Rhythm in *Song of Myself*

Although Walt Whitman’s *Song of Myself* is often seen as a formless piece of free verse, several scholars identify the poet’s strategic use of rhythm throughout the work. Close attention to Whitman’s long poem reveals a deliberate formal design that re-

One study of the poem suggests that he made many of his 1891 revisions to underscore the function of each section as a unit of meaning governed by its own rhythm (Strauch 64). Roger Mitchell also notes Whitman’s use of rhythmic groups:

Whitman is doing more than simply distributing a pattern of groups in some sensible fashion over the lines of a poem, creating what some critics are calling a “group/line pattern.” Whitman is also conscious of the size of his groups and of their progression in terms of size pattern. (16)

Mitchell’s analysis demonstrates Whitman’s care in rhythmic organization.

Critics also argue that Whitman’s use of rhythm is intrinsically connected to his intention that, despite its self-referential title, the poem represent a wide swath of humanity. Edward Dowden claims that “No single person is the subject of Whitman’s song, or can be; the individual suggests a ‘group sized pattern’ and possesses equal claims to recognition” (qtd. in Mason 34).

**Block Quotation (A):** Direct quotes more than four lines in length are set apart in a block—double-spaced and indented one inch from the margin. The quote does not have quotation marks and the parenthetical citation comes after the ending punctuation.

**Indirect Sources (B):** To cite information that your source has borrowed from a secondary or indirect source, use the author of the secondary source in your signal phrase and the author and page number of the work you found the material in after the phrase “qtd. in” for the parenthetical citation.
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(Dorris and Erdrich 23)
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(J. Rogers 654)
If the two authors share the same initial, include the entire first name.
(Jordan Rogers 89)
If you are referencing more than one work by one author, include the title in the citation—italicized if it is a book or a film, in quotation marks if it is an article.
(King, On Writing 76)

Sample Essay with In-text Citations

Davy Jones
Professor Mills
ENGL2010
15 July 2016
Rhythm in Song of Myself
Although Walt Whitman’s Song of Myself is often seen as a formless piece of free verse, several scholars identify the poet’s strategic use of rhythm throughout the work. Close attention to Whitman’s long poem reveals a deliberate formal design that reflects its subject matter.
One study of the poem suggests that he made many of his 1891 revisions to underscore the function of each section as a unit of meaning governed by its own rhythm (Strauch 64).
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