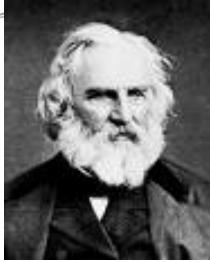




# Fireside Poets

- “Fireside” suggests their **honored place in American homes** during the 1800’s.
- These popular poems, easy to read, **romanticized the American way of life** for ordinary people.

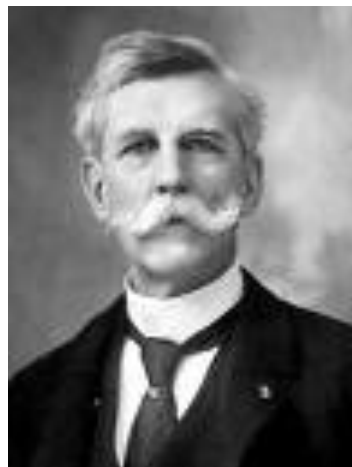
# Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882)



- **Taught at Harvard** (His house is a historic site at Harvard Yard. Graduated with Hawthorne at Bowdoin )
- **Most famous fireside poet**
- **Profound sorrow** (After his 1<sup>st</sup> wife died, he married Fanny; 2 of his 6 children lived just a year, another was persistently troubled; Fanny's dress caught fire, and she died from her injuries.)
- Famous works: **"Song of Hiawatha," & "Psalm of Life"**

# Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-1894)

- Born into an elite Massachusetts family.
- **Became a doctor** after studying medicine at **Harvard**.
- Faith in science—true **product of the Age of Reason**
- Wanted to replace **sin** with scientific understanding of psychological disturbance. (Strange because his father was a minister.)
- **“Old Ironsides”**



# James Russell Lowell (1819-1891)

- Also born into an elite Massachusetts family
- Also educated at **Harvard**.
- An **abolitionist**
- **“Auspex” & “May is a Pious Fraud”**



# John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1879)



- Warm depictions of American rural life.
- **Quaker** (still marginalized) & farmer in Massachusetts, limited education, so he's **not in the Harvard crowd**.
- Also an **abolitionist**—caused him to be stoned during a lecture tour and tarnished his chance at popularity (until “Snowbound”).
- Famous works: **“Proem”** and **“Snowbound”**—the latter brought him fame and wealth




## AUSPEX

Lowell

MY heart, I cannot still it,  
Nest that had song-birds in it;  
And when the last shall go,  
The dreary days to fill it,  
Instead of lark or linnet,  
Shall whirl dead leaves and snow.

Had they been swallows only,  
Without the passion stronger  
That skyward longs and sings,--  
Woe's me, I shall be lonely  
When I can feel no longer  
The impatience of their wings!



## Auspex (cont.)

A moment, sweet delusion,  
Like birds the brown leaves hover;  
But it will not be long  
Before their wild confusion  
Fall wavering down to cover  
The poet and his song.

## MAY IS A PIOUS FRAUD

*Lowell*

MAY is a pious fraud of the almanac.  
A ghastly parody of real Spring  
Shaped out of snow and breathed with eastern wind;  
Or if, o'er-confident, she trust the date,  
And, with her handful of anemones,  
Herself as shivery, steal into the sun,  
The season need but turn his hour-glass round,  
And Winter suddenly, like crazy Lear,  
Reels back, and brings the dead May in his arms,  
Her budding breasts and wan dislusted front





## May is a Pious Fraud (cont.)

With frosty streaks and drifts of his white beard  
All overblown. Then, warmly walled with books,  
While my wood-fire supplies the sun's defect,  
Whispering old forest-sagas in its dreams,  
I take my May down from the happy shelf  
Where perch the world's rare song-birds in a row,  
Waiting my choice to upen with full breast,  
And beg an alms of springtime, ne'er denied  
Indoors by vernal Chaucer, whose fresh woods  
Throb thick with merle and mavis all the years.

# Proem by John Greenleaf Whittier

I love the old melodious lays  
Which softly melt the ages through,  
The songs of Spenser's golden days,  
Arcadian Sidney's silvery phrase,  
Sprinkling our noon of time with freshest morning dew.

Yet, vainly in my quiet hours  
To breathe their marvellous notes I try;  
I feel them, as the leaves and flowers  
In silence feel the dewy showers,  
And drink with glad, still lips the blessing of the sky.

The rigor of a frozen clime,  
The harshness of an untaught ear,  
The jarring words of one whose rhyme  
Beat often Labor's hurried time,  
Or Duty's rugged march through storm and strife, are here.

Of mystic beauty, dreamy grace,  
No rounded art the lack supplies;  
Unskilled the subtle lines to trace,  
Or softer shades of Nature's face,  
I view her common forms with unanointed eyes.

Nor mine the seer-like power to show  
The secrets of the heart and mind;  
To drop the plummet-line below  
Our common world of joy and woe,  
A more intense despair or brighter hope to find.


Yet here at least an earnest sense  
Of human right and weal is shown;  
A hate of tyranny intense,  
And hearty in its vehemence,  
As if my brother's pain and sorrow were my own.

O Freedom! if to me belong  
Nor mighty Milton's gift divine,  
Nor Marvell's wit and graceful song,  
Still with a love as deep and strong  
As theirs, I lay, like them, my best gifts on thy shrine!




## Old Ironsides

Ay, tear her tattered ensign down!  
Long has it waved on high,  
And many an eye has danced to see  
That banner in the sky;  
Beneath it rung the battle shout,  
And burst the cannon's roar;  
The meteor of the ocean air  
Shall sweep the clouds no more.



Her deck once red with heroes' blood  
Where knelt the vanquished foe,  
When winds were hurrying o'er the flood,  
And waves were white below,  
No more shall feel the victor's tread,  
Or know the conquered knee;  
The harpies of the shore shall pluck  
The eagle of the sea!



Oh better that her shattered bulk  
Should sink beneath the wave;  
Her thunders shook the mighty deep,  
And there should be her grave;  
Nail to the mast her holy flag,  
Set every threadbare sail,  
And give her to the god of storms,  
The lightning and the gale!

# Psalm of Life --Longfellow

Tell me not in mournful numbers,  
Life is but an empty dream!  
For the soul is dead that slumbers,  
And things are not what they seem.

Life is real! Life is earnest!  
And the grave is not its goal;  
Dust thou art, to dust thou returnest,  
Was not spoken of the soul.

Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,  
Is our destined end or way;  
But to act, that each tomorrow  
Find us farther than today.

Art is long, and Time is fleeting,  
And our hearts, though stout and brave,  
Still, like muffled drums, are beating  
Funeral marches to the grave.

In the world's broad field of battle,

In the bivouac of Life,  
Be not like dumb, driven cattle!  
Be a hero in the strife!

Trust no Future, howe'er pleasant!  
Let the dead Past bury its dead!  
Act, - act in the living Present!  
Heart within, and God o'erhead!

Lives of great men all remind us  
We can make our lives sublime,  
And, departing, leave behind us  
Footprints on the sand of time;

Footprints, that perhaps another,  
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,  
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,  
Seeing, shall take heart again.

Let us then be up and doing,  
With a heart for any fate;  
Still achieving, still pursuing  
Learn to labor and to wait.



# Jewish Cemetery at Newport

Longfellow

How strange it seems! These Hebrews in their graves,  
Close by the street of this fair seaport town,  
Silent beside the never-silent waves,  
At rest in all this moving up and down!  
The trees are white with dust, that o'er their sleep  
Wave their broad curtains in the south-wind's breath,  
While underneath such leafy tents they keep  
The long, mysterious Exodus of Death.  
And these sepulchral stones, so old and brown,  
That pave with level flags their burial-place,  
Seem like the tablets of the Law, thrown down  
And broken by Moses at the mountain's base.

## Jewish Cemetery (cont.)

The very names recorded here are strange,  
Of foreign accent, and of different climes;  
Alvares and Rivera interchange  
With Abraham and Jacob of old times.  
"Blessed be God! for he created Death!"  
The mourners said, "and Death is rest and peace";  
Then added, in the certainty of faith,  
"And giveth Life that never more shall cease."  
Closed are the portals of their Synagogue,  
No Psalms of David now the silence break,  
No Rabbi reads the ancient Decalogue  
In the grand dialect the Prophets spake.  
Gone are the living, but the dead remain,  
And not neglected; for a hand unseen,  
Scattering its bounty, like a summer rain,  
Still keeps their graves and their remembrance green.

How came they here? What burst of Christian hate,  
What persecution, merciless and blind,  
Drove o'er the sea--that desert desolate--  
These Ishmaels and Hagers of mankind?  
They lived in narrow streets and lanes obscure,  
Ghetto and Judenstrass, in mirk and mire;  
Taught in the school of patience to endure  
The life of anguish and the death of fire.  
All their lives long, with the unleavened bread  
And bitter herbs of exile and its fears,  
The wasting famine of the heart they fed,  
And slaked its thirst with marah of their tears.  
Anathema maranatha! was the cry  
That rang from town to town, from street to street;  
At every gate the accursed Mordecai  
Was mocked and jeered, and spurned by Christian feet.

(Jewish Cemetery cont.)

Pride and humiliation hand in hand

Walked with them through the world where'er they went;

Trampled and beaten were they as the sand,

And yet unshaken as the continent.

For in the background figures vague and vast

Of patriarchs and of prophets rose sublime,

And all the great traditions of the Past

They saw reflected in the coming time.

And thus forever with reverted look

The mystic volume of the world they read,

Spelling it backward, like a Hebrew book,

Till life became a Legend of the Dead.

But ah! what once has been shall be no more!

The groaning earth in travail and in pain

Brings forth its races, but does not restore,

And the dead nations never rise again.