

A Supermarket in California

[Allen Ginsberg](#) - 1926-1997

5 What thoughts I have of you tonight, Walt Whitman, for I
walked down the sidestreets under the trees with a headache self-
conscious looking at the full moon.

 In my hungry fatigue, and shopping for images, I went into the
neon fruit supermarket, dreaming of your enumerations!

10 What peaches and what penumbras! Whole families shopping
at night! Aisles full of husbands! Wives in the avocados, babies in
the tomatoes!—and you, García Lorca, what were you doing
down by the watermelons?

 I saw you, Walt Whitman, childless, lonely old grubber, poking
among the meats in the refrigerator and eyeing the grocery boys.

15 I heard you asking questions of each: Who killed the pork
chops? What price bananas? Are you my Angel?

 I wandered in and out of the brilliant stacks of cans following
you, and followed in my imagination by the store detective.

20 We strode down the open corridors together in our solitary
fancy tasting artichokes, possessing every frozen delicacy, and
never passing the cashier.

 Where are we going, Walt Whitman? The doors close in a hour.
Which way does your beard point tonight?

25 (I touch your book and dream of our odyssey in the
supermarket and feel absurd.)

 Will we walk all night through solitary streets? The trees add
shade to shade, lights out in the houses, we'll both be lonely.

 Will we stroll dreaming of the lost America of love past blue
automobiles in driveways, home to our silent cottage?

30 Ah, dear father, graybeard, lonely old courage-teacher, what
America did you have when Charon quit poling his ferry and you
got out on a smoking bank and stood watching the boat disappear
on the black waters of Lethe?

—Berkeley, 1955

Guidelines

- Determine the form, meter and rhyme scheme of the poem . What do you notice about the length of the stanzas ?
- Sum up the action of the poem briefly.
- Who is the speaker of the poem ? What do we learn about him ? Another poet is present in the poem ? (Pick allusions and explain them)How can you account for this choice ? Which role does he play ? Say what brings the two generations together.
- Where and when is the scene set ? How important is the setting ? How symbolic of America in the 50s?
- In the poem find examples of : allusions/ apostrophe/ asyndeton (= omission of the conjunctions that ordinarily join coordinate words or clauses ex :*I came, I saw, I conquered*)/ consonance/ assonance/ metaphor/ repetition/ rhetorical questions. Which effect do they produce ?
- How does Ginsberg deal with the concept of consumerism and conformity ? is his approach similar to Warhol's ? Find precise examples to justify your answer(s)