

# Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's "My Lost Youth"

## Lesson Plan

A resource developed through the *Longfellow and the Forging of American Identity* program

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**Suggested Grade Level:** Easily adaptable for Grades 3 –12

**Subject Area:** English

### Learning Results:

*English Language Arts:*

Process of Reading: A3, A4, A10

Literature and Culture: B6

Language and Images: C1, C4

Stylistic and Rhetorical Aspects of Writing and Speaking: G2, G5, G11

Research Related Writing and Speaking: H1, H2, H3, H4, H9

**Time Required:** One class period to review the exhibit "My Lost Youth": Longfellow's Portland – Then and Now.

Each lesson below will take 1-3 class periods to complete.

### Materials and Resources Required:

- Internet access
- Copy of "My Lost Youth" (provided in this lesson packet)
- Supplies for photo projects: glue, tape, construction paper or card stock, markers

### Preparation Required/Preliminary Discussion:

View the exhibit entitled "My Lost Youth": Longfellow's Portland - Then and Now" to give students a more thorough background and greater understanding of the following activities.

Read the poem "My Lost Youth."

**Lesson #1:** Research your hometown. Do a comparative photo journal of your favorite places in your town and do research to see what used to be on those sites. If possible, go to your local historical society or look on the Internet and find out as much as you can. Report to the class your findings.

**Lesson #2:** Having familiarized yourself with Longfellow's poem, write a poem about your childhood. Be sure to include all the favorite places and memories that you wish to preserve. You might choose a refrain from a favorite song or poem that means something to you - as Longfellow uses "A boy's will is the wind's will and thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts." You may choose the tone of nostalgia, as does Longfellow, or perhaps set another tone.

**Lesson #3:** Begin with finding favorite photos of your childhood, perhaps of birthday parties, your grandparents, your pets. Then write a poem about whom or what you choose.

**Lesson #4:** Interview a parent or grandparent about his or her youth and recreate those days for your loved one in a poem. Maybe you could even find photos of that person's childhood and make a gift to that person of your work.

**Lesson #5:** By extension: Make a book, an autobiography or memoir about your youth. As you grow older, it would be really fun and important to preserve those days forever. You are the greatest story, and you are unique to the world.

## **My Lost Youth by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow**

Often I think of the beautiful town  
That is seated by the sea;  
Often in thought go up and down  
The pleasant streets of that dear old town,  
And my youth comes back to me.  
And a verse of a Lapland song  
Is haunting my memory still:  
"A boy's will is the wind's will,  
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

I can see the shadowy lines of its trees,  
And catch, in sudden gleams,  
The sheen of the far-surrounding seas,  
And islands that were the Hesperides  
Of all my boyish dreams.  
And the burden of that old song,  
It murmurs and whispers still:  
"A boy's will is the wind's will,  
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

I remember the black wharves and the slips,  
And the sea-tides tossing free;  
And Spanish sailors with bearded lips,  
And the beauty and mystery of the ships,  
And the magic of the sea.  
And the voice of that wayward song  
Is singing and saying still:  
"A boy's will is the wind's will,  
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

I remember the bulwarks by the shore,  
And the fort upon the hill;  
The sunrise gun, with its hollow roar,  
The drum-beat repeated o'er and o'er,  
And the bugle wild and shrill.  
And the music of that old song  
Throbs in my memory still:  
"A boy's will is the wind's will,  
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

I remember the sea-fight far away,  
How it thundered o'er the tide!  
And the dead captains, as they lay  
In their graves, o'erlooking the tranquil bay,

Where they in battle died.  
And the sound of that mournful song  
Goes through me with a thrill:  
"A boy's will is the wind's will,  
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

I can see the breezy dome of groves,  
The shadows of Deering's Woods;  
And the friendships old and the early loves  
Come back with a Sabbath sound, as of doves  
In quiet neighborhoods.  
And the verse of that sweet old song,  
It flutters and murmurs still:  
"A boy's will is the wind's will,  
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

I remember the gleams and glooms that dart  
Across the school-boy's brain;  
The song and the silence in the heart,  
That in part are prophecies, and in part  
Are longings wild and vain.  
And the voice of that fitful song  
Sings on, and is never still:  
"A boy's will is the wind's will,  
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

There are things of which I may not speak;  
There are dreams that cannot die;  
There are thoughts that make the strong heart weak,  
And bring a pallor into the cheek,  
And a mist before the eye.  
And the words of that fatal song  
Come over me like a chill:  
"A boy's will is the wind's will,  
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

Strange to me now are the forms I meet  
When I visit the dear old town;  
But the native air is pure and sweet,  
And the trees that o'ershadow each well-known street,  
As they balance up and down,  
Are singing the beautiful song,  
Are sighing and whispering still:  
"A boy's will is the wind's will,  
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

And Deering's Woods are fresh and fair,  
And with joy that is almost pain  
My heart goes back to wander there,  
And among the dreams of the days that were,  
I find my lost youth again.  
And the strange and beautiful song,  
The groves are repeating it still:  
"A boy's will is the wind's will,  
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."