

Once to Every Man and Nation Worksheet

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Verse 1

Once to every man and nation, comes the moment to decide,
In the strife of truth with falsehood, for the good or evil side;
Some great cause, some great decision, offering each the bloom or blight,
And the choice goes by forever, 'twixt that darkness and that light.

Verse 2

Then to side with truth is noble, when we share her wretched crust,
Ere her cause bring fame and profit, and 'tis prosperous to be just;
Then it is the brave man chooses while the coward stands aside,
Till the multitude make virtue of the faith they had denied.

Verse 3

By the light of burning martyrs, Christ, Thy bleeding feet we track,
Toiling up new Calv'ries ever with the cross that turns not back;
New occasions teach new duties, time makes ancient good uncouth,
They must upward still and onward, who would keep abreast of truth.

Verse 4

Though the cause of evil prosper, yet the truth alone is strong;
Though her portion be the scaffold, and upon the throne be wrong;
Yet that scaffold sways the future, and behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above His own.

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

Verse 1: strife, blight, 'twixt

Verse 2: noble, wretched, crust, Ere, 'tis, multitude, virtue

Verse 3: martyrs, Thy, Calv'ries, uncouth

Verse 4: scaffold, Standeth

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, without drawing a picture of Christ, draw your idea of the *imagery* or *figurative language* the author uses!

Verse 1: moment to decide, bloom or blight

Verse 2: truth is noble, brave man chooses, coward stands aside

Verse 3: teach new duties, ancient good uncouth

Verse 4: truth ... is strong

Mechanics 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.)
How did you respond to the poem when you read it the first time?

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 must every man and nation do? What offers "bloom or blight"? Explain and discuss: "the choice goes by forever, 'twixt that darkness and that light."

Verse 2: How is siding with truth described? Do you agree? What do the brave do? What do cowards do? Explain and discuss: "Till the multitude make virtue of the faith they had denied."

Verse 3: Explain and discuss: "By the light of burning martyrs, Christ, Thy bleeding feet we track, Toiling up new Calv'ries ever with the cross that turns not back." What do new occasions teach? Why do "ancient goods" become "uncouth"?

Verse 4: Explain and discuss: "Though the cause of evil prosper, yet the truth alone is strong." What may be awaiting truth? What may be upon the throne or in control of the civil government? The author asserts the "scaffold sways the future." How does truth and justice sway the future? Who is watching? Who is guarding His people?

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 four verses.

What does the Bible have to say about noble truth? Identify Biblical characters that were demonstrated noble truth. Can you think of anyone else in history that demonstrated this character trait in the Biblical sense? What will you tell your grandchildren about being noble and truth? How will you encourage your grandchildren in these character traits?

What does the Bible have to say about justice? Give examples of individuals in the older and newer testament that demonstrated justice. Give historical examples of justice. After reading the newspaper, listening to the news on radio, or watching the news, can you think of any examples of justice today? What will you tell your grandchildren about justice? How will you encourage your grandchildren in this character trait?

Discuss this poem with respect to ...

Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him. Psalm 2:11,12

Psalm 53:1 ... The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity: there is none that doeth good.

Psalm 2:1-5 ... Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: they Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure.

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?

This well known author and poet for this poem is James R. Lowell (1819-1891). He was born 22 February 1819 and died 12 August 1892 both in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He graduated from Harvard in 1838 and in 1855 became Harvard's Professor of Modern Languages and Literature after Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. He served as a minister to Spain as well as an ambassador to England. This poem first appeared the *Boston Courier*, December 11, 1845.

Geography

Locate Massachusetts, England, and Spain on a globe, map and atlas.

Challenge Locate Cambridge on a map or in an atlas.

Compare/contrast the weather of England, Spain and/or Massachusetts with your own for one week. Make an English, Spanish or New England 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 six 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 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 message of this poem.

4) Be a Reporter! Either with your family camcorder or with a handheld tape recorder, "interview" various individuals this poem could illustrate (e.g., family members, judges, soldiers, ministers, missionaries, honorable civil servants, farmers, laborers, citizens, 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 *Once to Every Man and Nation*.

7) Scavenger Hunt. Go to the library to learn what you can about James R. Lowell (1819-1891) and share it with your family. If possible, discover the story behind this poem.