Walt Whitman

## Leaves of Grass

There was a Child went Forth

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|  | THERE was a child went forth every day; |
|  | And the first object he look’d upon, that object he became; |
|  | And that object became part of him for the day, or a certain part of the day, or for many years, or stretching cycles of years. |
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|  | The early lilacs became part of this child, |
| 5 | And grass, and white and red morning-glories, and white and red clover, and the song of the phoebe-bird, |
|  | And the Third-month lambs, and the sow’s pink-faint litter, and the mare’s foal, and the cow’s calf, |
|  | And the noisy brood of the barn-yard, or by the mire of the pond-side, |
|  | And the fish suspending themselves so curiously below there--and the beautiful curious liquid, |
|  | And the water-plants with their graceful flat heads--all became part of him. |
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| 10 | The field-sprouts of Fourth-month and Fifth-month became part of him; |
|  | Winter-grain sprouts, and those of the light-yellow corn, and the esculent roots of the garden, |
|  | And the apple-trees cover’d with blossoms, and the fruit afterward, and wood-berries, and the commonest weeds by the road; |
|  | And the old drunkard staggering home from the out-house of the tavern, whence he had lately risen, |
|  | And the school-mistress that pass’d on her way to the school, |
|  | And the friendly boys that pass’d--and the quarrelsome boys, |
|  | And the tidy and fresh-cheek’d girls--and the barefoot negro boy and girl, |
|  | And all the changes of city and country, wherever he went. |
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|  | His own parents, |
|  | He that had father’d him, and she that had conceiv’d him in her womb, and birth’d him, |
| 20 | They gave this child more of themselves than that; |
|  | They gave him afterward every day--they became part of *him*. |
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|  | The mother at home, quietly placing the dishes on the supper-table; |
|  | The mother with mild words--clean her cap and gown, a wholesome odor falling off her person and clothes as she walks by; |
|  | The father, strong, self-sufficient, manly, mean, anger’d, unjust; |
|  | The blow, the quick loud word, the tight bargain, the crafty lure, |
|  | The family usages, the language, the company, the furniture--the yearning and swelling heart, |
|  | Affection that will not be gainsay’d--the sense of what is real--the thought if, after all, it should prove unreal, |
|  | The doubts of day-time and the doubts of night-time--the curious whether and how, |
|  | Whether that which appears so is so, or is it all flashes and specks? |
| 30 | Men and women crowding fast in the streets--if they are not flashes and specks, what are they? |
|  | The streets themselves, and the façades of houses, and goods in the windows, |
|  | Vehicles, teams, the heavy-plank’d wharves--the huge crossing at the ferries, |
|  | The village on the highland, seen from afar at sunset--the river between, |
|  | Shadows, aureola and mist, the light falling on roofs and gables of white or brown, three miles off, |
| 35 | The schooner near by, sleepily dropping down the tide--the little boat slack-tow’d astern, |
|  | The hurrying tumbling waves, quick-broken crests, slapping, |
|  | The strata of color’d clouds, the long bar of maroon-tint, away solitary by itself--the spread of purity it lies motionless in, |
|  | The horizon’s edge, the flying sea-crow, the fragrance of salt marsh and shore mud; |
|  | These became part of that child who went forth every day, and who now goes, and will always go forth every day. |

Whitman, Walt. 1900. Leaves of Grass.

http://www.cc.columbia.edu/acis/bartleby/whitman/whit215.html

**A Child Goes Forth….**

First, read Walt Whitman’s poem “There Was a Child Went Forth” from *Leaves of Grass*. Read it out loud. Twice.

Then write your own “There Was a Child Went Forth” poem following this pattern:

1. Start with Whitman’s first stanza.
2. Then, write about your earliest childhood memories of setting ending with the line “…became a part of this child.” (taken from the original)
3. Then a stanza or two about mom and dad (or a mom and dad substitute) ending with “…became a part of this child.”
4. Then elementary school memories ending with “…became a part of this child.”
5. Then middle school memories ending with “…became a part of this child.”
6. Then high school memories ending with “…became a part of this child.”
7. Then include more global happenings during the span of your 17-18 years ending with “…became a part of this child.”
8. Finally, end with Whitman’s final line.