CAPITOLO

5

The American Renaissance: Poe, Melville, Whitman and Dickinson

"Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string." — Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance" (1841)

OBIETTIVI

1. I can describe the United States from westward expansion to the Civil War, and explain the roles of slavery, emancipation and Abraham Lincoln.
2. I can explain Transcendentalism and the "American Renaissance", and present Poe, Melville, Whitman and Dickinson and their main works.
3. I can analyse free verse, common metre and slant rhyme in Whitman and Dickinson, and the rhetoric of the Gettysburg Address.
4. I can recognise British and American English and use one variety consistently in spelling, vocabulary, grammar and dates.
5. I can write and deliver a short commemorative speech, and build a percorso from one text to four subjects for the colloquio.
6. I can compare the Gettysburg Address with Pericles' funeral oration, explain Pavese's role as a translator of American literature, and describe how the telegraph works.

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English 5 · Parte II · America, Empire and War · versione 1.0
Capitolo 5: The American Renaissance: Poe, Melville, Whitman and Dickinson · pagine 151–184 del volume completo · estratto per lo studio

On 19 November 1863, in a small town in Pennsylvania, a tall, tired man stood up after a two-hour oration by the most famous speaker in America and spoke for about two minutes. Few in the crowd of thousands can have guessed that the moment was historic. Today schoolchildren learn the speech by heart, the words "government of the people, by the people, for the people" stand in the constitution of France, and the short text is printed on the wall of a memorial in Washington. That speech, Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, is one of the three texts of this chapter.

The other two come from poets whom their own age hardly knew how to read. Walt Whitman published his first book at his own expense and spent the rest of his life rewriting it; Emily Dickinson wrote almost 1,800 poems and saw about ten of them in print, without her name. Around them, between the 1830s and the Civil War, the United States produced its first great generation of writers — Emerson and Thoreau, Poe, Hawthorne, Melville — while the country expanded to the Pacific and then nearly broke in two over slavery. This is where English literature stops being only the literature of England, and where the English language starts to have two standards. It is also where the Italian writers of the 1930s, Cesare Pavese first, went looking for a freedom they could not find at home.

5.1 History and Society: the United States, 1830–1865

In chapter 4 Britain reached the end of the Victorian age. This chapter goes back to the 1830s and crosses the Atlantic, to a republic that was only fifty years old when Victoria came to the throne.

5.1.1 A nation moving west

In 1830 the United States was a country of twenty-four states, most of them east of the Mississippi. Thirty years later it stretched from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Texas, independent from Mexico since 1836, was annexed in 1845; the Oregon Country in the north-west was divided with Britain in 1846; and the war with Mexico (1846–1848) ended with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which gave the United States California and most of the present South-West. Gold was found in California in January 1848, and in the following years tens of thousands of people crossed the continent or sailed round South America to reach it.

Americans described this growth with a new phrase. In 1845 the journalist John L. O'Sullivan wrote that it was the nation's "manifest destiny" to spread over the continent. **Manifest Destiny** (*destino manifesto*) became the name of the belief that expansion westwards was natural, even God-given. The idea had victims. The *frontier* (English 3, chapter 1), the moving edge of

settlement, was for settlers a place of opportunity and for Native Americans the edge of dispossession: under the Indian Removal Act of 1830 whole nations were forced west of the Mississippi, and the Cherokee removal of 1838–1839, in which thousands died, is remembered as the "Trail of Tears".

5.1.2 Slavery and the road to war

Expansion raised one question again and again: would the new territories allow slavery? In the Southern states the economy rested on cotton, and cotton rested on the labour of enslaved Black people — almost four million of them in the census of 1860. In the North, where slavery had been abolished state by state, a growing abolitionist movement (English 4, chapter 9) demanded its end everywhere. Two books gave the movement its voice. Frederick Douglass, who had escaped from slavery in Maryland in 1838, published his *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* in 1845; Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (serialised in 1851–1852, a book in March 1852) sold hundreds of thousands of copies in its first year and made millions of Northern readers feel what slavery meant.

Politics could not hold the two sides together. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 obliged Northern states to return people who had escaped; the Kansas–Nebraska Act (1854) let settlers vote on slavery, and Kansas fell into small-scale civil war; in the Dred Scott case (1857) the Supreme Court ruled that Black people could not be citizens. In November 1860 Abraham Lincoln, the candidate of the new Republican Party, which opposed the spread of slavery into the territories, was elected president. Before he took office, South Carolina declared that it had left the Union (20 December 1860). **Secession** (*secessione*), the withdrawal of a state from the Union, spread to six more states in a few weeks; in February 1861 they formed the Confederate States of America. When Confederate guns fired on Fort Sumter, in the harbour of Charleston, on 12 April 1861, the war began, and four more states joined the South.

5.1.3 The Civil War (1861–1865)

Figura 5.1 shows the country divided. The **Union** (the United States government and the states loyal to it, also called "the North") faced the eleven states of the **Confederacy** (*Confederazione*), whose capital was Richmond, Virginia, a hundred miles from Washington. Between them lay the **border states** (*stati di confine*): Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky and Missouri, slave states that stayed in the Union; West Virginia, which broke away from Virginia, joined them as a new state in 1863. The North had more people, most of the factories and railways, and the telegraph; the South had able generals, Robert E. Lee above all, and the advantage of fighting at home.

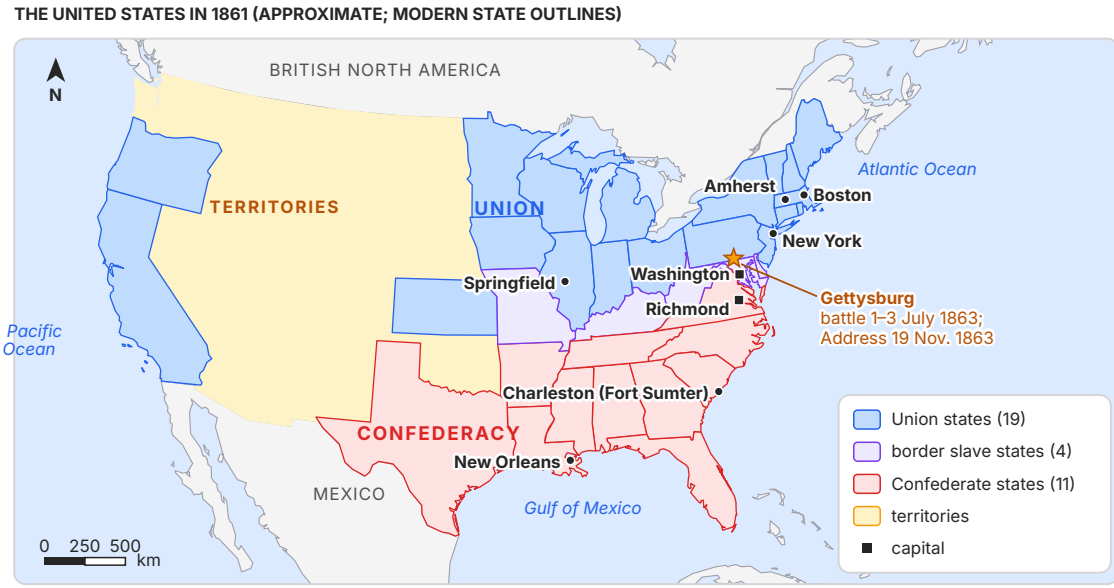


Figura 5.1 The United States in 1861 (approximate; drawn on modern state outlines). The Union's 19 free states, the 4 border slave states that stayed in the Union, the 11 states of the Confederacy and the western territories. West Virginia, split from Virginia, became a Union state in 1863; the Confederate capital moved from Montgomery to Richmond in May 1861. Springfield, Illinois, was Lincoln's home town; Amherst, Massachusetts, was Emily Dickinson's.

It was the first industrial war: railways moved armies, the telegraph carried orders, photographs of the dead were shown in New York galleries. It was also the deadliest war in American history. The traditional estimate is about 620,000 soldiers dead; a demographic study published by J. David Hacker in 2011 raised it to about 750,000. In the first days of July 1863 the largest battle of the war was fought around the town of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, when Lee invaded the North and was driven back after three days (1–3 July). Together with the fall of Vicksburg on the Mississippi the next day, it is usually seen as the turning point of the war.

The war also changed its aim. On 1 January 1863 Lincoln's **Emancipation Proclamation** (*proclama di emancipazione*) declared free all enslaved people in the areas still in rebellion. It did not apply to the border states, and it could only be enforced where the Union armies arrived, but it turned a war for the Union into a war against slavery, and it opened the army to Black soldiers: about 180,000 served before the end. The Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, passed by Congress in January 1865 and ratified in December, abolished slavery in the whole country. **Emancipation** (*emancipazione*), the legal freeing of enslaved people, was complete on paper; equal rights would take another century.

5.1.4 Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865)

Lincoln was born in a log cabin in Kentucky, had about a year of formal schooling, and taught himself law from borrowed books. As a lawyer in Springfield, Illinois, he became famous in 1858 for a series of public debates on slavery with the senator Stephen Douglas, which he lost as an election but won as an argument. He read the Bible and Shakespeare all his life, and his prose has their rhythm: short words, balanced clauses, repetition.

In November 1863 he was invited to say "a few appropriate remarks" at the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery at Gettysburg, where thousands of Union dead had been hastily buried. The main speaker was Edward Everett, a former professor of Greek at Harvard, who spoke for two hours. Lincoln spoke for about two minutes (T3). He was re-elected in 1864; on 9 April 1865 Lee surrendered at Appomattox; five days later, on 14 April, Lincoln was shot at Ford's Theatre in Washington by John Wilkes Booth, a Confederate sympathiser, and he died the next morning. A funeral train carried his body back to Springfield through the cities of the North, and Whitman mourned him in some of his best-known poems.

DA RICORDARE

1845 Texas annexed; Douglass's *Narrative* · **1846–1848** war with Mexico · **1850** Fugitive Slave Act · **1852** *Uncle Tom's Cabin* · **Nov. 1860** Lincoln elected · **12 April 1861** Fort Sumter: the war begins · **1 Jan. 1863** Emancipation Proclamation · **1–3 July 1863** Gettysburg · **19 Nov. 1863** the Gettysburg Address · **9 April 1865** Appomattox · **14–15 April 1865** Lincoln assassinated · **Dec. 1865** Thirteenth Amendment.

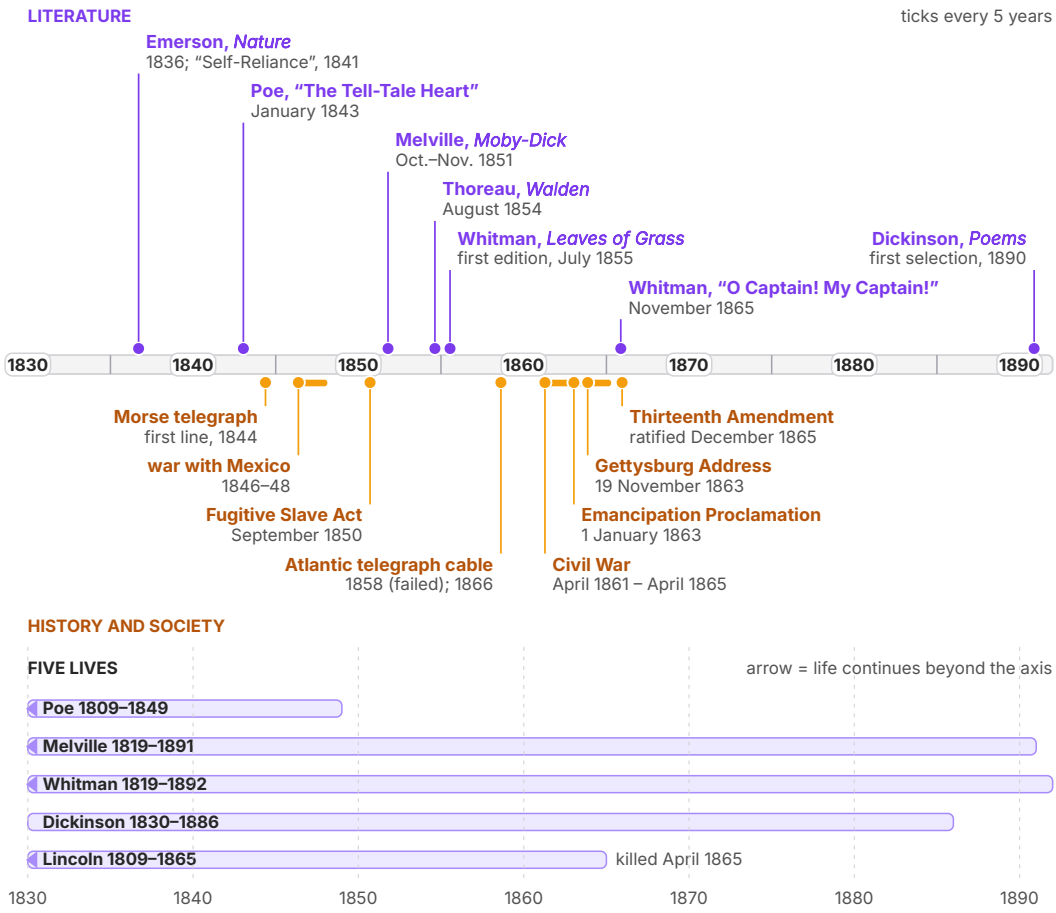


Figura 5.2 The United States and its writers, 1830–1892 (proportional time axis, ticks every 5 years). Violet: literature; amber: history. Bars show the war with Mexico and the Civil War; below, the lives of the chapter's four writers and of Lincoln (arrows: the life began before 1830).

5.2 Literature: the American Renaissance

The timeline (Figura 5.2) shows something remarkable: in five years, from 1850 to 1855, American writers published *The Scarlet Letter*, *Moby-Dick*, *Walden* and *Leaves of Grass*. In 1941 the Harvard critic F. O. Matthiessen called this moment the **American Renaissance** (*Rinascimento americano*). The label is a critic's, not the writers': nobody in the 1850s spoke of a "renaissance", and the word suggests a rebirth of something old, while these writers felt they were creating something new. But it has stuck, because it names a real event — the moment when American literature stopped imitating British models and found its own subjects: the individual, nature, democracy, the sea, and the dark side of the American dream of innocence.

5.2.1 Transcendentalism: Emerson and Thoreau

The movement began in Concord, Massachusetts, a small town near Boston. Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882), a former Unitarian minister, argued in *Nature* (1836) that every person can know truth directly, through intuition and the contemplation of nature, without churches, traditions or books. **Transcendentalism** (*trascendentalismo*) is the name of this philosophy: a belief that the divine is present in nature and in every human soul, so that intuition "transcends" the evidence of the senses and of logic. Its debt to German idealism, to Coleridge and to Hindu scriptures is clear, but its consequences were American: in "Self-Reliance" (1841) Emerson told his readers to trust their own judgement against society, which he saw as a conspiracy against the individual.

His friend Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862) tested the idea in practice. From July 1845 to September 1847 he lived alone in a cabin he had built at Walden Pond, near Concord, and *Walden* (1854) is his account of that experiment in simple living. In 1846 he spent a night in jail because he refused to pay his poll tax in protest against slavery and the war with Mexico; the lecture he drew from it, known as "Civil Disobedience" (1849), was later read by Gandhi and by Martin Luther King.

5.2.2 Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849)

Poe was everything the Transcendentalists were not: a professional writer in New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore, always in debt, interested in fear, guilt and death rather than in the divine soul. He wrote poetry ("The Raven", 1845), criticism and, above all, tales. Reviewing Hawthorne's stories in 1842, he explained his method. A tale should be short enough to be read "at one sitting", and every word in it should serve a **single effect** (*effetto unico*), an emotion the writer chooses before he starts: "If his very initial sentence tend not to the outbringing of this effect, then he has failed in his first step." The idea shaped the modern short story (English 3, chapter 5, gave you the term). Poe is also usually credited with the first modern detective story, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841; English 2 met it beside Sherlock Holmes), and in "The Tell-Tale Heart" (1843) he gave the narration to a murderer who insists he is not mad — an unreliable narrator (English 4) whose every sentence proves the opposite. Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–1864), whose *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) explores guilt in Puritan New England, shared Poe's darkness with a moral seriousness Poe did not have. In France, Baudelaire translated Poe and made him a model for European poets.

5.2.3 Herman Melville and *Moby-Dick*

Herman Melville (1819–1891) went to sea at nineteen, and in 1841 sailed on the whaling ship *Acushnet* to the Pacific; he deserted in the Marquesas Islands and used his adventures in popular travel novels. Then he attempted something much larger. *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale* (London, as *The Whale*, October 1851; New York, November 1851) is narrated by a young sailor who opens

the book with three words: “Call me Ishmael.” Ishmael signs on to the *Pequod*, a whaler from Nantucket whose captain, Ahab, has lost a leg to a white sperm whale, Moby Dick, and has sworn revenge. The hunt takes the crew round the world, and it ends with the destruction of the ship and of everyone on it — except the narrator.

The book is an adventure, a technical treatise on whales and whaling, a Shakespearean tragedy with stage directions and soliloquies, and a philosophical enquiry. The whale is its great symbol (English 4, chapter 11): for Ahab it is the mask of a hostile universe, for the reader it can be nature, God, evil, or simply the unknowable, and the novel refuses to choose. The crew, from every continent, is a picture of America. Readers in 1851 were puzzled, and Melville died almost forgotten, working as a customs inspector in New York. The “Melville revival” of the 1920s made *Moby-Dick* a classic — and Italian readers met it in 1932, in Cesare Pavese’s translation (Connections).

5.2.4 Walt Whitman (1819–1892)

In July 1855 a thin, anonymous book appeared in Brooklyn: *Leaves of Grass*, twelve untitled poems with a portrait of the author in working clothes. Walt Whitman, a printer and journalist, had paid for it himself. Emerson wrote to him, “I greet you at the beginning of a great career”, and Whitman printed the sentence on the next edition. *Leaves of Grass* became his life’s work: he enlarged and revised *Leaves of Grass* for the rest of his life, through several editions to the “deathbed edition” of 1891–1892, which is the text printed here. During the Civil War he worked as a volunteer in the military hospitals of Washington, and he saw Lincoln pass in the streets; after the assassination he wrote, among other poems, “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d” and “O Captain! My Captain!” (T1).

Whitman’s great formal invention is **free verse** (*verso libero*): verse with no regular metre and no rhyme, whose lines are shaped by the rhythm of speech, by the length of a breath and by repetition. His long lines often form a **catalogue** (*catalogo*, *elenco*), a list of people, places and activities that tries to include the whole nation in one poem. The “I” of his poems is both Walt Whitman and every American, and every reader: “what I assume you shall assume” (T1b). Free verse became common in English only in the early twentieth century (Rosenberg’s trench poem in chapter 7 is one example), among poets who learned it from Whitman and from the French.

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ «Whitman scrive in *blank verse*, cioè in versi liberi.» → ✓ Il *blank verse* (English 3) è il pentametro giambico **senza rima** di Shakespeare e Milton: ha un metro fisso, come il nostro endecasillabo sciolto. Il *free verse* di Whitman non ha né rima né metro fisso: è il «verso libero».

✗ «In *Moby-Dick* Melville racconta la sua caccia alla balena.» → ✓ Il narratore è Ishmael, un personaggio; Melville usa la propria esperienza di marinaio, ma non è Ishmael.

5.2.5 Emily Dickinson (1830–1886)

Emily Dickinson spent almost all her life in her family's house in Amherst, Massachusetts. In her thirties she withdrew more and more from society, dressed in white, and corresponded with friends rather than visiting them. In those years she wrote almost 1,800 poems. About ten were printed while she lived, anonymously and often altered by editors; the others she copied into small hand-sewn booklets, called **fascicles** (*fascicoli*), or kept on loose sheets, and her sister found them after her death.

Her poems are short, and almost all use the four-line stanza of the Protestant hymns she sang as a girl: lines of eight and six syllables, rhyming in lines 2 and 4. Hymn books call this **common metre** (*metro comune* degli inni), a version of the ballad stanza you met in English 3, chapter 5. Inside this simple frame she was radically original. She used dashes instead of most punctuation, capital letters on important nouns, and a rhyme that only half rhymes. A **slant rhyme** (*rima imperfetta*) is an approximate rhyme in which the sounds are close but not identical — *me / Immortality*, *Chill / Tulle*; it is the same device that English 4 (chapter 13) called a *half-rhyme*, and Dickinson made it a signature. Her subjects are death, God, nature, love, and the mind observing itself, often in a single unexpected image.

The first selection, *Poems* (1890), edited by her friend Mabel Loomis Todd and the critic Thomas Wentworth Higginson, was a success — but the editors gave the poems titles, replaced dashes with commas, regularised rhymes and even changed words. Only in 1955 did Thomas H. Johnson publish all the poems as she wrote them; R. W. Franklin's edition (1998) is the standard text today. Dickinson gave her poems no titles: they are known by their first lines and by their numbers in these editions.

> **IN SINTESI**
>
> **The American Renaissance at a glance.** *Emerson*: Transcendentalism, the self-reliant individual (*Nature* 1836). *Thoreau*: simple living and civil disobedience (*Walden* 1854). *Poe*: the short tale of a single effect, the detective story, the unreliable narrator. *Hawthorne*: guilt and the Puritan past (*The Scarlet Letter* 1850). *Melville*: the whale as symbol, the epic novel of obsession (*Moby-Dick* 1851). *Whitman*: free verse, the catalogue, the democratic "I" (*Leaves of Grass* 1855–1892). *Dickinson*: common metre, dashes, slant rhyme, the inner life (published 1890, complete 1955).

5.3 Texts: Captains, a Carriage and a Cemetery

Whitman is printed from the 1891–1892 edition of *Leaves of Grass* (Project Gutenberg #1322, checked against the 1881–1882 text on Wikisource, which is identical in these lines); Dickinson from R. W. Franklin's reading of the manuscript (poem 479), compared with the 1890 text; Lincoln from the Bliss copy of the Gettysburg Address (see the Approfondimento). The American

spellings — *labor*, *honored*, *harbor* — are the authors' and are never corrected. Read each text aloud before you analyse it.

5.3.1 T1 · Walt Whitman, "O Captain! My Captain!" and "Song of Myself"

Context. Two poems that show the two Whitmans. "O Captain! My Captain!", written after Lincoln's death and first printed in November 1865, was his most popular poem in his lifetime — and his most traditional. "Song of Myself", the long poem that opened the first edition in 1855 (untitled then), shows the voice that made him new. Section 1 is printed as it stands in 1891–1892.

Tabella 5.1 T1a — "O Captain! My Captain!" (1865), stanza 1, text of *Leaves of Grass* (1891–92)

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!	5
O the bleeding drops of red,	
Where on the deck my Captain lies,	
Fallen cold and dead.	

Tabella 5.2 T1b — "Song of Myself" (1855; text of 1891–92), section 1

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,	
And what I assume you shall assume,	
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.	
I loafe and invite my soul,	
I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass.	5
My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil, this air,	
Born here of parents born here from parents the same, and their parents the same,	
I, now thirty-seven years old in perfect health begin,	
Hoping to cease not till death.	
Creeds and schools in abeyance,	10
Retiring back a while sufficed at what they are, but never forgotten,	
I harbor for good or bad, I permit to speak at every hazard,	
Nature without check with original energy.	

Glosses. *rack*: storm, violent weather · *exulting*: rejoicing · *keel*: the bottom of a ship (here, the ship itself) · *assume*: take for granted, believe · *loafe* (modern *loaf*): spend time idly · *abeyance*: temporary suspension · *sufficed at what they are*: accepted as enough as they are · *at every hazard*: whatever the risk.

Analysis

Form. T1a has the regular music of a ballad or a hymn: four long lines rhyming in couplets (*done / won*; *exulting / daring* is only a near-rhyme), then four short lines that shrink on the page like a voice breaking. It is an extended metaphor: the ship is the nation, the "fearful trip" the war, the "prize" the Union saved and slavery ended, the Captain Lincoln. T1b has no metre and no rhyme. Its unity comes from repetition and parallelism: *celebrate / sing*, *loafe / lean*, *born here … born here*, and from lines that grow as long as the thought needs.

Meaning. The two poems move in opposite directions. In T1a the crowd celebrates and the speaker mourns: public joy, private grief, kept apart by the turn "But O heart!". In T1b the speaker celebrates himself, but the self is immediately shared — "what I assume you shall assume",

"every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you". The idle poet who "loafes" and looks at "a spear of summer grass" (the grass of the book's title, which grows everywhere and for everyone) is a provocation: in a country of work and expansion, the poet's job is to stop and observe, and to let "Nature" speak "without check".

1. In T1a, who are "the people all exulting", and why is the speaker unable to join them?
2. Explain the extended metaphor of T1a. What is the ship, what is the "fearful trip", what is the prize?
3. Look at the layout of the last four lines of T1a. What does the shape on the page suggest?
4. In T1b, find two repetitions and one example of parallelism. What replaces metre in this poem?
5. In old age Whitman is reported to have grown tired of "O Captain!", though readers loved it. Using T1b, suggest why.

5.3.2 T2 · Emily Dickinson, "Because I could not stop for Death –"

Context. Written about 1862, during the war, and copied into one of the fascicles; first printed in 1890 as "The Chariot", a title that is not hers. The text below is Franklin's reading of the manuscript (poem 479; Johnson's number is 712). Franklin's text is reprinted with small differences of capitals and dashes from one source to another; the words are the same.

T2 — "Because I could not stop for Death –" (c. 1862), complete (R. W. Franklin, no. 479)

Because I could not stop for Death –
He kindly stopped for me –
The Carriage held but just Ourselves –
And Immortality.

We slowly drove – He knew no haste
And I had put away
My labor and my leisure too,
For His Civility –

We passed the School, where Children strove
At Recess – in the Ring –
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain –
We passed the Setting Sun –

Or rather – He passed Us –
The Dews drew quivering and Chill –
For only Gossamer, my Gown –
My Tippet – only Tulle –

We paused before a House that seemed
A Swelling of the Ground –

The Roof was scarcely visible –
The Cornice – in the Ground – 20

Since then – 'tis Centuries – and yet
Feels shorter than the Day
I first surmised the Horses' Heads
Were toward Eternity –

Glosses. *Civility*: politeness · *strove*: past of *strive*, struggled, competed · *Recess*: school break · *Ring*: a circle of children playing · *Gazing*: staring · *Gossamer*: a very thin, light fabric · *Tippet*: a short cape over the shoulders · *Tulle*: thin net fabric, used for veils · *Cornice*: the decorative moulding at the top of a wall · *surmised*: guessed.

Analysis

Form. Six quatrains in common metre, lines 2 and 4 rhyming — almost always slantly (Figura 5.3). Stanza 4 breaks the pattern (6–8–8–6 syllables) at the very moment the journey turns cold. The dashes slow the reading and leave the syntax open, as if the voice were stopping to look.

"BECAUSE I COULD NOT STOP FOR DEATH": THE RHYME WORDS OF LINES 2 AND 4

stanza	line 2	line 4	rhyme	what you hear
1	*me*	*Immortality*	slant	same vowel sound, but -ty is unstressed
2	*away*	*Civility*	slant	different vowels: "-ay" against "-ty"
3	*Ring*	*Sun*	slant	different vowels; nasal endings -ng, -n
4	*Chill*	*Tulle*	slant	same final l, different vowels
5	*Ground*	*Ground*	identical	the same word repeated
6	*Day*	*Eternity*	slant	as in stanza 2: "-ay" against "-ty"

Text: the manuscript reading (R. W. Franklin, no. 479). Lines 1 and 3 of each stanza do not rhyme.

slant rhyme: an approximate echo of sound — identical rhyme: the same word

Figura 5.3 The rhyme words of lines 2 and 4 in T2 (text: Franklin, no. 479). Five stanzas end on a slant rhyme, one on an identical rhyme; lines 1 and 3 do not rhyme.

Meaning. Death is a gentleman caller who takes a lady for a drive, politely, with Immortality as chaperone. The carriage passes three images of a life — children at play, ripe grain, the setting sun — and then the light changes: "Or rather – He passed Us". The speaker is dressed for a summer drive, not for the cold of the grave, and the "House" where they pause is a tomb, hardly visible above the ground. The last stanza reveals that she has been speaking from death all along:

centuries have passed, and they feel shorter than the day of the drive. The poem never says whether Eternity is heaven or nothing; the horses only point "toward" it.

The 1890 text. The first editors left out stanza 4 entirely, gave the poem a title, replaced the dashes with commas and semicolons, rewrote lines 9–10 and 20 — children who "played, / Their lessons scarcely done" and a cornice that is "but a mound" — and turned "and yet" in line 21 into "but each". They made the poem more regular, and less strange.

ESEMPIO SVOLTO

Reading one stanza closely: stanza 3.

1. **Structure.** Three lines begin "We passed" (anaphora, English 4): the repetition imitates the steady movement of the carriage.
2. **Images.** "School … Children" = childhood; "Fields of Gazing Grain" = maturity, harvest; "Setting Sun" = old age and the end of the day. The drive is a life seen in fast motion.
3. **Language.** "Gazing Grain": the grain is personified (English 3), it stares at the passing carriage — or the dead woman sees the world staring back at her.
4. **Sound.** Alliteration (*Gazing Grain*, *Setting Sun*) and the slant rhyme *Ring / Sun*.
5. **Your sentence.** "In stanza 3 Dickinson compresses a whole life into three images, and the repeated 'We passed' makes time move as steadily as the carriage."

1. Who are the three passengers in the carriage? What kind of man is Death in stanzas 1–2?
2. Why did the speaker "put away" her "labor" and her "leisure"? What does the line suggest about how she died?
3. What changes in stanza 4? Consider the clothes, the temperature and the line "He passed Us".
4. What is the "House" of stanza 5? Why is it described so indirectly?
5. Compare the 1890 text of lines 9–10 with the manuscript. What did the editors lose?

5.3.3 T3 · Abraham Lincoln, the Gettysburg Address (19 November 1863)

Context. Lincoln spoke at the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery, four and a half months after the battle. The text is the Bliss copy, which Lincoln wrote out in 1864 for a charity volume; it has about 270 words.

Tabella 5.3 T3 — The Gettysburg Address, complete (the Bliss copy)

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.
Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.
But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate — we can not consecrate — we can not hallow — this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us — that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion — that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain — that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom — and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.
Abraham Lincoln. November 19, 1863.

Glosses. *Four score and seven*: 87 (a score = 20) — 1863 − 87 = 1776, the Declaration of Independence · *brought forth*: gave birth to · *proposition*: a statement to be proved, as in geometry · *endure*: last · *consecrate*, *hallow*: make sacred · *detract*: take away · *the last full measure of devotion*: their lives · *resolve*: decide firmly.

Analysis

Structure. Three paragraphs, three times: the past (1776, a nation born), the present (a war that tests it, a field to dedicate), the future (the "unfinished work", a "new birth of freedom"). The imagery of birth runs through all three — *brought forth*, *conceived*, *new birth* — so that the war becomes the painful second birth of the nation.

Rhetoric. Lincoln uses the rule of three (English 3, chapter 13) twice, at the two climaxes: "we can not dedicate — we can not consecrate — we can not hallow" and "of the people, by the people, for the people". Antithesis (English 3) organises the central idea: *living / dead*, *what we say here / what they did here*, *add / detract*. The key words are repeated like a refrain: *dedicate* or *dedicated* six times, *here* eight times. And there is a strategy of absence: the speech never names Gettysburg, the South, the enemy or slavery. Confederate soldiers too had died on that field; Lincoln speaks of "a great civil war" and of "freedom", and lets his listeners fill in the rest.

Prediction and irony. "The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here" is the most famous wrong prediction in American oratory — and a calculated modesty: by putting the speakers below the soldiers, Lincoln gives the living their task.

APPROFONDIMENTO

Five manuscripts, one speech. Nobody recorded exactly what Lincoln said at Gettysburg. Five copies in his hand survive, named after the people who received them: Nicolay and Hay (his secretaries), Everett, Bancroft and Bliss. They differ in small ways — "under God" is missing from the two earliest copies — and newspaper reports of the day differ again. The Bliss copy, written for an anthology sold to help soldiers, is the only one Lincoln signed and dated, and it became the standard text: it is the one carved on the Lincoln Memorial in Washington.

1. Why does Lincoln begin with 1776 rather than with the battle?
2. Find the three images of birth. What do they suggest about the war?
3. Lincoln says that the living "can not" dedicate the ground. Who has already done it, and what is left for the living to do?
4. Find two examples of the rule of three and two antitheses.
5. Why do you think the speech never mentions slavery or the Confederacy?

5.4 Language: British and American English

Read T3 again and look at one word: *honored*. A British printer would write *honoured*. Neither is a mistake. English has two major written standards, **British English** (BrE) and **American English** (AmE), and many others — Irish, Australian, Indian, Nigerian (chapters 8 and 12). They share almost all their grammar and most of their vocabulary; the differences are few, but they are systematic, and they are worth knowing because the texts you read, the INVALSI tasks and the films you watch use both.

5.4.1 Spelling

Most spelling differences follow a handful of patterns (Figura 5.4). Many go back to Noah Webster, whose *American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828) simplified spellings on purpose, to give the new nation a language of its own: *color*, *center*, *traveler*. One pattern is a trap. The ending *-ize* is not only American: British usage accepts both *realise* and *realize*, and the Oxford University Press prefers *-ize* — this is called **Oxford spelling**. American English, however, accepts only *-ize*. Some words never take *-ize* in either variety (*advertise*, *surprise*, *exercise*), and *analyse* is *analyze* in AmE.

BRITISH AND AMERICAN SPELLING: EIGHT PATTERNS

pattern	British English (BrE)	American English (AmE)
-our / -or	*colour, honour, labour*	*color, honor, labor*
-re / -er	*centre, theatre, metre*	*center, theater, meter*
-ise or -ize / -ize	*realise or realize*	*realize*
-yse / -yze	*analyse, paralyse*	*analyze, paralyze*
-ll- / -l-	*travelled, cancelled*	*traveled, canceled*
-ence / -ense	*defence, licence (noun)*	*defense, license*
-ogue / -og	*catalogue, dialogue*	*catalog (dialogue usual)*
-mme / -m	*programme (TV, course)*	*program*

BrE accepts both -ise and -ize (Oxford spelling uses -ize); this book uses -ise. AmE uses only -ize.
Quoted texts keep their own spelling: Lincoln's "honored", Dickinson's "labor".

Figura 5.4 British and American spelling: eight regular patterns. In quotations always keep the spelling of the original.

5.4.2 Vocabulary

Vocabulary differences are more numerous, and a few can cause real misunderstandings (Tabella 5.4). You already know some: the British *first floor* is the American *second floor* (English 1, chapter 4). Two warnings. In Britain *pants* are underwear; in America they are trousers. And American *school* can mean university: "Where did you go to school?" may be a question about your degree.

Tabella 5.4 British and American vocabulary: common pairs

British English	American English	Italian
autumn	fall (also autumn)	autunno
flat	apartment	appartamento
lorry	truck	camion
pavement	sidewalk	marciapiede
underground, tube	subway	metropolitana
rubbish	garbage, trash	spazzatura
queue	line	coda, fila
mobile (phone)	cell phone	cellulare
chips / crisps	French fries / chips	patatine fritte / in sacchetto
secondary school	high school	scuola superiore

5.4.3 Grammar

Grammar differs least, but some differences are frequent in texts (Tabella 5.5).

A **collective noun** (*nome collettivo*) names a group: *team, family, government, audience, staff, crew*. British English can treat it as plural when it thinks of the members (*The crew are tired*) and as singular when it thinks of the unit (*The crew is complete*); American English almost always uses the singular. Whatever you choose, be consistent in the same sentence: ✗ *The team is playing well, but they have lost their best player* mixes the two treatments, which careful writers avoid in both varieties; ✓ *The team is playing well, but it has lost its best player* (AmE and BrE) or ✓ *The team are playing well, but they have lost their best player* (BrE).

Tabella 5.5 British and American grammar: the main differences

	British English	American English
Past with *just, already, yet* (English 1, chapter 13)	*I've just finished. Have you eaten yet?*	*I just finished. Did you eat yet?* (present perfect also used)
get: past participle	*got*: *She's got much better.*	*gotten* for "become / obtained": *She's gotten much better.*
Possession	*Have you got a pen?* (also *Do you have…?*)	*Do you have a pen?*
Collective nouns	*The team are / is winning. The government have / has decided.*	*The team is winning. The government has decided.*
Mandative subjunctive (English 4, chapter 7)	*They insisted that he should leave* or *…that he leave*	*They insisted that he leave.* (much more common)
Prepositions	*at the weekend · different from / to · Monday to Friday · write to me*	*on the weekend · different from / than · Monday through Friday · write me*
Articles	*in hospital · at university* (English 4, chapter 1)	*in the hospital · in college*
shall	*Shall I open the window?*	rare: *Should I open the window?*

5.4.4 Dates, numbers and punctuation

Lincoln dated his copy "November 19, 1863": month, day, comma, year — the American order. British usage writes *19 November 1863*. With numbers the difference is dangerous: *4/7/1865* is 4 July in London and April 7 in New York, so in formal writing spell the month out. American English puts a full stop after *Mr., Mrs., Dr.*; British English usually does not (*Mr Lincoln*). American texts use double quotation marks, with commas and full stops inside them; British texts often use single ones.

GRAMMAR IN ITALIANO

Inglese britannico e americano. Sono due varietà standard della stessa lingua, entrambe corrette: le differenze riguardano soprattutto l'**ortografia** (*colour / color*, *centre / center*; *-ise* e *-ize* sono entrambe britanniche, solo *-ize* è americana), il **lessico** (*flat / apartment*), alcuni punti di **grammatica** (*Did you eat yet?*, *gotten*, i nomi collettivi col verbo al plurale in BrE, *on the weekend*, il congiuntivo dopo *insist / suggest*) e il modo di scrivere le **date** (*19 November / November 19*).

Confronto con l'italiano. Anche l'italiano ha varietà regionali (*anguria / cocomero*, il passato remoto più usato al Sud), ma una sola ortografia. In inglese l'ortografia stessa cambia: per questo conta la **coerenza**. In un tema o nelle prove scritte puoi usare l'una o l'altra varietà, ma non mescolarle nello stesso testo; nelle citazioni si conserva sempre la grafia originale.

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ *The colour of the sea changed as the ship traveled toward the center of the storm.* → ✓ *...travelled towards the centre...* (BrE) oppure ✓ *The color ... traveled toward the center...* (AmE): una sola varietà per testo.

✗ *Lincoln's speech has gotten famous all over the world* in un testo britannico → ✓ *has become famous*. *Gotten* è solo americano (e non sostituisce *have got* = avere).

✗ Correggere *labor* in *labour* citando Dickinson → ✓ le citazioni si riportano come sono.

DA RICORDARE

In the exam. Either variety is correct; mixing them is not. Choose one — this book uses British English with *-ise* — and keep it for spelling, vocabulary and dates in the whole text. Reading and listening tests use texts and speakers from both sides of the Atlantic (and beyond): recognise both, write one.

5.5 Skills: Words that Travel, Words that Stay

5.5.1 Vocabulary: the sea, the frontier and freedom

Tabella 5.6 collects the words of this chapter's two great subjects: the sea and the struggle for freedom.

Tabella 5.6 The sea, the frontier and freedom

Word	Meaning	Example
whale (n.)	a very large sea mammal	*The sperm whale was hunted for its oil.*
voyage (n.)	a long journey by sea or in space	*The* Pequod*'s voyage lasted years.*
harpoon (n., v.)	a spear on a rope, thrown at whales; to strike with one	*The harpoon flew from the boat and struck the whale.*
frontier (n.)	the edge of settled land (English 3)	*The frontier moved west every decade.*
settler (n.)	a person who goes to live in a new region	*Settlers crossed the plains in wagons.*
abolition (n.)	the official ending of a law or system	*the abolition of slavery*
emancipation (n.)	the act of freeing people from legal restrictions	*the emancipation of enslaved people*
union (n.)	states or people joined together; the Union = the USA	*to preserve the Union*
liberty (n.)	freedom, especially political freedom	*a nation conceived in Liberty*
equality (n.)	the state of having the same rights	*equality before the law*

Word formation: words American English took from other languages

Settlers met new animals, objects and landscapes, and often took their names from the people who already knew them (Tabella 5.7). These *loanwords* (English 3, chapter 2) record the history of contact: Native American languages for nature and everyday objects, Spanish for the landscape and the cattle culture of the South-West, Dutch from the old colony of New Amsterdam (New York).

Tabella 5.7 Loanwords in American English (etymologies from standard dictionaries)

Word	From	Original meaning or form
canoe	Taíno, a language of the Caribbean, through Spanish *canoa*	dugout boat
moccasin	Powhatan, an Algonquian language of Virginia	soft leather shoe
raccoon	Powhatan (first recorded in 1608)	probably "the one who scratches with its hands"
skunk	an Algonquian language of southern New England	the animal's name
canyon	Spanish *cañón*	tube, pipe; deep valley
ranch	Spanish *rancho*	small farm, group of huts
rodeo	Spanish *rodeo*, from *rodear*	to surround: a round-up of cattle
cookie	Dutch *koekje*	little cake
boss	Dutch *baas*	master

5.5.2 Reading: Why Ishmael survives

Before you read. Think of a story you know in which only one character survives (a film, a myth, the *Odyssey*). Why does the storyteller keep that character alive?

Link Reading Club · Seminar notes

Why Ishmael survives · *posted by Sam*

Our first-year seminar on the American novel meets on Tuesday mornings in a room with no windows, which is perhaps the right place to read about the bottom of the sea. This week the question on the handout was simple: everyone on the *Pequod* drowns except the narrator. Why him? My tutor wanted a thesis, not a plot summary, so here are my notes, tidied up for the club. Giulia, Callum: tell me where I'm wrong.

1. Because somebody has to tell the story. This is the boring answer, and Melville seems to know it. The Epilogue opens with a line from the Book of Job: "And I only am escaped alone to tell thee." In Job, messengers run to bring the news of disaster. Ishmael is that messenger. A first-person narrator who dies in the last chapter would leave nobody to write the book — so far, so obvious. But Melville did not have to choose a first-person narrator at all. Why this one?

2. Because Ishmael watches, and Ahab wants. Ahab has one idea: to kill the whale. Everything he sees becomes part of that idea, and in the end he can no longer see anything else. Ishmael is the opposite. He is curious about everything: whales, ropes, sharks, philosophy, the different religions of the crew. Whole chapters do nothing but describe the parts of a whale's head. Students hate those chapters (we had a vote; they lost). But they are the point. Ishmael survives because his mind is open, and Ahab's is closed.

3. Because he learned to share. At the beginning Ishmael is gloomy and alone — he goes to sea, he says, when it is "a damp, drizzly November" in his soul. Then he has to share a bed in an inn with Queequeg, a harpooner from the South Seas covered in tattoos, and is terrified. Within a day they are friends. Our tutor pointed out that the friendship is described with almost the language of a marriage, which in 1851 is surprising. Ishmael, who has the name of an outcast — in Genesis, Ishmael is the son whom Abraham sends into the desert — finds a brother in a man the other sailors call a savage.

4. Because the friend saves him, literally. This is the detail I love. Queequeg falls ill and orders a coffin to be made for himself; then he recovers, and the coffin is turned into the ship's life-buoy. When the *Pequod* sinks, the coffin shoots up from the whirlpool, and Ishmael floats on it for almost a day and a night. Melville even compares him, spinning round the vortex, to Ixion on his wheel in the Greek myth. The object made for one friend's death keeps the other alive.

5. Because another ship is looking for its children. He is picked up by the *Rachel*, a whaler whose captain has lost his own son in a boat and has been searching for him. The last sentence of the novel says that the ship, looking for her missing children, "only found another orphan." The name comes from the Bible, where Rachel weeps for her children. So the book ends with loss and with rescue in the same sentence.

My thesis (draft): Ishmael survives not by chance but because the novel rewards three things that Ahab rejects: curiosity, friendship across difference, and the humility to tell other people's story instead of his own.

My tutor's comment in the margin: "Good. Now find a counter-argument." Over to you.

After you read. 1 Why does Sam call his first answer "boring"? 2 What is the difference between Ishmael and Ahab, according to point 2? 3 How does Queequeg save Ishmael's life? 4 Explain the two biblical names, Ishmael and Rachel. 5 Write the counter-argument Sam's tutor asks for (40–60 words).

5.5.3 Speaking: public speaking — delivering a short speech

A speech is written for the ear. Listeners cannot reread, so a good speaker repeats key words, signposts every move, groups ideas in threes, and uses pauses as punctuation. Lincoln's "of the people, by the people, for the people" works because the three phrases have the same rhythm and only the preposition changes. Mark your text before you speak: a single slash (/) for a short pause, a double slash (//) for a long one, and underline the words to stress.

Tabella 5.8 Useful language — delivering a short speech

Function	Phrases
Opening	*Good morning, everyone. · Thank you all for being here. · We are here today to…*
Signposting	*Let me begin with… · That brings me to my second point. · Finally, and most importantly…*
Involving the audience	*Think for a moment about… · Many of you will remember… · Imagine…*
Emphasising (triplets)	*We remember them, we thank them, we continue their work. · not…, not…, but…*
Closing	*So let us… · I'd like to end with… · Thank you.*

1. **Task 1 (pairs).** Mark the pauses and stresses in the last sentence of T3, from "It is rather for us…". Read it aloud to your partner twice: once fast, once with your marks. Which works better, and why?
2. **Task 2 (individual, 90 seconds).** Deliver a short speech to welcome a group of exchange students to your school. Use one triplet and two signposts. *Colloquio link:* use the same techniques to present the Gettysburg Address to the commission, linking it to Pericles' funeral speech (Greek) and to the unification of Italy in the same years (history).

5.5.4 Writing: a commemorative speech

A **commemorative speech** (*discorso commemorativo*) honours people or an event on an anniversary, at a memorial or at a ceremony. It is short (two or three minutes, 250–300 words), and it usually moves, like T3, from the past to the present to the future. Giulia was asked to speak for the students at the ceremony for her school's 150th anniversary.

Tabella 5.9 Model text — a commemorative speech (about 270 words)

One hundred and fifty years
Good morning, Headteacher, teachers, parents and friends. Thank you for being here.
One hundred and fifty years ago, eleven boys sat down in a cold room on this street to read Homer. They had no heating, no library and no idea that we would come. Today four hundred of us — girls and boys — still open the same Homer every week. Some things change slowly, and some things should.
We are here to remember the people who made this school. Not only the famous names on the honours board, but the teachers who stayed after the bell to explain one more verb; the caretakers who opened the gates at seven every winter morning; and the students whose names are on the plaque by the stairs, who left for the wars of the last century and never came back. We walk past that plaque every day. Today, let us stop.
What did they leave us? They left us a building, of course. But more than that, they left us a habit: the habit of reading slowly, of asking why, of disagreeing politely. In a world that moves very fast, that habit is not old-fashioned. It is a kind of freedom.
So this anniversary is not only a celebration of the past. It is a promise about the future. In fifty years, when this school is two hundred years old, other students will stand here. Let us make sure they find a school that is open to everyone, curious about everything, and still a little in love with Homer.
We remember them. We thank them. We continue their work.
Thank you.

ESEMPIO SVOLTO

Analysing the model.

1. **Opening** (para. 1): greets the audience in order of rank, then thanks them.
2. **Past** (para. 2): a concrete image — eleven boys, a cold room, Homer — instead of dates and statistics; the last sentence is a short, memorable contrast.
3. **The people honoured** (para. 3): a list of three groups, from the ordinary to the tragic; the call "let us stop" turns memory into an action.
4. **Present** (para. 4): the question "What did they leave us?" and its answer, a triplet (*reading slowly, asking why, disagreeing politely*).
5. **Future** (para. 5): "not only… It is a promise"; a second triplet (*open, curious, in love*).
6. **Closing**: three short sentences with the same structure, easy to remember — the speech's equivalent of "of the people, by the people, for the people".

Checklist. ✓ a greeting and thanks ✓ past → present → future ✓ concrete images, not lists of dates ✓ at least two triplets and one rhetorical question ✓ short sentences at the climaxes ✓ *we / us* to include the audience ✓ a memorable last line ✓ 250–300 words (about two minutes aloud).

Task. Write a commemorative speech (250–300 words) for one of these occasions: a the anniversary of a local library, sports club or theatre; b the inauguration of a memorial to the volunteers who helped during a flood or an earthquake in your region; c the last day of your fifth year, honouring the people who made your five years at the liceo. Then mark your pauses and stresses and deliver it in two minutes.

5.6 Connections: Pavese's Whale, Pericles' Dead and News by Wire

5.6.1 Cesare Pavese translates *Moby-Dick*

In 1930 Cesare Pavese (1908–1950) graduated from the University of Turin with a thesis on Walt Whitman. In the same years he began to translate American novels for Turin publishers: Sinclair Lewis first (1931), then, in 1932, *Moby-Dick* for Frassinelli. His version opens with the sentence every Italian reader knows — "Chiamatemi Ismaele" — and continues in a deliberately unusual Italian (Ishmael has "pochi o punti denari" in his purse, an old literary Italian way of saying "little or no money") that tries to keep the strangeness of Melville's prose.

Pavese was not alone. With Elio Vittorini he belonged to a group of Italian writers who, in the 1930s, discovered American literature and translated it — the "decade of translations", as Pavese himself later called it. For young writers under Fascism, which censored and controlled culture, America was less a real country than a myth of freedom, energy and modernity, and its writers offered a new, direct way of telling stories. Vittorini's anthology *Americana* (1941) was stopped by the censors and published only in a revised edition in 1942, with a new introduction by Emilio Cecchi in place of Vittorini's own commentary. Pavese's own novels, from *Paesi tuoi* (1941) to *La luna e i falò* (1950), owe something to the Americans he translated; you will meet his "myth of America" again in chapter 10, and his Greek myths in chapter 14.

5.6.2 Two funeral speeches: Pericles and Lincoln

In the winter of 431–430 BC, at the end of the first year of the Peloponnesian War, Athens buried its dead in a public ceremony, and Pericles gave the **funeral oration** (*epitaffio*, Greek *epitáphios lógos*), the speech in praise of those who died for the city. Thucydides, whom you read in Greek last year, reports it in Book II (35–46). Historians and critics, among them Garry Wills in *Lincoln at Gettysburg* (1992), have often compared it with the Gettysburg Address. It is a comparison of two speeches, not a source: nothing shows that Lincoln was imitating the Greek model.

Tabella 5.10 Thucydides, II.37.1 and II.43.3 (Greek text of the Oxford Classical Text, via Perseus); translation by the editors

II.37.1	καὶ ὄνομα μὲν διὰ τὸ μὴ ἐς ὀλίγους ἀλλ᾽ ἐς πλείονας οἰκεῖν δημοκρατία κέκληται
	(kaì ónoma mèn dià tò mḕ es olígous all' es pleíonas oikeîn dēmokratía kéklētai) "And because it is governed not for the few but for the many, its name is democracy."
II.43.3	ἀνδρῶν γὰρ ἐπιφανῶν πᾶσα γῆ τάφος
	(andrôn gàr epiphanôn pâsa gê táphos) "For the whole earth is the tomb of famous men."

The two speeches share a pattern. Both praise the dead by praising the community and the ideal they died for — democracy in Athens, "government of the people" in America — and both say very little about the battle. Both doubt the power of words: Pericles begins by saying that men who proved their worth in deeds should be honoured by deeds, not speeches; Lincoln says the world will not remember what is said, only what was done. Both end by turning to the living and their duty. The differences are as instructive. Pericles speaks for an imperial city at the height of its power and praises it at length; Lincoln never names the place or the enemy, and speaks in under three hundred words. And the Athenian democracy that Pericles praises excluded women, foreigners and slaves — while Lincoln spoke in the middle of a war that was ending slavery.

COLLEGAMENTI

Greek: the epitaphios as a genre. The Athenian funeral speech was a fixed public form, with set parts: praise of the ancestors, of the city and its constitution, of the dead; consolation for the families; exhortation to the living. Read Thucydides II.35–46 in Italian and find each part. Then find the same parts — or their absence — in T3: which ones did Lincoln keep, and which did he leave out?

5.6.3 News by wire: the telegraph

The Civil War was the first war of the electric telegraph. The physics behind it was new. In 1820 the Danish scientist Hans Christian Ørsted noticed that an electric current deflects a compass needle: a current produces a magnetic field. A telegraph uses this effect at a distance (Figura 5.5). At the sending station a battery and a key are connected by a long wire to an electromagnet at the receiving station, and the ground itself carries the current back. When the operator presses the key, the circuit is closed, current flows, and the coil of the electromagnet attracts an iron armature with a click; when the key is released, the current stops and a spring pulls the armature back. Short and long pulses — dots and dashes — spell out letters in Morse code.

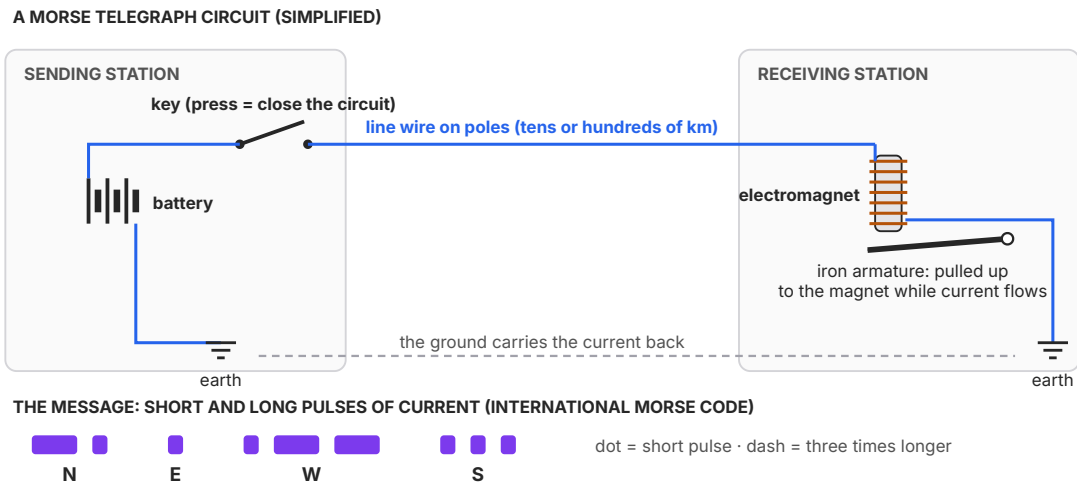


Figura 5.5 A Morse telegraph circuit (simplified): battery, key, line wire, electromagnet and armature, with the earth as return path. Below, the word NEWS in International Morse code; the American lines of the 1860s used an older variant, American Morse.

Samuel Morse opened the first long line, from Washington to Baltimore, on 24 May 1844, with a message from the Bible: “What hath God wrought”. Seventeen years later a network of wires crossed the continent. During the war, Lincoln spent hours in the War Department’s telegraph office, reading reports from the front almost as they were sent; newspapers printed battle news the next morning. Across the ocean it was harder: the first Atlantic cable (1858) carried messages between Queen Victoria and President Buchanan, then failed after a few weeks; only in 1866 did a lasting cable, laid by the steamship *Great Eastern*, connect Europe and America.

COLLEGAMENTI

Physics: why the signal fades. Every wire has a resistance, which grows with its length, so the current that reaches a distant station is weaker. Long land lines therefore used **relays**: a weak current moved an armature that closed a second, local circuit with its own battery, which sent the signal on at full strength. In your physics course, connect this with Ohm’s law (current = voltage ÷ resistance) and with the magnetic field of a coil, which grows with the current and the number of turns.

LEARNING TO LEARN

Building a percorso for the colloquio. At the colloquio you start from a material and move across subjects. Prepare by building **percorsi** (paths): put one text in the centre of a page and draw four branches to four subjects, each with a concrete link and one key word. For T3: **Greek** — Pericles' funeral oration (Thucydides II.35–46): *the dead and the city*; **History** — the Civil War and, in the same years, the unification of Italy (the Kingdom of Italy was proclaimed in March 1861, a month before Fort Sumter): *nations born in war*; **Philosophy** — in 1864 Karl Marx drafted the International Working Men's Association's address congratulating Lincoln on his re-election: *labour and slavery*; **Physics** — the telegraph and electromagnetism: *news by wire*. Then practise saying each link in two sentences, in English and in Italian. The same method works for a Latin or Greek text: put Tacitus or Plutarch in the centre, and look for English, Italian and history links.

SINTESI

- Between 1830 and 1860 the United States expanded to the Pacific (Texas 1845, Oregon 1846, the war with Mexico 1846–1848, the gold rush), in the name of **Manifest Destiny** and at the expense of Native Americans.
- Slavery divided North and South. Abolitionists (Douglass's *Narrative*, 1845; Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 1852) faced the Fugitive Slave Act (1850) and the Dred Scott decision (1857).
- Lincoln's election (1860) led to **secession** and the **Confederacy**; the **Civil War** (1861–1865) was the first industrial war and the deadliest in American history.
- The Emancipation Proclamation (1 January 1863) made the war a war against slavery; the Thirteenth Amendment (1865) abolished it. Lincoln was assassinated in April 1865.
- The **American Renaissance** is Matthiessen's 1941 label for the masterpieces of c. 1850–1855. **Transcendentalism** (Emerson, Thoreau) trusted intuition, nature and the individual.
- Poe theorised the tale of a **single effect**, wrote what is usually called the first modern detective story, and used unreliable narrators. Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851), narrated by Ishmael, makes the whale an open symbol.
- Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (1855–1892) introduced **free verse** and the **catalogue**, with a democratic "I"; "O Captain! My Captain!" (1865) is his most traditional poem.
- Dickinson wrote almost 1,800 poems in **common metre**, with dashes and **slant rhyme**; the 1890 editors altered them, and Johnson (1955) and Franklin (1998) restored her texts.
- The Gettysburg Address (19 November 1863; about 270 words in the Bliss copy) moves from past to present to future, with images of birth, the rule of three and antithesis.
- British and American English differ in spelling (*colour / color*; *-ise* and *-ize* are both British), vocabulary, some grammar (*gotten*, collective nouns, *on the weekend*) and dates: use one variety consistently.
- Pavese translated *Moby-Dick* in 1932; Pericles' funeral oration in Thucydides is often compared with Lincoln's speech; the telegraph, based on electromagnetism, carried the news of the war.

ESERCIZI

History and Literature

1. ● "Manifest Destiny" was…

   A. a law that forced Native Americans to move west of the Mississippi

   B. the belief that the United States was destined to expand across the continent

   C. the name of the Union army in the Civil War

   D. Lincoln's plan to abolish slavery gradually

2. ● The Emancipation Proclamation of 1 January 1863…
   A. abolished slavery in the whole United States
   B. applied only to the four border states
   C. declared free the enslaved people in the areas still in rebellion
   D. was rejected by Congress and never applied

3. ● The expression “American Renaissance”…
   A. was coined by Emerson in *Nature* (1836)
   B. was the title of the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*
   C. was the name of a magazine edited by Poe
   D. is a label created by the critic F. O. Matthiessen in 1941

4. ● True or false? Correct the false statements. a South Carolina was the first state to leave the Union. b Thoreau lived at Walden Pond for ten years. c Poe thought a tale should be short enough to be read at one sitting. d *Moby-Dick* was a best-seller in 1851. e Dickinson published most of her poems in her lifetime. f Whitman went on revising *Leaves of Grass* until the 1890s.

5. ●● Match each author with a work and its date. Authors: Emerson · Poe · Melville · Stowe · Thoreau · Whitman. Works: *Walden* · *Leaves of Grass* · *Nature* · *Moby-Dick* · “The Tell-Tale Heart” · *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Dates: 1836 · 1843 · 1851 · 1852 · 1854 · 1855.

6. ●● Explain these terms in your own words, with an example from the chapter: a Transcendentalism · b single effect · c free verse · d catalogue · e slant rhyme · f common metre · g secession.

7. ●●● Short answer (50–80 words). Why is the Civil War often called the first industrial war, and how did the Emancipation Proclamation change its aim?

Text Analysis

8. ● In T1a, the “fearful trip” stands for…
   A. the Civil War
   B. Lincoln’s journey to Gettysburg
   C. a real sea voyage Whitman made
   D. Lincoln’s funeral train

9. ●● T1. Compare T1a and T1b (60–80 words): rhyme, metre, line length, and who “I” is in each poem.

10. ● T2. Answer briefly. a Who drives the carriage, and who else is in it? b Which three things do they pass in stanza 3? c What is the speaker wearing, and why does it matter? d What is the “House” of stanza 5? e How long ago did the drive take place?

11. ●● T2. Find one example of each device and quote it: a personification · b anaphora · c alliteration · d slant rhyme · e a dash that suspends the sentence.

12. ●● T3. Paraphrase in simple modern English: a “Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation” b “far above our poor power to add or detract” c “the last full measure of devotion” d “that these dead shall not have died in vain”.

13. ●●● T3. Write a PEE paragraph (Point, Evidence, Explanation; 80–100 words) on this point: “In the Gettysburg Address Lincoln turns a funeral into a programme for the future.”

14. ●●● Colloquio link (60–80 words). Start from T2 and link it to another subject — for example Greek (Hermes, who guides the souls of the dead), Italian (death in Pascoli or Leopardi) or philosophy.

Language

15. ● Which sentence is correct in BOTH British and American English?

    A. I’ve gotten a letter from the university this morning.

    B. See you on the weekend!

    C. The government has decided to lower taxes.

    D. Did you finish your essay yet?

16. ● In British English, *realise* and *realize*…

    A. are both correct, but one text should use only one of them

    B. are both wrong: the correct form is *realyse*

    C. differ: *realize* is American only

    D. differ in meaning: *realise* = understand, *realize* = make real

17. ● Rewrite in American spelling. a The theatre’s programme was cancelled. b We analysed the colour of the centre. c The defence lawyer travelled with her licence.

18. ● Rewrite in American English, changing the vocabulary. a I left my mobile on the pavement. b We queued for the underground in autumn. c Take the rubbish out before you go on holiday. d They have moved into a flat near the secondary school.

19. ●● Complete with the verb in brackets, in the variety indicated. a (AmE) I ___ (just / finish) my essay — can I go out? b (BrE) I ___ (just / finish) my essay — can I go out? c (AmE) Her English ___ (get) much better since September. d (BrE, the members) The crew ___ (be) exhausted after the storm. e (AmE) The captain insisted that the sailor ___ (leave) the ship at once.

20. ●● Each sentence has one error (✗): a mix of varieties in a British text, or a mistake. Correct it. a The colour of the sky changed as we traveled towards the coast. b I have gotten two brothers and a sister. c The government have made their decision, but it has not explained why. d On 19 November 1863 Mr. Lincoln spoke at Gettysburg. e Dickinson writes that she had put away “my labour and my leisure too”.

21. ● Dates. a Write *4 July 1776* in American style. b Write *November 19, 1863* in British style. c Lincoln died on 15/4/1865 (BrE): write the date in American numeric form. d What date is *9/4/1865* for a British reader, and for an American reader?

22. ●● Collective nouns. Which verb forms are possible in British English, and which in American English? a The audience was / were on its / their feet. b My family is / are moving to Milan. c The staff has / have been very kind.

23. ●● Translate into English. a Lincoln pronunciò il discorso di Gettysburg nel novembre del 1863, quattro mesi e mezzo dopo la battaglia. b Whitman non usa né la rima né un metro fisso: scrive in versi liberi. c Nei temi puoi usare l'inglese britannico o quello americano, ma non devi mescolarli.

Vocabulary

24. ● Complete with words from Tabella 5.6 (one is not needed): voyage · settlers · harpoon · abolition · equality · liberty · frontier. a The ___ of the *Pequod* ends in disaster. b Thousands of ___ moved west in covered wagons. c Douglass campaigned for the ___ of slavery. d Queequeg could throw a ___ with great precision. e Black Americans would wait another century for full ___ before the law. f For Native Americans, the ___ meant the loss of their land.

25. ● Word formation. Group these words by the language they come from (Native American languages, Spanish, Dutch): canoe · rodeo · cookie · moccasin · ranch · boss · raccoon · canyon · skunk.

26. ●● Collocations. Match each verb with a noun phrase and write a sentence about the chapter with each: abolish · deliver · dedicate · preserve · harpoon · sign — a whale · slavery · a proclamation · a speech · a cemetery · the Union.

Writing and Speaking

27. ●●● Writing. Write the commemorative speech of the Skills section (250–300 words), using the checklist. Mark the pauses (/ and //) and the words to stress.

28. ●● Speaking (2 minutes). Present one writer of this chapter to a class of younger students as if introducing a guest: who, when, the one work to read, one sentence or line to remember, and why it still matters. Use one triplet and two signposts.

Towards the Exam

29. ●● Reading (multiple choice, inspired by INVALSI formats). Read Sam's notes in the Skills section again and choose A, B, C or D. a Sam's tutor wanted (A) a summary of the plot (B) a thesis (C) a list of characters (D) a comparison with another novel. b According to Sam, the chapters on whales (A) should be cut (B) are a weakness of the novel (C) show Ishmael's open mind (D) were added by an editor. c The coffin that saves Ishmael was made (A) for Ahab (B) for Queequeg (C) by Ishmael (D) for the *Rachel*'s captain. d In the last line of the novel, Ishmael is called (A) a messenger (B) a brother (C) a survivor (D) an orphan.

30. ●● Open cloze. Write ONE word in each gap. Emily Dickinson lived almost all her life (1) ___ Amherst. She wrote nearly 1,800 poems, but only about ten were printed (2) ___ she was alive. Most of (3) ___ were found by her sister after her death. The first editors changed her punctuation and (4) ___ removed whole stanzas. It was not (5) ___ 1955 that readers could see the poems as she (6) ___ written them.

31. ●●● Key-word transformation. Complete the second sentence so that it means the same as the first, using the word in capitals (2–5 words). a Few readers understood *Moby-Dick* in 1851. HARDLY — ___ *Moby-Dick* in 1851. b Lincoln's speech was only about two minutes long. LASTED — Lincoln's speech ___ about two minutes. c Most of Dickinson's poems were published only after her death. UNTIL — Most of Dickinson's poems ___ after her death. d People say that Poe invented the detective story. SAID — Poe ___ the detective story.

32. ●●● Colloquio prompt. The material: the line "I celebrate myself, and sing myself" (Whitman, T1b), and a description of an image — a nineteenth-century engraving of a whaling boat, six men rowing towards a huge whale that rises from the sea. Guided questions: a What links the line and the image? b Which writer of the chapter does each recall, and why? c Link the material to one other subject. d What does it say about America in the 1850s?

PER APPROFONDIRE

- [NAA] *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, vol. B (1820–1865): the introduction and the sections on Emerson, Thoreau, Poe, Melville, Whitman, Dickinson and Lincoln.
- [ABR] M. H. Abrams, G. G. Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*: the entries "Transcendentalism", "free verse", "rhyme" (half rhyme, slant rhyme) and "short story".
- [SWA] M. Swan, *Practical English Usage*: the entry on American and British English.
- [CRY] D. Crystal, *English as a Global Language*: the chapter on the spread of English in America.
- The texts of this chapter online: Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (1891–92), Project Gutenberg #1322; Dickinson, *Poems* (1890), Project Gutenberg #12242, and the Emily Dickinson Archive (edickinson.org) for the manuscripts; the Gettysburg Address, Library of Congress (the five copies); Melville, *Moby-Dick*, Project Gutenberg #2701; Thucydides, Perseus Digital Library.

Glossario del capitolo

American Renaissance
Rinascimento americano — F. O. Matthiessen's label (1941) for the great American works of c. 1850–1855 by Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville and Whitman.

Border states
stati di confine — the slave states that stayed in the Union during the Civil War: Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, Missouri (and West Virginia from 1863).

Catalogue
catalogo, elenco — in poetry, a long list of people, places or actions, typical of Whitman.

Collective noun
nome collettivo — a noun for a group (*team, family, crew*); in British English it can take a plural verb.

Commemorative speech
discorso commemorativo — a short speech that honours people or an event at an anniversary or a ceremony.

Common metre
metro degli inni — a hymn quatrain of lines of 8 and 6 syllables, rhyming in lines 2 and 4; Dickinson's usual stanza.

Confederacy
Confederazione — the Confederate States of America (1861–1865), the eleven Southern states that left the Union.

Emancipation
emancipazione — the legal freeing of enslaved people; in the USA, the Proclamation of 1863 and the Thirteenth Amendment (1865).

Fascicle
fascicolo — one of the small hand-sewn booklets into which Emily Dickinson copied her poems.

Free verse
verso libero — verse without regular metre or rhyme, shaped by the rhythm of speech; not the same as blank verse.

Funeral oration
epitaffio, orazione funebre — a public speech in praise of people who died for their city or country, like Pericles' in Thucydides.

Manifest Destiny
destino manifesto — the nineteenth-century belief that the United States was destined to expand across North America.

Oxford spelling
grafia di Oxford — British spelling with *-ize* instead of *-ise* (*realize*), preferred by Oxford University Press.

Secession
secessione — the formal withdrawal of a state from a federation, as the Southern states did in 1860–1861.

Single effect
effetto unico — Poe's principle that every element of a short tale must serve one emotion chosen in advance.

Slant rhyme
rima imperfetta — an approximate rhyme with similar but not identical sounds (*Chill / Tulle*), typical of Dickinson.

Transcendentalism
trascendentalismo — the movement of Emerson and Thoreau: the divine is present in nature and in every soul, and intuition reveals truth.

Union
Unione — the United States as one nation; in the Civil War, the federal government and the states loyal to it.

Soluzioni

1. B (the phrase is O'Sullivan's, 1845; the Indian Removal Act was a separate law of 1830).

2. C (it did not apply to the border states; slavery was abolished everywhere by the Thirteenth Amendment, 1865).

3. D.

4. a T (20 December 1860). b F: about two years (July 1845 – September 1847). c T. d F: it puzzled readers and sold poorly; it became a classic after the "Melville revival" of the 1920s. e F: only about ten, anonymously; the rest appeared after her death. f T (the "deathbed edition", 1891–1892).

5. Emerson — *Nature* — 1836; Poe — "The Tell-Tale Heart" — 1843; Melville — *Moby-Dick* — 1851; Stowe — *Uncle Tom's Cabin* — 1852; Thoreau — *Walden* — 1854; Whitman — *Leaves of Grass* — 1855.

6. Model definitions. a The belief (Emerson, Thoreau) that the divine is present in nature and in every soul, so that intuition gives direct access to truth; e.g. Emerson's "Self-Reliance". b Poe's principle that every word of a short tale must serve one emotion chosen in advance; e.g. the terror of "The Tell-Tale Heart". c Verse with no regular metre and no rhyme, shaped by speech rhythm and repetition; e.g. "Song of Myself". d A long list of people, places or actions in a poem, meant to include a whole world; e.g. Whitman's catalogues of Americans. e An approximate rhyme with similar but not identical sounds; e.g. *Chill / Tulle*. f The hymn quatrain of 8 and 6 syllables rhyming in lines 2 and 4; e.g. every stanza of T2. g The withdrawal of a state from the Union; e.g. South Carolina in December 1860.

7. *Traccia:* industrial because railways moved troops and supplies, the telegraph carried orders and news, factories produced weapons in large numbers, and photographs showed the dead to the public. The Proclamation (1 January 1863) freed the enslaved people in the rebel areas and opened the army to Black soldiers (about 180,000 served): a war to save the Union became also a war to end slavery.

8. A.

9. *Traccia:* T1a rhymes in couplets and has a regular, song-like rhythm with long lines and a shrinking refrain; T1b has no rhyme and no metre, and its lines vary with the thought. In T1a "I" is a sailor who mourns his captain — a private voice inside a public scene; in T1b "I" is the poet and at the same time every reader ("what I assume you shall assume").

10. a Death drives; Immortality and the speaker are inside. b A school with children playing, fields of grain, the setting sun. c Only a thin gown of gossamer and a tulle tippet: summer clothes, too light for the cold of the grave — she was not prepared for death. d A grave or tomb, almost below the ground. e Centuries ago — yet it feels shorter than that day.

11. a Death "kindly stopped", "He knew no haste"; or "Gazing Grain". b "We passed … We passed … We passed" (stanza 3). c "Gazing Grain", "Setting Sun". d *me / Immortality*, *away / Civility*, *Ring / Sun*, *Chill / Tulle*, *Day / Eternity*. e "Or rather – He passed Us –", or "Since then – 'tis Centuries – and yet".

12. a Eighty-seven years ago our ancestors created a new country here. b much more than our weak words could increase or reduce it. c their lives — the most that a person can give. d that these soldiers will not have died for nothing.

13. Model: *Point:* Lincoln changes a ceremony for the dead into a call to action. *Evidence:* he says "we can not dedicate" the ground, because the soldiers have already consecrated it, and asks the living to "be dedicated here to the unfinished work". *Explanation:* the word *dedicate* moves from the cemetery to the audience; the speech ends with the future — "a new birth of freedom" and a government that

"shall not perish" — so mourning becomes a political programme.

14. *Traccia:* Dickinson's Death is a polite driver who accompanies the soul towards eternity, like Hermes Psychopompos, the guide of souls in Greek myth (Odyssey XXIV), or Charon in the Underworld; but her journey has no judgement and no clear destination. Other valid links: Pascoli's and Leopardi's meditations on death, or Schopenhauer's idea of death in philosophy. Any well-explained link is acceptable.

15. C (A, B and D are American usages).

16. A.

17. a The theater's program was canceled. b We analyzed the color of the center. c The defense lawyer traveled with her license.

18. a I left my cell phone on the sidewalk. b We waited in line for the subway in the fall. c Take the garbage (trash) out before you go on vacation. d They have moved into an apartment near the high school.

19. a just finished (*I've just finished* is also possible) b have just finished (*I've just finished*) c has gotten d are e leave.

20. a traveled → travelled (or, in an American text, colour → color and towards → toward). b have gotten → have got (or *have*): *gotten* does not mean "possess". c singular and plural mixed in one sentence → *The government has made its decision, but it has not explained why* (AmE and BrE), or in BrE with plural agreement throughout: *The government have made their decision, but they have not explained why*. d *Mr.* → *Mr*: British style has no full stop after *Mr* (*On 19 November 1863 Mr Lincoln spoke…*). e quote exactly: "My labor and my leisure too".

21. a July 4, 1776. b 19 November 1863. c 4/15/1865. d For a British reader 9 April 1865 (Lee's surrender); for an American reader September 4, 1865.

22. a BrE: *was … its* or *were … their*; AmE: *was … its* (some speakers also use *their*). b BrE: *is* or *are*; AmE: *is*. c BrE: *has* or *have*; AmE: *has*.

23. a Lincoln delivered (gave) the Gettysburg Address in November 1863, four and a half months after the battle. b Whitman uses neither rhyme nor a fixed metre: he writes in free verse. c In your essays you can use British or American English, but you must not mix them.

24. a voyage b settlers c abolition d harpoon e equality f frontier (not needed: liberty).

25. Native American languages: canoe (Taíno, through Spanish), moccasin, raccoon, skunk. Spanish: rodeo, ranch, canyon. Dutch: cookie, boss.

26. abolish slavery · deliver a speech · dedicate a cemetery · preserve the Union · harpoon a whale · sign a proclamation. Sample sentences: *Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. He delivered a short speech at Gettysburg, where a cemetery was dedicated to the Union dead. His aim was to preserve the Union. The Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery. Queequeg could harpoon a whale from a moving boat.*

27. Assess with the checklist: greeting and thanks; past → present → future; concrete images; at least two triplets and a rhetorical question; inclusive *we*; a memorable closing line; 250–300 words; one consistent variety of English.

28. Model (Dickinson): *Good morning, everyone. Today I'd like to introduce a poet who hardly left her house — and travelled further than anyone: Emily Dickinson, who lived in Amherst, Massachusetts, from 1830 to 1886. Let me begin with a surprise: she wrote almost 1,800 poems, and only about ten were printed in her life. That brings me to the one poem to read: "Because I could not stop for Death", where Death is a polite gentleman who takes her for a drive. Remember one line: "Since then – 'tis Centuries – and yet / Feels shorter than the Day". Why does she still matter? Because she is short, surprising and honest: she makes you look at death, at time and at yourself. Read her slowly, read her aloud, read her again. Thank you.*

29. a B b C c B d D.

30. (1) in (2) while (also: when) (3) them (4) even (also: also / sometimes / they) (5) until (also: till) (6) had.

31. a Hardly anyone (anybody) understood b lasted only (also: only lasted / lasted for only) c were not published until (weren't published until) d is said to have invented.

32. *Traccia:* a Both celebrate energy and the self: the poet's expansive "I" and the men's struggle with nature. b The line is Whitman's democratic, free-verse "I"; the image recalls Melville's *Moby-Dick* and Ahab's obsession — curiosity and celebration against the will to dominate. c History: whaling as an industry (whale oil for lamps before petroleum, the first oil well in 1859); or physics and the new technologies of the age (the telegraph); or Greek: the sea and the hero's journey in the *Odyssey*. d A young, expanding nation, confident and restless, looking for its own voice in literature — and about to be divided by the Civil War.