

Simply Charlotte Mason presents

Enjoy the Poems

Oliver Wendell Holmes



Oliver Wendell Holmes

Compiled by Ruth Smith

With additional material by Sonya Shafer

Make poetry study simple and enjoyable!

- Get to know a poet and his style through 26 complete poems and a living biography.
- Encourage imagination with helpful tips for Setting the Imaginary Stage.
- Nourish a love for poetic expression by allowing the poems to speak for themselves.
- Enjoy powerful use of language with occasional definitions.
- Gain confidence with practical and inspiring Poetry Notes from Charlotte Mason and others.
- Cultivate good character through beautiful words well put.

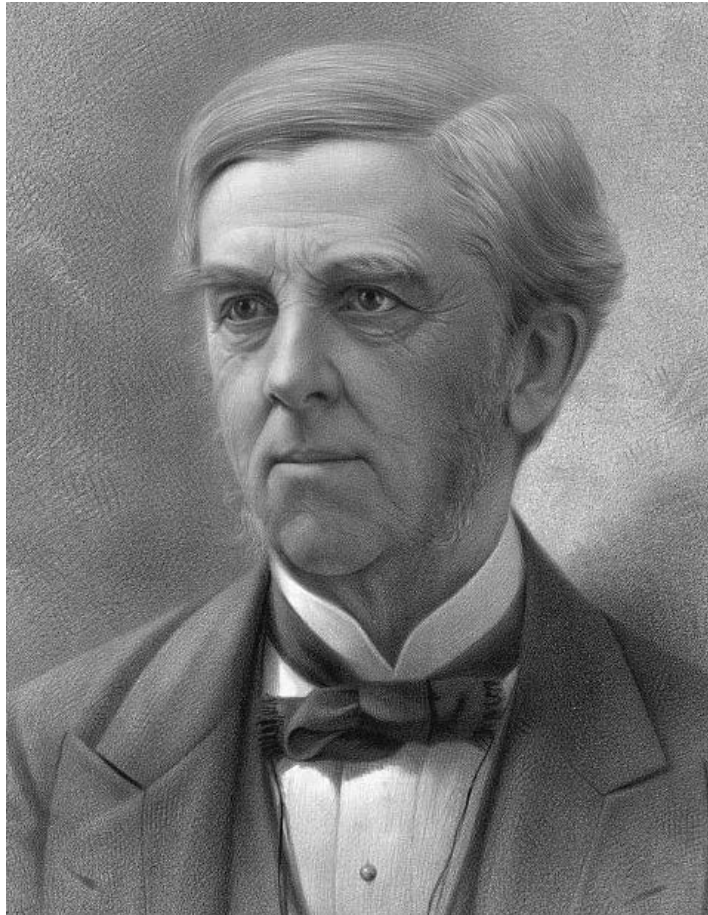
“The line that strikes us as we read, that recurs, that we murmur over at odd moments—this is the line that influences our living.”

—Charlotte Mason

Give your children the gift of poetry with the
Enjoy the Poems series!

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Charlotte Mason
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Enjoy the Poems of Oliver Wendell Holmes



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Cover Design: John Shafer

ISBN 978-1-61634-357-6 printed
ISBN 978-1-61634-358-3 electronic download

Published by
Simply Charlotte Mason, LLC
930 New Hope Road #11-892
Lawrenceville, Georgia 30045
simplycharlottesmason.com

Printed by PrintLogic, Inc.
Monroe, Georgia, USA

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Suggested Schedule

To linger with this poet for a year, you might follow a schedule something like this. Also try to memorize and recite one poem each 12-week term.

Week 1: Read a new poem.
Week 2: Read a new poem.
Week 3: Read the poet's biography and narrate it.
Week 4: Read a new poem.
Week 5: Read a new poem.
Week 6: Enter the poet in your Book of Centuries.
Week 7: Read a new poem.
Week 8: Read a new poem.
Week 9: Choose one of the previous poems and illustrate it.
Week 10: Read a new poem.
Week 11: Read a new poem.
Week 12: Tell what you know about this poet.

Week 13: Read a new poem.
Week 14: Read a new poem.
Week 15: Read a new poem.
Week 16: Read a new poem.
Week 17: Children read aloud favorite poems so far.
Week 18: Read a new poem.
Week 19: Read a new poem.
Week 20: Read a new poem.
Week 21: Choose one of the previous poems and illustrate it.
Week 22: Read a new poem.
Week 23: Read a new poem.
Week 24: Revisit favorite poems.

Week 25: Read a new poem.
Week 26: Read a new poem.
Week 27: Read a new poem.
Week 28: Read a new poem.
Week 29: Children read aloud favorite poems so far.
Week 30: Read a new poem.
Week 31: Read a new poem.
Week 32: Read a new poem.
Week 33: Choose one of the previous poems and illustrate it.
Week 34: Read a new poem.
Week 35: Read a new poem.
Week 36: Revisit favorite poems.

How to Enjoy the Poems

1. Gather the children and read a poem aloud at least once a week. Focus on one poet's work for many months. Linger and get to know his or her ideas.
“‘Collections’ of poems are to be eschewed; but some one poet should have at least a year to himself, that he may have time to do what is in him towards cultivating the seeing eye, the hearing ear, the generous heart” (Vol. 5, p. 224).
2. Read complete poems, not just portions or snippets. We have included only complete poems in this book.
“Selections should be avoided; children should read the whole book or the whole poem to which they are introduced” (Vol. 6, p. 340).
3. Share poems that are suitable for your children during each season of life.
“What can we do to ensure that the poetry our children learn shall open their eyes to beauty, shall increase their joy? In all humility I would offer one suggestion on this point to-day, this: The poetry must be such as to delight them, (1) by being in itself delightful; and (2) by being suitable to their years” (“An Address on the Teaching of Poetry” by Rev. H. C. Beeching, *The Parents’ Review*, Vol. 3 (1892–93), edited by Charlotte Mason, pp. 893–898).
4. Understand that the purpose of poetry is to cultivate the imagination, right emotions, and the power of vivid expression.
“The purpose of poetry is to communicate or extend the joy of life by quickening our emotions. . . . It teaches us how to feel, by expressing for us, in the most perfect way, right human emotions, which we recognise as right, and come ourselves to share. It is good for all of us to be taught how to feel; to be taught how to feel in the presence of Nature; how to feel to one’s country, to one’s lover, or wife, or child; to be taught to feel the mystery of life, the glory of it, the pathos of it; good for us to be shaken out of our lethargic absorption in ourselves, and to have our eyes anointed with salve, that we may look round us and rejoice, and lift up our hearts. . . .
“It will be readily seen that if the poems become real and vivid to them, the children gain, besides the immediate joy in the life represented, and the right training of the emotions by their right exercise thus administered (which I maintain is the true function of poetry), they gain, I say, besides this, exercise to their own powers of imagination; the wings of their own fancy become fledged, and they can fly at will. And, secondly, they gain skill in the use of language” (“An Address on the Teaching of Poetry” by Rev. H. C. Beeching, *The Parents’ Review*, Vol. 3 (1892–93), edited by Charlotte Mason, pp. 893–898).
5. Don’t turn the poetry readings into lessons. Give only enough explanation necessary to help your children realize the situation of the poem. We have included occasional notes to help you do this.
“Poetry must not on any pretence be made into a poetry lesson; all that is at enmity with joy must be banished from this ideal province. What one wants, of course, is that the poem shall become to the reader what it was to the writer; a few words may need explaining, but the ex-

planation must not be elaborate . . .; the chief thing will be to make sure that the child realises the facts, the situation” (“An Address on the Teaching of Poetry” by Rev. H. C. Beeching, *The Parents’ Review*, Vol. 3 (1892–93), edited by Charlotte Mason, pp. 893–898).

6. Allow your children time and space to feel the force and beauty of words.

“The thing is, to keep your eye upon words and wait to feel their force and beauty; and, when words are so fit that no other words can be put in their places, so few that none can be left out without spoiling the sense, and so fresh and musical that they delight you, then you may be sure that you are reading Literature, whether in prose or poetry” (Vol. 4, Book 1, p. 41).

7. Encourage your children to make the poetry their own.

Let them

- Read it aloud, being careful to say beautiful words in a beautiful way.
- Act it, presenting the dramatic poems in their own style.
- Draw it, portraying a favorite scene in art.
- Copy it, transcribing a favorite stanza in their best handwriting.
- Memorize and recite it, conveying their own interpretation of the ideas.
- Treasure it, entering favorite passages or phrases in a personal journal for years to come.

Getting to Know Oliver Wendell Holmes

Nothing much ever happened to Oliver Wendell Holmes. He started life in Massachusetts, tumbling about the thousands of books in his father's library and, later, reading them whenever he could, sometimes during school hours when he was supposed to be reading his lessons. When he wasn't reading, he was talking or working with his hands. He was an inveterate whisperer at every school he ever attended, and his desk bore sad witness to his passion for whittling.

When Holmes graduated, he was still in some doubt as to what should be his calling in life. So he took a tentative step into law school. One day, while he was there, he read a news item that the historic, but unseaworthy, frigate *Constitution* was scheduled to be destroyed. The news stirred something deep inside him. On a scrap of paper he quickly composed a poem, "Old Ironsides," and sent it to a local newspaper. Other newspapers picked it up across the country, and many citizens rallied to the cause. The grand old ship was saved from destruction, and Oliver Wendell Holmes, law student, achieved instant fame.

But Oliver was discovering that being a law student was not the road for him. So he stopped at the first milestone, the end of that year, and made a change. He began to study medicine instead, and he soon found that he enjoyed his new path much better.

(Complete biography is included with the full book.)

TO A BLANK SHEET OF PAPER

Wan-visaged thing! thy virgin leaf
To me looks more than deadly pale,
Unknowing what may stain thee yet,—
A poem or a tale.

Who can thy unborn meaning scan?
Can Seer or Sibyl read thee now?
No,—seek to trace the fate of man
Writ on his infant brow.

Love may light on thy snowy cheek,
And shake his Eden-breathing plumes;
Then shalt thou tell how Lelia smiles,
Or Angelina blooms.

Satire may lift his bearded lance,
Forestalling Time's slow-moving scythe,
And, scattered on thy little field,
Disjointed bards may writhe.

Perchance a vision of the night,
Some grizzled spectre, gaunt and thin,
Or sheeted corpse, may stalk along,
Or skeleton may grin!

If it should be in pensive hour
Some sorrow-moving theme I try,
Ah, maiden, how thy tears will fall,
For all I doom to die!

But if in merry mood I touch
Thy leaves, then shall the sight of thee
Sow smiles as thick on rosy lips
As ripples on the sea.

The Weekly press shall gladly stoop
To bind thee up among its sheaves;
The Daily steal thy shining ore,
To gild its leaden leaves.

Thou hast no tongue, yet thou canst speak,
Till distant shores shall hear the sound;

*Setting the
Imaginary Stage:
When Dr. Holmes
occasionally spoke
of his manner of
writing, he explained
that when he took
his pen in hand, he
knew not whither it
would carry him.*

*Sibyl refers to a
woman able to
foretell the future.*

Thou hast no life, yet thou canst breathe
Fresh life on all around.

Thou art the arena of the wise,
The noiseless battle-ground of fame;
The sky where halos may be wreathed
Around the humblest name.

Take, then, this treasure to thy trust,
To win some idle reader's smile,
Then fade and moulder in the dust,
Or swell some bonfire's pile.

*Poetry Note: "Great artists, whether they be poets or painters, builders or musicians, have the power of expressing and showing to the rest of us some part, anyway, of the wonderful visions Imagination has revealed to them."
—Charlotte Mason*

Pages for Poem Illustrations

An Illustration of _____