

### COMMON CORE

**RL 4** Analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including language that is fresh, engaging or beautiful.

**RL 5** Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text contribute to overall structure and meaning, as well as aesthetic impact.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow . . .

- was a child prodigy.
- spoke 11 languages.
- read 18 languages.
- grew a beard to hide the scars of a fire that killed his wife.

(background) Westminster Abbey

# A Psalm of Life The Tide Rises, the Tide Falls

Poetry by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

VIDEO TRAILER



KEYWORD: HML11-342A

## Meet the Author

### Henry Wadsworth Longfellow 1807–1882

For nearly 150 years, Longfellow's "Paul Revere's Ride" has captivated readers. Its lines are as familiar as a nursery rhyme, and the image of Revere galloping into danger is imprinted on our minds. This poem, along with a number of others, made Henry Wadsworth Longfellow one of America's most popular poets.

**Boy Genius** Longfellow grew up in a literary household in Portland, Maine. His mother, Zilpah Wadsworth, often read aloud to him, while his father, Stephen, supplied him with numerous books. An exceptionally intelligent child, Longfellow entered school at the age of three and at six received this flattering report: "Master Henry Longfellow is one of the best boys we have in school. He spells and reads very well. He can also add and multiply numbers. His conduct is very correct and amiable."

**Professor and Poet** At age 13 Longfellow became a published poet, and at 15 he entered Bowdoin College in Maine where, like his classmate Nathaniel Hawthorne, he decided to devote his life to writing. While in college, he published poems in national magazines. Longfellow studied

a number of foreign languages, including French, Spanish, and Italian. He was such a gifted translator that the college offered him upon graduation the first professorship in modern languages. Longfellow taught at Bowdoin until 1834, when he transferred to Harvard. He remained there until 1854.

**Voice of America** Although he worked hard to introduce European literature to an American audience, Longfellow wrote about American subjects. He sought inspiration in American history and lore, as well as in the country's landscape. A poet, argued Longfellow, should take his subjects from "nature and not from books" and should try to "fathom the recesses of his own mind, and bring up rich pearls from the secret depths of thought."

**Literary Fame** With the publication of his books *Evangeline, A Tale of Acadie* (1847) and *The Song of Hiawatha* (1855), Longfellow became a household name. Personal tragedy, however, cast a shadow over his achievement. His first wife died following a miscarriage and his second wife was fatally burned in a fire. Longfellow coped by immersing himself in his work. In his final years, Longfellow was showered with accolades. When he died, he became the first American writer to be honored with a bust in Poets' Corner of London's Westminster Abbey.

Author Online

Go to [thinkcentral.com](http://thinkcentral.com). KEYWORD: HML11-342B



## ● TEXT ANALYSIS: STANZA AND RHYME SCHEME

Poets often organize their ideas and images in compact units known as **stanzas**—groups of lines sometimes characterized by a repeated pattern of rhyme and number of lines. Each stanza generally develops a separate idea, image, or example of figurative language; recognizing stanzas will help you trace this development.

A **rhyme scheme** is the pattern of end rhyme in a stanza or an entire poem. Rhyme helps to make the words of a poem memorable and is often used to emphasize important words in the poem.

*Life is real! Life is earnest!  
And the grave is not its goal;  
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,  
Was not spoken of the soul.*

Here the rhyme scheme is *abab*; that is, the first and third lines (*a* and *a*) rhyme, as do the second and fourth lines (*b* and *b*).

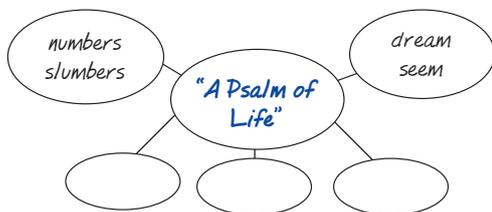
As you read, note how Longfellow makes use of these conventions to organize his thoughts about life and express them in a form that the reader will remember.

## ■ READING STRATEGY: READING TRADITIONAL POETRY

To appreciate the musical qualities of these Longfellow poems, try the following strategies:

- Read each poem silently to interpret the basic meaning.
- Then, read them aloud, listening for the end rhyme. Notice which words are emphasized by rhyme.

In a web diagram like the one shown, note some important words that are emphasized through rhyme. You will need a separate diagram for each poem.

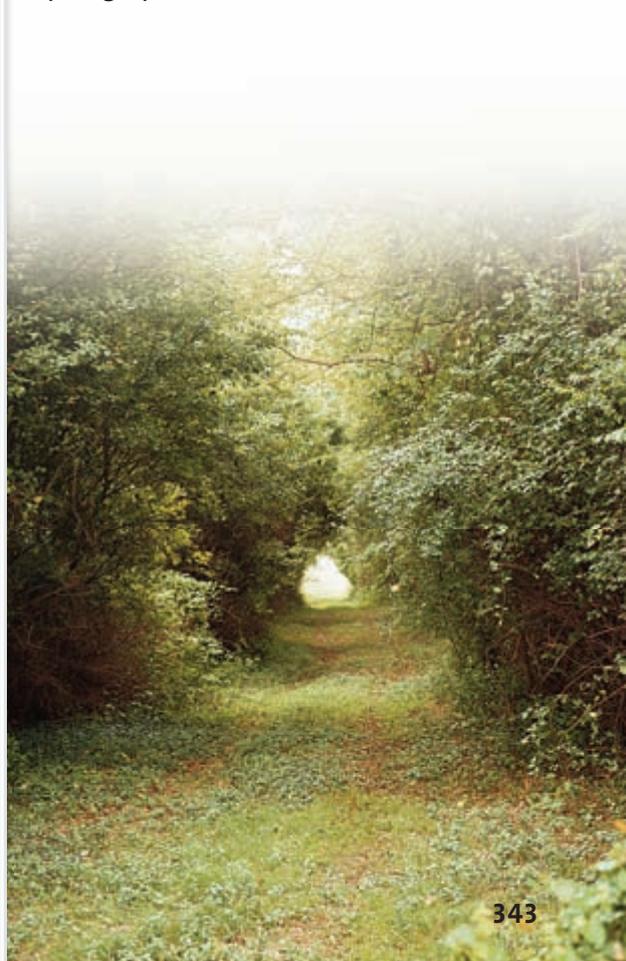


Complete the activities in your **Reader/Writer Notebook**.

## *What gives life* **PURPOSE?**

People who live with purpose may be more likely to feel a sense of satisfaction or accomplishment. What is it that gives life value or meaning? Is it self-expression, creativity, following one's dream, or serving humanity? In the poems that follow, Longfellow offers his thoughts about how to lead a purposeful life.

**QUICKWRITE** Think of a person you know or have read about who has led a life you truly admire. How has this person made a difference in the world? Describe his or her impact on family, community, or country in a short paragraph.



# A Psalm of Life

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

*What the Heart of the Young Man  
Said to the Psalmist<sup>1</sup>*

Tell me not, in mournful numbers,<sup>2</sup>  
Life is but an empty dream!—  
For the soul is dead that slumbers,  
And things are not what they seem.

5 Life is real! Life is earnest!  
And the grave is not its goal;  
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,  
Was not spoken of the soul. **A**

Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,  
10 Is our destined end or way;  
But to act, that each tomorrow  
Find us farther than today.

Art is long, and Time is fleeting,  
And our hearts, though stout<sup>3</sup> and brave,  
15 Still, like muffled drums, are beating  
Funeral marches to the grave.

In the world's broad field of battle,  
In the bivouac<sup>4</sup> of Life,  
Be not like dumb, driven cattle!  
20 Be a hero in the strife!

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1. **Psalmist** (să'mĭst): the author of the poems in the biblical Book of Psalms, many of which comment on the fleeting nature of life. King David of Israel is regarded as the author of most of the psalms.

2. **numbers**: metrical feet or lines; verses.

3. **stout**: strong.

4. **bivouac** (bĭv'oo-ak'): a temporary encampment of troops.

## **A STANZA AND RHYME SCHEME**

Review the rhyme scheme of the first two stanzas. How does the rhyme scheme contribute to the poem's **tone**, or attitude? Explain.



*The Calm After the Storm* (1866), Edward Moran. Oil on canvas. Private collection. © SuperStock, Inc./SuperStock.

Trust no Future, howe'er pleasant!  
 Let the dead Past bury its dead!  
 Act,—act in the living Present!  
 Heart within, and God o'erhead!

25 Lives of great men all remind us  
 We can make our lives sublime,  
 And, departing, leave behind us  
 Footprints on the sands of time; **B**

Footprints, that perhaps another,  
 30 Sailing o'er life's solemn main,<sup>5</sup>  
 A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,  
 Seeing, shall take heart again.

Let us, then, be up and doing,  
 With a heart for any fate;  
 35 Still achieving, still pursuing,  
 Learn to labor and to wait.

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5. **main:** open ocean.

### ▲ Analyze Visuals

How might the title of this painting (*The Calm After the Storm*) connect to the **theme** of this poem?

### **B** TRADITIONAL POETRY

Note the word emphasized by the end rhyme in lines 25 and 27. What might be the significance of this word?

# THE TIDE RISES, *The Tide Falls*

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

The tide rises, the tide falls,  
The twilight darkens, the curlew<sup>1</sup> calls;  
Along the sea sands damp and brown  
The traveler hastens toward the town,  
5 And the tide rises, the tide falls. **C**

Darkness settles on roofs and walls,  
But the sea in the darkness calls and calls;  
The little waves, with their soft white hands,  
Efface<sup>2</sup> the footprints in the sands,  
10 And the tide rises, the tide falls.

The morning breaks; the steeds in their stalls  
Stamp and neigh, as the hostler<sup>3</sup> calls;  
The day returns, but nevermore  
Returns the traveler to the shore,  
15 And the tide rises, the tide falls. **D**

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1. **curlew**: a type of large bird often found along the shoreline.
  2. **efface**: to wear away; wipe out.
  3. **hostler**: person who takes care of horses.

## **C STANZA AND RHYME SCHEME**

What rhyme occurs in three of the five lines of each stanza? What word is emphasized by this repeated rhyme? Consider the impact of this technique on the poem's meaning.

## **D TRADITIONAL POETRY**

In terms of basic meaning, what is the difference between the day and the traveler in lines 13–14?



*Singing Beach, Manchester* (1863), Martin Johnson Heade. Oil on canvas, 50.8 cm × 91.4 cm. The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, 3rd, 1993.35.12.

## Comprehension

- Recall** What record does the traveler leave behind in “The Tide Rises, the Tide Falls”? What happens to this record and to the traveler?
- Recall** What, according to the speaker of “A Psalm of Life,” is “our destined end” or purpose?
- Paraphrase** What does the speaker say about the value of the lives of great people in “A Psalm of Life”?

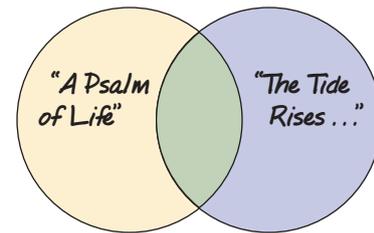
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## Text Analysis

- Draw Conclusions About Traditional Poetry** Review the emphasized words you recorded in your web diagram for “A Psalm of Life.” What can you conclude about the relationship between the poem’s sound and its meaning?
- Analyze Metaphor** A metaphor compares two dissimilar things. Think about the metaphor in lines 17–18 of “A Psalm of Life.” What is Longfellow saying about the world and life by comparing them to a battlefield and a bivouac?
- Examine Stanza and Rhyme Scheme** Identify the rhyme scheme used in “The Tide Rises, the Tide Falls.” How does this rhyme scheme reflect the poem’s central image?
- Interpret Repetition** Longfellow repeats the line “the tide rises, the tide falls” throughout his poem. What idea is he trying to emphasize about the difference between nature and human life through this repetition?
- Compare and Contrast** Reread lines 8–10 in “The Tide Rises . . .” and 25–32 in “A Psalm of Life.” Consider what happens to the footprints in each poem. Based on this and other images, how would you say Longfellow’s outlook on life and death in each poem is similar? In what way is it different? Use a Venn diagram like the one shown to organize your thoughts.



## Text Criticism

- Critical Interpretations** “Longfellow,” writes critic Alan Trachtenberg, “remains one of the nation’s abidingly popular poets; more poems of his are probably still taken to heart and committed to memory than those of any of his more luminous 19th century peers. . . .” Why do you think Longfellow was, and still is, popular? Use evidence to support your conclusions.

### *What gives life* **PURPOSE?**

What, according to the speaker of “A Psalm of Life,” should people do to give their lives purpose? Do you agree or disagree?