

Biography Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

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[Henry Wadsworth Longfellow](#) was an American poet who was best known for poems such as "[Paul Revere's Ride](#)," and "[A Psalm of Life](#)." Longfellow was born in 1807 in Portland, Maine, which was a part of the Massachusetts colony at the time. He attended college at Bowdoin and later moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts. He went on to write poetry, plays, novels and anthologies. He also had friends who were famous poets, including Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne and John Greenleaf Whittier. Amid his success as a poet, Longfellow also faced personal tragedy.

[Longfellow](#) was born to Stephen and Zilpah Longfellow. His mother's maiden name was Wadsworth, and he was named after his uncle Henry. The [house](#) in which Longfellow grew up was built by his grandfather, a Revolutionary War general. The house is the oldest building in Portland and is located on Congress Street. Longfellow's education took place at several different institutions. As a child he went to Portland Academy and then began attending school at Bowdoin when he was only 15 years old. Longfellow loved literature and became best friends with fellow writer, Nathaniel Hawthorne. Longfellow frequently wrote poetry and had an impressive collection by the time he graduated from Bowdoin.

After college, Longfellow took time to travel. He returned several years later and became a professor at Bowdoin. Longfellow also married his first wife, Mary Potter, in 1831. After teaching at Bowdoin for five years, Longfellow moved on to bigger things. He decided to take a job that was offered to him at Harvard. As part of the requirements to teach at the university, Longfellow went on a trip overseas in 1835 and took his wife with him. Longfellow's life took a tragic turn when his wife died due to a miscarriage while the couple was in the Netherlands.

Following his wife's death, Longfellow moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts and became a professor at Harvard. He found success as a professor and as a poet. During this time he published his first poetry collection, "Voices of the Night." Longfellow used different styles, elements, and poetry methods in his work. He also used symbols in his poetry and incorporated allegory, diction, imagery and metaphor.

A woman named Frances Appleton was the subject of some of Longfellow's earlier poetry. Appleton was part of a wealthy family in Boston. She was very intelligent and cultured. After several years of teaching at Harvard, Appleton and Longfellow were married in 1843. The couple soon moved into what was known as the [Craigie House](#), where Longfellow had been renting a room since moving to Cambridge. They went on to have a happy marriage and raised six children. Longfellow wrote the poem, "[The Evening Star](#)", about his second wife.

Longfellow began dedicating more time to his poetry and retired from teaching at Harvard in 1854. As Longfellow began to find more success with his poetry, tragedy struck his family once again. In 1861, Longfellow's second wife died as the result of a house fire. Longfellow tried to save her and he suffered burns to his face. These burns were later hidden by his trademark white beard. Years later, he wrote the poem, "[The Cross of Snow](#)", in memory of Frances.

The remainder of Longfellow's life was difficult as he struggled to cope after his wife's death. He occupied himself with poetry and worked on translations of other writers as well. He began the Dante Club, which was dedicated to his translation of [Dante Alighieri's, "Divine Comedy."](#) His poetry and translations made Longfellow a wealthy man.

Longfellow died in 1882 after suffering from peritonitis. He was laid to rest beside both of his wives in [Mount Auburn Cemetery](#). "[In the Harbor](#)" was his last publication. Longfellow continues to be known as one of the greatest American poets. He is respected for his intelligence, endurance, and creativity. Both of his homes are now museums open to the public. The Longfellow Institute at Harvard and the Longfellow Community in Minnesota are named after Longfellow. A mountain range in Maine, several schools, and a bridge near Boston also bear Longfellow's name. Longfellow lives on through his poetry, legacy, and influence on American poetry.

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