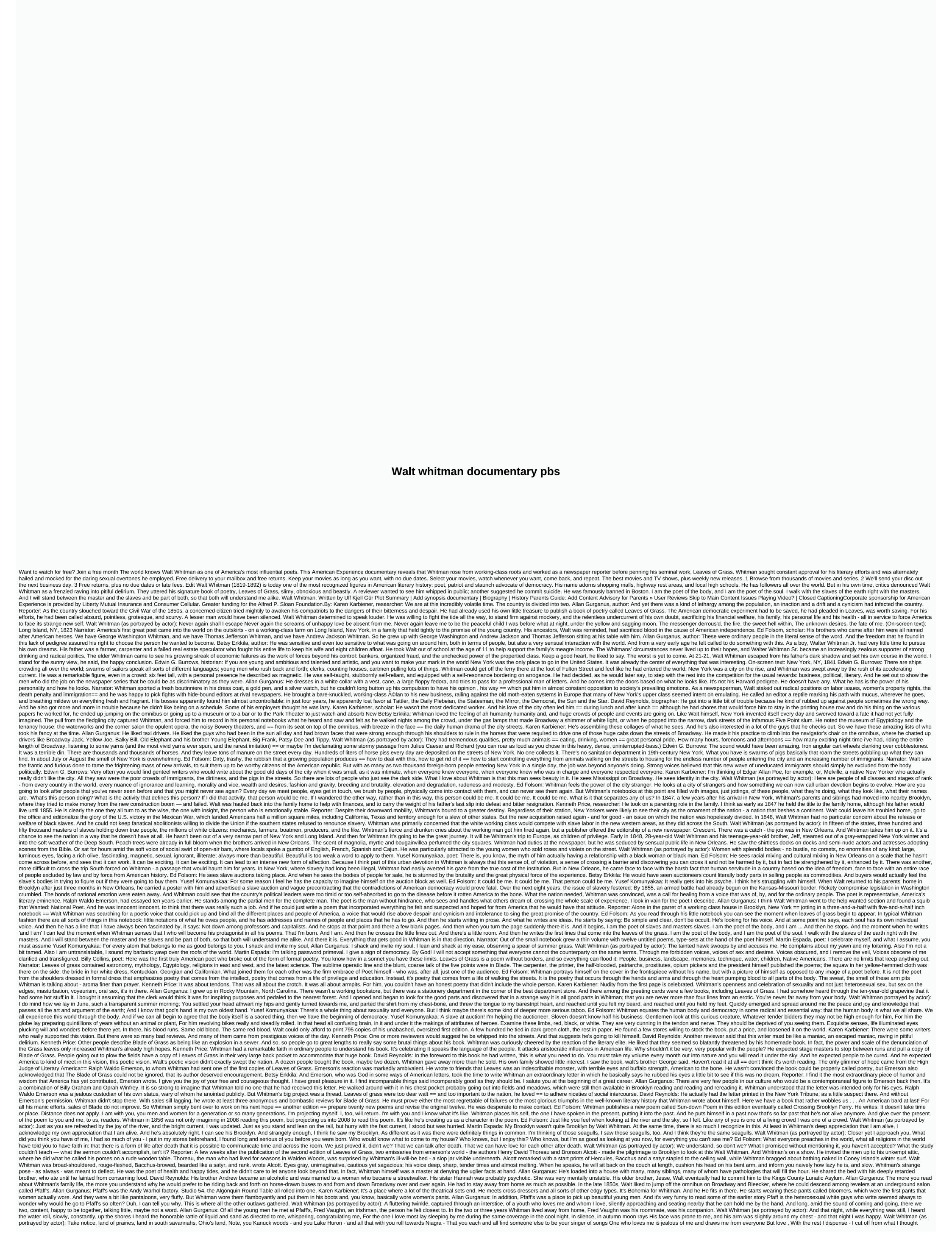
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would be sufficient me, for it doesn't - I don't care about my own songs - I'll go with him, I love, It's to be enough for us that we're together - We never separate again. Allan Gurganus: Just when Whitman felt closest to him, just when Whitman felt closest to him, just when Whitman was literally willing to abandon his mission as the great American poet - imagine he had already published Leaves of Grass. This kid must have had something extraordinary - Mr. Vaughn decided he wanted a wife and kids. He wanted a normal life. He was tired of lying to his family. And he moved out. He said goodbye. Walt Whitman (as portrayed by actor): Hours continue long sore and heavy heart. Hours at dusk as I retreated to a lonely and unfried place. I'm sitting on my own. Lean my face in my hands. Sleepless. Deep at night, And all you can say, in reading these poems, is that this was one of the great loves of his life. We don't have any pictures of Fred Vaughan. We don't know much about him. But the remnants of the poems, the great chasm of the poems, the great chasm of the poems, make poetry one of the most powerful he has ever written. Allan Gurganus: Sullen and suffering hours! (I'm ashamed - but it's useless - I am what I am;) Hours of my torment - I wonder if other men ever have like, out of the same feelings? Is there even someone else like me - distracted - his friend, his lover, lost to him? Does he see himself reflected in me? In these hours, does he see the face of his hours reflected? It had been more than three years since the publication of the second edition of Leaves, but in the wake of the Fred Vaughan case, Walt had something he felt compelled to share with his compatriots - a simple new human equation for national healing. Devotion, he wrote, must solve every one of the problems of freedom. In January 1860 - while the South was talking about leaving the Union - Whitman let it be known that he was in search of a publishing house, and a Boston firm named Thayer & amp; Eldridge wrote to say they wanted to publish the third edition of Leaves of Grass. We can and will sell a large number of copies, try us. We can do good for you. Whitman's old swagger returned. I feel as if things had taken a turn with me eventually, Walt wrote to his brother Jeff. In Boston, preparing the new edition and its 124 new poems, Whitman made sure to be seen. I'm creating a sensation on Washington Street, he crowed. Everyone here is like everyone else. And I'm Walt Whitman. When the great man himself, Emerson, took Walt for a walk in a Boston park and suggested he tone down the more explicit sexual references, Walt wanted some of it. The dirtiest book in the whole world, he said later, is the expurgated book. Karen Karbiener: The 1860 edition features two new clusters, as he called them, the Calamus Cluster and the Children of Adam, as the title says, have a lot to do with heterosexual love, procreation is really a featured element in a lot of the poems. But Calamus poems, man, that's where the energy is. Billy Collins: Passing strangers, you don't know how longingly I look at you. Yusef Komunyakaa: You must be the he I sought or she you again. I'm going to make sure I don't lose you. Ed Folsom: I think that Whitman thought that The Blade of Grass would prevent a civil war. I think he had so much faith in the 1860 blades. Leaves of grass are really a book about preserving the Union. It's a book about prevent a civil war. I think he had so much faith in the 1860 blades. Leaves of grass are really a book about prevent a civil war. I think he had so much faith in the 1860 blades. Leaves of grass are really a book about prevent a civil war. I think he had so much faith in the 1860 blades. Leaves of grass are really a book about prevent a civil war. I think the 1860 blades. Leaves of grass are really a book about prevent a civil war. I think the 1860 blades are really a book about prevent a civil war. I think the 1860 blades are really a book about prevent a civil war. I think the 1860 blades are really a book about prevent a civil war. I think the 1860 blades are really a book about prevent a civil war. I think the 1860 blades are really a book about prevent a civil war. I think the 1860 blades are really a book about prevent a civil war. I think the 1860 blades are really a book about prevent a civil war. I think the 1860 blades are really a book about prevent a civil war. I think the 1860 blades are really a book about prevent a civil war. I think the 1860 blades are really a book about prevent a civil war. I think the 1860 blades are really a book about prevent a civil war. I think the 1860 blades are really a book about prevent a civil war. I think the 1860 blades are really a book about prevent a civil war. I think the 1860 blades are really a book about prevent a civil war. I think the 1860 blades are really a book about prevent a civil war. I think the 1860 blades are really a book about prevent a civil war. I think the 1860 blades are really a book about prevent a civil war. I think the 1860 blades are really a book about prevent a civil war. I think the 1860 blades are really a book about prevent a civil war. I think the 1860 blades ar begins, as Whitman sees it turn from what everyone thought would be a two-week series of skirmishes in a brutal and protracted war, he begins to believe that the Blade of Grass is a failure that is over. Narrator: As the signal national event of his lifetime unfolded, Walt Whitman turned from it, and from poetry. In the first eighteen months of the American Civil War, he fell into a deep malaise. He busy himself with a sentimental history of old Brooklyn, and occasionally picked fights at Pfaff's. His connection to the war was his brother George, who fought with the 51st Century U.S. Walt followed the 51st in the papers, through his struggles on Roanoke Island, Kelly's Ford, Second Bull Run, Antietam, and then at Fredericksburg, Virginia, where the 13th Battalion, 13t Whitman comes to Fredericksburg without knowing what he finds and walks by the mansion that has been converted into the hospital. And what he remembers seeing is a pile of severed limbs, amputated limbs, amputa in Fredericksburg for more than a week - and approached the war every day. In his little green notebook, Whitman began to capture the camp's sights, sounds and smells - and the soldier language on the front. He walked the charred and denuded landscape of the now-still battlefield, then the silent funeral team at work, pulled back army-issue blankets to look at the faces of the dead, and visited with the men who would soon have died. Walt Whitman (as portrayed by actor): I don't see that I'm doing much good for these wounded and dying; But I can't leave them. Sometimes some young people hold on to me and I do what I can for him; in any case stop with him and sit near him for hours if he wants to. Reporter: Doctors at the field hospital noticed Whitman and asked him to care for a trainload of injured people heading north to the capitals Whitman came in was a primitive business. Surgeons sharpened knives on their boot soles. We knew nothing about antiseptics, wrote a doctor, and therefore did not use any. The infection cut through those wards. Gangrene cases had to watch as their tissues were eaten away. The smell was so bad that they were often isolated and were left to die alone. Walt Whitman (as portrayed by actor): You hear groans or other sounds of unbearable suffering from two or three cots, but in the main there is quiet. Most of these sick or evil are completely without friend or acquaintances here. In one of the hospitals I find Thomas Haley, shot through the lungs - inevitably dying. The poor guy is like a frightened animal. Reporter: What was a man to do? Walt later wrote. There were thousands, tens of thousands, tens of thousands of people need me. Karen Karbiener: He gives up everything, drops it, and he volunteers over the next three, four years in these terrible hospitals where amputation is considered a solution. Allan Gurganus: He would go back to O'Connor's House. He was going to take a shower. He would refresh himself, probably take a nap. Have a dinner. And then, at six o'clock, he returned to the ward and stayed from six to nine. If a particular soldier was particularly wounded and especially wanted his company, he would stay the night in the hospital and go straight from the department to work the next morning. In the spring of 1863, Whitman walked from his small apartment to his government office building to the forty hospitals in and around Washington, where he roamed through a nervous city. Uniformed soldiers lined the streets and bunked down in the Capitol, or in the park next to the Washington, where he roamed through the streets and bunked down in the Capital. The rebels were at the gate for all who knew. Walt Whitman (as portrayed by actor: The troupe of the guard patrols about to investigate passes, a guard at the door, a cavalry man on horseback with naked saber over his shoulder, like a statue on the corner. A great white Aladdin palace, with an unfinished dome (reported to be cracking), the goddess of Liberty meanwhile standing in the mud waiting. The light falls, falls, touches the cold whites of the great public edifices - touches with a kind of death-glaze here and there the windows of Washington. Tale: This horrific scene, Whitman had come to believe, was beyond a poet's healing - at least beyond his recovery. Walt had no plans to make new editions grass. He had devoted himself to his duty in the hospitals. That's all he had to give. What hope he still had for the continuation of America's great democratic experiment, he grafted on to a new savior. I see the president almost every day, he wrote, we are where we exchange bows, and very cordial. I never see the man without feeling that he is someone who is personally attached. David Reynolds: Lincoln embodied everything I, the first person, of Leaves of Grass was meant to embodi. He was the average, ordinary, every day American. And yet he was gifted with such eloquence. He had a kind of poetic side to him. Karen Karbiener: Apparently he used to say things like I remember a quote that Lincoln was so ugly that he was beautiful, you know. It went back to him. There was something so appealing about this domestic man. In 1863, Lincoln was attacked for introducing the slaves of every state in rebellion. Whitman supported him on everything. Above all, Walt honored Lincoln's promise to save the Union, even though the terrible cost of the president's stubborn will grew. After every big fight near Washington, hundreds of wounded a day barked at the foot of Sixth Street == more than a thousand some days. The war, Whitman wrote, strikes me as a great slaughterhouse and the men mutually slaughter each other. Walt Whitman (as portrayed by actor): When I'm present at the most horrific scenes, deaths, surgeries, sickening wounds (maybe full of maggots,) I don't give out or budge. But often, hours afterward, maybe when I'm at home, or out walking alone, I feel sick, and actually tremble. Yesterday was the worst, many with bad and bloody wounds, inevitably long neglected. The sight of some cases brought tears to my eyes. I had luck yesterday, however, to do something good. Ed Folsom: He would get dressed up and, and and wash his beard and like a soldier said like Santa claus coming through wards and he carried his little bag and he would give them sweets And he would give them treats, and he would take down their, their requests, for little things that he would go and get. Allan Gurganus: His bag contained tobacco aplenty. And as a good mother, no child was given more than the other child. He wanted jelly. He wanted jelly. He wanted pickles. He have biscuits. Any treat a soldier could have imagined. There was a moment when he gave fifteen cents to one of these boys and the boy said: I'm going to buy milk from the milk lady. And then burst into tears. Ed Folsom: The intensity of this feeling of meeting the strangers again and feeling tremendous affection for those who show that affection. Many of the soldiers, as they were dying the last kiss they wanted, the last moment of affection they would have be from this bearded poet who had taken the time to stop with them. There were these again moments of what he had learned in New York to be the moments of urban devotion. It in the hospital became national devotion - all these soldiers from all over the country, southern soldiers as well as northern soldiers. There was really a feeling in these hospital wards of Whitman encountering the country, the whole nation in a way that he would never in any other setting. They were all there, and he would absorb it all, show affection for all of them. Walt Whitman (as portrayed by actor: I spent a long time with Oscar F. Wilber, Company G, 154th, New York, low with chronic diarrhea and a bad wound too. He talked about death and said he didn't fear it. He behaved very manly and lovingly. The kiss I gave him when I left he returned had quadrupled. He died a few days later. Whitman's efforts in hospitals - 600 visits he estimated to more than 100,000 patients - left him near collapse. He suffered from insomnia, night sweats, night races, headaches, sore throats and buzzing in his ears. Alone with his suffering, in a Spartan third-floor walk-up ten blocks from the White House, Walt Whitman found enough strength to extend a final and solemn service to the soldiers he would come to know as well. He opened his notebooks and began sketching his memorial to all of them, in a new book of poetry he called Drum-Taps. Martin Espada: From the stump of the arm, the amputated hand, I regret the clotted fluff. Remove the slough. Wash the case and blood. Back on the pillow the soldier bends with curved neck and side falls head. His eyes are closed. His face is pale. He dares not look at the bloody stump and has yet to look at it. I'm faithful. I'm not giving up. The broken thigh, the knee, the wound in the stomach, these and more I dress with impassy hand. But deep in my chest a fire, a burning flame. Thus, in silence in dreams' projections, Recurring, resume, I thread my way through the hospitals, The wounded and wounded I pacify with soothing touches, I sit by the restless all the dark night, some are so young, Some suffer so much. Walt Whitman completed the script for Drum-Taps around the time of Lincoln's second inauguration. A month later, Lee surrender - on Good Friday - Walt was at home in Brooklyn with his family. George was finally home too, after four years at war. Jeff was prospering. Drum-Taps was ready for the news of the last sad sacrifice of the long war. David Reynolds: Southerners as well as Northerners were stunned and were, on some level, saddened by the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, So Lincoln, in a sense, becomes a larger version of what he had been in life. Billy Collins: Coffin, passing through lanes and streets, Through day and night, with the great cloud darkening the country, With the pomp of inloop'd flags, with the cities draped in black, With the show of the States themselves, as of crape-veil'd women, standing, With processions long and winding, and flambeaus of the night, With the countless torches lit-with the silent sea of faces, and the unbarred heads David Reynolds: Walt Whitman, who had been looking above all for unity, camaraderie, togetherness, feels that in the death of Abraham Lincoln we finally have the kind of unity that America had lacked before it. The unity finally achieved and that Whitman's early poetry could, tried to achieve, but never could. Walt Whitman (as portrayed by actor): Then there's a cement to whole people, subtle, more underlying, than anything in written constitution, or courts, or armies. Namely, the cement of a death identified thoroughly with that of people, on its head, and for its sake. Strange (isn't it?), that battles, martyrs, anguish, blood, even murder, should then condense, perhaps only really, permanently condense, a nationality. Ed Folsom: It's only going to be after the Civil War that he'll start re-imagining the Leaves of Grass so radically that after the Civil War he'd actually say at some point that the Civil War is the very heart and center of the Blade of Grass around which the book works. In the 1867 edition he actually sews in, I think of it as an act of suturing, a kind of wartime action be has made the decision that the Blade of Grass is big enough, absorptive enough, wide enough to absorb this national disaster And what new life now for America now can possibly grow out of it. (Text on screen): Camden, N.J., 1884 Narrator: The War ended The Blade of Grass and set a period of an era. Walt Whitman spent many of the following 25 years confined to a small house he bought in Camden, New Jersey, while the country poet had so lovingly absorbed from the view. Postwar America avoided Whitman's grip; what grew from the Civil War disappointed. Whitman didn't add much to Blade of Grass in the long years after the war. He tinkered and edited, pulled out some of the more revealing Calamus poems, attached little addenda. The aging poet suffered a series of strokes. His legs let him down. His lungs wither. Abscesses surrounded his heart. A growth eroded a rib, leaving him in excruciating pain. He had an enlarged prostate, a fatty liver and a gallstone. Karen Karbiener: In the late 1880s he was wheelchair bound and really found one side of his body completely paralyzed. So it was a man on all fronts, you know, intellectual, political, personal then some debilitating changes. Walt Whitman (as portrayed by actor): Approaching, approaching, approaching, curious, you dim insecure ghost - brought you life or death? Strength, weakness, blindness, more paralysis and heavier? Or calm skies and sun? Show touching waters yet or haply cut me short forever? Or leave me here as now, Boring, parrot like and old, with crack'd voice harping, screaming? Karen Karbiener: You have poems that complain about old age and about cricketiness. He even writes about the condition of his body. You learn he has diarrhea. But for him, it's important. He puts his body on paper. But there's something else, too. There's an idea that there's something beyond the body. It's as if he knows he has to leave that shell behind, and yet there's something to look forward to too. Walt Whitman (as portrayed by actor): Ah whisper, something again unseen How late this heated day you enterest on my window, You're making, folding close and firm yet soft, Companion better than talk, book, art. Martin Espada: What's striking to me is how he fails his guard, and how he honestly expresses himself as one, a sick, old man, grateful for a moment's breeze that may or may not be indicative of anything out there in the universe. Walt Whitman (as portrayed by actor): So sweet your primitive taste to breathe within, Thy soothing fingers on my face and hands, You, messenger-magical strange brings to the body and spirit of me, (Distances wicking - occult medicine penetrates me from head to foot) I feel the globe myself quickly swimming in space; You blown from the lips so loved, now gone Haply from endless shop, God-sent, (For you art spiritual, godly) minister to speak to me, here and now, what word has never told and can not tell, Do you have no soul? Can't I know, identify you? Walt Whitman died in Camden, New Jersey, in 1892. His Leaves of Grass ==which he had tended to in 35 years, seven separate editions == had grown from 95 pages and twelve poems to 400 pages and more than 300 poems. No wife survived him, and no children; he left his most treasured possession, Leaves of Grass, to anyone who wanted it. Walt Whitman (as portrayed by actor: I depart as air. I shake my white locks on the runaway sun, I effuse my flesh in swirls and drift it in lacy jags. I bequeath myself to dirt to grow from the grass I love, if you want me again look for me under your boot soles. You'll hardly know who I am or what I mean, but I'll be in good health for you anyway, and filter and fiber your blood. Failing to pick me up in the first place keep encouraged, missing me somewhere and wait for you. (Text on screen): Walt Whitman printed 795 copies of the first edition of Leaves of Grass in 1855. About two dozen sold. (On-screen text): In 2008, millions of copies of Blades of Grass are circulating around the world. World.

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