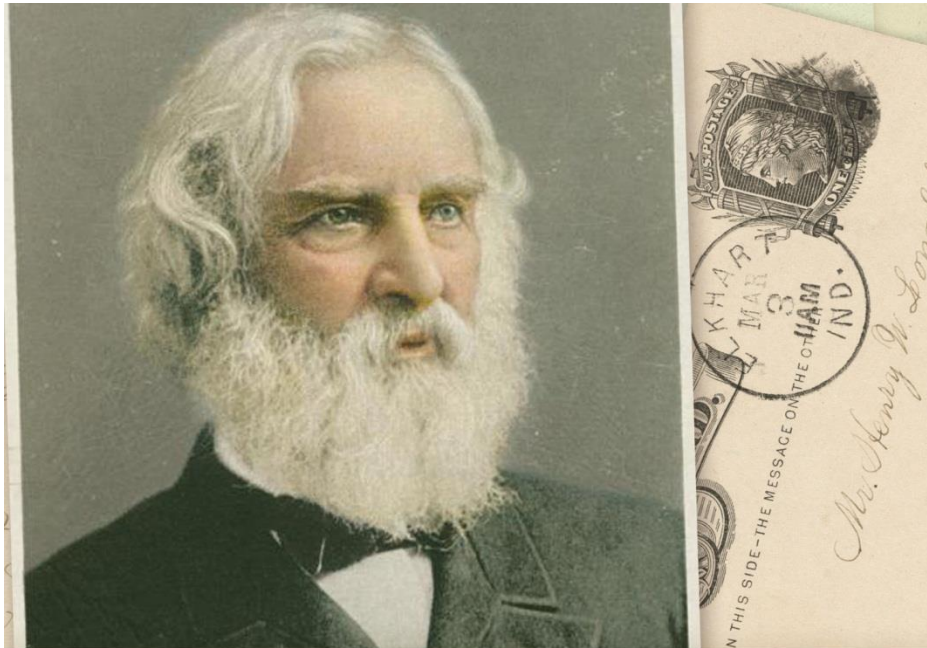


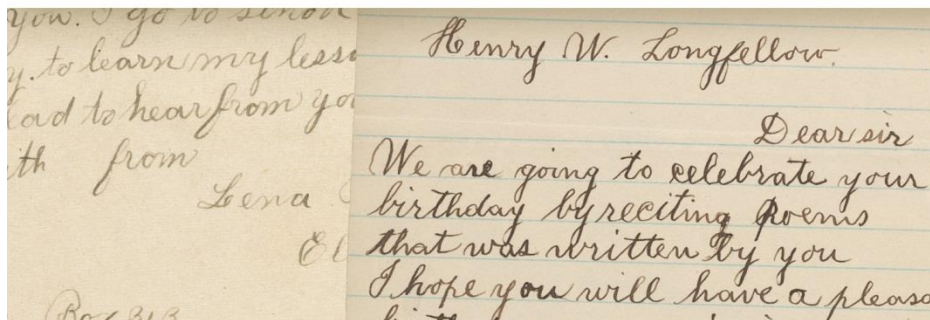
Teacher's Guide for DEAR MR. LONGFELLOW: LETTERS TO AND FROM THE CHILDREN'S POET by Sydelle Pearl, published by Prometheus Books, October 2012. Teacher's Guide created by Sydelle Pearl, © 2012.



Dear Mr. Longfellow

LETTERS TO AND FROM THE CHILDREN'S POET

Sydelle Pearl



This Teacher's Guide contains curriculum connections for grades 3-6 to Art, Creative Dramatics, Geography, History, Languages, Math, Music, Science, and Writing Activities. Book Lists for DEAR MR. LONGFELLOW are available at www.storypearls.com for the following topics: Chairs, Letter Writing, Poetry, Teaching Poetry, Poets, and Trees.

Art Activities:

--Make an illustration for a scene of one of Henry's poems that appears in *Dear Mr. Longfellow*.

--Draw horse chestnut leaves. See Millicent Selsam's book *Tree Flowers*, illustrated by Carol Lerner.

--Turn to page 126 of *Dear Mr. Longfellow*. Find the sketch of the blacksmith shop or "smithy" that Henry made in the year 1840. Draw the tree as high and as wide you think it looked over thirty years later before it was cut down.

--Turn to page 82 to see the watercolor and pencil drawing of the Longfellow House that Henry probably made with one of his children. Draw where you live using watercolor and pencil.

--Turn to page 74 to see the framed picture of Henry, Fanny and their two sons, Ernest and Charley. Draw a picture of your family. Use popsicle sticks, cardboard, or construction paper to create a frame that you can decorate. Then you can place your frame around your drawing.

--Turn to page 31 to see children in a third grade classroom in Boston in the year 1892. Draw a picture or take a photograph of a classroom in your school. Write about how it looks different from the picture in the book and how it looks the same.

--Do some research and find a picture of lilacs. Have you ever smelled real lilacs growing? They were Henry's favorite flower. What is your favorite flower? Draw it, paint it, or make it with colored tissue paper.

--Every state has a designated state tree, flower, and bird. What state do you live in? What is your state tree, flower, and bird? Can you draw them?

--Turn to page 92 in *Dear Mr. Longfellow* to read about how Henry wrote near a window that overlooked the Charles River. What is a beautiful scene in nature for you? Perhaps you would like to look out of an imaginary window and see a tree, ocean, river, lake, mountain, field, or a combination of all of these. Do you see a seagull flying over the waves? Do you see a sparrow in a tree branch? Do you see a deer in a field? Consult library books for images. You can use old magazines and cut out pictures. Create your scene. When it is dry, (if you have decided to use paint), glue it to a piece of poster board. Glue long strips of cardboard vertically and horizontally to be the windowpane over the picture. Add on fabric to be the curtain or valance (top cloth). You can use fabric markers if you want to decorate it. Now you have a window! You can look at it the way Henry did—for inspiration—or you can put it in a place where there are no windows. Or you can give it to someone who has to be in a space without windows—until now!

--Turn to page 96. Read about how Ernest, Charley, Alice, and Edith Longfellow loved to play at the beach in Nahant, MA. Take a walk and collect some materials from nature. You can collect smooth rocks, seaweed, seashells, leaves, bark, tops of acorns, etc. Glue everything on and make your own nature collage.

--Turn to page 43 to see a picture of the Wadsworth-Longfellow House in Portland, Maine, where Henry lived when he was a boy. Find the sentence on page 42 in *Dear Mr. Longfellow* that says "Can you imagine Henry looking out one of the windows as a child?"

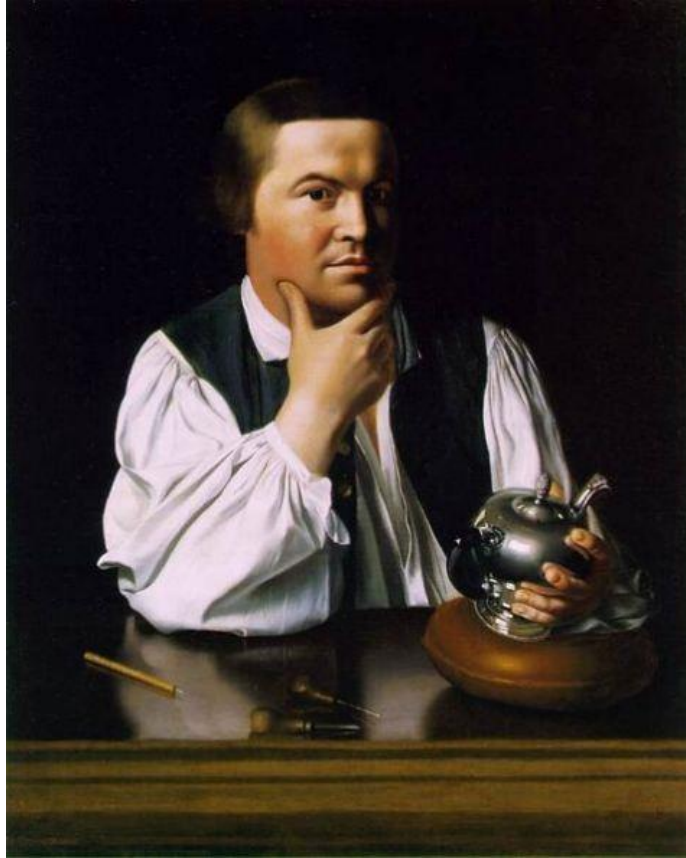
Draw the view you think Henry could see from his window. What about the window of Henry's imagination?

-- It was common for people of Henry's time to sketch the things that they wanted to remember. The daguerreotype or early photograph was not invented until 1837. Turn to Chapter 2 in *Dear Mr. Longfellow* that tells about Henry's travels in Europe as a young man. Henry made sketches as he traveled. Draw Henry watching the circus in France, visiting the outdoor market in Spain, or meeting the affectionate dog in Italy.

--Take a walk. Bring a sketchbook or drawing book with you or take some paper, something to lean on, and a pencil. Stop and draw anything that interests you. Draw with pencil and then color in the figures with colored pencils or crayons. Date your drawing. Revisit the same scene to draw it again—on a sunny day, a cloudy day, a snowy day, etc. Compare your drawings. How do they look the same? How do they look different?

--In Chapter 6 of *Dear Mr. Longfellow* you can read about how the children of Cambridge, MA gave Henry a chair that was made from the wood of the "spreading chestnut tree" from his poem "The Village Blacksmith" for his 72nd birthday. On page 132 you can see a photograph of the chair. How can you take a chair in your classroom and turn it into the special armchair that the children of Cambridge gave to Henry?

--Take a look at the picture of Paul Revere. It was painted by John Singleton Copley and the actual painting is hanging in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, MA. Paul was a silversmith. In the painting, he is holding a teapot. Can you figure out how to make a teapot using recycled materials?



In *Dear Mr. Longfellow*, you can find some verses to Henry's poem, "Paul Revere's Ride."

Here is a book about Paul Revere by Jean Fritz: *And Then What Happened, Paul Revere?*

And here are some books with Henry's poem about Paul Revere:

The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, illustrated by Christopher Bing

Paul Revere's Ride by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, illustrated by Ted Rand

Creative Dramatics Activities:

--In 1842, Henry published a book called *Poems on Slavery*. Read the book *Henry's Freedom Box* by Ellen Levine. Henry Brown was a slave from Virginia who was desperate to be free. He decided to get into a box and have himself shipped to Philadelphia! Henry did not say a single word or make a single sound while he was inside of the box. Sometimes the box was placed upside down or from side to side and Henry had trouble breathing! But Henry's box made it all

the way to Philadelphia by train and steamboat and Henry was free! He took the name "Box" for his middle name all the rest of his life.

See if you can find a big box, with the help of an adult. When you go inside of it, try not to sneeze, cough, clear your throat, or yawn. Imagine that your very life depends upon your absolute silence. What is this experience like for you? Write about it in your journal. Maybe you can write in your journal from inside of the box! (See **Writing Activities.**)

--See if your teacher can get the book, *Jacob Lawrence: the Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman Series of 1938-1940* by Ellen Harkins Wheat from the library. It has copies of the series of paintings that the African-American artist, Jacob Lawrence, made about the escaped slaves Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass. One of the paintings of Harriet shows her lying on the field and the overseer's shoes in front of her. This scene is based on something that really happened to Harriet when she was young. On the plantation in Maryland where she lived as a slave, a male slave began to run away. The overseer threw a lead weight at the slave to stop him from running but it missed him and hit Harriet in the head instead! She fell down and was very, very sick for a long time. Her mother, Old Rit, nursed Harriet back to health. For the rest of her life, Harriet would suddenly fall asleep for no apparent reason. Harriet grew up to lead about 300 slaves from the South to the North to freedom. She was called the "Moses" of her people. Perhaps your teacher can read the book *Harriet and the Promised Land* by Jacob Lawrence to your class. Can you act out a scene from Harriet's life?

--See if your teacher can show you some paintings by Jacob Lawrence of Frederick Douglass. One of the paintings shows little Frederick hiding behind a chair while his master, Hugh, came into the room while Frederick was learning how to read from Sophia, Hugh's wife. It was against the law for slaves to learn how to read or write and Hugh was very angry at his wife for teaching Frederick! Can you act out that scene?

Frederick grew up to become a very famous speaker or orator and he wrote his autobiography which told details about his life, except for how he escaped to freedom. Frederick did not want any of those who had so kindly helped him escape to be in danger and so he kept the details of his escape a secret. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas: An American Slave* is still a famous book today.

--Turn to page 125 of *Dear Mr. Longfellow* and read about how the people of Cambridge, MA protested the cutting down of the "spreading chestnut tree." Do you think they held up signs as they protested? What do you think the signs said? Make the signs and hold them up. Make up a song or chant to help you in your protest. Act out this scene.

--Turn to page 125-133 and read about the special chair that Henry received on his 72nd birthday. How do you think the special birthday chair was delivered to Henry on his birthday?

Did the children of Cambridge, MA accompany the chair when it was brought to Henry's house? Perhaps one of Henry's housemaids answered the door and welcomed everyone inside. Write a play about this and then find some friends to help you act it out.

--Turn to page 133 in *Dear Mr. Longfellow* and read the quote about children sitting in the special chair "to the despair of his housemaids." Write and act out a scene between Henry, the housemaids, and the children of Cambridge who came to Henry's house to sit in the chair.

--Turn to page 45 of *Dear Mr. Longfellow* and read about how Henry told only his sister Anne about the poem he wrote and was excited to submit to the *Portland Gazette*. Read about how Henry was very upset when a friend's father criticized the poem when Henry was visiting. Act out these two scenes.

--Turn to page 54 in *Dear Mr. Longfellow* and read about how Henry was traveling in Italy and put money in a beggar's hat but the beggar became very angry with Henry and dumped out all of the coins!

---Turn to one of the pages in *Dear Mr. Longfellow* that has one of Henry's poems. See if you can learn one of the poems so well that you can recite it from memory.

Geography and Language Activities:

This is a quote from Henry's publisher, James T. Fields. It appears in his wife's book, *Authors and Friends* by Annie Fields, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1896), pp. 17-18:

'I remember how instantaneously in the year 1839 'The Voices of the Night' sped triumphantly on its way. At present his currency in Europe is almost unparalled. Twenty-four publishing houses in England have issued the whole or part of his works. Many of his poems have been translated into Russian or Hebrew. 'Evangaline' has been translated three times into German and 'Hiawatha' has not only gone into nearly all the modern languages, but can now be read in Latin. I have seen translations of all Longfellow's principal works in prose and poetry, in French, Italian, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, Swedish, and Danish. The Emperor of Brazil has himself translated and published 'Robert of Sicily', one of the poems in 'Tales of a Wayside Inn', into his native tongue, and in China they use a fan which has become immensely popular on account of the 'Psalm of Life' being printed on it...Professor Kneeland, who went to the national millennial celebration in Iceland, told me that when he was leaving that faraway land, on the verge almost of the Arctic Circle, the people said to him: 'tell Longfellow that we love him...tell him that Iceland knows him by heart.' To-day there is no disputing the fact that Longfellow is more popular than any other living poet; that his books are more widely circulated, command

greater attention, and bring in more copyright money than those of any other author, not accepting Tennyson, now writing in English verse.”

--Look at a map of the world or a globe. Find the places in the world that are mentioned in the above quote.

--These are the languages Henry could speak, read, and write: Spanish, French, Italian, German, Swedish, Dutch, Danish. He could also read Portuguese, Icelandic, and Anglo-Saxon.

Learn to say “Good Day” in Spanish: Buenos Días Bway-nos dee ahs;

French: Bonjour Bon joor; Italian: Buon Giorno Bwohn joor noh;

German: Guten Tag Gooten Tag

--Turn to page 116 in *Dear Mr. Longfellow* and find the part that says Charley Longfellow traveled to China, India, and Japan. Find these places on a map or globe.

--Turn to page 119 in *Dear Mr. Longfellow* and read about how Henry met Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle. Write about what it must have been like for Henry to meet her in the castle. Write about what it must have been like for Henry to greet readers of his books who couldn't wait to shake his hand.

--Queen Elizabeth II is queen of England today. She was Queen Victoria's great-great granddaughter!

--Henry grew up in Portland, Maine. Visit <http://hwlongfellow.org/>, a website coordinated by the Maine Historical Society, to learn about the house Henry lived in as a child, the Wadsworth-Longfellow House.

--Henry lived his entire adult life in Cambridge, MA. Visit www.nps.gov/long/index.htm, a website coordinated through the National Park Service, to learn about the house Henry lived in as an adult with his own children, the Longfellow House-Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site.

--On page 178 of *Dear Mr. Longfellow*, the website for the exhibition curated by Christoph Irmischer entitled *Public Poet, Private Man: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow at 200*, is mentioned.

Explore it and see what you can find out about Henry's life!

<http://hcl.harvard.edu/libraries/houghton/exhibits/longfellow/>.

History Activities:

--Look at a map and find the Native American names of cities, towns, rivers, and lakes. Make a list. Henry mentions the "Dakotahs" in his poem, "The Song of Hiawatha." Can you find the states North Dakota and South Dakota on a map of the United States?

The Homestead Act was passed by Congress in 1862 to entice people to settle the West by offering families one hundred and sixty acres of land if they would live on it and farm it for five years. It was difficult to cross the varied terrain in all kinds of weather, but determined pioneers traveled along The Oregon Trail by horse and covered wagon to build a new life on the Great Plains. Missionaries who were hopeful of converting those they encountered to a belief in the Bible traveled out West too. For many people, the settling of the West was viewed as a religious act—it was thought to be God's will or "manifest destiny" that America expand as far as the Pacific Ocean. In order to make room for more settlers, Native Americans who lived in this vast area were forced to move to designated places called reservations. Indian tribes fought to hold onto their land, but in the end, it was taken from them.

Here are some more Native American names: Cheyanne; Nebraska; Monongehela; Oklahoma; Sioux Falls; Lake Huron; Saginaw; Massachusetts.

Can you find them on a map of the United States? Can you find other Native American names?

--Read the book *The Scrambled States of America* by Laurie Keller. At the end of the book, notice the map of the United States and see the date that each state joined the Union. At the time of Henry's death, there were 38 states in the Union. What state do you live in? When did it join the Union?

--Often, street names tell stories. For example, there is a street in Cambridge, MA near Brattle Street called Craigie Street. It is named for the Widow Craigie's husband, General Andrew Craigie. What is the name of the street that you live on? What is the name of the street where your school is located? Can you research the story behind the name? If there is a historical society in your area, you could contact them or you could inquire about the street name at the public library.

Can you find a letter in *Dear Mr. Longfellow* that Henry received from someone who lived on Craigie Street?

--Turn to pages 17-19 in *Dear Mr. Longfellow* and read the poem "The Village Blacksmith." Find the verse that says "And children coming home from school/look in through the open door."

How would the children looking "in through the open door" have been dressed? People dressed quite differently than today. Little boys wore long hair and dresses until they were

about five years old and then they “graduated” into knee pants or knickers. Girls wore long dresses with pantalettes underneath. Women wore long dresses and petticoats with tight corsets to make their waists look small. The corsets pulled their chests in but made it hard for them to breathe or move comfortably. Bustles were attached to their dresses at the back. Women carried delicate parasols to use in sunny weather and wore long gloves, carried fans and wore high heels. Men wore top hats, leaned on canes and wore gloves too. Boys wore top hats like their fathers. Girls wore bonnets trimmed with lace, ribbon or flowers like their mothers.

See the book *The Way We Wore: Fashion Illustrations of Children's Wear 1870-1970* by Linda Martin.

--Since the sewing machine had been invented in 1846, by the 1880's many factories assembled clothes as well as leather shoes. The hand-powered washing machine was invented in 1860 but it usually took an entire day to do the washing and another full day to do the ironing. Perhaps you have heard the song “This is the way we wash our clothes, wash our clothes, wash our clothes. This the way we wash our clothes so early Monday morning. This is the way we iron our clothes, iron our clothes, iron our clothes. This is the way we iron our clothes so early Tuesday morning...” Monday was washing day and Tuesday was ironing day!

--People had to shop for food very often since there were no preservatives, refrigerators, or freezers to keep food fresh. There were ice boxes, however, and heavy blocks of ice and milk in glass bottles were delivered daily in horse drawn carts. Many houses had barns for horses the way that cars are parked in garages today. Do you live in an old house or know someone who lives in an old house? Find out how old the house actually is and take a good look at the garage. Do you think it could have been a barn where horses once lived? Draw the scene.

--Around the country, towns sprang up along the tracks of the transcontinental railroad that was completed in 1869. The loud hissing and whistling of the powerful steam locomotive or “iron horse” became familiar sounds. Millions of immigrants traveled to America from the 1880's to the 1920's in search of jobs and freedom from oppression. They came in big ships from Germany, Italy, Ireland, Hungary, Poland, Russia, Greece, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and other countries too. People still come to America for these reasons today, although they often travel by airplane and come from many more places.

Henry's great-grandfather had been a teacher and his great-great-great grandfather had been a blacksmith, like the character in his famous poem. Both sets of grandparents came to America from England in the 1600's. Four descendants on his mother's side traveled on the Mayflower with the other Pilgrims. Henry published a poem in 1858 about the Pilgrims called “The Courtship of Miles Standish”. Perhaps he was thinking of his distant relatives when he wrote it.

Where did members of your family live before they came to America? Interview an elderly family member and find out! Ask about what they wore, what they studied in school, what chores they did, what they ate, and what they did for fun. See if they can show you an old photo. Ask if they can recall any poem of Henry's that they learned to recite as a child! You can also visit elderly residents in a nursing home or assisted living facility to interview the residents. Write up their responses in your class magazine! (See **Writing Activities.**)

Math Activities:

--Turn to page 27 of *Dear Mr. Longfellow*. Find the section where it says that a little boy who visited Henry brought him two cents so Henry could buy his own copy of *Jack the Giant Killer*. This was a version of *Jack and the Beanstalk*.

Find out how much two cents in 1882 would be the equivalent of today.

--Turn to the front cover of *Dear Mr. Longfellow*. Notice the postcard that says one cent. What would one cent in 1880 be the equivalent of today? How much does it cost to send a postcard today? How much does it cost to send a letter in the mail?

--Turn to page 133 to read about how the children who lived during Henry's lifetime contributed dimes so that the special chair made from the wood of the "spreading chestnut tree" could be built in time for Henry's birthday in 1879. Turn to page 163-166 to read about how children contributed their dimes to help build the memorials for Henry after his death. Research how much a dime was worth in 1879. How much was a dime worth in 1914, the year that the Longfellow Memorial Monument was unveiled?

--Turn to page 166 to read about how adults contributed one dollar towards the building of the Longfellow Memorial Monument for Henry in Cambridge, MA in the years 1882 until the monument was unveiled in 1914. How much was the dollar worth in the year 1914? What would be the equivalent today?

--On page 173 of *Dear Mr. Longfellow*, it says that the Longfellow School in Bozeman, Montana raised \$473 towards the renovation of the Wadsworth-Longfellow House in 2000. How much would \$473 in 2000 be worth today? Write down your ideas about how you think the school raised this money. Contact the school to see if you were right.

--Turn to page 65 to read that Fanny's father, Nathan Appleton, purchased Craigie House for Fanny and Henry as a wedding present, after the Widow Craigie died. He paid \$10,000 for it in the year 1843. (reference: Charles C. Calhoun, *Longfellow: a Rediscovered Life*, Boston: Beacon Press, 2004, p. 167.) What would that amount be equivalent to today?

--Here are some examples of how much money Henry made from his poetry:

In 1839, his book, *Voices of the Night*, was published. It contained poems such as “A Psalm of Life” and “Footsteps of Angels.” Can you find references to these poems in *Dear Mr. Longfellow*?

The price of *Voices of the Night* was 75 cents--about \$12 today.

Between the years 1845 and 1850, Henry made \$2,000 each year from his writing. What would that amount be today?

In 1874, he made \$3,000 from the sale of a single poem called “The Hanging of the Crane” that was printed in the newspaper called the *New York Ledger*. How much would that amount be the equivalent of today? (all references from Christoph Irmscher's *Longfellow Redux*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006)

Music Activities:

--Henry played the flute. Can you make your own musical instrument? Here are some books to help you:

Kids Can Jumbo Book of Music by Deborah Dunleavy, illustrated by Louise Phillips; *Making Music* by Ann Sayre Wiseman and John Langstaff; *Plunk and Scrape* by Sally Hewitt, photography by Peter Millard; *Those Amazing Musical Instruments* by Genevieve Helsby with Marin Alsop as your Guide.

--When Henry was a boy in Portland, Maine growing up near the sea, he probably heard sailors speaking to each other. Fresh fruit and vegetables were hard to come by aboard a ship.

Hardtack was a dry, hard biscuit. **Salt horse** referred to salted beef. **Limey** was a word the American sailors called the British sailors because they ate so many limes. British law in 1845 said that sailors had to receive lime juice every ten days at sea. The vitamin C in the limes prevented the sailors from getting scurvy, a disease of swollen, bleeding gums.

There were many jobs to do aboard ship and the sailors' songs helped to make the work easier. Ropes from anchors had to be secured onto posts, water that had landed in the ship had to be pumped out, and other jobs had to get done too.

Here is a verse and the chorus of a song that would have been sung by English and American sailors to help them do these jobs for the last time at the end of a voyage, just before they got paid. “Her” refers to the ship; “Johnnie” refers to a sailor; “grub” refers to the food on board. Perhaps Henry heard sailors sing this song.

“Oh, the times are hard and the wages low—
Leave her Johnnie, leave her!”

And now ashore again we'll go—
It's time for us to leave her?

The grub was bad, the voyage long—
Leave her, Johnnie, leave her!

The seas were high, the gales were strong—
It's time for us to leave her. ...

(from *A Book of Shanties* compiled by C. Fox Smith, Methuen and Co. Ltd. , London, 1927, p.75)

Science Activities:

--Henry loved flowers. You can plant some flower seeds in soil in a flowerpot or you can make your own flowerpot from a milk carton. Another idea is to plant an avocado pit after you have finished the avocado. Poke toothpicks in the bottom of the pit so it can touch the top of the water in a cup but not fall in. When it begins to grow roots, you can plant it in soil and water it. If you are patient, it will start to grow! Write and draw about how it grows in your journal. (See **Writing Activities.**)

--Do some research about the gifts that we get from trees. Trees deeply affect our lives. They offer us oxygen; shade; fruits, nuts, and sap to eat; wood to make instruments, furniture, and homes; places for animals to live; and their roots help anchor the earth so we can walk on sturdy ground. The pencils and paper you use in school are made from trees!

Make a list of everything you can think of that is made from wood.

--You can plant a tree! Write about how it grows in your journal.

--The famous poem that Henry wrote about the "spreading chestnut tree" was about a horse-chestnut tree. Horse chestnuts are poisonous for people to eat but chestnuts from the American chestnut tree have been used for many years to cook with. These chestnuts can be ground into flour or boiled and roasted. Perhaps your teacher could get chestnuts from the supermarket at Thanksgiving time and you can see what they taste like when they are boiled until they are soft enough to eat.

--If you live in the northeastern United States, in the autumn you can collect pine cones that drop to the ground from pine trees, acorns that drop to the ground from oak trees and chestnuts that drop to the ground from chestnut trees. You can crack them open using a nut cracker. What do they look like inside? You can draw them in your sketch book.

--Turn to page 31 in *Dear Mr. Longfellow* and take a look at the photograph of the children in a Boston third grade classroom in 1892. Page 30 says "Some of the children in the photograph have slates in front of them."

Their slates were made from a kind of rock. A blackboard is made from this kind of rock. Chalk comes from the earth too—it is made from a mineral called calcium carbonate. You can read about rocks and minerals. Here is a book title: *Eyewitness Rocks and Minerals* by Dr. R. F. Symes and the staff of the National History Museum, London.

--You could also visit a museum like the Carnegie Museum of Natural History in Pittsburgh, PA that has a special rock and mineral section.

--The telephone was invented in 1877 and the electric light bulb followed in 1879 but these were not fully developed or available for most Americans until the 1900's. In the meantime, families used lamps lighted by candles, gas, or kerosene and they wrote letters to people in order to communicate with them.

Read about the lives of inventors. Thomas Alva Edison invented the light bulb and Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone. You can read about Benjamin Franklin who lived during Henry's grandfather's time. Franklin invented bi-focals, the Franklin stove, lightning rod, and many other inventions. He started the first public library in the country!

George Washington Carver was an African-American who was born a slave. He created so many things from peanuts like shampoo, glue, paint, and hand lotion. Find out more from the book *George Washington Carver: Peanut Wizard* by Laura Driscoll, illustrated by Jill Weber.

Here are some more books about inventors:

Always Inventing: A Photobiography of Alexander Graham Bell by Tom L. Matthews; *Benjamin Franklin: An American Genius—His Life and Ideas with 21 Activities* by Brandon Marie Miller; *Girls Think of Everything: Stories of Ingenious Inventions by Women* by Catherine Thimmesh, illustrated by Melissa Sweet; *Hooray for Inventors* by Marcia Williams; *Thomas Edison for Kids: His Life and Ideas* by Laurie Carlson ; *What Color is My World? : The Lost History of African-American Inventors* by Kareen Abdul Jabbar and Raymond Obstfeld, illustrated by Ben Boos and A. G. Ford.

Can you make up an invention? What is it called? What does it do? How does it work? What does it look like?

Writing Activities:

Celebrate Henry's Birthday! Here are some things you can do:

--Type up a program of some of Henry's poems you plan to read aloud. Give a copy to guests who come to your school to listen.

--Bake a birthday cake with the help of an adult. Write down the ingredients so you can remember how the cake was made and you can put it in your scrapbook.

--Write up a sketch or short biography about Henry's life.

--Find your favorite letter in *Dear Mr. Longfellow* that was written to Henry by a child. Pretend you are Henry and write a response to the letter.

--Write a poem in honor of Henry's life. Turn to page 157 in *Dear Mr. Longfellow* to read some verses of the poem ten year old Bessie Mifflin wrote in honor of Henry's birthday in 1882. Illustrate your poem.

--Write your own poem about the act of writing. Here is a poem Henry wrote called "The Poet and His Songs." [From *The Poetical Works of Longfellow*, with a new introduction by George Monteiro, based on the original Cambridge Edition of 1893 prepared by Horace E. Scudder, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1975, pp. 348-349.]

As the birds come in the Spring,
We know not from where;
As the stars come at evening
From depths of the air;

As the rain comes from the cloud
And the brook from the ground;
As suddenly, low or loud,
Out of silence, a sound;

As the grape comes to the vine,
The fruit to the tree;
As the wind comes to the pine,
And the tide to the sea;

As come the white sails of ships
O'er the ocean's verge;
As comes the smile to the lips,
The foam to the surge;

So come to the Poet his songs
All hitherward blown
From the misty realm that belongs
To the vast Unknown.

His, and not his, are the lays
He sings and their fame
Is his, and not his; and the praise
And the pride of a name.

For voices pursue him by day,
And haunt him by night,
And he listens, and needs must obey
When the Angel says, "Write!"

--Children loved to receive Henry's autograph. You can see Henry's autograph on the bottom of the photograph on page 12 of *Dear Mr. Longfellow*.

--Turn to page 27 of *Dear Mr. Longfellow* and find the part where it says that a little boy brought two cents to Henry so he could buy his own copy of *Jack the Giant Killer*. This is another version of the English tale *Jack and the Beanstalk*. Turn to page 73 and read Fanny Longfellow's version of this story that she told Charley and Ernest when they were very small.

Here is a version of *Jack and the Beanstalk* that you can find in the library: *Kate and the Beanstalk* by Mary Pope Osborne, illustrated by Giselle Potter.

Write your own version of *Jack and the Beanstalk* and illustrate it.

--In *Dear Mr. Longfellow*, there are many letters and snippets of letters. There were no phones or computers in Henry's lifetime. People communicated by writing letters and visiting and mail was delivered about three times a day! Sad news, such as the announcement of the death of someone was marked by an envelope lined in black.

Write a letter to someone that you care about. Tell the person about what is happening in your life and ask questions about the other person's life. You can write to wish the person a happy birthday and make your own birthday card! Write out his or her address on an envelope as well as your address in the upper left-hand corner. If your news is happy, then you can decorate the envelope to let the person know that inside there is the promise of happy news. Then you can attach a stamp and mail your letter.

Perhaps you would like to write a letter to President Obama!

Here is a book of letters children have written to him: *Thanks and Have Fun Running the Country: Kids Letters to President Obama* edited by Jory John.

--Turn to page 80 of *Dear Mr. Longfellow* where it says that President Abraham Lincoln was moved to tears after hearing Henry's poem, "The Building of the Ship" read aloud.

Here is a book to read about Abraham Lincoln: *Lincoln: a Photobiography* by Russell Freedman.

On October 15, 1860, 11 year old Grace Bedell from Westfield Chatauque County, New York, wrote to Lincoln and suggested that he grow a beard because his face looked too skinny. She thought a beard would help him look better and help him get elected. Lincoln listened to Grace and grew a beard. He did become president. Perhaps the beard helped him get elected!

Read Grace Bedell's letter in *Young People's Letters to the President* by Judith E. Greenberg, (New York: Franklin Watts, 1998), pp.9-10.

Perhaps you would like to write a letter to a fairytale character! Here are some books to read to give you some ideas:

Dear Peter Rabbit by Alma Flor Ada, illustrated by Leslie Tryon; *The Jolly Postman : Other People's Letters* by Janet and Allan Ahlberg; *Yours Truly, Goldilocks* by Alma Flor Ada, illustrated by Leslie Tryan.

--On page 47 of *Dear Mr. Longfellow* it says that Henry's father wanted him to be a lawyer but Henry wanted to be a writer. He wrote, in a letter to his father, "*...the fact is—and I will not disguise it in the least, for I think I ought not, --the fact is, I most eagerly aspire after future eminence in literature, my whole soul burns most ardently after It, and every earthly thought centers on it...*"

Write a letter to someone about something you want very much to do with your life or write about something that matters very much to you and that you care deeply about.

--Henry kept a journal all of his life. In *Dear Mr. Longfellow*, on pages 78, 87, 97, 99, 128, and 154, you can read some of his entries.

It was quite common for people to keep diaries or journals during Henry's lifetime. The entries were private. Today, many people write computer blogs that are meant for others to read.

Try keeping a journal of your own. Get a notebook just for this purpose. You can decorate the cover of it with stickers or fabric that is glued on. Write about what you are wearing, how you are feeling, what you are doing, and where you are going. You can write about your family, your friends, and other people you spend time with. You can write about your wishes and dreams. You can describe books that you are reading that are meaningful to you. Let your journal be a record of your life. Remember to date each entry so that you can go back in time and know what your days were like.

--Make your own autograph album. You can use a small notebook or gather little sheets of paper together and use cardboard to be the front and back covers. You can decorate the covers by using colored pencils, markers, and or stickers.

Here is a book of autograph rhymes: *Yours Till Banana Splits: 201 Autograph Rhymes* compiled by Joanna Cole and Stephanie Calmanson, illustrated by Alan Tiegreen.

You can ask people you know to sign their names inside of your autograph album and write a short message. People still collect autographs today, especially from people who are thought to be famous. Have you ever gotten someone's autograph? Write about this experience in your journal!

--People who lived in Henry's time wrote with quill pens. They dipped the point of a feather into a container of ink called an inkwell. If you can, in the autumn, collect some feathers that have fallen to the ground from flying geese overhead. You can ask an adult to sharpen the points of the feathers. Then you can dip the points of the feathers into black paint and try writing with them.

--Can you find two pictures of Henry in *Dear Mr. Longfellow* holding a quill pen? Write about what you think he was writing.

--Take a look at Nannie Gould's letter to Henry on pages 13, 14, and 15. Write about what you think she meant when she wrote: "I hope you get as nice a present this year as you did the last."

-- You can create your own magazine with your friends and classmates! Henry's daughters, Edith and Annie, created their own magazine, "The Secret", along with some friends they went to school with. One story, about the Longfellow family pet, Trap, was by ten year old Annie Longfellow. Turn to pages 107 and 109 in *Dear Mr. Longfellow* to read the story and turn to page 108 to see a photograph of Henry with Trap.

You can focus on pets in your magazine. You can include stories, photographs and interviews with your friends about their pets. Perhaps you can include a section with letters from pets! A book to read about a pet who writes to his owner is *Dear Mr. Larue: Letters from Obedience School* by Mark Teague. If Trap could have written a letter to Henry, what do you think the letter would have said? Write the letter.

--Write a story about how Trap got his name.

--On page 153 of *Dear Mr. Longfellow*, it says that Henry saved the programs of birthday celebrations held in his honor and put them into a special scrapbook. Your class can create a special scrapbook of memories of your year together. You can include photographs, samples of student artwork and writing, and other creations too.

Please visit www.storypearls.com to learn more about Sydelle Pearl and her books.