

*Leaves of Grass*: Public opinion and the continuous suppression of minorities



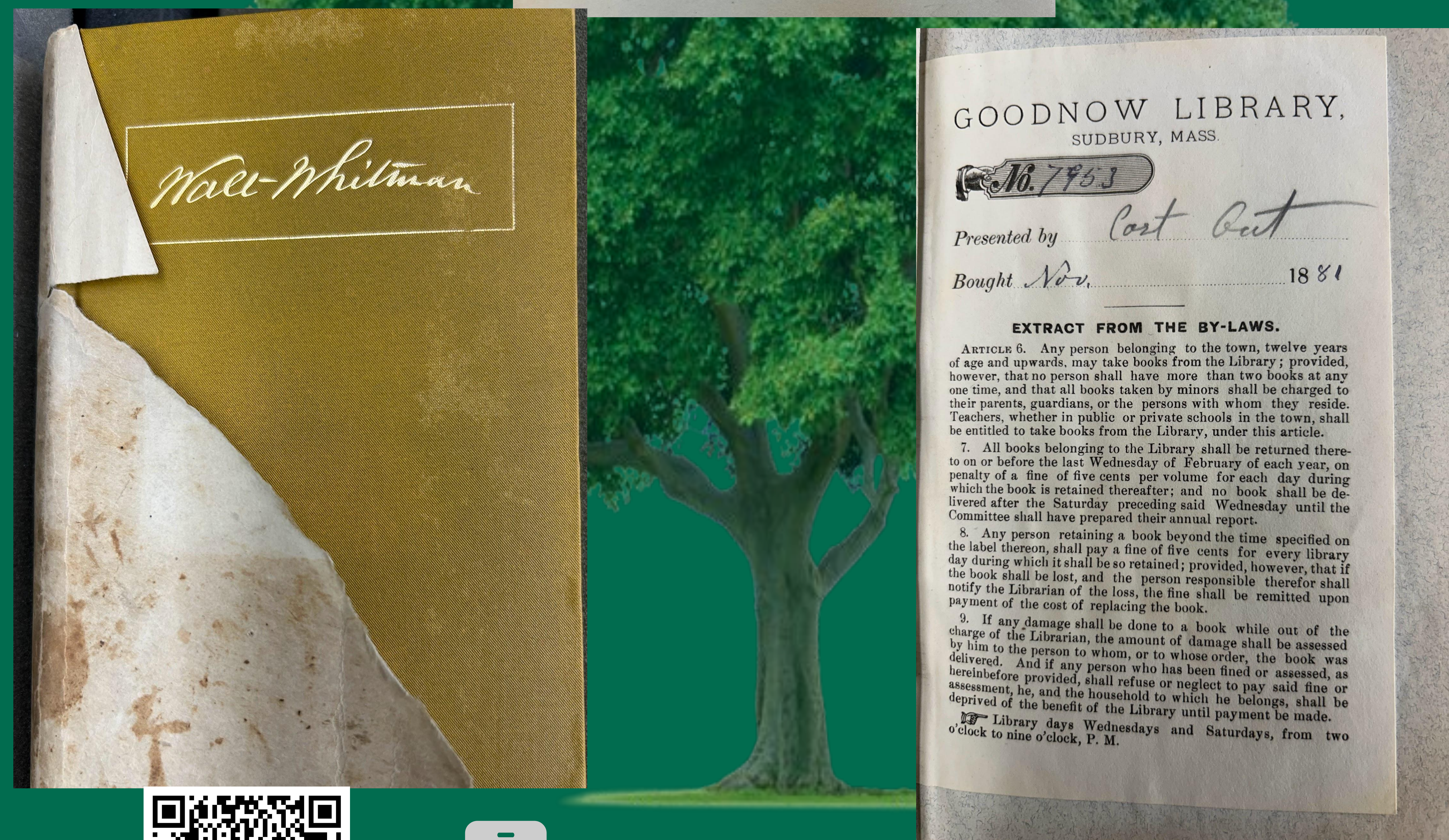
PRESENTER:  
**Hailey Miglino**

**BACKGROUND:** In November 1881, James R. Osgood and Company published the seventh edition of *Leaves of Grass*. Shortly after, the New England Society for the Suppression of Vice condemned the book for its references to sexuality, including celebrations of same-sex relationships, resulting in its removal from a Boston library. This episode exemplifies a long history of censorship, perpetuated by governments and religious authorities throughout history.

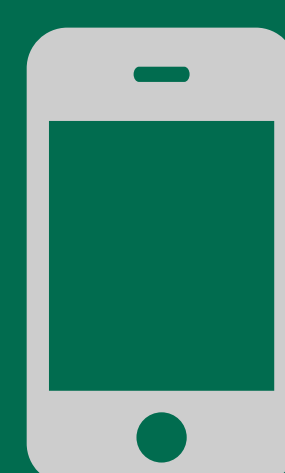
**FINDINGS:** A book's material aspects enrich its value; this project explores how physical evidence, like the absence of annotations, provides insights into the broader history of suppression surrounding *Leaves of Grass*. The condition of Binghamton University's copy serves as both a historical artifact and a reminder of ongoing censorship, underscoring the importance of preserving the voices of marginalized people.

# The importance of preserving the voices of minorities through evidence of attempted censorship. How Binghamton University's copy of *Leaves of Grass* (Boston, 1881-82) highlights the history of is suppression

*Leaves of Grass* is still suppressed today and was on a list of top banned books of 2023 due to its portrayal of sexual relationships and homosexuality.



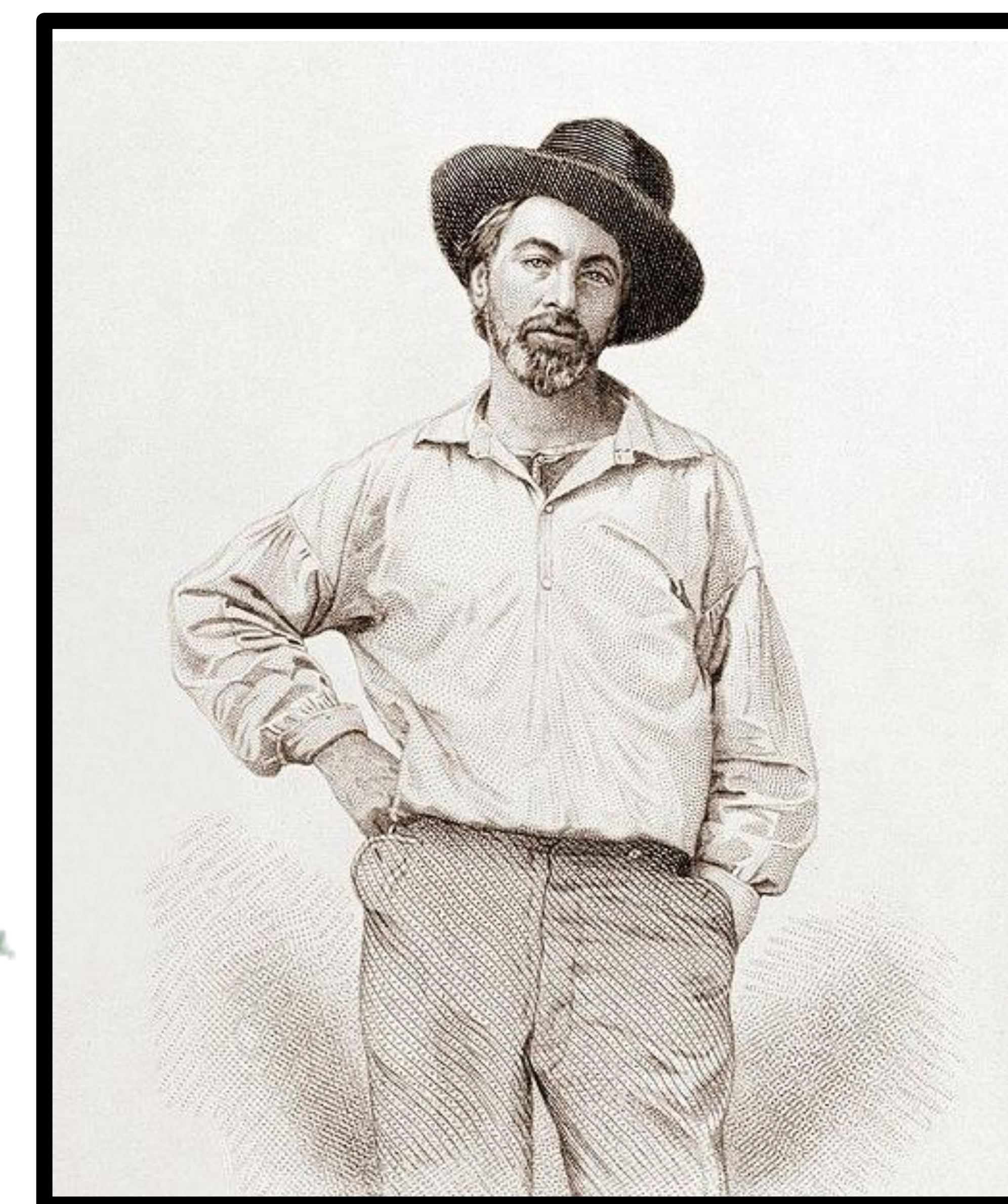
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## METHODS:

- Researched the historical context of the publication of the 7th edition of *Leaves*.
- Investigated the history of societies like the New England Society for the Suppression of Vice that targeted Whitman in the late Victorian era and feared rampant obscenity and the spread of immorality.
- Explored historical and contemporary opinions of Whitman and how the evolving reception of Walt Whitman and his work reflects changing societal attitudes toward queerness and highlights the persistent marginalization faced by certain individuals.



- Public conversations about projects dedicated to the preservation of Whitman's memory such as the naming of the Walt Whitman Bridge and the upholding of his past residences.
- The controversy surrounding these landmarks is evident of consistent homophobia and lack of recognition for minorities.
- Whitman as advertisement for both himself and a variety of products.