

# Sex & Sexuality in American Poetry

## First Short Essay Assignment

*Choose one of the four passages below. Read it very closely and connect it to the 1855 edition of Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass.*

*Minimum five pages, double-spaced, paginated. At the top of the first page, place your original title and name. This assignment does not call for a Works Cited page, unless you choose to bring in critical material.*

The atmosphere is not a perfume . . . . it has no taste of the distillation . . . . it is odorless,  
It is for my mouth forever . . . . I am in love with it,  
I will go to the bank by the wood and become undisguised and naked,  
I am mad for it to be in contact with me. ("Song of Myself" ll. 9-12)

★ ★ ★ ★

Prodigal! you have given me love! . . . . therefore I to you give love!  
O unspeakable passionate love!

Thruster holding me tight and that I hold tight!  
We hurt each other as the bridegroom and the bride hurt each other. ("Song of Myself" ll. 447-50)

★ ★ ★ ★

These became part of that child who went forth every day, and who now goes and will always  
go forth every day,  
And these become of him or her that peruses them now. ("There Was A Child Went Forth" ll. 31-32)

★ ★ ★ ★

Will we stroll dreaming of the lost America of love past blue automobiles in driveways, home to  
our silent cottage?  
Ah, dear father, graybeard, lonely old courage-teacher, what America did you have when  
Charon quit poling his ferry and you got out on a smoking bank and stood watching the  
boat disappear on the black waters of the Lethe? ("A Supermarket in California," ll. 11-12)