



# The Sacrificial Years: A Chronicle of Walt Whitman's Experiences in the Civil War

*Walt Whitman*

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## **The Sacrificial Years: A Chronicle of Walt Whitman's Experiences in the Civil War** Walt Whitman

In Late 1862, at the height of the Civil War, the poet and former newspaperman Walt Whitman traveled to a Virginia base camp in search of his wounded brother. The unattended misery he found there -- rows of unburied corpses, piles of amputated limbs, wounded men lying on the frozen ground -- moved him to (as he wrote) "a profound conviction of necessity" that he had to help relieve it. Whitman spent the next four years, at great personal and professional sacrifice, working as a voluntary nurse at military hospitals in the frontline capital of Washington, tending the sick and wounded well past the war's end. The Sacrificial Year, is Walt Whitman's story of his involvement in the Civil War, and of his thoughts and feelings about this great crisis. Whitman himself never kept a diary of his experiences -- a fact he later regretted -- but he did write hundreds of letters, newspaper articles, and "memoranda." While many of these works have been published individually, editor John Harmon McElroy is the first to select and arrange Whitman's prose writings on the war in chronological sequence -- including previously unpublished extracts from his recently discovered Civil War notebook -- thereby reconstructing a continuous narrative of his month-to-month experience in his own words. Poignant and powerful, encompassing all the horror and scope of that immense conflict, Walt Whitman's war chronicles are among the essential documents of those crucial years. This edition contains nearly 300 entries, and is further enhanced with over 50 compelling period photographs of the places, people, and events that Whitman captured so vividly in his prose.

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