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## Visiting Author Sydelle Pearl



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Author Sydelle Pearl came to the Baldwin School to visit the third grade students. Ms. Pearl talked about her latest book, *Dear Mr. Longfellow* which complements the students study of Cambridge and Massachusetts. Ms. Pearl spoke about how Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, a professor of languages at Harvard University, was such an inspiration to the children of Cambridge. Longfellow was known as "the children's poet." Students memorized his poetry. Local children would visit him and many children wrote letters to Longfellow. Ms. Pearl read the hundreds of letters written to Longfellow to craft her book that reveals Longfellow's life and his poems that became so important to children.

Each day, Longfellow would walk from his home on Brattle Street to Harvard. He would pass by a very large horse chestnut tree and a blacksmith shop. This inspired him to write the poem *The Village Blacksmith*. In time, that tree was to be cut down. From the wood of that tree, friends and neighbors of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Phoebe and Eben Horsford, along with local children, had a chair made for him from the wood of the tree. This chair was given to him on his 72nd birthday. Chestnut tree leaves and flowers were carved in the chair and a verse from the Blacksmith poem was also carved into the seat of the chair. In Ms. Pearl's book she included a letter written to Longfellow from a child of Cambridge on his 73rd birthday. It said, "I hope you receive as nice a present as you did last year". Longfellow dedicated his poem *From My Arm-Chair* to the children of Cambridge who presented him with the chair.