

THE SONG  
OF  
HIAWATHA

*An Epic Poem*

*by*

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

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# DEDICATION

*To Mr. Rease Parton  
and his eighth-grade English students  
at St. Philip and St. Augustine Catholic Academy  
in Dallas, Texas.*

CLASS OF 2019

## PUBLISHER'S FOREWORD

**W**HAT MAKES A TIMELESS TALE—one that can be re-read with pleasure, time and again, by succeeding generations? Some would say truth—the story must strike a chord of truth in the heart of the reader about the human condition; others would say beauty, which makes the reading a pleasure and immerses the reader in a world worth visiting and lingering in; others might insist on adventure, allowing the reader to live vicariously through the story's hero, experiencing things we might never dare in real life.

The greatest tales, those that have endured the longest because they continue to speak to our desire for truth, beauty, and adventure, include the time-honored epics of the past. Who knows if anyone will be reading James Patterson or Danielle Steele a hundred years from now? But there is little doubt that there will still be readers enjoying the adventures of Odysseus, King Arthur and his knights, and the beautiful, elegiac story that Henry Wadsworth Longfellow tells in *The Song of Hiawatha*.

Longfellow was one of the most popular American writers of the nineteenth century, both at home and abroad. Unlike best-selling writers today, he was primarily a poet, not a novelist, and his most famous works are long, narrative poems. I remember, as a child, listening to my mother read aloud to me from Longfellow's *Evangeline* (which told a moving tale of my

## THE SONG OF HIAWATHA

And the maid with hair like sunshine  
Vanished from his sight forever;  
Never more did Shawondasee  
See the maid with yellow tresses!  
290 Poor, deluded Shawondasee!  
'T was no woman that you gazed at,  
'T was no maiden that you sighed for,  
'T was the prairie dandelion  
That through all the dreamy Summer  
295 You had gazed at with such longing,  
You had sighed for with such passion,  
And had puffed away forever,  
Blown into the air with sighing.  
Ah! deluded Shawondasee!  
300 Thus the Four Winds were divided;  
Thus the sons of Mudjekeewis  
Had their stations in the heavens,  
At the corners of the heavens;  
For himself the West-Wind only  
305 Kept the mighty Mudjekeewis.





### III

## HIAWATHA'S CHILDHOOD

DOWNWARD through the evening twilight,  
In the days that are forgotten,  
In the unremembered ages,  
From the full moon fell Nokomis,  
5 Fell the beautiful Nokomis,  
She a wife but not a mother.

She was sporting with her women,  
Swinging in a swing of grape-vines,  
When her rival, the rejected,  
10 Full of jealousy and hatred,  
Cut the leafy swing asunder,  
Cut in twain the twisted grape-vines,  
And Nokomis fell affrighted  
Downward through the evening twilight,  
15 On the Muskoday, the meadow,

## THE SONG OF HIAWATHA

On the prairie full of blossoms.

“See! a star falls!” said the people;

“From the sky a star is falling!”

There among the ferns and mosses,  
20 There among the prairie lilies,  
On the Muskoday, the meadow,  
In the moonlight and the starlight,  
Fair Nokomis bore a daughter.

And she called her name Wenonah,  
25 As the first-born of her daughters.

And the daughter of Nokomis  
Grew up like the prairie lilies,  
Grew a tall and slender maiden,  
With the beauty of the moonlight,  
30 With the beauty of the starlight.

And Nokomis warned her often,  
Saying oft, and oft repeating,  
“Oh, beware of Mudjekeewis,  
Of the West-Wind, Mudjekeewis;  
35 Listen not to what he tells you;  
Lie not down upon the meadow,  
Stoop not down among the lilies,  
Lest the West-Wind come and harm you!”

But she heeded not the warning,  
40 Heeded not those words of wisdom.  
And the West-Wind came at evening,  
Walking lightly o’er the prairie,

## HIAWATHA'S CHILDHOOD

Whispering to the leaves and blossoms,  
Bending low the flowers and grasses,  
45 Found the beautiful Wenonah,  
Lying there among the lilies,  
Woodyed her with his words of sweetness,  
Woodyed her with his soft caresses,  
Till she bore a son in sorrow,  
50 Bore a son of love and sorrow,  
    Thus was born my Hiawatha,  
Thus was born the child of wonder;  
But the daughter of Nokomis,  
Hiawatha's gentle mother,  
55 In her anguish died deserted  
By the West-Wind, false and faithless,  
By the heartless Mudjekeewis.  
    For her daughter, long and loudly  
Wailed and wept the sad Nokomis;  
70 "Oh that I were dead!" she murmured,  
"Oh that I were dead, as thou art!  
No more work, and no more weeping,  
Wahonowin! Wahonowin!"  
    By the shores of Gitche Gumees,  
65 By the shining Big-Sea-Water,  
Stood the wigwam of Nokomis  
Daughter of the Moon, Nokomis.  
Dark behind it rose the forest,  
Rose the black and gloomy pine-trees,

## THE SONG OF HIAWATHA

70    Rose the firs with cones upon them;  
      Bright before it beat the water,  
      Beat the clear and sunny water,  
      Beat the shining Big-Sea-Water.  
      There the wrinkled old Nokomis  
75    Nursed the little Hiawatha,  
      Rocked him in his linden cradle,  
      Bedded soft in moss and rushes,  
      Safely bound with reindeer sinews;  
      Stilled his fretful wail by saying,  
80    “Hush! the Naked Bear will hear thee!”  
      Lulled him into slumber, singing,  
      “Ewa-yea! my little owlet!  
      Who is this, that lights the wigwam?  
      With his great eyes lights the wigwam?  
85    Ewa-yea! my little owlet!”  
      Many things Nokomis taught him  
      Of the stars that shine in heaven;  
      Showed him Ishkoodah, the comet,  
      Ishkoodah, with fiery tresses;  
90    Showed the Death-Dance of the spirits,  
      Warriors with their plumes and war-clubs  
      Flaring far away to northward  
      In the frosty nights of Winter;  
      Showed the broad white road in heaven,  
95    Pathway of the ghosts, the shadows,  
      Running straight across the heavens,

## HIAWATHA'S CHILDHOOD

Crowded with the ghosts, the shadows.

At the door on summer evenings  
Sat the little Hiawatha;  
100 Heard the whispering of the pine-trees,  
Heard the lapping of the waters,  
Sounds of music, words of wonder;  
"Minne-wawa!" said the pine-trees.  
"Mudway-aushka!" said the water.

105 Saw the fire-fly, Wah-wah-taysee,  
Flitting through the dusk of evening,  
With the twinkle of its candle  
Lighting up the brakes and bushes,  
And he sang the song of children,  
110 Sang the song Nokomis taught him:  
"Wah-wah-taysee, little fire-fly,  
Little, flitting, white-fire insect,  
Little, dancing, white-fire creature,  
Light me with your little candle,  
115 Ere upon my bed I lay me,  
Ere in sleep I close my eyelids!"

Saw the moon rise from the water  
Rippling, rounding from the water,  
Saw the flecks and shadows on it,  
120 Whispered, "What is that, Nokomis?"  
And the good Nokomis answered:  
"Once a warrior, very angry,  
Seized his grandmother, and threw her

## THE SONG OF HIAWATHA

Up into the sky at midnight;  
125 Right against the moon he threw her;  
'T is her body that you see there."  
Saw the rainbow in the heaven,  
In the eastern sky, the rainbow,  
Whispered, "What is that, Nokomis?"  
130 And the good Nokomis answered:  
"T is the heaven of flowers you see there;  
All the wild-flowers of the forest,  
All the lilies of the prairie,  
When on earth they fade and perish,  
135 Blossom in that heaven above us."  
When he heard the owls at midnight,  
Hooting, laughing in the forest,  
"What is that?" he cried in terror;  
"What is that," he said, "Nokomis?"  
140 And the good Nokomis answered:  
"That is but the owl and owlet,  
Talking in their native language,  
Talking, scolding at each other."  
Then the little Hiawatha  
145 Learned of every bird its language,  
Learned their names and all their secrets,  
How they built their nests in Summer,  
Where they hid themselves in Winter,  
Talked with them whene'er he met them,  
150 Called them "Hiawatha's Chickens."