KIDS DON’T GET ENOUGH
ART THESE DAYS. So no
wonder some of them
mistake America’s most
revolutionary poet for a
box of chocolates.

The son of a Quaker
carpenter, Walt Whitman
grew up with an affinity
for nature. This, along
with his awe of New
York City, inspired him
to write a fresh kind
of poetry, the likes of
which Americans had
never seen. His collection of poems became
known as Leaves of Grass. Due
to its hedonistic, sensual, even
narcissistic subject matter, the
poems were often banned. This
guy pushed the envelope all
right, before most folks even
knew there was an envelope to push.

Throughout his career, Whitman rewrote
and reinvented Leaves of Grass, expanding and
editing his masterpiece
in an effort to publish the
quintessential collection.

In essence, Leaves of Grass
was Walt himself in
verse form. Walt Whitman
changed poetry. His life’s
work was way ahead of
its time. And even though
he emerged long before
the Summer of Love, he
was the one true original
beatnik — an inspiring
example for writers like
Ginsberg and Kerouac.

Walt Whitman can
influence your child,
too. That’s what poetry
does. In fact, the more
art kids get, the smarter
they become in subjects
like math and science.
So they become more well-rounded adults. For
Ten Simple Ways to get more art in kids’
lives, visit AmericansForTheArts.org.