

The Bridge – Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was an American poet and a member of the Fireside Poets of New England. This group was famous for writing poetry that was simple, relatable, and easy to remember. Some of Longfellow's most famous works include Paul Revere's Ride, The Song of Hiawatha, and Evangeline. He was also the first American to translate Dante Alighieri's Divine Comedy.

The Bridge was published in 1845. This personal poem uses the image of a bridge over the Charles River to describe the poet's emotional journey. The bridge acts as a metaphor, showing the passage of time and the change from sadness to happiness.

The poem begins with the speaker standing on the bridge at midnight. The striking of the clock and the peaceful scene of the moon rising behind a church tower create a calm and reflective mood. The quiet river flowing below adds mystery and uncertainty. The river symbolizes life's challenges, carrying both hope and despair.

The moon's reflection on the water is compared to a golden goblet sinking into the sea. In contrast, the speaker notices a "flaming furnace" in the distance. Its red glow represents strong emotions or struggles, contrasting with the moon's calmness.

The bridge brings feelings of loneliness and doubt to the speaker. Shadows moving over the water and the tide's rhythm show life's constant changes. The tide, though delayed, always reaches the shore, reminding us that time and emotions move on naturally, even when we resist.

The speaker reflects on his feelings, comparing them to the rushing waters under the bridge. His thoughts are overwhelming, like a flood, and his sadness feels heavy. The tears he sheds show his deep sorrow and regret. He remembers coming to the bridge many times before, always thinking about the same scene. This repetition shows his connection to the bridge as a place of reflection. He recalls feeling restless and burdened by life's struggles. At one point, he even wishes to be carried away by the tide to escape his troubles.

The speaker sees the bridge as a place where many people cross, each with their own burdens. He observes a "long procession" of people—some young and full of energy, others old and tired. This contrast highlights different stages of life and the struggles everyone faces.

The speaker reflects that life continues endlessly. As long as people feel emotions and face challenges, life's cycle will go on. The flowing river symbolizes the passage of time and the endurance of life's trials.

The Bridge is a thoughtful poem about time, sorrow, and shared human struggles. The bridge symbolizes life's journey, while the moon

and river show love, change, and the flow of time. The poem teaches us to embrace the passage of time, let go of regrets, and find hope in the future. Longfellow's message inspires us to reflect on our emotions and trust in the healing power of time, nature, and human connections.

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