



Dear Mr. Longfellow: Letters to and from the Children's Poet

Sydelle Pearl

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Dear Mr. Longfellow: Letters to and from the Children's Poet Sydelle Pearl

If you were attending school in the late-nineteenth century, it's very likely that your teacher would have taught you to memorize lines from "The Village Blacksmith" by renowned poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. And on the classroom wall you'd probably see his portrait looking down benignly on you and your classmates. Longfellow was so famous and beloved by youth in this era that he was known as "the children's poet." Students not only memorized his poetry but sent him hundreds of letters.

In this charming biography, storyteller and author Sydelle Pearl recounts the life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow by drawing upon the letters he received from his young admirers. In their letters, children from yesteryear reveal details about their lives that reach across the years to young people today. The letters also highlight the unique, close relationship that children shared with Longfellow. A girl from West Virginia writes, "Thank you so much for writing for children.... It makes us feel that we are not forgotten." Others ask him about what he did as a boy or a young man. In one extraordinary gesture of friendship, the schoolchildren of Cambridge celebrated his birthday by presenting him with a chair created from the wood of the "spreading chestnut tree" made famous in his poem "The Village Blacksmith." Longfellow dedicated his poem "From My Arm-Chair" to these thoughtful children.

Complete with selected poems and photographs of the poet and his family, *Dear Mr. Longfellow* brings to life a famous figure of American literature and a distant, simpler age in the history of our country.

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