a noun that begins with a vowel sound)

**Ye-** You (plural or respectful used when one addresses a group)

1. Addressing a person or a thing, living or non-living is known as Apostrophe.

Note: The spelling is same as the diacritical apostrophe (').

Here, the poet addresses an unusual companion, rain, a non-living entity.

Other Examples: "Busy old fool, unruly sun, Why dost thou thus? (The Sun Rising BY JOHN DONNE)

2. Attributing or ascribing a non-living, a human quality is Personification.

Here, the poet assigns the quality of speaking which is characteristically human to a non-living thing, rain.

Other Examples: "For men may come and men may go, But I go on forever." (The Brook By Alfred Lord Tennyson)

3. Extended Metaphor is an implicit comparison between two unlikely things.

Here, the poet compares a natural phenomenon with an intellectual phenomenon: Rain and Poem.

Other Examples: "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players." (As you like it By Shakespeare)

# The Unstoppable and Eternal

**Eternal I rise impalpable out of the land and the bottomless sea,**

**Upward to heaven, whence, vaguely form'd, altogether changed, and yet the same,**

**The rain continues to speak:**

- ✓ **It says that it rises upward, towards the sky from the deep sea and land in an undefinable form - water vapour.**
- ✓ **It gets formed as clouds, completely different from what it was, still maintaining the essence of its being.**
- ✓ **These expressions are a direct reference to the process of water cycle.**

# State and Being

- The Poet refers to the water cycle in a poetic way. The water gets evaporated from the sea.
- The evaporated form of water goes upward towards the sky and condenses there in the form of a cloud.
- The poet speaks about how the changing forms of water, though different, are essentially the same.

The subtle reference to the changing states of water from liquid to gaseous forms and back to its original form tells us how it is always possible to retain one's identity despite going through a rigorous process of change.



**Hyperbole: An expression or overstatement of truth not to be taken quite literally.**

**Here, Eternal I rise... upward to heaven & the bottomless sea are hyperbolic.**

**Other Examples: That joke is so old, the last time I heard it I was riding a dinosaur.**

# Rain: the Provider, Sustainer and Redeemer

**I descend to lave the drouths,  
atomies, dust-layers of the  
globe,  
And all that in them without  
me were seeds only, latent,  
unborn;**

- Here comes the third stage of water cycle, where in the evaporated and condensed water vapour pours down as rain.
- When it rains, they say, it pours. The rain comes down to fulfill the dearth of water (referred here as drauth).
- It washes away every tiny speck of accumulated layers of dust on earth;
- It enables and nourishes the dormant seeds.
- The seeds without rain would remain Covert and waiting to come to life.

**Asyndeton**: It is the omission or absence of a conjunction between parts of a sentence.

Here, In the lines, **I descend to lave the drouths, atomies, dust-layers of the globe**

**...seeds only, latent, unborn;**

In the above line missing of the conjunction and qualify them for Asyndeton.

**Other Examples: Vini, Vici, Vidi (I came, I saw, I conquered)**

# Pay Back in the Same Coin

**And forever, by day and night, I give back life to my own origin, and make pure and beautify it;**

- ✓ **The rain keeps giving back life to the origin that gave birth to rain itself; namely, the earth.**
- ✓ **It keeps replenishing the earth, beautifying it making it immaculate and livable.**



**Imagery: It is a descriptive expression appeals to all our senses and imagination.**

**Here, the entire poem deals with an image of the rain talking, falling, beautifying, replenishing appealing to all our senses.**

# Gratitude- An Attitude

- ❖ **These two lines of the poem speak about the power of giving back to the source.**
- ❖ **As the earth is, so the rain is and vice versa.**
- ❖ **Giving back to the source can be a joyful and fulfilling.**
- ❖ **Rain gives back to the earth munificently by purifying, beautifying and replenishing it.**

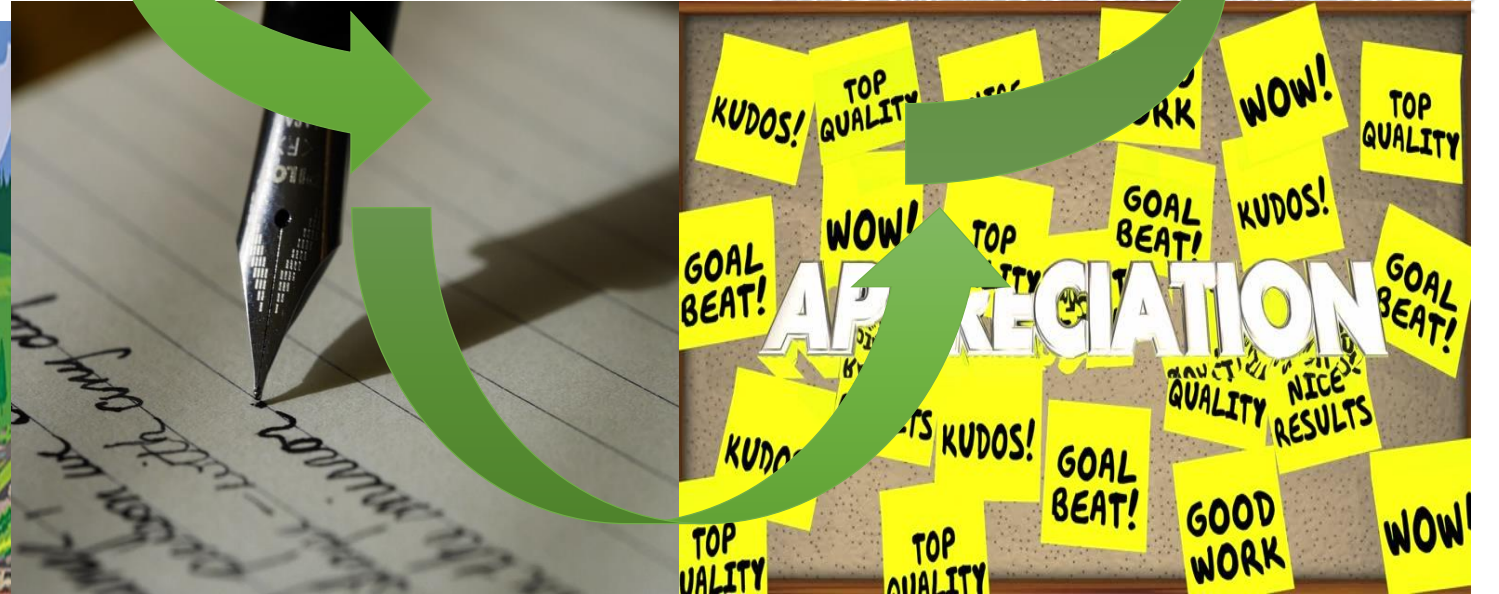
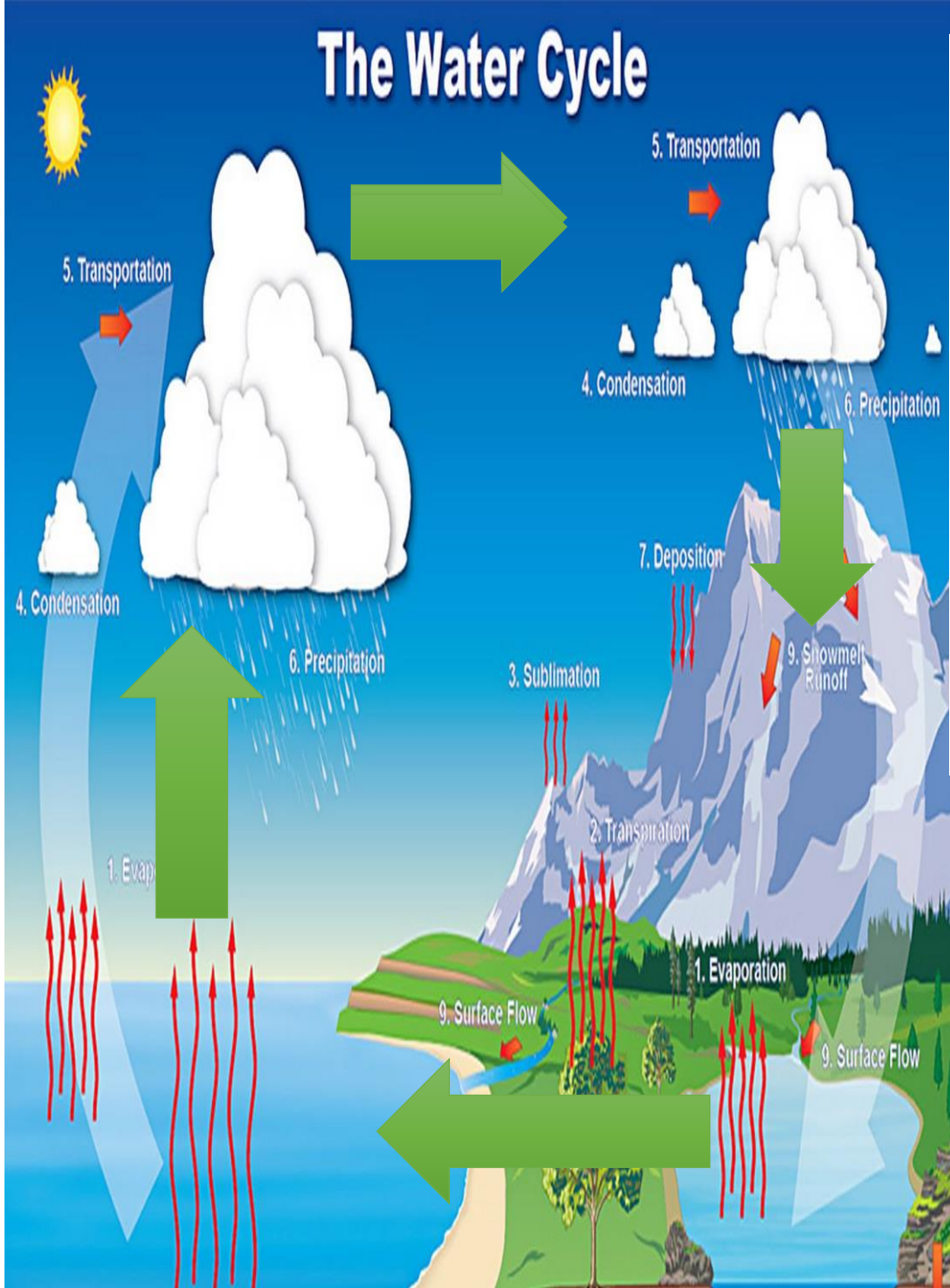
# Sound of Music



**(For song, issuing from its birth-place, after fulfilment, wandering, Reck'd or unreck'd. duly with love returns.)**

- ❖ Here, the poet draw parallels between rain and song or poem.
- ❖ The poem originates as an idea from the poet's head, being formed in words and formed in script, appreciated or unappreciated, brings credit to the maker; the poet.
- ❖ Similarly, rain too originates, takes a different form, and gives credit to the origin; the earth, with due love.

# The Water Cycle





# Like peas in a pod!

## Rain

Water is an essential element on earth.

It transforms into vapour from its original state.

The water vapour goes up and condenses.

It comes to earth and replenishes it voluntarily, without even being asked.

## Song/Poem

Poem is originally a thought generated from the creator's brain.

The idea transforms itself from thought to expressions.

Expressions collect up and get the form of a poem

Poem too, appreciated or not, gives credit to its creator even without being warranted.

## Extended Metaphor: The comparison between rain and song (Poetry)

Parentheses: “A word, clause, sentence, etc., inserted (as an explanation, qualification, aside, or afterthought) into a passage which is already grammatically complete, and usually marked off by brackets, dashes, or comma.” (OED)

Here, the parentheses given at the end (For song, issuing ...returns.) is an explanation to what is said in the beginning, I am the poem of the earth.

# The Rhyme and Reason

- **The poem is written in Free Verse.**
- **It must have been done so to indicate that rain and poetry can't be confined within any conventional boundaries.**
- **They flow free from their sources, uninterrupted.**
- **There is no specific rhyme or meter intended by the poet.**

# Let's Sum Up!

- ✓ The poet picks up an imaginary conversation with the rain.
- ✓ The rain calls itself the poem of the earth.
- ✓ It tells how it generates out of the deep sea, rises in the form of vapour, condenses up above the world.
- ✓ It tells the poet how it pays its gratitude to the earth by purifying, beautifying and replenishing it.
- ✓ The poet justifies his stance of calling rain a poem by presenting a parenthetical tag line at the end.
- ✓ He says that rain is much like the poem in the sense that it originates from a source, changes form, condenses and flows down asked for or not;
- ✓ The poem originates as a thought, gets expression in the form of words, formed vaguely in scripts and flows around the masses as a song.
- ✓ It is appreciated or not, gets its due credit to the poet in the same way as the rain pays back its creator even if she (the earth) doesn't demand it.

**Art – Are( Archaic)**

**Thou – You (Archaic)**

**Impalpable – Intangible, unperceivable, unclear, vague**

**Bottomless-Deep, unfathomable**

**Whence - When**

**Drouth- dearth of something**

**Atomies: Tiny particles**

**Latent: Dormant, buried**

**Recked or unrecked – heard or unheard/appreciated or unappreciated**

**GLOSSARY**

- **Hornbill: NCERT Textbook for Class XI, English**
- <https://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1891/poems/350>
- <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/walt-whitman>

**Hear the poem by clicking the following link:**

- <https://youtu.be/UwpufdP3DJQ>

# References