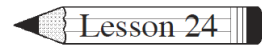


A Sample Lesson from The Gold Book

Poetry



Poet's Corner

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882) was born in the busy seaport of Portland, Maine. The excitement and blend of people of the harbors provided Henry with a rich experience. From a very early age Henry was drawn to writing. He was greatly inspired by Washington Irving's *Sketch Book*.

As a young man he went to Europe to study as a linguist. He had opportunities to meet distinguished men and women of England and France, but he found he enjoyed the simple life in the countryside where he befriended peasants and farmers. Longfellow returned to America a few years later and began his professorship. He married, but his wife died a few years later. Years later, Longfellow remarried and established a happy home with five children. After resigning from Harvard, he took on the sole task of writing poetry, his great joy. Longfellow received honorary degrees at Oxford and Cambridge Universities.

Of all the American poets, Longfellow is probably one the best loved. When the day came to cut down the tree that Longfellow referred to as "the spreading chestnut tree" in his poem "Village Blacksmith" the children of Cambridge had it made into a chair and gave it to Longfellow as a gift. He died in 1882 in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He was honored two years later with a bust that was placed in the Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey. He was the first American to receive this recognition. Longfellow's poetry is full of beauty and marked with easy rhyme. His poems are basically easy to understand and leave the reader with a joyful, melodic spirit.

1. a. Read "The Day is Done" in *The Mentor Book of Major American Poets*.

b. The **simile** is another common poetic device. It is a type of figurative language which makes a comparison between two things by using words such as *like*, *as*, *appears*, and *seems*. What is the simile in the first stanza?

How does Longfellow use the simile effectively?

c. Find the simile in the third stanza.

How does Longfellow use the simile to express his feelings?

d. Find the simile in the seventh stanza.

Do you think this simile is effective? Why?

e. Find the similes in the ninth and last stanza.

f. Write a poem using similes to create vivid pictures and evoke emotion.

2. a. Read “Evangeline” in *The Mentor Book of Major American Poets*. (This is only part of the long narrative poem.)

b. Words to Know:

1) Grand-Pré - French, meaning great meadow

2) primeval - primitive

3) Druids - priests of a Celtic religious order

4) eld - ancient times

5) hoar - very old

6) disconsolate - not to be comforted

c. The meaning of this poem will be gained with a little background knowledge of the Acadians. Using your library or reference books, find out some information about these people.

3. a. Read “The Song of Hiawatha” in *The Mentor Book of Major American Poets*. (This is only part of the long narrative poem.)

Longfellow was one of the first Americans to write about the Native American people. When “The Song of Hiawatha” was published in 1855, it was an instant success. Although the real Hiawatha was an Iroquois chief during the late 1500’s, Longfellow’s Hiawatha is from the Ojibwa tribe. Legend tells that he was raised by his grandmother, Nokomis, and he learned to talk to the animals and the forest. He excelled in all the manly skills and grew up to be a leader. He married the fair maiden Minnehaha and became the peacemaker among neighboring tribes.

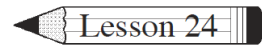
b. This poem is enjoyable to read aloud. Practice reading it aloud on your own, and then find an audience to read to. Have fun.

4-5. Use the next two days to read more poetry by Longfellow, and write your own poetry.

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Answers



1.

b. ... the darkness falls...as a feather is wafted downward.
The darkness falls softly and gradually like a feather.

c. A feeling of sadness and longing... as the mist resembles the rain.
The sadness isn't a deep pain but a heaviness of heart.

d. ... songs...as showers from the clouds of summer or tears from the eyelids...

Yes. Just as summer clouds get so full that a burst of showers breaks forth,
so is the song in a poet's heart.

e. ninth stanza: songs... like the benediction
last stanza: night... like the Arabs

2.

c. When disputes arose between the French settlers and British colonists, the Acadians wanted to continue their peaceful farm life. The Acadians were originally from France. They did not want to take an oath of allegiance to England and wished to be excused from warring against the French. Therefore, the Acadians were deported and settled in various states. This caused the separation of family and friends. In this poem, Longfellow tells a sad love story of the separation of Evangeline and Gabriel.