Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Walt Whitman (1819–1892).  Leaves of Grass.  1900.   
 **To a Locomotive in Winter**

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| THEE for my recitative! |  |
| Thee in the driving storm, even as now—the snow—the winter-day declining; |  |
| Thee in thy panoply, thy measured dual throbbing, and thy beat convulsive; |  |
| Thy black cylindric body, golden brass, and silvery steel; |  |
| Thy ponderous side-bars, parallel and connecting rods, gyrating, shuttling at thy sides; | *5* |
| Thy metrical, now swelling pant and roar—now tapering in the distance; |  |
| Thy great protruding head-light, fix’d in front; |  |
| Thy long, pale, floating vapor-pennants, tinged with delicate purple; |  |
| The dense and murky clouds out-belching from thy smoke-stack; |  |
| Thy knitted frame—thy springs and valves—the tremulous twinkle of thy wheels; | *10* |
| Thy train of cars behind, obedient, merrily-following, |  |
| Through gale or calm, now swift, now slack, yet steadily careering: |  |
| Type of the modern! emblem of motion and power! pulse of the continent! |  |
| For once, come serve the Muse, and merge in verse, even as here I see thee, |  |
| With storm, and buffeting gusts of wind, and falling snow; | *15* |
| By day, thy warning, ringing bell to sound its notes, |  |
| By night, thy silent signal lamps to swing. |  |
|  |  |
| Fierce-throated beauty! |  |
| Roll through my chant, with all thy lawless music! thy swinging lamps at night; |  |
| Thy piercing, madly-whistled laughter! thy echoes, rumbling like an earthquake, rousing all! | *20* |
| Law of thyself complete, thine own track firmly holding; |  |
| (No sweetness debonair of tearful harp or glib piano thine,) |  |
| Thy trills of shrieks by rocks and hills return’d, |  |
| Launch’d o’er the prairies wide—across the lakes, |  |
| To the free skies, unpent, and glad, and strong. |  |

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| The Railway Train  by Emily Dickinson  I like to see it lap the miles, And lick the valleys up, And stop to feed itself at tanks; And then, prodigious, step  Around a pile of mountains, And, supercilious, peer In shanties by the sides of roads; And then a quarry pare  To fit its sides, and crawl between, Complaining all the while In horrid, hooting stanza; Then chase itself down hill  And neigh like Boanerges;  Then, punctual as a star,  Stop--docile and omnipotent-- At its own stable door. |

**Vocabulary**

* *prodigious*: enormous;
* *supercilious*: condescending, arrogant, proud;
* *Boanerges*: a name Christ gave to the disciples James and John, meaning "sons of thunder"; also, a loud preacher or orator;
* *docile*: obedient, submissive;
* *omnipotent*: all powerful.

“Sounds” from *Walden,* by Henry David Thoreau

The Fitchburg Railroad touches the pond about a hundred rods south of where I dwell. I usually go to the village along its causeway, and am, as it were, related to society by this link. The men on the freight trains, who go over the whole length of the road, bow to me as to an old acquaintance, they pass me so often, and apparently they take me for an employee; and so I am. I too would fain be a track-repairer somewhere in the orbit of the earth.

The whistle of the locomotive penetrates my woods summer and winter, sounding like the scream of a hawk sailing over some farmer's yard, informing me that many restless city merchants are arriving within the circle of the town, or adventurous country traders from the other side. As they come under one horizon, they shout their warning to get off the track to the other, heard sometimes through the circles of two towns. Here come your groceries, country; your rations, countrymen! Nor is there any man so independent on his farm that he can say them nay. And here's your pay for them! screams the countryman's whistle; timber like long battering-rams going twenty miles an hour against the city's walls, and chairs enough to seat all the weary and heavy-laden that dwell within them. With such huge and lumbering civility the country hands a chair to the city. All the Indian huckleberry hills are stripped, all the cranberry meadows are raked into the city. Up comes the cotton, down goes the woven cloth; up comes the silk, down goes the woollen; up come the books, but down goes the wit that writes them.

When I meet the engine with its train of cars moving off with planetary motion- or, rather, like a comet, for the beholder knows not if with that velocity and with that direction it will ever revisit this system, since its orbit does not look like a returning curve- with its steam cloud like a banner streaming behind in golden and silver wreaths, like many a downy cloud which I have seen, high in the heavens, unfolding its masses to the light- as if this traveling demigod, this cloud- compeller, would ere long take the sunset sky for the livery of his train; when I hear the iron horse make the bills echo with his snort like thunder, shaking the earth with his feet, and breathing fire and smoke from his nostrils (what kind of winged horse or fiery dragon they will put into the new Mythology I don't know), it seems as if the earth had got a race now worthy to inhabit it. If all were as it seems, and men made the elements their servants for noble ends! If the cloud that hangs over the engine were the perspiration of heroic deeds, or as beneficent as that which floats over the farmer's fields, then the elements and Nature herself would cheerfully accompany men on their errands and be their escort.

I watch the passage of the morning cars with the same feeling that I do the rising of the sun, which is hardly more regular. Their train of clouds stretching far behind and rising higher and higher, going to heaven while the cars are going to Boston, conceals the sun for a minute and casts my distant field into the shade, a celestial train beside which the petty train of cars which bugs the earth is but the barb of the spear.