



Charley Longfellow: Coming of Age in a Time of Turbulence

Lesson 2: Antebellum Issues (1842-1861)

Students interpret poetry and prose that shed light on Henry and Fanny Longfellow's thoughts on slavery, abolition, politics, and the pending war. A culminating activity asks students to imagine how Mr. and Mrs. Longfellow's stance on antebellum politics, slavery, and war might have influenced their oldest son Charley.

**Longfellow House-
Washington's
Headquarters NHS**

LESSON 2
ANTEBELLUM ISSUES
1842-1861

Teacher's Notes

Main Objective

This lesson introduces students to poems and prose that communicate Henry and Fanny Longfellow's thoughts on slavery, abolition, politics, and the pending war. It also presents students with the atmosphere at Craigie House in the years leading up to the Civil War. A culminating activity asks students to imagine how Mr. and Mrs. Longfellow's stance on antebellum politics, slavery, and war might have influenced their oldest son Charley.

Investigative Question 2

What were Mr. and Mrs. Longfellow's views on pressing national issues in the years leading up to the Civil War and what impact do you think their views had on Charley?

Intended Learning Outcomes (Understandings)

By the close of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Discuss Mr. and Mrs. Longfellow's views and positions with respect to antebellum politics, slavery, and war.
- Describe how poetry can be used to convey point of view.

Intended Learning Outcomes (Skills)

By the close of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Develop a hypothesis based on evidence from a variety of primary sources.
- Imagine the impact Mr. and Mrs. Longfellow's views on war and slavery may have had on their oldest son Charley.

Curriculum Connections

History/Social Science

Learning Standards

USI.31 Describe the formation of the abolitionist movement, the roles of various abolitionists, and the response of southerners and northerners to abolitionism.

USI.36 Summarize the critical developments leading to the Civil War.

Concepts and Skills

8. Interpret the past within its own historical context rather than in terms of present-day norms and values.

10. Distinguish historical fact from opinion.

English Language Arts

Reading and Literature Strand

8: Understanding a Text. Students will identify the basic facts and main ideas of a text and use them as the basis for interpretation.

9: Making Connections. Students will deepen their understanding of a literary or non-literary text by relating it to its contemporary context or historical background.

18: Dramatic Reading and Performance. Students will plan and present dramatic readings, recitations, and performances that demonstrate appropriate consideration of audience and purpose.

Prior Knowledge

- Slave trade
- Relationship between slavery in the South and New England manufacturing
- Annexation of Texas
- Fugitive Slave Law
- 1856 assault on Senator Charles Sumner

Teacher Preparation

1. Review lesson plan
2. Ensure that students are familiar with content identified under “Prior Knowledge”
3. Review and introduce vocabulary to students
4. Copy Clues and Evidence packets for Teams A - F

Time

Recommended allotment of time for this lesson is three 50-minute sessions:

Activity I: One 50-minute session

Activity II (optional): Two 50-minute sessions

Challenging Vocabulary

Students may find some vocabulary in this lesson difficult. Definitions are included for groups 1 and 2. You may wish to introduce students to the remaining vocabulary prior to the lesson.

Group 1: bay, bore, brake, bulrush, Cain, cedar, dismal, fens, flail, garner, infirm, livery, morass, quake, rank, shroud

Group 2: abyss, affright, domain, fettered, fleshless, freight, gall, gyve, kite, limb, lust, plummet, rank, shackle, woe, yawning

Group 3: abhorrence, apathy, conviction, dictated, earnest, indignation, indignity, orator, pathos

Group 4: alleged, plover, revenue, soldiery, vexed

Group 5: abhor, arsenal, bate, compromising, despair, dignified, disunion, jot, principle, reticence, roused, seceding, self-indulgence, spurred, tenfold, traitors, undivided, virtues

Group 6: enthrallments, feeble, intrepidity, quarrel, ruffian, unflinching, vicissitudes, wretched

Materials

For Teachers

- Lesson plan
- Clues and Evidence packets for Teams A - F
- photograph of Longfellow dining room
- facsimile of Mary Appleton Mackintosh portrait that hangs in the Longfellow dining room

For Students

- All Students: “Cast of Characters: Antebellum Issues”
- Investigative Team A: Clues and Evidence Packet
- Investigative Team B: Clues and Evidence Packet
- Investigative Team C: Clues and Evidence Packet
- Investigative Team D: Clues and Evidence Packet
- Investigative Team E: Clues and Evidence Packet
- Investigative Team F: Clues and Evidence Packet

Activities

I. Thoughts on Slavery

A. Introduction

1. In 1842, Henry Longfellow published *Poems on Slavery*, a collection of nine poems that described his thoughts on slavery. Fanny Longfellow also took a position on slavery. What were their views on slavery and the impending war? During this portion of the lesson, small groups of students interpret poetry and prose to find out Henry and Fanny's views on the slave trade, the Fugitive Slave Law, antebellum politics, and the impending war.
2. Divide the class into six Investigative Teams (A - F).

B. Research

1. Team A

- a. Lead: What does *The Slave in the Dismal Swamp* tell you about Henry Longfellow's thoughts on slavery?
- b. Clues:
 - a. What is the slave doing?
 - b. How does Longfellow describe the swamp?
 - c. How does Longfellow describe the slave?
 - d. How does the slave feel?
 - e. How are Longfellow's *Poems on Slavery* received?

2. Team B

- a. Lead: What does the poem *The Witnesses* tell you about Henry Longfellow's thoughts on slavery?
- b. Evidence:
 - a. Who are the witnesses?
 - b. How does Longfellow describe the witnesses?
 - c. What happens to the "black Slave-ship?"
 - d. Can the witnesses really see?
 - e. What do they witness?
 - f. How are Longfellow's *Poems on Slavery* received?

3. Team C

- a. Lead: How do Mr. and Mrs. Longfellow feel about slavery?
- b. Evidence:
 - a. What are Mr. and Mrs. Longfellow's views on the expansion of slavery into new states and territories?
 - b. How do Mr. and Mrs. Longfellow feel about the North's response to slavery?
 - c. Why do you think Mrs. Longfellow believes that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is "the most American book we've had?"

- d. How does the judge from Florida justify slavery and does Mr. Longfellow support his argument?

4. Team D

- a. Lead: How does Henry Longfellow feel about the Fugitive Slave Law?
- b. Evidence:
 - a. How does he feel about Boston and its stance on the Fugitive Slave Law?
 - b. What does Mr. Longfellow believe the passage of the law says about the Union?
 - c. To what does Mr. Longfellow think the passage of this law will lead?

5. Team E

- a. Lead: How do Mr. and Mrs. Longfellow feel about the impending war?
- b. Evidence:
 - a. How does Mrs. Longfellow feel about war?
 - b. How do the Longfellows feel about secession?
 - c. How do Mr. and Mrs. Longfellow feel about President Lincoln?
 - d. Do the Longfellows believe war is the solution?

6. Team F

- a. Lead: What does the relationship with Charles Sumner say about Mr. and Mrs. Longfellow's political leanings?
- b. Evidence:
 - i. What do these letters say about Sumner's relationship with the Longfellows?
 - ii. What happens to Charles Sumner? Why?
 - iii. How do Henry Longfellow and the people of Massachusetts respond?

C. Conclusion

1. When finished, each team gives a brief talk about their findings with respect to Mr. and Mrs. Longfellow's positions on slavery, abolition, politics, and the pending war. Each team should say what kinds of evidence they looked at and provide an answer to their lead question in the presentation:
 - a. Team A: What does The Slave in the Dismal Swamp tell you about Henry Longfellow's thoughts on slavery?
 - b. Team B: What does the poem The Witnesses tell you about Henry Longfellow's thoughts on slavery?

- c. Team C: How do Mr. and Mrs. Longfellow feel about slavery?
 - d. Team D: How does Henry Longfellow feel about the Fugitive Slave Law?
 - e. Team E: How do Mr. and Mrs. Longfellow feel about the impending war?
 - f. Team F: What does the relationship with Charles Sumner say about Mr. and Mrs. Longfellow’s political leanings?
2. Conclude the discussion by asking: What impact do you think Mr. and Mrs. Longfellow’s views had on Charley? Why?

II. Putting it All Together (optional)

A. Introduction

1. This activity encourages students to think about the viewpoints of Mr. and Mrs. Longfellow, and to speculate on how their views may have influenced their son Charley.
2. Students work in groups of seven to prepare and present brief dramatic performances that communicate their responses to the guiding question: What were Mr. and Mrs. Longfellow’s views on pressing national issues in the years leading up to the Civil War and what impact do you think their views had on Charley?

B. Set the stage:

It is May 7, 1861. Charles Sumner arrives for dinner. He joins Mr. and Mrs. Longfellow at the dining table. Following dinner, sixteen-year-old Charley and fifteen-year-old Erny enter the dining room for dessert. As they eat strawberries and burnt cream, the adults discuss politics, slavery, and war.

Imagine you are the Mary Appleton Mackintosh portrait that hangs in the Longfellow dining room (show image of portrait). If the portrait could talk, what would its account of the dessert conversation be? Create a five-minute skit that brings the portrait’s account to life. Your skit should clearly communicate Fanny and Henry Longfellow’s views on antebellum politics, slavery, and war, and give the audience a sense of Charley’s thoughts on the matters. Be sure to answer the following questions (Post questions):

1. What does Henry Longfellow say about slavery? About the state of the Union? What expressions are on his face? What tone of voice does he use?
2. How does Fanny respond? What does she say?
3. Do Fanny and Henry hold similar views?
4. Does anyone else take part in the conversation? If so, what do they say?

Note: You may want to review Longfellow’s *Poems on Slavery* and the excerpts from journal entries and letters. In addition, be sure to think about what you’ve already learned about Charley from the Longfellow scrapbook or your visit to the Longfellow House. Finally, take time to think about how *you* have reacted to the ideas and viewpoints of your parents or guardians.

5. What is Charley thinking, imagining, and/or doing as his parents talk?
- C. Cast of characters: Charles Sumner, Mr. Longfellow, Mrs. Longfellow, Charley Longfellow, Erny Longfellow. Optional characters: Alice Longfellow, Edith Longfellow, Kate Donohoe (parlor girl)
- D. Present skit. After all skits have been performed, pose the following questions:
1. How did each of the skit teams portray Mr. and Mrs. Longfellow? Charley? What do you think accounts for the similarities and differences? (Opportunity to discuss guiding question)
 2. On what kinds of issues do you agree/disagree with your parents or guardians?
 3. To what extent can you see your relationship with your parents or guardians revealed in the skit you put together about Charley and his parents?
 4. What must historians be mindful of when interpreting past events?

Resources for Further Research and Discovery

Books

Hamilton, Virginia. *The Defeat and Triumph of a Fugitive Slave*. U.S.: Laurel Leaf Books (1993).

Born a slave in Virginia, Anthony Burns was twenty when he escaped to Boston in 1854. For a few short months he lived and worked there as a free man. But Burns' brief time of happiness ended abruptly. He was arrested and held without bail at the instigation of his former owner, Charles Suttle, who came to Boston invoking the Fugitive Slave Act—a highly controversial federal law that allowed owners to reclaim escaped slaves by presenting proof of ownership. But Anthony had powerful allies: abolitionists who saw him as a symbol of freedom imperiled; the Boston Vigilance Committee, a group of legal professionals sworn to use any means within their power to defend the rights of fugitive slaves; and Richard Henry Dana, the patrician lawyer and author of *Two Years before the Mast*; and neighbor of poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, who stepped forward to defend Anthony without charge. Award-winning author Virginia Hamilton provides a fascinating account of Burns' life and the tense mood of the nation in the years leading up to the Civil War.

Poems

Longfellow, Henry W. *Poems on Slavery*. Boston, MA: New England Anti-Slavery Tract Association, J.W. Alden, publishing agent (1843).

Includes the following poems:

- “The Quadroon Girl” (December 1842)
- “The Slave Singing at Midnight” (December 1842)
- “The Slave’s Dream” (December 1842)
- “To William E. Channing” (December 1842)
- “The Warning” (December 1842)

Websites

National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom (National Park Service)
<http://slaveryandremembrance.org/partners/partner/?id=P0010>

United States Senate Art & History (account of the May 22, 1856 caning of Senator Charles Sumner)

http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/minute/The_Canining_of_Senator_Charles_Sumner.htm

Longfellow Dining Room



Mary Appleton Mackintosh Portrait in the Longfellow Dining Room



Cast of Characters: Antebellum Issues

Principal Characters

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (b. 1807): [HWL] Henry Longfellow was a scholar and educator, translator, poet, compiler of anthologies, and husband to Frances Appleton Longfellow with whom he fathered six children. He was raised in Portland, Maine, and graduated from Bowdoin College in 1825. He was a professor of Modern Language at Bowdoin (1829-1835) and afterwards professor of French and Spanish literature at Harvard College. Longfellow was the first American poet to make substantial sums from his work, and at the turn of the 20th century, copies of his poems sold worldwide in excess of one million. During his lifetime, Longfellow was the most popular and widely read American poet in the world.

Frances Appleton Longfellow (b. 1817): [FAL] Daughter of Nathan Appleton, wife of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and mother to six Longfellow children. Fanny was raised in the fashionable Beacon Hill section of Boston, though the family traveled to Europe with some degree of regularity. Fanny married Henry Longfellow in July 1843, at which point the two set up home in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Fanny was an avid reader and writer, and appreciated the fine arts, theater, and music.

Charles Appleton Longfellow (b. 1844): [CAL] The first born of the Longfellow children. In an 1848 journal entry, his mother describes Charley as one who “promises to be the man of action.”

Supporting Characters

Appleton, Nathan (1779-1861): Fanny Appleton Longfellow’s father. Nathan Appleton was a member of the Boston Associates - a group of investors who financed the early Lowell textile manufacturing system. Nathan Appleton purchased the Brattle Street home for his daughter and her husband as a wedding present, and proceeded to finance their acquisition of furniture, carpets, and other textiles used in the house interior, as well as a stretch of land that connected the house to the Charles River.

Dana Jr, Richard Henry (1815-1882): Writer, lawyer, close friend and neighbor of Henry W. Longfellow, and father-in-law to Longfellow’s daughter Edith. After spending two years (1831–33) at Harvard, he shipped as a common sailor around Cape Horn to California. The narrative of this voyage, published as *Two Years before the Mast* (1840), was written to secure justice for the sailor and has become an American classic of the days of sailing ships. Dana graduated from Harvard in 1837 and entered law practice. Active in politics, he helped found the Free-Soil party and represented escaped slaves who became fugitives with passage of the Compromise of 1850 (Fugitive Slave Act).

Felton, Cornelius (1807-1862): Close friend of Henry Longfellow and frequent guest at the Longfellow House. Felton graduated from Harvard in 1827, served as professor of Greek (1832-18345), then assumed the Eliot Professor of Greek Literature (1834-1860). He was appointed president of Harvard College in 1860, a position he held for two years until his death on February 26, 1862.

Greenleaf, Mary Longfellow (1816-1902): Henry Longfellow's younger sister. Mary married cotton trader James Greenleaf and lived down the street from Henry and Fanny Longfellow half of the year, and in New Orleans the other half. Mary's husband, James, was described as a Copperhead by Sam Longfellow.

Longfellow, Alice M. (1850-1928): The Longfellows' second daughter.

Longfellow, Edith (1853-1915): The Longfellows' third daughter.

Longfellow, Ernest (1845-1921): The Longfellows' second son. In 1848 Fanny Longfellow described Erny as the one who "promises to be the poet."

Longfellow, Reverend Samuel (1819-1892): Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's youngest brother and biographer, Samuel was a Unitarian minister and author of many hymns still in use today. Sam believed in transcendentalism, temperance, and women's suffrage, and ardently opposed the institution of slavery. Sam lived with Henry and Fanny Longfellow while attending Harvard (1844-1846), and continued to live with the family on-and-off until his death in 1892.

Longfellow, Zilpah (1778-1851): Henry Longfellow's mother. Daughter of Brigadier General Peleg Wadsworth who served with Paul Revere in the Revolution and later became a member of the Massachusetts Senate and Federal Congress. Zilpah married Stephen Longfellow in 1804—two years after the death of her sister Eliza – Stephen's first fiancée. Zilpah Longfellow mothered six children. The home in which she raised her children is in Portland, Maine. Today, the house is a museum operated by the Maine Historical Society.

Mackintosh, Mary Appleton (1813-1889): Fanny Appleton's older sister. Mary lived in England with her husband, Robert, and their four children. She and Fanny communicated regularly about parenting, children, and family affairs.

Sumner, Charles (1811-1874): Henry Longfellow's closest friend, frequent houseguest, and faithful confidante. Sumner was a politician and statesman from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. A noted lawyer and orator, Sumner devoted his enormous energies to the destruction of what he considered the "Slave Power"—the conspiracy of slave owners to seize control of the federal government and block the progress of liberty. He served in the U.S. Senate for 23 years, from 1851 to his death, during which time fought to repeal the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act, denounced the Kansas-Nebraska Act which paved the way for slavery to be extended into the new territories, and gave numerous speeches on the evils of slavery and the danger of

growing sectionalism. On May 22, 1856, Sumner was attacked and beaten into unconsciousness in his Senate chamber by South Carolina congressman Preston Brooks for comments made about Brooks' uncle during a speech given two days earlier. Sumner, who suffered from severe head trauma and post traumatic shock, did not attend the Senate for three years, though he continued to serve as Senator from Massachusetts until his death on March 11, 1874.

Wadsworth, Emmeline Austin: Fanny Longfellow's best friend; moved to Geneseo, New York following her marriage to William Wadsworth.

Whittier, John Greenleaf (1807-1892): Poet, abolitionist, and friend of Henry W. Longfellow, Whittier was devoted to social causes and reform, and worked passionately for a series of abolitionist newspapers and magazines in the years leading up to the Civil War. Whittier founded the antislavery Liberty party in 1840 and ran unsuccessfully for Congress in 1842.

Guiding Question #1

What does the poem “The Slave in the Dismal Swamp” reveal about Henry Longfellow’s thoughts on slavery?

Supporting Questions

1. What is the slave doing?

- POEM: “The Slave in the Dismal Swamp,” 1842

2. How does Longfellow describe the swamp?

- POEM: “The Slave in the Dismal Swamp,” 1842

3. How does Longfellow describe the slave?

- POEM: "The Slave in the Dismal Swamp," 1842

4. How does the slave feel?

- POEM: "The Slave in the Dismal Swamp," 1842

5. How are Longfellow's Poems on Slavery received?

- LETTER: Henry Longfellow to John G. Whittier – September 1843

Primary Source Packet #1

Guiding Question: What does the poem “The Slave in the Dismal Swamp” reveal about Henry Longfellow’s thoughts on slavery?

POEM: “THE SLAVE IN THE DISMAL SWAMP” FROM *POEMS ON SLAVERY*

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 1842

In dark fens of the Dismal Swamp
The hunted Negro lay;
He saw the fire of the midnight camp,
And heard at times a horse’s tramp,
And a bloodhound’s distant bay.

Where the will-o’-the-wisps and glowworms shine,
In bulrush and in brake;
Where the waving mosses shroud the pine,
And the cedar grows, and the poisonous vine
Is spotted like the snake;

Where hardly a human foot could pass,
Or a human heart would dare,
On the quaking turf of the green morass
He crouched in the rank and tangled grass,
Like a wild beast in his lair.
A poor old slave, infirm and lame;

Great scars deformed his face;
On his forehead he bore the brand of
shame,
And the rags, that hid his mangled frame,
Were the livery of disgrace.

All things above were bright and fair;
All things were glad and free;
Lithe squirrels darted here and there,
And wild birds filled the echoing air
With songs of liberty!

On him alone was the doom of pain,
From the morning of his birth;
On him alone the curse of Cain
Fell, like a flail on the garnered grain,
And struck him to the earth!

Vocabulary for “The Slave in the Dismal Swamp”

bay (bā) n. a deep, prolonged bark

bore (bôr) v. to have as a quality; exhibit

brake (brāk) n. Any of various ferns of the genus *Pteris*

bulrush (bööl’ rush) n. wetland plants having grass-like leaves, such as papyrus and cattail

Cain (kān) n. In the Bible, the eldest son of Adam and Eve, who murdered his brother Abel out of jealousy and was condemned to be a fugitive

cedar (sē’ dər) n. an evergreen coniferous tree or shrub

dismal (dīz’ məl) adj. dreary; gloomy

fen (fēn) n. low, flat, swampy land; a bog or marsh

flail (flāl) n. a tool, consisting of a long wooden handle and shorter stick attached to its end, used to separate grain or seeds from straw

garner (gär' nər) v. to gather

infirm (in-fûrm') adj. physically weak; feeble

livery (lív'ə-rē) n. a uniform or distinctive dress

morass (mə -rās') n. low-lying, soggy ground

quake (kwāk) v. to tremble or shake with shock; to shiver, as with cold or fright

rank (rāngk) adj. very strong or offensive smell or taste

shroud (shroud) v. to wrap or hide

LETTERS

Henry Longfellow to John G. Whittier – September 1843

It is impossible for me to accept the Congressional nomination you propose, because I do not feel myself qualified for the duties of such an office, and because I do not belong to the Liberty Party. Though a strong anti-slavery man, I am not a member of any society, and fight under no single banner.

I am much gratified that the Poems on Slavery should have exercised some salutary influence; and thank you for your good opinion of them. At all times I shall rejoice in the progress of true liberty, and in freedom from slavery of all kinds; but I cannot for a moment think of entering the political arena. Partisan warfare becomes too violent, too vindictive, for my taste; and I should be found a weak and unworthy champion in public debate.

Guiding Question #2

What does the poem “The Witnesses” tell you about Henry Longfellow’s thoughts on slavery?

Supporting Questions

1. Who are the witnesses?

POEM: The Witnesses, 1842

2. How does Longfellow describe the witnesses?

POEM: The Witnesses, 1842

3. What happens to the “black Slave-ship?”

POEM: The Witnesses, 1842

4. Can the witnesses really see?

- POEM: The Witnesses, 1842

5. What do they witness?

- POEM: The Witnesses, 1842

6. How are Longfellow's Poems on Slavery received?

- JOURNAL: Henry Longfellow – August 1, 1846

Primary Source Packet #2

Guiding Question: What does the poem "The Witnesses" tell you about Henry Longfellow's thoughts on slavery?

POEM: "THE WITNESSES" FROM *POEMS ON SLAVERY*

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 1842

In Ocean's wide domains,
Half buried in the sands,
Lie skeletons in chains,
With shackled feet and hands.

Beyond the fall of dews,
Deeper than plummet lies,
Float ships, with all their crews,
No more to sink nor rise.

There the black Slave-ship swims,
Freighted with human forms,
Whose fettered, fleshless limbs
Are not the sport of storms.

These are the bones of Slaves;
They gleam from the abyss;
They cry, from yawning waves,
"We are the Witnesses!"
Within Earth's wide domains
Are markets for men's lives;
Their necks are galled with chains,
Their wrists are cramped with gyves.

Dead bodies, that the kite
In deserts makes its prey;
Murders, that with affright
Scare school-boys from their play!

All evil thoughts and deeds;
Anger, and lust, and pride;
The foulest, rankest weeds,
That choke Life's groaning tide!

These are the woes of Slaves;
They glare from the abyss;
They cry, from unknown graves,
"We are the Witnesses!"

Vocabulary for “The Witnesses”

abyss (ə bɪs') n. a deep, dark hole with no obvious exit

affright (ə frɪt') n. terror; a cause of terror

domain (dō mān') n. territory or area

fetter (fɛt' ə) adj. chained or restrained

fleshless (flɛsh' lɛs) adj. without skin

freight (frāt) v. to load with cargo

gall (gɔl) v. to make the skin sore by rubbing; chafe; irritate

gyve (jɪv) n. a shackle or chain for the leg

kite (kīt) n. a predatory bird having a long, often forked tails

limb (lɪm) n. a jointed appendage of an animal, such as an arm, leg, wing, or flipper

lust (lʌst) n. an overwhelming craving or desire

plummet (plʌm' ɪt) n. something that weighs down or oppresses; something very heavy

rank (ræŋk) adj. very strong or offensive smell or taste

shackle (shæk' əl) v. to restrain a prisoner or captive with a metal device that encircles the ankle or wrist

woe (wō) n. deep sorrow; misfortune

yawning (yô' nɪŋ) adj. gaping or cavernous

HENRY W. LONGFELLOW JOURNAL

August 1, 1846

The mail brings me an Anti-Slavery Standard, with a long and violent tirade against me for publishing the Poems on Slavery in the cheap edition, - taken from a South Carolina paper. How impatient they are, those hot Southrons. But this piece of violence is quite ridiculous....

Guiding Question #3

How do Mr. and Mrs. Longfellow feel about slavery?

Supporting Questions

1. What are Mr. and Mrs. Longfellow's views on the expansion of slavery into new states and territories?

- LETTER: Fanny Longfellow to Mary Longfellow Greenleaf – March 22, 1844
- LETTER: Henry Longfellow to Charles Sumner – July 23, 1857
- JOURNAL: Henry Longfellow – December 8, 1850

2. How do Mr. and Mrs. Longfellow feel about the North's response to slavery?

- LETTER: Fanny Longfellow to Nathan Appleton – May 4, 1851
- JOURNAL: Henry Longfellow – July 25, 1846

3. Why do you think Mrs. Longfellow believes that Uncle Tom's Cabin is "the most American book we've had?"

- LETTER: Fanny Longfellow to Sam Longfellow – May 10, 1852

4. How does the judge from Florida justify slavery and does Mr. Longfellow support his argument?

- JOURNAL: Henry Longfellow – July 31, 1858

Primary Source Packet #3

Guiding Question: How do Mr. and Mrs. Longfellow feel about slavery?

LETTERS

Fanny Longfellow to Mary Longfellow Greenleaf – March 22, 1844

How do they feel in your part of the world about the annexation of Texas? Here there is great excitement and indignation, and many that have been cowardly about slavery are warmed by the occasion into a clearer expression of abhorrence. Heaven defend us from an act so foolish and wrong!

Fanny Longfellow to Nathan Appleton – May 4, 1851

...The seizure of a supposed slave and his summary trial without judge or jury and return to slavery was thought by many a great indignity in Massachusetts...where Northern freedom is thought as important a matter as southern slavery...It rather helped Sumner's election, which I fear will not give you much pleasure, but you can feel sure that whatever he does as senator will be dictated by a sincere conviction and an earnest desire to do right and a statesmanlike broad view...

Fanny Longfellow to Sam Longfellow – May 10, 1852

Another book is having immense success—Uncle Tom's Cabin, by Mrs. Stowe. It describes slavery in all its phases without exaggeration and with a graphic truth and pathos and power which all must feel. It must do good, but is most painful to read...It is the most American book we have had and will give its authoress great fame...

Henry W. Longfellow to Charles Sumner – July 23, 1857

...I say nothing of politics. There is nothing very cheering, except the anti-slavery movement in Missouri and Mr. Helper's book, from Carolina—also anti-slavery.

HENRY W. LONGFELLOW JOURNAL

July 25, 1846

...In the evening Mr. Giddings of Ohio gave a lecture on the Rights of the North, in reference to Southern Slavery. A plain, straightforward man, and no orator. I hope his words will have a good effect here, where there has been such apathy on the subject. Saw Whittier there.

December 8, 1850

Sumner at dinner. We discussed the pro-slavery aggressions since the formation of the Constitution; the purchase of Louisiana, that of Florida, the annexation of Texas. These three

great violations of the compact between the States, and consequent increase of the Slavery power, the North has submitted to, fascinated by increase of territory.

July 31, 1858

Went to town to dine with the Club. The only stranger present was (a) Judge —, of Florida. I discussed slavery with him. He said, “Slavery always existed. Scripture does not forbid it. The text ‘Do unto others,’ etc., means do to the slave what you would have him do to you if you were his slave.” To which I answered, “If you were a slave, the thing you would wish most of all would be your freedom. So your Scripture argument for Slavery is knocked into the cocked hat.” He blushed, then laughed and said, ‘Well, it is so; I give it up.’ Very frankly.

Guiding Question #4

How does Henry Longfellow feel about the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law?

Supporting Questions

1. How does Mr. Longfellow feel about Boston and its stance on the Fugitive Slave Law?

- JOURNAL: Henry Longfellow – September 14, 1850
- JOURNAL: Henry Longfellow – April 4, 1851

2. What does Mr. Longfellow believe the passage of the law says about the Union?

- JOURNAL: Henry Longfellow – October 26, 1850
- JOURNAL: Henry Longfellow – April 4, 1851
- JOURNAL: Henry Longfellow – June 2, 1854

3. To what does Mr. Longfellow think the passage of this law will lead?

- JOURNAL: Henry Longfellow – May 30, 1854
- JOURNAL: Henry Longfellow – May 29, 1858

Primary Source Packet #4

Guiding Question: How does Henry Longfellow feel about the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law?

HENRY W. LONGFELLOW JOURNAL

September 14, 1850

The day has been blackened to me by reading of the passage of the “Fugitive Slave Bill” in the House, Eliot of Boston voting for it. This is a disgrace to the city. If we should read in Dino Compagni that in the tenth century a citizen of Florence had given such a vote, we should see what an action he had done. But this the people of Boston cannot see in themselves. They will uphold it.

October 26, 1850

The slave-hunters are in Boston. I hope they will be imprisoned, as they deserve. What a disgrace this is to a republic of the nineteenth century.

April 4, 1851

There is much excitement in Boston about the capture of an alleged fugitive slave. O city without soul! When and where will this end? Shame, that the great Republic, the “refuge of the oppressed,” should stoop so low as to become the Hunter of Slaves!

May 30, 1854

The slave case drags along. There is great and wide-spread excitement, and a healthy one. The general feeling is, “We will submit to this not longer, come what may!”

June 2, 1854

The fugitive slave is surrendered to his master, and, being marched through State Street with soldiery, put on board the United States revenue cutter. Dirty work for a country that is so loud about freedom as ours!

May 29, 1858

In town. Dine with the Club. Felt vexed at seeing plover on the table at this season, and proclaimed aloud my disgust at seeing the game-laws thus violated. If anybody wants to break a law, let him break the Fugitive-slave Law. That is all it is fit for.

Guiding Question #5

How do Mr. and Mrs. Longfellow feel about the impending war?

Supporting Questions

1. How does Mrs. Longfellow feel about war?

- JOURNAL: Fanny Appleton Longfellow – August 8, 1843
- LETTER: Fanny Longfellow to Zilpah Longfellow – April 3, 1844

2. How do the Longfellows feel about secession?

- JOURNAL: Henry Longfellow – December 3, 1860
- LETTER: Fanny Longfellow to Mary Appleton Mackintosh – February 4, 1861

3. How does Mrs. Longfellow feel about President Lincoln?

- LETTER: Fanny Longfellow to Emmeline Wadsworth – February 12, 1861

4. Does Fanny Longfellow believe war is the solution?

- LETTER: Fanny Longfellow to Emmeline Wadsworth – February 12, 1861
- LETTER: Fanny Longfellow to Emmeline Wadsworth – April 19, 1861
- LETTER: Fanny Longfellow to Emmeline Wadsworth – April 29, 1861

Primary Source Packet #5

Guiding Question: How do Mr. and Mrs. Longfellow feel about the impending war?

FANNY LONGFELLOW JOURNAL

August 8, 1843

...Returned by the Arsenal [Springfield]...pleased Henry by calling the line of barrels organ pipes for that fearful musician death to play upon. Felt very warlike against war, reflecting upon the noble uses the money wasted upon these murderous purposes might be put to. Spurred Henry to write a peace-poem and discussed the errors of education upon this matter.

HENRY W. LONGFELLOW JOURNAL

December 3, 1860

Congress comes together today. The sky looks troubled, and disunion is threatened. I hope the North will stand firm, and not bate one jot of its manhood. Secession of the North from freedom would be tenfold worse than secession of the South from the Union.

LETTERS

Fanny Longfellow to Zilpah Longfellow – April 3, 1844

...He has written a poem lately upon peace which I am sure will give his mother's heart throb of great joy and pride... I hope [it] will unseal many eyes and touch many hearts. I especially love to have his beautiful spirit occupied in such subjects which must better humanity and freshen with ...everlasting truths of love and mercy, which are so mildewed by prejudice and the bad customs of nations...

Fanny Longfellow to Mary Appleton Mackintosh – February 4, 1861

Dear Mary,

...Everything is as unsettled as ever. The southern states go on seceding and Helping themselves to all the ports & navy yards they can & the government for fear of bloodshed, does little or nothing to stop them. The border states we hoped to save (tho' if there must be a separation it would be better perhaps to have all the slavery ones together) but tho' some are very unwilling to desert the union, they will probably go—Lincoln's election is but an excuse for all this— it is a plot of many year's growth, and has its root in the intense greed of the south for undivided power—to rule or ruin is their motto...It would seem as if they had not one sensible man among them, but the truth is they are over powered by the threats of the mob led on by their worst politician, & many of the bitter feelings attached to the union grown over their disunion...

Fanny Longfellow to Emmeline Wadsworth – February 12, 1861

...I have great hopes in Lincoln; he has shown such dignified reticence through all this excitement, and is thought very fearless and firm in not compromising with traitors...How it will all end God alone can know, but it looks like a great crisis He is bringing about for his own purposes, and as it must come some day, it is better to have it over before our children are men.

Fanny Longfellow to Emmeline Wadsworth – April 19, 1861

...the people North and West are roused to a state of patriotism which fuses all parties in the one resolve to protect the government, seriously threatened at Washington, and volunteers are pouring south like a spring tide, with all the enthusiasm of '76...I abhor war wherever and whenever produced, and trust this will be a short one...

Fanny Longfellow to Emmeline Wadsworth – April 29, 1861

...Well may you sigh over such a state of things, but painful as it is, it is better than our past apathy, when we yielded principle and power to these corrupt men...Now the North is roused with a glorious heart-beat for liberty, such as has never been in our time...the south...hoped we were too divided in opinion to stand against them, and cannot comprehend the intense love of country, and not of state only all classes here display. I am proud to live at such a time...It was worth some loss of life and property to behold the heroic virtues so alive after our long dream of self-indulgence. It is not against the people of the South we wage war, but against these rebels and traitors who have silenced their loyalty and tried to overthrow ours...I hope we shall have a peaceful old age, dear, to talk over all this, though I do not despair yet of renewing my impressions with my children...Pray for us that God will shield the right, if that needs praying for...

Guiding Question #6

What does the relationship with Charles Sumner say about Mr. and Mrs. Longfellow's political leanings?

Supporting Questions

1. What do these letters say about Sumner's relationship with the Longfellows?

- LETTER: Charles Sumner to Henry Longfellow - Fall, 1851
- LETTER: Henry Longfellow to Charles Sumner – June 2, 1854

2. What happened to Charles Sumner? Why?

- JOURNAL: Henry Longfellow – May 23, 1856
- JOURNAL: Henry Longfellow – May 30, 1856
- JOURNAL: Henry Longfellow – November 2, 1856

3. How do Henry Longfellow and the people of Massachusetts respond?

- JOURNAL: Henry Longfellow – May 24, 1856
- JOURNAL: Henry Longfellow – November 3, 1856
- JOURNAL: Henry Longfellow – January 9, 1857

Primary Source Packet #6

Guiding Question: What does the relationship with Charles Sumner say about Mr. and Mrs. Longfellow's political leanings?

LETTERS

Charles Sumner to Henry W. Longfellow – Fall 1851

Dearest Longfellow—I could not speak to you as we parted, -my soul was too full; only tears would flow. Your friendship, and dear Fanny's have been among my few treasures, like gold unchanging. For myself, I see with painful vividness the vicissitudes and enthrallments of the future, and feel that we shall never more know each other as in times past...Whatever may be in store for me, so much at least is secure; and the memory of you and Fanny will be to me a precious fountain...

Henry W. Longfellow to Charles Sumner – June 2, 1854

We read in the evening papers yesterday that some evil-minded persons were stirring up a mob against you and threatening violence. To which I said, and all responded, 'Charles Sumner will do his duty' ...Today is decided the fate of Burns, the fugitive slave. You have read it all in the papers, - the arrest, the trial etc. Dana has done nobly, acting throughout with the greatest nerve and intrepidity. Fanny joins me in congratulations on your noble position and labors. It is a great thing in one's life to stand so long and unflinching in the range of the enemy's artillery.

HENRY W. LONGFELLOW JOURNAL

May 23, 1856

A lovely morning. Walking in the garden, when Owen arrives and in a voice broken by sobs, tell me that Sumner has been brutally beaten in the Senate, by a Mr. Brooks, nephew of Butler, who was severely handled in Sumner's speech.

O Southern Chivalry! O blackguardism! O scoundrelism!

May 24, 1856

Great excitement in town on this affair of Sumner; and to night, a great meeting in Fannuel [sic] Hall... At dinner—let me record it to his honor Felton, who has had a long quarrel with Sumner, proposed as a toast "The Reelection of Charles Sumner!"

May 30, 1856

Very wretched out and restless. There is great excitement about Sumner; news that he is worse and in much danger. The act of a single ruffian, who probably glories in his shame agitates the whole Republic.

Dana comes in the evening. He is getting up a Sumner meeting here.

November 2, 1856

Sumner arrived just as we were sitting down to breakfast. He looks well in the face, but is feeble and walks with an uncertain step.

November 3, 1856

We drove over to Mr. Amos Lawrence's where was the start for the grand triumphant entry of Sumner into Boston. Thence we drove through Brookline to the Roxbury line; and there Mr. Quincy (the mayor of Boston) received us, and the triumphal entry began.

January 9, 1857

Sumner at dinner. He is elected to Congress for another term; 333 against 12! There is no mistaking the meaning of such a vote!

ARTWORK

Charcoal drawing of Charles Sumner by Eastman Johnson, 1846



Oil painting of Charles Sumner by Ernest W. Longfellow, c. 1868

