



"Flood-tide below me!
I see you face to face!
Clouds of the west—
sun there half an hour high—
I see you also face to face."

CROSSING BROOKLYN FERRY A WHITGUIDE



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WALT WHITMAN INITIATIVE

Originally called "Sun-Down Poem," the poem documents a ferry ride from Manhattan to Brooklyn, much like the one that can be taken today from Pier 11 to DUMBO. Though written so long ago, Whitman's words about the unity of people over decades and centuries, all sharing in the awe of the river, the city, and all who inhabit stay true.

Leaves of Grass.
Whitman and published in the 1856 edition of
Crossing Brooklyn Ferry is a poem written by Walt

CROSSING BROOKLYN FERRY

THEN...

The Fulton Street Ferry was a steam-powered ferry that first started operating in 1814. It connected the Fulton Streets of Manhattan and Brooklyn. It ran under what is now the Brooklyn Bridge. Construction started on the Brooklyn Bridge in 1869, and before its construction, the ferry was the main mode of transportation between the two boroughs of the city.

The reliability of the ferry with its short commute (15-20 minutes), helped allow for Brooklyn, where Whitman lived, to become a suburb of Manhattan.

Source: MCNY Blog



This is a photo of the Fulton Ferry taken in 1890 and sent to Walt Whitman in Camden, New Jersey from J. Johnston. (Image from the Library of Congress)

... AND NOW

Today, the Ferry runs from the Wall Street terminal rather than the original Fulton Street terminal. It is a part of the MTA's East River route since 2017.

Thankfully, the ferry is not the only way to travel between Manhattan and Brooklyn, but it allows for a shorter commute for some and the beauty of the river for all!



A WHITMAN ACTIVITY!

Take the East River Ferry from the Wall Street Pier (Pier 11) to Dumbo/Fulton Ferry. A oneway ticket is \$4.00. Sit and loafe in Brooklyn Bridge Park and appreciate how the city has grown from Whitman's time to ours and also how it has stayed the same.

*Fifty years hence, others will see them as they cross, the sun half an hour high,
A hundred years hence, or ever so many hundred years hence, others will see them,
Will enjoy the sunset, the pouring-in of the flood-tide, the falling-back to the sea of
the ebb-tide.*

EXCERPTS FROM CROSSING BROOKLYN FERRY

1
Flood-tide below me! I see you face to face!
Clouds of the west—sun there half an hour high—I see you also
face to face.
Crowds of men and women attired in the usual costumes, how
curious you are to me!
On the ferry-boats the hundreds and hundreds that cross,
returning home, are more curious to me than you suppose,
And you that shall cross from shore to shore years hence are
more to me, and more in my meditations, than you might
suppose.

2
The impalpable sustenance of me from all things at all hours of
the day,
The simple, compact, well-join'd scheme, myself disintegrated,
every one disintegrated yet part of the scheme,
The similitudes of the past and those of the future,
The glories strung like beads on my smallest sights and hearings,
on the walk in the street and the passage over the river,
The current rushing so swiftly and swimming with me far away,
The others that are to follow me, the ties between me and them,
The certainty of others, the life, love, sight, hearing of others.
Others will enter the gates of the ferry and cross from shore to
shore,
Others will watch the run of the flood-tide,
Others will see the shipping of Manhattan north and west, and the
heights of Brooklyn to the south and east,
Others will see the islands large and small;

Fifty years hence, others will see them as they cross, the sun half an
hour high,
A hundred years hence, or ever so many hundred years hence, others
will see them,
Will enjoy the sunset, the pouring-in of the flood-tide, the falling-
back to the sea of the ebb-tide.

4
These and all else were to me the same as they are to you,
I loved well those cities, loved well the stately and rapid river,
The men and women I saw were all near to me,
Others the same—others who look back on me because I look'd
forward to them,
(The time will come, though I stop here to-day and to-night.)

5
What is it then between us?
What is the count of the scores or hundreds of years between us?

Whatever it is, it avails not—distance avails not, and place avails not,
I too lived, Brooklyn of ample hills was mine,
I too walk'd the streets of Manhattan island, and bathed in the waters
around it,
I too felt the curious abrupt questionings stir within me,
In the day among crowds of people sometimes they came upon me,
In my walks home late at night or as I lay in my bed they came upon
me,
I too had been struck from the float forever held in solution,
I too had receiv'd identity by my body,
That I was I knew was of my body, and what I should be I knew I
should be of my body.



TANE POETRY LIBRARY

The Walt Whitman Initiative (WWI) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit
organization whose mission is to celebrate and honor
New York City's literary legacy, and to serve as an
organizing center for cultural activism and poetry-related
events. We are an international collective open to all, and
seek to foster a sense of community among those
interested in the life, work, and influence of Walt
Whitman.

WALT WHITMAN INITIATIVE



WALT WHITMAN

WHO WAS WALT WHITMAN?

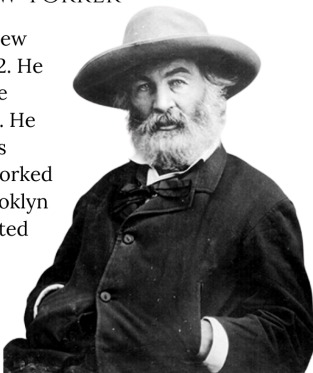
Walt Whitman, (b. May 31st, 1819) was an American poet,
journalist, printer, and essayist, and he is best known for
his book *Leaves of Grass*. This book of poems was
published several times over his lifetime, each edition
accruing new poems and edits.

WHAT IS HE KNOWN FOR?

He is known for being one of the first American poets to
cultivate an American voice in poetry along with Emily
Dickinson. He is also known as the father of free-verse
poetry, his lines unstrained by meter and rhyme

WHITMAN, THE NEW YORKER

Walt Whitman lived in New
York City from 1832-1862. He
walked many of the same
streets that we do today. He
also built houses with his
father in Brooklyn. He worked
as a journalist at the Brooklyn
Daily Eagle, and frequented
bars in Manhattan.



The Tane Poetry Library is a
free, open-source research
library located in the Fulton
Street Market in South Street
Seaport. We have over 600
volumes of books dedicated to
the words and study of Walt
Whitman. Visit our website to
learn more about how you can
access the library.