

I HEARD THE BELLS ON CHRISTMAS DAY Worksheet

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Verse 1

I heard the bells on Christmas day
Their old familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet the words repeat
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

Verse 2

I thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along the unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

Verse 3

And in despair I bowed my head
'There is no peace on earth,' I said,
'For hate is strong and mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men.'

Verse 4

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
'God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail
With peace on earth, good will to men.'

Verse 5

\Till ringing, singing on its way
The world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime, a chant sublime
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

Vocabulary In one or two words define the following terms from the poem.

Verse 2: belfries, Christendom

Verse 3: despair, mocks

Verse 4: pealed, doth, prevail

Verse 5: revolved, chime, chant, sublime

Word Pictures Word pictures is another way of saying *imagery*. *Imagery* or *figurative language* helps us form a picture of what the author is trying to present. Discuss what these word pictures mean and, perhaps, draw your idea of the *imagery* or *figurative language* the author uses!

Verse 1: bells on Christmas day; wild and sweet the words repeat

Verse 2: belfries of all Christendom; unbroken song

Verse 3: in despair I bowed my head; hate is strong and mocks the song Of peace on earth, good will to men

Verse 4: pealed the bells; The wrong shall fail, the right prevail

Verse 5: world revolved from night to day

Mechanics are the nuts and bolts of a poem. Verbally discuss.

Who is the speaker? (Does the speaker have a specific personality or has the author remained in the background so the message of the poem will be more clear?)

What does the poem reveal about the speaker's character? (Sometimes, poems reveal nothing about the speaker's personal thoughts, feelings, or attitudes. Yet, the poem may demonstrate those character traits that are important to the author like courage, loyalty, perseverance, etc.)

Is the speaker addressing someone in particular or is it to anyone? (Sometimes poems are not directed to anyone in particular, but to anyone that may read it.)

Does the poem have a setting? (Does the author tell where the poem occurs? Is the poem about a specific event?)

Is the poem about a particular event? (Is the event past or present? If it is about a past event, does the remembrance of the event have a particular meaning to the speaker?)

Is the theme of the poem stated directly or indirectly? (Some poems are straightforward and are meant to be taken literally. In songs, the theme may be presented in the refrain or in the last few lines. Sometimes the theme is a little bit more difficult to discern as it is made with figurative language or symbols.)

What point of view or perspective is the speaker? (What meaning do you think the poem has for the author?)

How did you respond to the poem when you read it the first time? (Did your thoughts and feelings change after you took time to study it?)

Comprehension Questions Verbally discuss

Verse 1: What did the author hear? Why do you think the author used the terms “wild” and “sweet”? What was the message given by the bells?

Verse 2: Why do you think the author of this poem focussed on the belfries of Christendom? Did you notice that the last line in *Verse 1* is repeated in the last line of *Verse 2*? Why do you think the author chose to do that?

Verse 3: What revolved? What was ringing and singing? What was heard? Did you notice that the last line in *Verses 1* and *2* is repeated in the last line of *Verse 3*? Why do you think the author chose to do that?

Verse 4: What emotion was the author feeling? Do you think this emotion caused the author to bow the head? Why? Why was the author in “despair”? What mocks the song? Did you notice that the last line in *Verses 1, 2* and *3* is repeated in the last line of *Verse 4*? Why do you think the author chose to do that?

Verse 5: How did the bells respond to the author's despair? Do you think we all need to be reminded that “God is not dead, nor doth He sleep; The wrong shall fail, the right prevail”? Why?

Note: This poem was written during the American War Between the States. Did this historical event or message become more real to you after reading this poem? Why?

After reading this poem, what character traits did you think of? What does the Bible have to say about these character traits?

What Does the Bible Say?

Find Scripture proofs for each of the assertions or statements made for each of the five verses and the refrain.

Re-read the Gospel accounts of the Nativity along with Isaiah 53. What does the Bible have to say about despair? Discuss the old saying, “To despair is to deny God.” What does this mean? Do you agree or disagree? Why?

The Author/Poet

Based on what you have studied about this poem so far, would you guess that the author was a Christian or a humanist? How did you arrive at your decision?

The name of the author for this poem or lyric is Henry W. Longfellow (1807-1882). He was born 17 February 1807, Portland, Maine, and died 24 March 24, 1882, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Longfellow is a well known American poet, educator, linguist. This poem was written in 1864.

Geography

Locate Maine and Massachusetts on a globe, map and atlas.

Challenge Locate Portland (Maine) and Cambridge (Massachusetts) on a map or in an atlas.

Compare/contrast weather from Maine and/or Massachusetts with your own for one week.

Make an American meal for your family.

Activities

1) Make your own book! Without making an image of Christ, draw pictures representing each verse. (Note: that will be five different illustrations). With construction paper and other items readily available at home, make a title page with the name of the song and the author’s name which will be your book’s cover. You may want to illustrate your cover and include this poem in your book.

2) Make your own play! Re-enact with your siblings or friends the event or message discussed in this poem. Keep it lively, simple, and short. You may want to end your play with singing a rousing chorus of this poem or reading Scripture verses. Videotape your creation.

3) Radio Drama! With a handheld tape recorder, create your own radio show dramatizing the historical event or message of this poem.

4) Be a Reporter! Either with your family camcorder or with a handheld tape recorder, “interview” various individuals connected with this poem (e.g., heads of nations either current / past, the warrior David from the Bible, Oliver Cromwell, George Washington, repentant sinner, etc.). In order to have the fast paced style of a reporter, watch and/or listen to the news with your parents’ permission. Keep the interviews lively, quick, and to the point.

Remain objective! Being objective means just reporting the facts and not giving your opinion of the situation.

5) What is one of the things you most enjoy? Is it literature? math? science? sports? cooking? Take that area of interest and relate that to this poem. If you enjoy dance, for example, develop a dance routine that physically expresses the sentiments of this poem. If you enjoy shop, create something out of wood that helps to clarify this poem. Do you enjoy creating stories? Write a story based on any time period you desire that expresses the sentiments of this poem. Do you enjoy creating things in the kitchen? Make an ancient meal from this time or develop your own meal that symbolizes the many different points this poem makes.

6) Poster. Create a poster illustrating the the author's view of the impact of *I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day*.

7) Scavenger Hunt. Go to the library to learn what you can about Henry W. Longfellow (1807-1882) and share it with your family. If possible, discover the story behind this poem.