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Whitman is today regarded as America's Homer or Dante, and his work the touchstone for literary originality in the New World. In *Leaves of Grass*, he abandoned the rules of traditional poetry - breaking the standard metred line, discarding the obligatory rhyming scheme, and using the vernacular. Emily Dickinson condemned his sexual and physiological allusions as 'disgraceful', but Emerson saw the book as the 'most extraordinary piece of wit and wisdom that America has yet contributed'. A century later it is his judgement of this autobiographical vision of the vigour of the American nation that has proved the more enduring. This is the most up-to-date edition for student use, with full critical apparatus.

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