Unlike many other poets, Whitman came from the working class and celebrated its unique contributions to American ideals. His groundbreaking *Leaves of Grass* was released in six editions spanning 1855 to 1892, plus a final reprint of the sixth which included appendices and is often referred to as the “deathbed” edition. Speaking both to – and in the voice of – the common man, it represents the greatest achievement of Whitman’s life and a benchmark in the evolution of American literature. Throughout its various reprints, it alternated as a commercial flop, a critical favorite, a commercial success, and a scandal (the 1882 edition was banned in Boston). A book of profound influence, it is regarded by most literary historians as a towering influence on American literature. Throughout its various reprints, it alternated as a commercial flop, a critical favorite, a commercial success, and a scandal (the 1882 edition was banned in Boston). A book of profound influence, it is regarded by most literary historians as a towering influence on American literature.

**Lesson Plan**

**Level 1: Contributions Approach**

1. Activate prior experience: Have you ever read the classic, *Leaves of Grass*, by Walt Whitman? Why is this considered to be classic about the comment man and the contribution to American literature?
2. Read the biographical information found at this link: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walt_Whitman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walt_Whitman)
3. Describe how Whitman used his literary skills to celebrate the body and the material world. Listen to segments of *Leaves of Grass* in this link: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leaves_of_Grass#Overview](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leaves_of_Grass#Overview)

**Level 2: Additive Approach**

1. Whitman’s role during the Civil War was documented in more than 600 letters. How did his contribution provided a picture of complexities of this time? Review the following link: [http://www.whitmanarchive.org/biography/correspondence/cw/index.html](http://www.whitmanarchive.org/biography/correspondence/cw/index.html)
2. How did Whitman break out as a poet who crossed into many boundaries that were not explored? Read the following: [http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/whitman/program/intro.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/whitman/program/intro.html)
3. Website Investigation: Choose another contributor to literature in The Legacy Walk and describe their connections as writers or poets to Whitman. Use the following link: [http://www.legacyprojectchicago.org/literature.html](http://www.legacyprojectchicago.org/literature.html)

**Level 3: Transformational Approach**

2. What specific events do you think were influential in Whitman’s life? Examine this entry from Poets.org at [http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/126](http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/126)
3. Capture your impression and connect the many challenges within the stages of Whitman’s life through these photographs. View the link compiled by Ed Folsom at [http://www.whitmanarchive.org/multimedia/gallery/introduction.html](http://www.whitmanarchive.org/multimedia/gallery/introduction.html)

**Level 4: Social Action Approach**

1. Whitman was a spokesperson for the impact of war on soldiers and families in America. How do you think his writing would provide a forum for this public outrage against war today?
3. Describe figures today who demonstrate that passion for justice in understanding “who they are” in today’s world.