O Captain! My Captain! – Walt Whitman

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

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up - for you the flag is flung - for you the bugle trills;
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths - for you the shores a-crowding;
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;
Here Captain! dear father!
This arm beneath your head;
It is some dream that on the deck,
You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still;
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will;
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done;
From fearful trip, the victor ship, comes in with object won;
Exult, O shores, and ring, O bells!
But I, with mournful tread,
Walk the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.
Style Analysis of Poetry
“O Captain! My Captain!” - Walt Whitman

Style Analysis is another way of saying that you are going to read a poem very closely and examine the elements of the poem that are important as well as the way the poet uses rhetorical devices in the poem. The following questions will help you to focus on some of the important elements of the poem. Detailed explanations of the terms used in Style Analysis can be found in the “Style/Rhetorical Analysis” handout.

The following are key elements of style analysis or a close reading of a poem:
1. Tone or Attitude
2. Diction or Language (figurative language or figures of speech)
3. Detail or Imagery
4. Point of View or Speaker
5. Organization
6. Syntax or Sentence Structure

“O Captain! My Captain!”
1. Who is the speaker of the poem? What do we know about the relationship between the speaker and his “captain”? 
2. What is the tone of the poem? In other words, what is the attitude of the speaker towards his captain? 
3. What happens in line 5 of the poem? How does the tone change in this line? 
4. In line 5, the repetition of the word “heart” is repeated three consecutive times. How is this sound imagery appropriate here? 
5. What visual imagery is present in the first stanza? What are specific words which give the reader sensory imagery? 
6. In stanza 2, what sound imagery is present? Identify specific words. 
7. What word does the speaker use in stanza 2 to refer to his captain? What does this suggest about how the speaker feels toward his captain? 
8. What touch imagery is present in stanza 2? Be specific. 
9. What is the tone of the line “It is some dream…”? What word would best describe the toe of this line? 
10. What is the speaker’s attitude in the stanza 3? How does the reader know that the captain is dead in the final stanza? What words create images of death? 
11. What line is repeated at the end of every stanza? What is the effect of this repetition? 
12. What might the fact that the speaker now walks the same deck the captain walked suggest about the speaker’s sense of purpose now that his captain is dead? 
13. What is the extended metaphor of the poem? In other words, what two things are being compared throughout the poem? (Remember that this poem is set during the Civil War).This may help:
   a. The captain is compared to _______________.
   b. The ship is compared to _______________.
   c. The “fearful trip” that is done in stanza 1 is _______________.
   d. The “prize we sought” in stanza 3 is _______________.
14. In reference to the extended metaphor of the poem, explain the line in the last stanza, “The ship is anchored safe and sound, its voyage closed and done.”
15. If the captain of the ship is Abraham Lincoln, president of the U.S. during the Civil War, how does he die? How is the Captain’s death in the poem similar to President Lincoln’s?