

Online Resources:

For simple background material you might want to read the Wikipedia article:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Song\\_of\\_Hiawatha](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Song_of_Hiawatha)

An audio recording of the poem. The introduction includes helpful background material about the poem, its history and sources and about Longfellow. It's read beautifully and could be read along.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rd8rgRnKjhM>

Articles and study materials

<http://tiny.cc/4cae2w>

<http://tiny.cc/vfae2w>

<http://voices.yahoo.com/summary-song-hiawatha-11529376.html>

Some personal notes about the poem:

The Song of Hiawatha is the meeting of an Epic poem and American Tall Tale. A mixture of Beowulf and Paul Bunyan.

I read this as a story for the white settlers in the New World, offering a history of the land they have occupied. It is written in a way that allows the pale-face readers to discover the roots of their new home not simply as strangers in a foreign land, but as a continuation of a rich heritage.

Each time Longfellow uses a native word he includes the English translation.

“He it was who sent the wood-birds,  
Sent the robin, the Opechee,  
Sent the bluebird, the Owaissa,  
Sent the Shawshaw, sent the swallow,  
Sent the wild-goose, Wawa, northward...”

Longfellow is writing Indian legend in a foreign language, the language of the conqueror, but by consistently incorporating the Indian words into his retelling of the story, he helps the English speaking readers to walk alongside, to enter into, the story in as close to its original form as they are able.

Prefiguring Christ in the New World, Hiawatha opens the doors for his people to receive the Gospel message from the European missionaries.

Examples:

I. The Peace Pipe

The nations come before God covered in war-paint and with hearts full of vengeance. Gitche Manitu instructs them to bathe in the river, washing themselves clean, and then to make peace between all the nations. Christian symbolism in a pre-Christian world.

## XXI. The White Man's Foot

Hiawatha's vision:

"True is all Iagoos tells us;  
I have seen it in a vision,  
Seen the great canoe with pinions,  
Seen the people with white faces,  
Seen the coming of this bearded  
People of the wooden vessel  
From the regions of the morning,  
From the shining land of Wabun.  
"Gitche Manito, the Mighty,  
The Great Spirit, the Creator,  
Sends them hither on his errand.  
Sends them to us with his message.  
Wheresoe'er they move, before them  
Swarms the stinging fly, the Ahmo,  
Swarms the bee, the honey-maker;  
Wheresoe'er they tread, beneath them  
Springs a flower unknown among us,  
Springs the White-man's Foot in blossom.

"Let us welcome, then, the strangers,  
Hail them as our friends and brothers,  
And the heart's right hand of friendship  
Give them when they come to see us.  
Gitche Manito, the Mighty,  
Said this to me in my vision.

"I beheld, too, in that vision  
All the secrets of the future,  
Of the distant days that shall be.  
I beheld the westward marches  
Of the unknown, crowded nations.  
All the land was full of people,  
Restless, struggling, toiling, striving,  
Speaking many tongues, yet feeling  
But one heart-beat in their bosoms.  
In the woodlands rang their axes,  
Smoked their towns in all the valleys,  
Over all the lakes and rivers  
Rushed their great canoes of thunder.

(brotherhood of all men)

(burning hearth fires and burning villages)

"Then a darker, drearier vision  
Passed before me, vague and cloud-like;  
I beheld our nation scattered,  
All forgetful of my counsels,  
Weakened, warring with each other;  
Saw the remnants of our people  
Sweeping westward, wild and woful,  
Like the cloud-rack of a tempest,  
Like the withered leaves of Autumn!"

## XXII. Hiawatha's Departure

From the distant land of Wabun,  
From the farthest realms of morning  
Came the Black-Robe chief, the Prophet,  
He the Priest of Prayer, the Pale-face,  
With his guides and his companions.

And the noble Hiawatha,  
With his hands aloft extended,  
Held aloft in sign of welcome,  
Waited, full of exultation,  
Till the birch canoe with paddles  
Grated on the shining pebbles,  
Stranded on the sandy margin,  
Till the Black-Robe chief, the Pale-face,  
With the cross upon his bosom,  
Landed on the sandy margin.

Then the joyous Hiawatha  
Cried aloud and spake in this wise:  
"Beautiful is the sun, O strangers,  
When you come so far to see us!  
All our town in peace awaits you,  
All our doors stand open for you;  
You shall enter all our wigwams,  
For the heart's right hand we give you.  
"Never bloomed the earth so gayly,

...

As they seem to us this morning,  
When you come so far to see us!"

And the Black-Robe chief made answer,  
Stammered in his speech a little,  
Speaking words yet unfamiliar:  
"Peace be with you, Hiawatha,  
Peace be with you and your people,  
Peace of prayer, and peace of pardon,  
Peace of Christ, and joy of Mary!"

...

All the old men of the village,  
All the warriors of the nation,  
All the Jossakeeds, the Prophets,  
The magicians, the Wabenos,  
And the Medicine-men, the Medas,  
Came to bid the strangers welcome;  
"It is well", they said, "O brothers,  
That you come so far to see us!"

...

From his place rose Hiawatha,  
Bade farewell to old Nokomis,  
Spake in whispers, spake in this wise,  
Did not wake the guests, that slumbered.

"I am going, O Nokomis,  
On a long and distant journey,  
To the portals of the Sunset.  
To the regions of the home-wind,  
Of the Northwest-Wind, Keewaydin.  
But these guests I leave behind me,  
In your watch and ward I leave them;  
See that never harm comes near them,  
See that never fear molests them,  
Never danger nor suspicion,  
Never want of food or shelter,  
In the lodge of Hiawatha!"

Forth into the village went he,  
Bade farewell to all the warriors,  
Bade farewell to all the young men,  
Spake persuading, spake in this wise:  
"I am going, O my people,  
On a long and distant journey;  
Many moons and many winters  
Will have come, and will have vanished,  
Ere I come again to see you.  
But my guests I leave behind me;  
Listen to their words of wisdom,  
Listen to the truth they tell you,  
For the Master of Life has sent them  
From the land of light and morning!"

...

Thus departed Hiawatha,  
Hiawatha the Beloved,  
In the glory of the sunset,  
In the purple mists of evening,  
To the regions of the home-wind,

Of the Northwest-Wind, Keewaydin,  
To the Islands of the Blessed,  
To the Kingdom of Ponemah,  
To the Land of the Hereafter!

The priest greets Hiawatha and the Indians in their own language, bringing the Word to them in words they can understand.

Hiawatha leaves, making room for Christ as the new leader of his people, with instructions that his people take to heart the message that God has sent them, even though he already saw in his vision that peace wouldn't last.

*I have bolded questions under which I have written brief notes in italics. These are suggestions of possible answers to the more subjective questions in the study guide. Most of the questions in this guide are looking for straightforward information found in the text or the glossary at the back of the book. Some of the questions are rather obscure and I'm really not sure what the teacher was looking for. You may just want to skip over anything that just doesn't make sense to you.*

### **Hiawatha Study Guidelines by Mrs. Barbara Hall (Kolbe Trinity Academy)**

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[http://www.kolbetrinity.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC\\_ID=235535&type=u](http://www.kolbetrinity.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=235535&type=u)

#### **Prologue and the Peace-Pipe.**

1. What type of poem is Hiawatha?
2. What was Longfellow's purpose in writing Hiawatha?
3. What sources did Longfellow use for the poem?
4. How does the poem start?
5. Who is Gitchie Manito?
6. How and why does he call the Indian tribes together?
7. What does he promise them?
8. What is their communal action before they separate and return home?

## **The Four Winds**

1. Who or what did Mudjekeewis slay?
2. Why was this an honor for him?
3. How did the Indians honor him?
4. To whom did he give the other three winds?
5. How is Wabun described? Which wind is he?
6. What effect does Kabibonokka have over the earth? Which wind is he?
- 7. What do you think Kabibonokka's wrestle with Shingebis might symbolize?**

*-“You are but my fellow mortal” could refer to winter's temporary reign over the earth. The cold north wind is fierce and threatening, but the diver recognizes that with proper preparation he can face the severity of winter until spring inevitably returns.*

8. How does Shawondasee contrast with Kabibonokka? Which wind is he?
9. Who is the “tall and slender maiden with yellow tresses”?

## Hiawatha's Childhood

1. How is Nokomis described in the first stanza?
2. What is the "Muskoday"?
3. Why does Nokomis fall down onto the 'Muskoday'?
4. Who is Wenonah?
5. What warning does Nokomis give Wenonah?
6. **Why does the poet write "bore a son of love and sorrow"?**

*- Wenonah fell in love with Mudjekeewis when he wooed her, but he was faithless and abandoned her and their son.*

7. How is Hiawatha described at birth?
8. What is the Native American name for the Big-Sea-Water? Does this place exist in reality?
9. What are 'reindeer sinews'?
10. **Why does the poet describe Ishkoodah as having fiery tresses?**

*- Ishkoodah is a comet – fiery tresses (hair) are the comet's fiery tail.*

11. Where does Hiawatha sit in the evening and what does he do?
12. How does Nokomis explain the moon to Hiawatha? How does she explain the rainbow?
13. Who are "Hiawatha's Chickens"?
14. Who are "Hiawatha's Brothers"?
15. Why does Hiawatha go into the forest with his bow and arrow?
16. How does he meet the challenge to kill the roebuck?
17. Why does the whole village celebrate Hiawatha's success?

## **Hiawatha and Mudjekeewis**

1. What exceptional talents does Hiawatha possess?

2. What are “Minjekahwun”?

**3. Why are his moccasins magic?**

*- They allowed him to walk a mile with each step. Similar to an American tall tale hero.*

4. What simile is used to describe Hiawatha’s feelings for his father?

5. Of what is his bow and arrow made?

6. Why does Nokomis not wish Hiawatha to go to Mudjekeewis?

7. How does he feel when he sees his father?

8. How does his father feel?

**9. What does the sight of Hiawatha represent for Mudjekeewis?**

*- His own youth and his passion for Hiawatha’s beautiful mother, Wenonah*

10. What does he tell Hiawatha?

11. How does Hiawatha react?

12. Which words does the poet use to indicate that Hiawatha is being cunning and deceiving his father?

13. Explain Hiawatha’s ruse?

**14. Why does he attack his father?**

*- Revenge for his mother, who died of a broken heart after Mudjekeewis left her.*



15. What is the Wawbeek? What does Hiawatha do with it?

16. To what does this lead?

17. How long does it last?

18. What is the outcome?

**19. Where does Hiawatha stop on his way home? Why?**

*- His excuse is to buy arrow-heads, but he is smitten with Minnehaha's beauty and wants to see her.*

**20. Who is "Laughing Water"?**

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## **Hiawatha's Fasting**

1. Why did Hiawatha pray and fast?
2. How long did he fast?
3. What questions does he ask on the first three days?
4. Who comes to him in a vision on the fourth day?
5. What message does he bring?
6. What does he challenge Hiawatha to do?
7. How does Hiawatha feel and how does he cope with the challenge?
8. When and how many times does Mondamin come?
9. Is this symbolic in any way?
10. When does the fighting stop each time?
11. What does Mondamin tell Hiawatha will happen the next night?
12. What is Mondamin?

*- Symbolic of corn, sent from God as a blessing to the tribes*

### **13. What does Hiawatha's struggle with Mondamin represent?**

*- Learning to grow crops*

### **14. What do the instructions given to Hiawatha symbolize?**

*- They teach him the best way to grow a healthy, fruitful crop*

## 15. What is the significance of the corn?

*- The tribes are able to grow their own food rather than relying purely on hunting and wild-grown foods, which they have limited control over.*

### **Hiawatha's Friends**

1. What are the names of Hiawatha's friends?
2. Who was 'most beloved by Hiawatha'?
3. Describe him.
4. From what did he make flutes?
5. About what did he sing?
6. Did everyone like his music? Give a quote to support your answer.
7. Why did Hiawatha love him?
8. What special quality had Kwasind?
9. Why did Hiawatha love him? (quote)
10. What was Kwasind like as a child?
11. In what way was he unusual?
12. His father called him lazy. What did he do once to prove him wrong?
13. Why did his companions once believe he was dead?
14. Everyone thought Kwasind was lazy? Was he really? How did he usually meet these taunts?

### **Hiawatha's Sailing**

1. From which trees does Hiawatha make his canoe?
2. For what does he use the hedgehog quills?
3. What does he use for paddles?
4. What does Kwasind do?
5. How did Hiawatha's and Kwasind's action help the people?

### **Hiawatha's Fishing**

1. Which fish does Hiawatha want to catch?
2. Which fish does he actually catch?
3. Does he catch the sturgeon eventually?
4. Who or what helps Hiawatha turn the canoe inside the sturgeon?
5. How does he escape from the inside of the sturgeon?
6. Of which scriptural story does this remind you?

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## Hiawatha and the Pearl-Feather

1. Why does Nokomis want Hiawatha to slay Megissogwon?
2. What does Megissogwon wear which makes him invincible?
3. How does Hiawatha defeat Megissogwon?
4. What did Megissogwon send the people?
5. **Does Megissogwon have any parallel in the Christian beliefs?**

*- St George and the dragon, or St Michael and the devil*

6. What does Hiawatha do with his booty?

## Hiawatha's Wooing

1. Why does Nokomis advise Hiawatha to marry within his tribe?
2. **Hiawatha replies: 'Very pleasant is the firelight, But I like the starlight better, Better do I like the moonlight'** What does this tell us about **Hiawatha?**

*- He wants to marry outside the tribe, he is a wanderer and adventurer*

3. For what sort of wife does Nokomis recommend he look?
4. What reason does Hiawatha give for marrying Minnehaha?
5. **How does the poet suggest that Minnehaha loves Hiawatha?**

*- For her goodness and beauty, and as a sign of peace between their tribes*

6. What does the arrow-maker think of Hiawatha?
7. How did Hiawatha 'woo' Minnehaha?
8. What does the sun advise Hiawatha?
9. What does the moon advise Minnehaha?

### **Hiawatha's Wedding Feast**

1. Describe the feast Nokomis prepared for the wedding.
2. How were the guests entertained?
3. Who served the guests?

### **The Son of the Evening Star**

1. **Is there a parallel in scripture to the tale told by the storyteller?**

*- Job? He's tested and rewarded for his faithfulness*

### **Blessing the Cornfields**

1. How does Hiawatha suggest Minnehaha should bless the cornfields?
2. Why does he suggest this?
3. Who plans to thwart Hiawatha's scheme? How?
4. Do they succeed?
5. What does Hiawatha do to the King of Ravens? Why?

### **Picture Writing**

1. Why did Hiawatha paint pictures?
2. What picture represented Gitchie Manito? **What did it signify?**

*- Egg is symbolic of life, pointing to the four winds symbolizes his presence everywhere*

3. What represented evil?
4. How were life and death represented?
5. What did the footsteps leading to a wigwam mean?
6. What did the bloody hands signify?
7. What did Hiawatha ask the people to do? Why?
8. Where else did they paint pictures?
9. Did they only paint pictures of objects and people?

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### **Hiawatha's Lamentation**

1. Who feared Hiawatha and were jealous of his faithful friendship with Chibiabos?
2. Describe Chibiabos from stanza three P107.
3. Where did Chibiabos go alone, ignoring Hiawatha's advice?
4. What happened to him?
5. How does Hiawatha react to his death?
6. Who comes to help Hiawatha?
7. What do they build?
8. What did they give Hiawatha?
9. At what point did Hiawatha stop mourning?
10. Whom did the medicine men summon with their magic?
11. What did they make him?
12. What was his duty?

**13. What is the significance of Chibiabos's comment about the burden put on the dead?**

*What was Hiawatha then able to teach his people?*

**Pau-Puk-Keewis**

1. What does the word 'Yenadizze' mean?
2. Why is 'Ojeeg' called the Summer-Maker?
3. How does Pau-Puk-Keewis interrupt Iagoo and his story-telling?
4. What does Pau-Puk Keewis bet on finally?
5. How does the poet show the unpopularity of Pau-Puk-Keewis?
6. Where does he go after the gambling bout?
7. What did he do as a taunt to Hiawatha? And to Minnehaha?
8. Why does the sea-gull cry to send a message to Hiawatha?

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**The Hunting of Pau-Puk-Keewis**

1. What simile does the poet use to describe Hiawatha's reaction to the mischief of Pua-Puk-Keewis?
2. What does Pua-Puk-Keewis ask the beaver?
3. Is he content to be just one of them?
4. What causes his downfall?
5. What does Hiawatha notice as the beaver is carried into the village?
6. What must Pua-Puk-Keewis as a **brant** not do?
7. What happens when he hears Hiawatha's voice?
8. Does he die this time?
9. How does he escape Hiawatha?
10. To where does he escape?
11. How does he finally die?
12. What happens to his spirit?



### **The Death of Kwasind**

1. Who plots against Kwasind? Why?
2. What is Kwasind's fatal secret?
3. How is Kwasind 'attacked' first?
4. How does he die?
5. How is he remembered?

### **The Ghosts**

1. Who enters the wigwam of Minnehaha and Nokomis?
2. How does Hiawatha react to the visitors?
3. How did the visitors behave when the food was ready?
4. Do they go away the next day?
5. What message do they bring to Hiawatha for the people?

### **The Famine**

1. Who are the two guests who come next to Hiawatha's wigwam?
2. What is Hiawatha's cry of desolation?
3. What indication does the poet give of Minnehaha's approaching death?
4. For how long does Hiawatha mourn?
5. What are the fires for?

### **The White Man's Foot**

1. Who is the old man?
2. Who is the young man?
3. Who returns from wanderings in the east?
4. What message does he bring?
5. What is Gitchie Manito's message to the Indians?
6. What does Hiawatha say will happen to them if they don't heed his words?

### **Hiawatha's Departure**

1. Whom does Hiawatha see coming across the waters?
2. What is the Black-robe?
3. Are the newcomers made welcome?
4. What message do they bring?
5. Where does Hiawatha say he is going?
6. What are his parting words to his people?