



Question of the Week

**How can people promote freedom?**

THE MIDNIGHT RIDE OF

# PAUL REVERE

*by*

Henry  
Wadsworth  
Longfellow

*graved and painted by*

Christopher Bing

## Genre

A **poem** is a composition arranged in lines. Some poems have rhyme, some have rhythm, and some have both. As you read this narrative poem—a long poem that tells a story—notice how the rhyme and rhythm reinforce the story's meaning.



## LISTEN, MY CHILDREN, AND YOU SHALL HEAR

Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,  
On the eighteenth of April, in Seventy-Five,  
Hardly a man is now alive  
Who remembers that famous day and year.

He said to his friend, "If the British march  
By land or sea from the town tonight,  
Hang a lantern aloft in the belfry arch  
Of the North Church tower as a signal light—  
One, if by land, and two, if by sea;  
And I on the opposite shore will be,  
Ready to ride and spread the alarm  
Through every Middlesex village and farm,  
For the country folk to be up and to arm."

Then he said, "Good night!"  
and with muffled oar  
Silently rowed to the Charlestown shore,  
Just as the moon rose over the bay,  
Where swinging wide at her moorings lay  
The *Somerset*, British man-of-war;  
A phantom ship, with each mast and spar  
Across the moon like a prison bar,  
And a huge black hulk, that was magnified  
By its own reflection in the tide.





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Meanwhile, his friend, through alley and street,  
Wanders and watches, with eager ears,  
Till in the silence around him he hears  
The muster of men at the barrack door,  
The sound of arms, and the tramp of feet,  
And the measured tread of the grenadiers,  
Marching down to their boats on the shore.

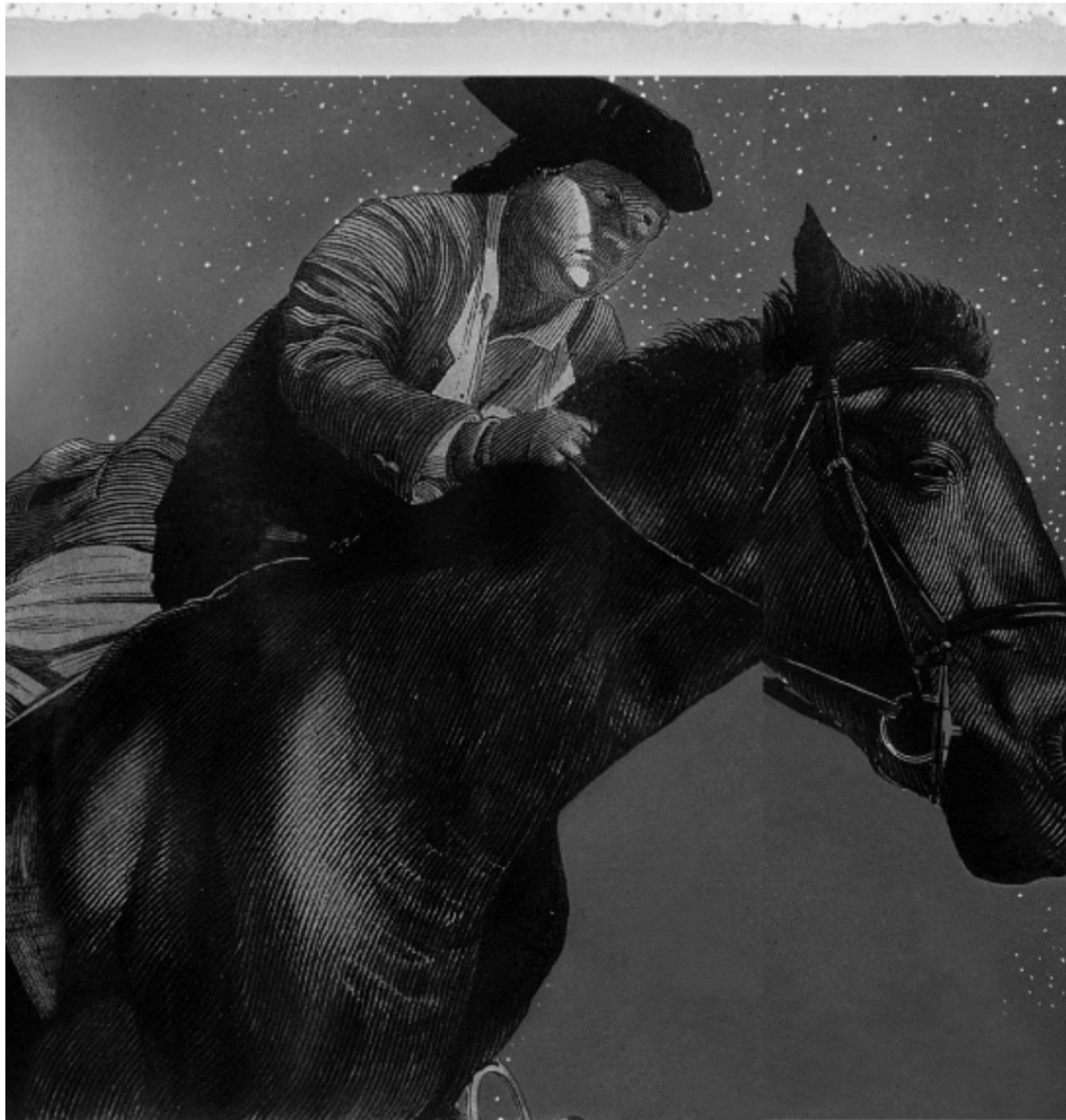
Then he climbed the tower  
of the Old North Church,  
By the wooden stairs, with stealthy tread,  
To the belfry-chamber overhead,  
And startled the pigeons from their perch  
On the **somber** rafters, that round him made  
Masses and moving shapes of shade—  
By the trembling ladder, steep and tall,  
To the highest window in the wall,  
Where he paused to listen and look down  
A moment on the roofs of the town,  
And the moonlight flowing over all.

Beneath in the churchyard, lay the dead,  
In their night-encampment on the hill,  
Wrapped in silence so deep and still  
That he could hear, like a sentinel's tread,  
The watchful night-wind, as it went  
Creeping along from tent to tent,  
And seeming to whisper, "All is well!"  
A moment only he feels the spell  
Of the place and the hour, the secret dread  
Of the lonely belfry and the dead;  
For suddenly all his thoughts are bent  
On a shadowy something far away,



Where the river widens to meet the bay—  
A line of black that bends and floats  
On the rising tide, like a bridge of boats.  
Meanwhile, impatient to mount and ride,  
Booted and spurred, with a heavy stride  
On the opposite shore walked Paul Revere.  
Now he patted his horse's side,  
Now gazed on the landscape far and near,  
Then, impetuous, stamped the earth,  
And turned and tightened his saddle girth;  
But mostly he watched with eager search  
The belfry tower of the Old North Church,  
As it rose above the graves on the hill,  
Lonely and spectral and somber and still.  
And lo! as he looks, on the belfry's height  
A glimmer, and then a gleam of light!  
He springs to the saddle, the bridle he turns,  
But lingers and gazes, till full on his sight  
A second lamp in the belfry burns!





A hurry of hoofs in a village street,  
A shape in the moonlight, a bulk in the dark,  
And beneath, from the pebbles,  
    in passing, a spark  
Struck out by a steed flying fearless and fleet:  
That was all! And yet,  
    through the gloom and the light,  
The fate of a nation was riding that night;  
And the spark struck out  
    by that steed, in his flight,  
Kindled the land into flame with its heat.

He has left the village and mounted the steep,  
And beneath him, tranquil and broad and deep,  
Is the Mystic, meeting the ocean tides;  
And under the alders that skirt its edge,  
Now soft on the sand, now loud on the ledge,  
Is heard the tramp of his steed as he rides.

It was twelve by the village clock,  
When he crossed the bridge  
    into Medford town.

He heard the crowing of the cock,  
And the barking of the farmer's dog,  
And felt the damp of the river fog,  
That rises after the sun goes down.





It was one by the village clock,  
When he galloped into Lexington.  
He saw the gilded weathercock  
Swim in the moonlight as he passed,  
And the meeting-house windows,  
    blank and bare,  
Gaze at him with a spectral glare,  
As if they already stood aghast  
At the bloody work they would look upon.

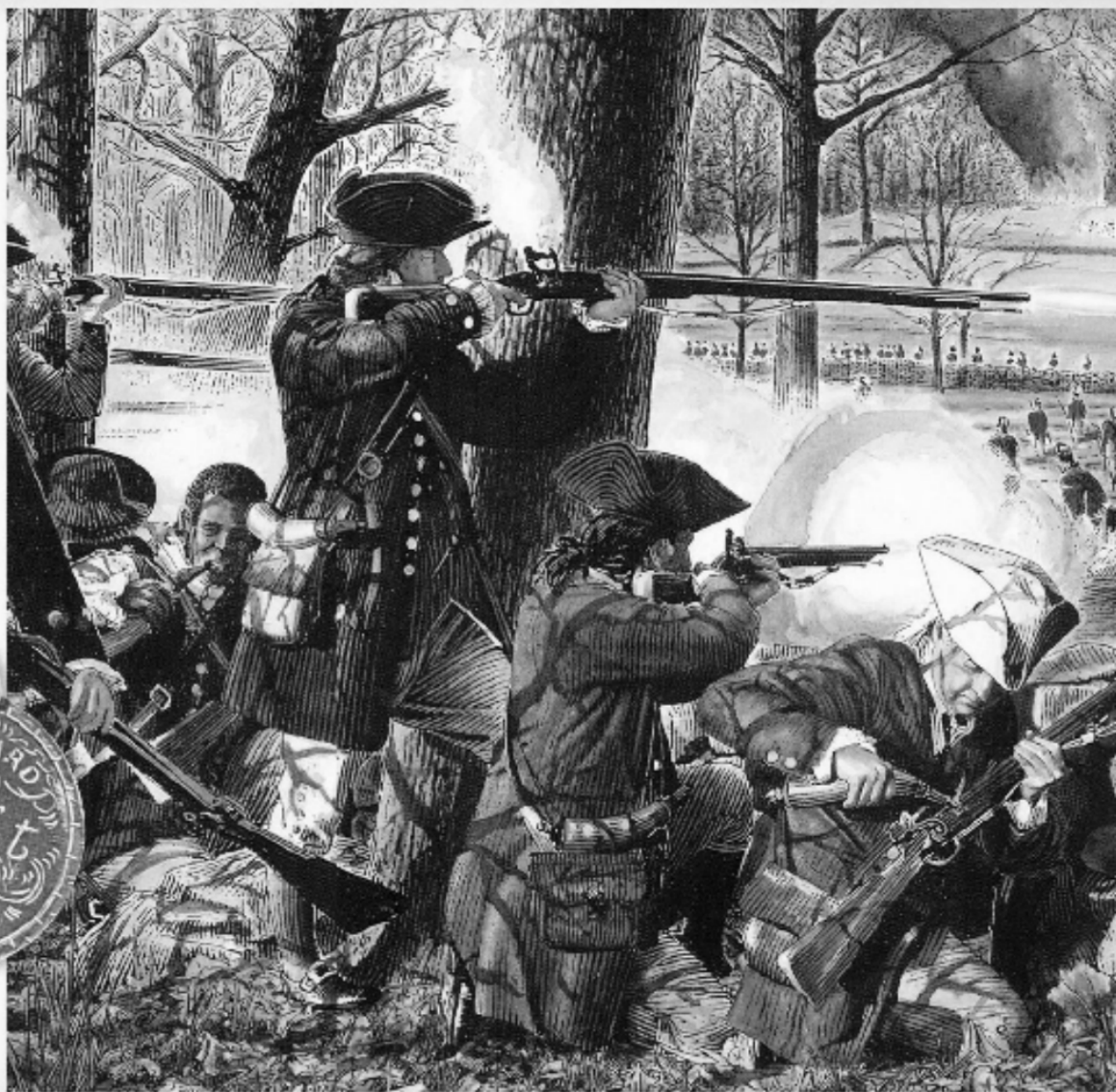
It was two by the village clock,  
When he came to the bridge in Concord town.  
He heard the bleating of the flock,  
And the twitter of birds among the trees,  
And felt the breath of the morning breeze  
Blowing over the meadows brown.  
And one was safe and asleep in his bed  
Who at the bridge would be first to fall,  
Who that day would be lying dead,  
Pierced by a British musket-ball.

You know the rest. In the books you have read  
How the British Regulars fired and fled—  
How the farmers gave them ball for ball,  
From behind each fence and farmyard wall,  
Chasing the red-coats down the lane,  
Then crossing the fields to emerge again  
Under the trees at the turn of the road  
And only pausing to fire and load.





So through the night rode Paul Revere,  
And so through the night went his cry of alarm  
To every Middlesex village and farm—  
A cry of defiance and not of fear,  
A voice in the darkness, a knock at the door,  
And a word that shall echo for evermore!  
For, borne on the night-wind of the Past,  
Through all our history, to the last,  
In the hour of darkness and peril and need,  
The people will waken and listen to hear  
The hurrying hoof-beats of that steed,  
And the midnight message of Paul Revere.





Common Core State Standards  
Literature 10. By the end of the year,  
read and comprehend literature, including  
stories, dramas, and poetry, at the high  
end of the grades 4–5 text complexity  
band independently and proficiently.  
Also Literature 5.

## Social Studies in Reading

### Genre Drama

- A drama is a story that is to be acted out. It usually includes dialogue, or lines that the characters speak to one another.
- A drama will also include descriptions of settings. This will let readers know where and when the drama takes place.
- A drama may include stage directions, or specific instructions about how to perform.
- Read *The Heroic Paul Revere*. While reading, think about ways this drama is similar to and different from the original poem.

## THE HEROIC *Paul Revere*

adapted from the poem *The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere*  
a play written by Charles Blair

### CAST

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow,  
as LONGFELLOW

PAUL REVERE	BRITISH SOLDIER 1
COLONIST	BRITISH SOLDIER 2

*NOTE: This play includes a scene where the character of Paul Revere rides a horse. The horse does not need to be a real horse. The actor can either pretend to ride a horse or a simple prop, such as a toy horse, can be used.*

### SCENE I

*THE SETTING: Colonial Boston in 1775, night. PAUL REVERE and a COLONIST stand before a church. On the stage is a small house and a fence. HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW enters.*

LONGFELLOW: Listen, my children, and you shall hear of the midnight ride of Paul Revere. What's that? You don't know the tale? Well, allow me to set the stage for you. The date is April 18, 1775. The American colonies and England are on the brink of war. Paul Revere speaks to his friend, a colonist.

REVERE: If the British march by land or sea from Boston tonight, hang a lantern aloft in the belfry arch of the North Church tower — one if by land, two if by sea.

COLONIST: Yes, sir.

REVERE: I will be on the opposite shore, ready to ride my horse and spread the alarm. Do you understand?

COLONIST: Yes, sir.

*(The two men shake hands.)*

REVERE: Good night, my friend. And good luck.

*(PAUL REVERE exits the stage.)*

COLONIST: What a brave man! But I mustn't waste time. I must find out what the British are up to!

LONGFELLOW: The colonist wandered through the streets, listening for British soldiers. He didn't have to wait long.

*(Several BRITISH SOLDIERS exit the house, yelling loudly. The COLONIST hides behind the fence.)*

BRITISH SOLDIER 1: The time has come to teach these rebels a lesson.

BRITISH SOLDIER 2: To the boats!

COLONIST: Listen to that! The British soldiers are on the move! And they are marching down to their boats on the shore. I must warn Mr. Revere!

### END OF SCENE I.

### Let's Think About...

How is the structure of this play different from that of the poem? **Drama**



Let's **Think** About...

What parts of the play are similar to the original text you just read? **Drama**

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**SCENE II**

*The COLONIST is standing inside the church's belfry. He places one lantern on the belfry. PAUL REVERE enters from the opposite side of the stage.*

REVERE: Look! It's a light! One light!  
*(The COLONIST places another lantern.)*

REVERE: A second light! The British are coming by sea! I must get my horse ready! We must ride and warn the colonists!

LONGFELLOW: With a hurry of hoofs Paul Revere rode off. Just imagine the sight! A shape in the moonlight, a bulk in the dark. The fate of a nation was riding that night.

REVERE: *(yelling from offstage)* Ride, my friend! Faster!

*(PAUL REVERE enters the stage, riding a horse.)*

LONGFELLOW: At twelve o'clock he crossed the bridge into Medford town! At one o'clock he galloped into Lexington! At two o'clock he rode into Concord. The people, safe and asleep in their beds, heard him exclaim . . .

REVERE: The British are coming! The British are coming!

LONGFELLOW: So through the night rode Paul Revere. He cried the alarm to every village and farm, a cry of defiance and not of fear. His voice called in a voice that shall echo forevermore—

REVERE: The British are coming!

LONGFELLOW: And the people fought bravely. Thus ends our tale. Now if anyone asks you what it means to be a hero, you can tell them about the midnight ride of Paul Revere.

**THE END**



Let's **Think** About...

**Reading Across**

**Texts** Both *The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere* and *The Heroic Paul Revere* tell the story of the most famous ride in American history. Make a chart to compare and contrast these two versions.

**Writing Across**

**Texts** Write a paragraph that compares and contrasts the two selections.

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