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Sept. 12, 2019

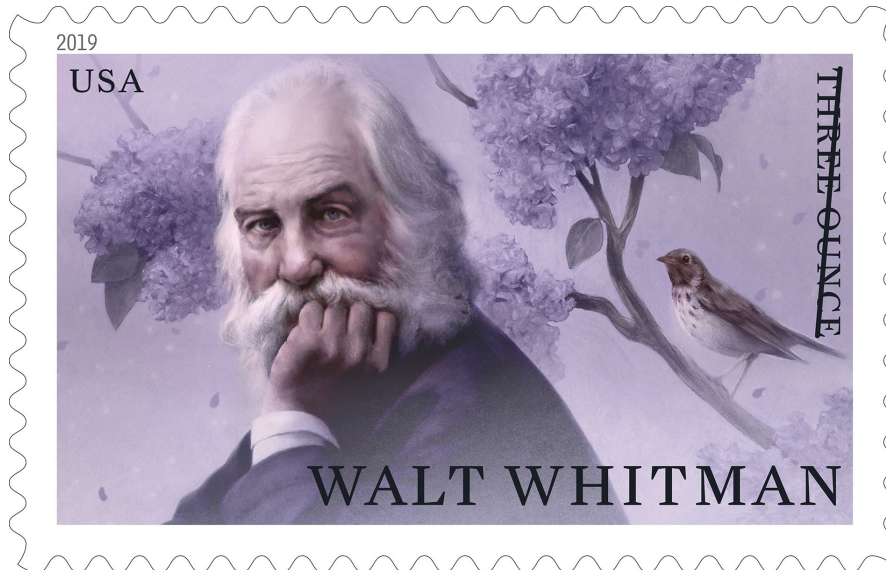
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## **Stamp Honors ‘Father of Modern American Poetry’**

*Walt Whitman Stamps on Sale Nationwide Today*

HUNTINGTON STATION, NY — The U.S. Postal Service (USPS) today honored the 200th anniversary of the birth of Walt Whitman with a new stamp in its Literary Arts series, commemorating the life, work and words of the poet some revere as the “Father of Modern American Poetry,” at his Long Island birthplace.

Whitman’s poetry was modern in “the topics and themes explored — freedom, human dignity, and democracy,” said Cara Greene, USPS vice president, controller. Greene dedicated the 85-cent stamp, which is intended for domestic First-Class Mail weighing up to 3 ounces. “Whitman was more than a giant in American literature,” said Greene. “He was a remarkable human being who helped nurse thousands of the Civil War’s sick and dying soldiers.”

Greene was joined to unveil the stamp by Cynthia Shor, Walt Whitman Birthplace State Historic Site executive director; Jeffrey Gould, Walt Whitman Birthplace Association trustee; Erik Kulleseid, New York State Parks Commissioner; Darrel Blaine Ford, Whitman personator; and David Reynolds, Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

Art director Greg Breeding designed the stamp, featuring a portrait of Whitman by Sam Weber, based on a photograph taken by Frank Pearsall in 1869. A lilac bush and hermit thrush in the stamp’s background recall the poem, “When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloom’d,” written after President Abraham Lincoln’s assassination.

Whitman’s name lines the bottom of the stamp. “USA” is printed horizontally in the top left corner. The stamp’s denomination, “THREE OUNCE,” is indicated at far right, down the side. News of the stamps can be shared using the hashtag [#WaltWhitmanStamps](https://twitter.com/WaltWhitmanStamps).

## Background

Writing powerfully about nearly every aspect of 19th-century American life, Whitman aimed to embody the nation's democratic ethos itself. Scholars interpret his use of poetry as breaking down artificial boundaries that separate man and woman, city and countryside, free and enslaved, poet and laborer — and ultimately the self and the universe.

His groundbreaking works include “Song of Myself,” in which Whitman argues that only through democracy, and the broad liberty that it promises, can the country approach the divine. Other poems include “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,” the best known of his urban pieces; and “I Sing the Body Electric,” in which Whitman boldly treats the physical body as equal to the soul.

The 1855 publication of “Leaves of Grass” marked the beginning of what would become Whitman's lifelong masterwork. Over the next 40 years, he would revise and expand the collection, which grew from 12 untitled pieces to nearly 400 poems. His work influenced not only the writers of the Harlem Renaissance and the Beat Generation but also numerous 20th-century artists and musicians.

## Postal Products

Customers may purchase stamps and other philatelic products through The Postal Store at [usps.com/shop](https://usps.com/shop), by calling 800-STAMP24 (800-782-6724), by mail through [USA Philatelic](#), or at Post Office locations nationwide. A video of the ceremony will be available on [facebook.com/usps](https://facebook.com/usps).

Information on ordering first-day-of-issue postmarks and covers is at [usps.com/shop](https://usps.com/shop) under “Collectors.”

The Postal Service receives no tax dollars for operating expenses and relies on the sale of postage, products and services to fund its operations.

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