WALT WHITMAN

I loafe and invite my soul,
I lean and loaf at my ease... observing a spear of summer grass...

Have you reckoned a thousand acres much? Have you reckoned the earth much?
Have you practiced so long to learn to read?
Have you felt so proud to get at the meaning of poems?

Tuesday: pages 1146-1152; Preface to the 1855 Edition of Leaves of Grass pages 1152-1165; One's Self I Sing pages 1165-1173 (and please please go beyond if you’d like)
Thursday: Crossing Brooklyn Ferry, page 1217; Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking, 1221; When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d, pages 1232 - 1239 and your choice of poems throughout the selections

Choose from the following:

- How does one “invite one’s soul”? The great critic Harold Bloom asks, “Who or what is being invited and to what revel?” Play around a little with this question in the specific context of imagery and feeling in Whitman’s poetry (as well as all that you understand of Transcendentalism).
- Most who write about the American Renaissance suggest that “In many ways, Whitman was the great American bard that Emerson had called for in his lectures and speeches.” Draw from Whitman’s Preface to the 1855 Edition of Leaves of Grass as well as any of his poems as you consider Whitman’s epic contributions to our American mythology.
- Compare Whitman’s verse to that of any of the following: Emerson, Thoreau, Douglass, Jacobs, Hawthorne, or Poe. What for you seems to distinguish Whitman so strikingly from his contemporaries? Again, please be specific, drawing from his poetry and/or prose.
- As you read his prose and poetry, jot down your own enumerations, those Whitman lines you love. Then comment on them. Or compose your own poem to Whitman. (For inspiration, you might try Ginsberg’s A Supermarket in California – “What thoughts I have of you tonight, Walt Whitman, for I walked down / the sidestreets under the trees with a headache, self-conscious looking at the / full moon” p 2451.)