

Longfellow and Dickens: The Story of a Trans-Atlantic Friendship Lesson Plan

A resource developed through the *Longfellow and the Forging of American Identity* program

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Suggested Grade Level: 10-12

Subject Area: Humanities: English

Learning Results:

English Language Arts:

Process of Reading: A4, A5

Literature and Culture: B3, B4

Informational Texts: D5

Stylistics and Rhetorical Aspects of Writing: G1

Research-Related Writing: H4, H5, H6, H7

Time Required:

2-3 Class periods per section (Nine sections)

You may choose to do some or all of the sections.

Materials and Resources Required:

All of the following documents are included in this lesson packet:

- Extensive Document Based Questions for Students.
- Useful resources for learning more about Charles Dickens
- Performance Indicators aligned with Maine Learning Results

The following manuscript can be downloaded from the lesson plan section of www.mainememory.net (.pdf version)

- The full text of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana's manuscript, which documents the friendship between Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Charles Dickens.

Preparation Required/Preliminary Discussion:

- Show students how to navigate www.mainememory.net, especially how to locate specific Longfellow poems.
- The extensive DBQ (Document Based Questions) for students require extensive manuscript reading that is appropriate for students in grades 10 - 12.

Learning Objectives:

Students will use a variety of documents to explore the relationship between Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Charles Dickens. Students will make connections between various texts, and put the friendship between the two men into a societal and historical context.

Lesson Outline:

- Student work is divided into sections. Each section is designated in bold to suggest the content of the manuscript and to focus on skills which align with the Maine Learning Results. Examples of contents and goals include:
 - **Visual Literacy**
 - **Reading for Information,**
 - **Making Inferences**
 - **Slavery, Spittoons and Senators**
 - **Longfellow's Visit to Dickens in London**
 - **About Slavery**
 - **Further Indicators of Friendship and Influence**
 - **Charles Dickens Returns to America**
 - **Longfellow Visits Gad's Hill.**
- You may want to assign a limited number of questions to some classes.
- Assign selected sections for homework or pair students to complete the questions as a long- term assignment.

Reading Scoring Guide: for Reading Performance

<u>Exemplary</u>	<u>Discerning</u>	<u>Thoughtful</u>	<u>Literal</u>	<u>Limited</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> insightful masters connections to other texts discerning perceptive constructs meaning reflects on meaning of text may resist ideological position of the author postulates rewriting text to provide cultural or historical accuracy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> discerning thorough perceptive less insight regarding complexities and nuances of text challenges the text makes assumptions from subtle clues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> constructs plausible and thoughtful interpretation of the text usually distinguishes between literal and figurative meanings demonstrates understanding of the whole work may be distracted by contradictions and or ambiguities of the text rarely takes risks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> constructs plausible but superficial meaning from the text shows little tolerance for textual difficulties inclined to ignore challenges of the text experiences reading text as isolated or unconnected to other texts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> constructs partial meaning from the text seldom asks meaningful questions about the text may abandon or stop reading text
6	5	4	3	2

Grade: 10-12

Student Name _____

Score _____

Comments (Generally, the 4 score meets the standard. A score of less than 2 is not within the range for grades 10-12 and has not been included on this rubric with its descriptors which would have indicated MINIMAL ability to read. The reader who scores a 1 is mainly able to or not able to decode rather than able to construct meaning.)

INTRODUCTION

All of the questions which follow are based on the transcript of the manuscript written by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow **Dana**. Mr. Dana did extensive research about the famous American poet and his friendship with the famous English Novelist. If you wanted to do similar intensive research, you could visit the archives of the Craigie House Museum in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and you could read all of the books listed in the Resources Section and you could visit the websites listed. However, it may prove to be more useful to read Mr. Dana's manuscript which is provided here in its entirety. Then you can answer the questions which follow. You will learn about Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's wonderful friendship with Charles Dickens. It is an exciting and interesting story. They lived in a time when travel by steamship, by train and by other forms of public transportation was challenging. They also lived in a time when letter writing was an art and the way they communicated. When you read Mr. Dana's manuscript you will find some interesting visuals of both writers and some visuals of programs and sketches of the interior of houses, especially dining rooms. These are ways to see how each writer valued the other and how American audiences valued Charles Dickens. England's Queen Victoria was a fan of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Your guided reading and research questions will focus on Longfellow and Dickens, but you will learn about fashion, literary circles, copyright issues, food, reading habits and many more facets of this stage of Victorian life. One of the most interesting aspects of the Longfellow Dickens friendship is how each man influenced the other man's writing, especially regarding slavery in America.

DIRECTIONS

1. Before you begin to answer the questions and do the suggested work that follows, check with your teacher to be certain how many of these questions you need to complete. Also check with your teacher about the formatting for your presentation of your research.
2. Before you begin your work it would be useful to peruse this entire manuscript. By previewing the length and visuals, you will have a sense of the comprehensive nature of Mr. Dana's work. He does not include the usual footnotes, but at the end of this manuscript he explains where and what his resources were.

Visual Literacy

Some people think that the Thompson portrait of Longfellow and the Alexander portrait of Dickens make Longfellow and Dickens look similar. Locate those 1842 portraits at the beginning of the Dana manuscript and study them before you do the following.

1. Longfellow's brother wrote him a note in 1842. What are three of his observations about the portraits?
2. Dickens wrote his friend Forster a note in 1842. What is the tone of Dickens' words?
3. What mode of transportation did Dickens use when he wrote these words?
4. What was Mr. Dickens attitude about Mr. Alexander leaving?
5. In your opinion how was Dickens' attitude the same as celebrity attitudes today?
6. When Longfellow's brother wrote, "stealing ships", what do you think he meant? Explain why he would make such a reference.
7. Do you agree with the comment about the Cephas G. Thompson portrait of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow looking like Charles Dickens?

Reading for Information

The transatlantic friendship between Dickens and Longfellow is well documented by the 1943 publication of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana's presentation to the Cambridge Historical Society. Continue reading and studying and researching this document to find evidence of that friendship. Answer as many of the questions which follow as your teacher believes will be helpful.

1. When did the friendship between Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Charles Dickens begin and how did trans-Atlantic travel make it possible for their friendship to strengthen?
2. How many visits and return visits happened? What did these two men have in common?
3. Mr. Dana claims that their friendship made a contribution to the relationship between England and America. This is an original thesis. Quote Mr. Dana. As you continue researching the document, look for examples to support Mr. Dana's thesis. When you find those examples record and document them. (You will need to follow your teacher's direction especially if you are gathering information in order to write a persuasive essay.)
4. When did Charles Dickens become famous in America?
5. What did Longfellow and his friends like to do?
6. Who were some of Professor Longfellow's friends and what did they do to imitate the famous Pickwick Club?
7. You may not have read the Pickwick Papers but you can use your ability to reason to answer the following questions. Letter writing was a popular form of communication. In one of his letters Charles Sumner uses the word "vidder." What is its modern equivalent? Find an example of hyperbole in that same letter. Explain why Sumner was laughing.
8. Some critics thought Dickens' fame might fade but he continued to achieve success. What did he publish next? How did the Five of Clubs react?
9. Two American cities planned elaborate events for Charles Dickens' visit to America in 1842. What and who made it possible for Henry Wadsworth Longfellow to be one of the first Americans to greet Charles Dickens in person?
10. On January 22, 1842 the S.S. Britannia sailed into Boston Harbor. We know that Longfellow and his friends were excited. How did Dickens feel?
11. Interpret the term "Alexandering" Dickens for a less able reader.
12. Who was Dexter and what did he do?
13. Box seats are sometimes reserved for celebrities. Dickens had box seats at the Tremont Theatre's production of Boz. What was Dickens compelled to do?
14. What does phrenologic mean?
15. Enjoy the descriptions of that evening at the theatre and the songs and the doggerel that were written for and about that occasion. Who were the "authorlings?"
16. What was Dickens' impression of Longfellow? How did Longfellow describe Dickens?

Making Inferences

Mr. Dana demonstrates that there "Never was Any Division but the Atlantic Between (Them) Longfellow and Dickens." Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's grandfather had helped build the fortifications that enabled George Washington to drive the British out of Boston. Longfellow knew the stories about Americans fighting against the British in the Revolutionary War. As you read about the historic sites and other places where Longfellow took Dickens on their long Sunday morning walk, make a map that includes each specific location they visited. Draw and label important stops/places they visited.

1. What did they see and hear on that day?
2. On February 1, 1842 the famous Dickens Dinner was held at Papanti's Hall. It was a grand celebration with many tributes by thirty orators. Sum up Dickens' reply.
3. Mr. Dana suggests that Dickens made a reference to one of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poems. What was the reference? Read the poem. (It can be found@ this site.) Do you agree with Mr. Dana that Dickens did refer to Longfellow's poem? Explain.
4. Dickens breakfasts with Longfellow at the Craigie House in Cambridge, Massachusetts. (This is the house that Longfellow would later own and which is now a museum house which you can visit.) Later they visit the Harvard College library and they meet other distinguished Americans. How did Richard Henry Dana describe Dickens? (Do you think Richard Henry Dana is related to our author?)
5. Cite anecdotal evidence from Felton that Americans other than the distinguished were eager to meet Charles Dickens.
6. Locate Dickens' invitation to Longfellow to visit him in London. Can you decipher Dickens' handwriting? If you can't, there's a transcription that follows it. How did Longfellow respond to the invitation?
7. Dickens calls Longfellow a "frank, accomplished man as well as a fine writer." What does Dickens give his friend John Forster?

Slavery, Spittoons and Senators

1. Dickens continued his travels in America. He gathered materials for what would become his chapter on slavery. Dickens' famous or infamous book was titled American Notes. It was controversial in America.
2. When Dickens traveled into the Deep South, what did he write about Boston?
3. Longfellow wrote a letter to his brother, Alexander on April 26, 1842. He refers to Boz and gives a definition of Boz. What is that definition? What is his opinion of Boz?

Longfellow's Visit to Dickens in London

1. On July 31, 1842 Dickens, who is home in London, writes to two of his American friends. He wrote to Sumner and Felton and he refers to Longfellow. Meanwhile, Longfellow writes to Sumner. What is "the water cure?"
2. Dickens wrote Longfellow a long letter dated September 28, 1842. Where was Dickens when he wrote the letter? What was he worried about? What was his address in London?
3. Dickens' American Notes would be published and reviewed in America soon. Many Americans became angry with Charles Dickens. Did Dickens anticipate their anger? How do you know?
4. Record Dickens' complimentary closing.
5. Longfellow wrote a diary entry on Monday, October 3rd. Does the content of the diary entry support Dickens' description of Longfellow as being frank? Explain.
6. What did Dickens keep as a pet?
7. What kinds of people did Charles Dickens invite to his dinners to meet his friend Longfellow, the famous American poet?
8. Longfellow had taken Dickens to see the rough sailors on the water front in Boston. Where did Dickens take Longfellow? How did this experience serve Dickens regarding reforms in England?
9. When he was visiting America, Longfellow walked Dickens around famous sites of the American Revolution. (George Washington had been quartered in the same Craigie House where Longfellow lived.) What sites did Dickens show Longfellow?
10. What parting gift did Dickens give Longfellow?
11. What do you think Longfellow meant when he said, "he has a grand chapter on slavery?"
12. On October 17, Dickens wrote a letter of introduction to Edward Maxon, a British publisher. What did he say to commend Longfellow?
13. Study a map of England. Reluctant for Longfellow to depart, Dickens travels with him as far as Bath before they say farewell. Then Longfellow boarded the largest ship in the world, which was docked in Bristol.
14. What did Longfellow bring with him? How long did he stay in his cabin? What did he write? According to Mr. Dana, what influenced Longfellow to write these particular poems?

About Slavery

1. Read Charles Dickens' chapter on slavery from his American Notes and then read Longfellow's slavery poems. What evidence supports Mr. Dana's theory that Charles Dickens influenced Longfellow's slavery poems?
2. Who published and republished Dickens' American Notes? How many copies of this book may have been sold?
3. Charles Sumner was a close friend of Longfellow's. He was also influenced by Mr. Dickens' chapter on slavery. Who was Sumner in relation President Lincoln?

Further Indications of Friendship and Influence

1. Longfellow kept a framed portrait of Dickens on a shelf on his bookcase. He wrote to Dickens and told him "he was trying to do something in verse for the cause of the Negro slaves in his Poems on Slavery." Charles Dickens responds from Devonshire Terrace in a letter dated December 29, 1842. In his letter Dickens writes, "(American) Notes had an enormous sale." He goes on to say, "I quite agree with you that we shall never live to see the passing of an International law. I have always held the same opinion. But we may sow the seed, and leave the gathering of the fruit to others."
2. What does Dickens say about Longfellow's slavery poems? What does Dickens say about Everett? Finally, how does Dickens sign his letter?
3. Longfellow presented Dickens with a copy of his Ballads and Other Poems. What evidence suggests Longfellow influenced Dickens' Martin Chuzzlewit?
4. There is further evidence of Longfellow's continued influence on Charles Dickens. What happened in the late 1840's to demonstrate that Dickens continued to be influenced by Longfellow? What evidence suggests that Longfellow possibly influenced Charles Dickens' Great Expectations?

Charles Dickens Returns to America

1. Longfellow remains a devoted Dickens fan and he writes journal entries about Dickens' novels. When did Dickens finally return to America? What was the purpose of his visit? What evidence suggests his popularity?
2. Charles Dickens spent Thanksgiving Day with Longfellow and his family who lived in Craigie House. Longfellow entertained Dickens with stories about "old letters written by a young girl." What evidence suggests that Dickens was impressed by this story?
3. Dickens writes a letter to his son two days after his Thanksgiving visit with Longfellow. He writes that he cannot get a scene out of his imagination. What does he mean?
4. During the quarter century what had Dickens and Longfellow done to highlight the lives of the poor and oppressed? What else did they have in common?
5. Many people describe Dickens' readings as triumphant - even as a "STAR SHOWER"...What did "laughing Allegra" who was only 12 years old at that time think of Dickens' reading?
6. Dickens was fond of gruesome stories. Longfellow tells him about a murder of a Harvard professor. Dickens wants to see the furnace at the Harvard Medical School where Professor Webster had disposed of the remains of his victim. Longfellow shares a personal anecdote about Webster. Dickens writes about this in a letter to Wilkie Collins in January 1868. What anecdote does he share? (P.S. You can read about the Webster case on line.)
7. Dickens calls Boston "his warm native place." What does he mean?

Longfellow Visits Gad's Hill

1. Longfellow visited Queen Victoria on the morning of July 14, 1868. Later that day he visited Charles Dickens. What did Queen Victoria tell Longfellow?
2. The following questions will guarantee you a place in trivia history. What did Annie Longfellow write in her description of Dickens' home? How did Charlie Dickens, age three, greet his grandfather?
3. Many details about the Longfellow's visit with Charles Dickens are included in Mr. Dana's manuscript. Read them to discover what a generous host Charles Dickens was. You will also discover how excited the Longfellows were about their visit. Dickens writes a letter to Mr. Fields on July 7th. Quote what he says about peoples' respect for Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.
4. What did Longfellow do for a hansom cab?
5. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana concludes his report by summing up how Longfellow and Dickens influenced each other. Quote what Dana says about Dickens' humor and Longfellow's nature. How did they influence each other?
6. According to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, how did he and the rest of America feel when Charles Dickens died on June 9, 1870?

Useful Resources for Learning More About Charles Dickens

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Archives of the Longfellow National Historic Site. 105 Brattle Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 02138.

Atterbury, Paul and Suzanne Fagence Cooper. *Victorians At Home and Abroad*. London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 2001.

Callow, Simon. *Dickens' Christmas: A Victorian Celebration*. New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 2003.

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<<http://www.familyrecords.gov.uk/frc/exhibitions/dickens1.htm>>.

Cooper, Suzanne Fagence. *The Victorian Woman*. London: V. A. Publications, 2001.

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<<http://www.fidnet.com/~dap1955/dickens/>>.

Perdue, David. "Dickens' Dream." *David Perdue's Charles Dickens Page*. 2006.
<<http://www.fidnet.com/~dap1955/dickens/buss.html>>.

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<<http://www.fidnet.com/~dap1955/dickens/america.html>>.

Pool, Daniel. *What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew - From Fox Hunting to Whist - the Facts of Daily Life in Nineteenth-Century England*. New York: Touchstone Book, 1994.

Wilson, A. N. *The Victorians*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003.