

Paul Revere's Ride

by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Listen, my children, and you shall hear
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,
On the eighteenth of April, in Seventy-five:
Hardly a man is now alive
Who remembers that famous day and year. 5
He said to his friend, "If the British march
By land or sea from the town to-night,
Hang a lantern aloft in the belfry arch
Of the North Church tower as a signal-light,
One, if by land, and two, if by sea; 10
And I on the opposite shore will be,
Ready to ride and spread the alarm
Through every Middlesex village and farm,
For the country folk to be up and to arm."
Then he said, Good-night! and with muffled oar 15
Silently rowed to the Charlestown shore,
Just as the moon rose over the bay,
Where swinging wide at her moorings lay
The Somerset, British man-of-war;
A phantom ship, with each mast and spar 20
Across the moon like a prison-bar,
And a huge black hulk, that was magnified
By its own reflection in the tide.
Meanwhile, his friend, through alley and street
Wanders and watches with eager ears, 25
Till in the silence around him he hears
The muster of men at the barrack door,
The sound of arms, and the tramp of feet,
And the measured tread of the grenadiers,
Marching down to their boats on the shore. 30
Then he climbed to the tower of the Old North Church
By the wooden stairs, with stealthy tread,
To the belfry-chamber overhead,
And startled the pigeons from their perch
On the sombre rafters, that round him made 35
Masses and moving shapes of shade,-
By the trembling ladder, steep and tall,
To the highest window in the wall,
Where he paused to listen and look down
A moment on the roofs of the town, 40
And the moonlight flowing over all.
Beneath, in the churchyard, lay the dead,
In their night-encampment on the hill,

Wrapped in silence so deep and still
That he could hear, like a sentinel's tread, 45
The watchful night-wind, as it went
Creeping along from tent to tent,
And seeming to whisper, "All is well!"
A moment only he feels the spell
Of the place and the hour, and the secret dread 50
Of the lonely belfry and the dead;
For suddenly all his thoughts are bent
On a shadowy something far away,
Where the river widens to meet the bay,-
A line of black that bends and floats 55
On the rising tide, like a bridge of boats.
Meanwhile, impatient to mount and ride,
Booted and spurred, with a heavy stride
On the opposite shore walked Paul Revere.
Now he patted his horse's side, 60
Now gazed at the landscape far and near,
Then, impetuous, stamped the earth,
And turned and tightened his saddle-girth;
But mostly he watched with eager search
The belfry-tower of the Old North Church, 65
As it rose above the graves on the hill,
Lonely, and spectral, and sombre and still.
And lo! as he looks, on the belfry's height
A glimmer, and then a gleam of light!
He springs to the saddle, the bridle he turns, 70
But lingers and gazes, till full on his sight
A second lamp in the belfry burns!
A hurry of hoofs in a village street,
A shape in the moonlight, a bulk in the dark,
And beneath, from the pebbles, in passing, a spark 75
Struck out by a steed flying fearless and fleet:
That was all! And yet, through the gloom and the light,
The fate of a nation was riding that night;
And the spark struck out by that steed, in his flight,
Kindled the land into flame with its heat. 80
He has left the village and mounted the steep,
And beneath him, tranquil and broad and deep,
Is the Mystic, meeting the ocean tides;
And under the alders, that skirt its edge,
Now soft on the sand, now loud on the ledge, 85
Is heard the tramp of his steed as he rides.
It was twelve by the village clock
When he crossed the bridge into Medford town.
He heard the crowing of the cock,
And the barking of the farmer's dog, 90
And felt the damp of the river fog,

That rises after the sun goes down.
It was one by the village clock,
When he rode into Lexington. 95
He saw the gilded weathercock
Swim in the moonlight as he passed,
And the meeting-house windows, blank and bare,
Gaze at him with a spectral glare,
As if they already stood aghast
At the bloody work they would look upon. 100
It was two by the village clock,
When he came to the bridge in Concord town.
He heard the bleating of the flock,
And the twitter of birds among the trees,
And felt the breath of the morning breeze 105
Blowing over the meadows brown.
And one was safe and asleep in his bed
Who at the bridge would be first to fall,
Who that day would be lying dead,
Pierced by a British musket-ball. 110
You know the rest. In the books you have read,
How the British Regulars fired and fled,-
How the farmers gave them ball for ball,
From behind each fence and farm-yard wall,
Chasing the red-coats down the lane, 115
Then crossing the fields to emerge again
Under the trees at the turn of the road,
And only pausing to fire and load.
So through the night rode Paul Revere;
And so through the night went his cry of alarm 120
To every Middlesex village and farm,-
A cry of defiance and not of fear,
A voice in the darkness, a knock at the door,
And a word that shall echo forevermore!
For, borne on the night-wind of the Past, 125
Through all our history, to the last,
In the hour of darkness and peril and need,
The people will waken and listen to hear
The hurrying hoof-beats of that steed,
And the midnight message of Paul Revere. 130

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. At what time did Paul Revere go on his ride?

- A. six o' clock in the evening
- B. six o' clock in the morning
- C. noon
- D. midnight

2. Who is the speaker of this poem?

- A. a British soldier who fought at Concord
- B. Paul Revere
- C. a good friend of Paul Revere's
- D. someone telling the story of Paul Revere's ride

3. Read these lines from the poem:

Listen, my children, and you shall hear
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,
On the eighteenth of April, in Seventy-five:
Hardly a man is now alive
Who remembers that famous day and year.
He said to his friend, "If the British march
By land or sea from the town to-night,
Hang a lantern aloft in the belfry arch
Of the North Church tower as a signal-light,
One, if by land, and two, if by sea;
And I on the opposite shore will be,
Ready to ride and spread the alarm
Through every Middlesex village and farm,
For the country folk to be up and to arm."

Based on these lines, what can you conclude about the person speaking to his friend (line 6)?

- A. The person speaking to his friend is a father with more than one child.
- B. The person speaking to his friend is a soldier in the American army.
- C. The person speaking to his friend is a soldier in the British army.
- D. The person speaking to his friend is Paul Revere.

4. In which lines of the poem does Paul Revere learn that the British are marching by sea?

- A. lines 6-9
- B. lines 57-59
- C. lines 42-48
- D. lines 69-72

5. What is the theme of this poem?

- A. Many people died in the fighting at Lexington and Concord.
- B. War is never a good solution to a problem between two groups of people.
- C. Paul Revere's ride had a big impact on history.
- D. Nothing in life is more important than friendship.

6. Reread these lines from the poem:

Then he said, Good-night! and with muffled oar
Silently rowed to the Charlestown shore,
Just as the moon rose over the bay,
Where swinging wide at her moorings lay
The Somerset, British man-of-war;
A phantom ship, with each mast and spar
Across the moon like a prison-bar,
And a huge black hulk, that was magnified
By its own reflection in the tide.

What mood does the language in the last four lines of that passage create?

- A. a silly, playful mood
- B. a bright, joyful mood
- C. a gentle, loving mood
- D. a dark, threatening mood

7. What is the subject of the phrase "wanders and watches" (line 25)?

- A. the "alley" (line 24)
- B. the "street" (line 24)
- C. "his friend" (line 24)
- D. "eager ears" (line 25)

8. The speaker states that "through all our history," people will "waken and listen to hear / The hurrying hoof-beats of that steed." What else will people waken and listen to hear?

9. Read these lines from the poem:

Listen, my children, and you shall hear
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,
On the eighteenth of April, in Seventy-five:
Hardly a man is now alive
Who remembers that famous day and year.

What does the speaker mean by the statement that "hardly a man is now alive / Who remembers that famous day and year"?

10. Why might the speaker be telling his or her children about Paul Revere's ride? Support your answer with evidence from the poem.