

NAXOS
AudioBooks

POETRY

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

The Song of Hiawatha

THE
COMPLETE
CLASSICS

UNABRIDGED

Read by **William Hootkins**



NA334012D

1	The Song of Hiawatha – Introduction	5:13
2	I – The Peace Pipe	3:21
3	Gitche Manito, the mighty...	4:07
4	II – The Four Winds	4:13
5	But one morning, gazing earthward...	4:20
6	Till at last he rose defeated...	4:43
7	III – Hiawatha's Childhood	4:26
8	At the door on summer evenings...	5:54
9	IV – Hiawatha and Mudjekeewis	3:46
10	Filled with joy was Mudjekeewis...	5:10
11	Back retreated Mudjekeewis...	4:28
12	V – Hiawatha's Fasting	4:01
13	Faint with famine, Hiawatha...	3:51
14	On the morrow came Nokomis...	4:34
15	VI – Hiawatha's Friends	3:14
16	Dear, too, unto Hiawatha...	4:29
17	VII – Hiawatha's Sailing	5:58
18	VIII – Hiawatha's Fishing	3:17

19	Reeling downward to the bottom...	3:30
20	Then he heard a clang and flapping...	3:05
21	IX – Hiawatha and the Pearl-Feather	4:31
22	All night long he sailed upon it...	4:47
23	Suddenly from the boughs above him...	4:09
24	X – Hiawatha's Wooing	3:40
25	At the doorway of his wigwam...	4:02
26	And the ancient Arrow-maker...	4:40
27	XI – Hiawatha's Wedding-Feast	5:26
28	Then they said to Chibiabos...	5:10
29	XII – The Son of the Evening Star	4:13
30	'On their pathway through the woodlands...'	5:31
30	'Forth with cheerful words of welcome...'	3:22
32	'After him he saw descending...'	3:55
33	XIII – Blessing of the Cornfields	4:07
34	On the morrow, as the day dawned...	5:54
35	XIV – Picture-Writing	3:44
36	And they painted on the grave-posts...	4:00

37	XV – Hiawatha’s Lamentation	1:22
38	Right across the Big-Sea-Water...	3:19
39	There a magic drink they gave him...	4:56
40	XVI – Pau-Puk-Keewis	4:48
41	So they sat and played together...	6:27
42	XVII – The Hunting of Pau-Puk-Keewis	4:13
43	Down into the pond among them...	4:54
44	Fast and far they fled to northward...	6:00
45	XVIII – The Death of Kwasind	5:28
46	XIX – The Ghosts	4:52
47	Many a daylight dawned and darkened...	5:05
48	XX – The Famine	4:01
49	In the wigwam with Nokomis...	4:15
50	XXI – The White Man’s Foot	4:49
51	Sailing on the wind to northward...	5:13
52	XXII – Hiawatha’s Departure	4:50
53	All the old men of the village...	6:05

Total time: 3:58:01

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

The Song of Hiawatha

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was the first American poet to earn a living from writing verse, a situation made possible by such poems as *Paul Revere's Ride*, *The Village Blacksmith*, *The Courtship of Miles Standish* and his most popular and enduring long poem, *The Song of Hiawatha*. Born in Portland, Maine, in 1807, he was still at college when he declared his intention to make writing his career. The son of a lawyer and congressman, Longfellow's first poem, *The Battle of Lovell's Pond*, was published when he was only thirteen. But it was as a translator that he first made his academic mark: translations of Horace won him a scholarship to travel through Europe in the 1820s, which he did before returning to academia in the USA. (It is said that he mastered eleven languages.)

Shortly after his marriage to Mary Potter in 1831 he embarked on an extended journey to Europe and Scandinavia. There he encountered the Finnish epic, the *Kalevala*, which was, famously, to provide him with the distinctive metre used in *Hiawatha*.

By 1836, now a widower, he was the published author of a variety of works: the romantic novel *Hyperion*; *Voices of the*

Night, a collection of poetry which sold many copies; as well as plays, and even poetry, on politically current topics such as slavery (written after spending time with Charles Dickens in London). The 1841 collection *Ballads and Other Poems* includes *The Wreck of the Hesperus* and *The Village Blacksmith*, both among his best-loved works. By this time, Longfellow was strongly established in the European Romantic literary mode.

In 1854 he resigned from his post as professor of French and Spanish at Harvard and went to live in Cambridge, Massachusetts. In the following year he published *The Song of Hiawatha*: it was immediately successful. It was read and quoted everywhere, and translated into numerous languages. Cardinal Newman's brother translated it into Latin; and before long, parodies began to appear. *Hiawatha's Photographing* by Lewis Carroll transports the metre into a hilarious Victorian marriage:

From his shoulder Hiawatha
Took the camera of rosewood,
Made of sliding, folding rosewood;
Neatly put it all together.

In its case it lay compactly,
Folded into nearly nothing;
But he opened out the hinges,
Pushed and pulled the joints and hinges,
Till it looked all squares and oblongs,
Like a complicated figure
In the Second Book of Euclid.

Another parody is *The Song of Milkanwatha*
by Marc Anthony Henderson (Rev. George
A. Strong, 1832–1912):

He killed the noble Mudjokivis.
Of the skin he made him mittens,
Made them with the fur side inside,
Made them with the skin side outside.
He, to get the warm side inside,
Put the inside skin side outside;
He to get the cold side outside
Put the warm side fur side inside.
That's why he put the fur side inside,
Why he put the skin side outside,
Why he turned them inside outside.

Longfellow's poem endured and survived all.

Soon after the death of Mary Potter, Longfellow had embarked on a happy second marriage to Frances Appleton, whom he had met on his travels in Germany and Switzerland. Yet in 1861 his personal life was shattered by her death, in unusual circumstances: she was sealing an envelope with wax when her dress caught alight from the match. Longfellow tried to save her but

she died the following day.

Longfellow lived the life of an honoured poet with international standing. During a visit to England in 1868 to receive an honorary degree from Cambridge University, he took tea with Queen Victoria. She noted in her diary that, such was his popularity, even her servants were curious to see him, and they 'concealed themselves in places' in the palace in order to do so. He counted Alfred, Lord Tennyson (whom he outsold) and Franz Liszt among his friends; and Nathaniel Hawthorne (with whom he was at college), James Russell Lowell and Oliver Wendell Holmes were close American friends.

As a translator, one of his key achievements was the first American translation of Dante's *The Divine Comedy* (1867).

Longfellow died in 1882 at the age of 75. He was the first American poet to be commemorated by a bust in Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey.

The Song of Hiawatha

Longfellow worked on *The Song of Hiawatha* from June 1854 to March 1855. Hiawatha was a historical figure from the mid-16th century, perhaps Mohawk, perhaps Onondaga. But Longfellow drew on the popular treatment of Indian stories made by Henry Rowe Schoolcraft who had married an Ojibway – and this is where Hiawatha

himself was placed.

Longfellow made no secret of his source. He wrote:

Into this old tradition I have woven
other curious Indian legends, drawn
chiefly from the various and valuable
writings of Mr Schoolcraft, to whom
the literary world is greatly indebted
for his indefatigable zeal in rescuing
from oblivion so much of the
legendary lore of the Indians.

The scene of the poem is among
the Ojibways on the southern shore
of Lake Superior, in the region
between the Pictured Rocks and the
Grand Sable.

Nor did Longfellow attempt to deny that
he had taken the haunting rhythm – a
trochaic hexameter – from the *Kalevala*
(Land of Heroes), the Finnish epic poem
which had been transmitted orally until the
early 19th century. Longfellow clearly
wanted to draw parallels of native myths
with his tale of Hiawatha, in addition to
adopting the metre.

It is a mythical story, of the young
Hiawatha raised by his grandmother
Nokomis. He becomes a warrior who has
grown up intent upon avenging the wrong
done by his father, the West Wind, on his
mother, Wenonah. Reconciliation occurs

and Hiawatha becomes leader of his
people.

The poem was immensely successful
during Longfellow's life, selling 50,000
copies within a short time of its publication.
Even today, many of its 22 sections remain
in common consciousness, particularly
'Hiawatha's Wooing' and 'Hiawatha's
Wedding-Feast'. The images are very strong
of Hiawatha with his birch canoe, his close
friendships, his 'Minnehaha, Laughing
Water', and his life in the forests,
mountains and rivers. And, certainly when
read aloud, the much-mocked rhythm
becomes an integral support for the epic
nature of the poem: it is there,
unmistakably, but as a base from which
the narrative springs. It rarely feels intrusive,
calculated, or (curiously!) arduously
repetitive.

There occur frequently the expression of
sentiments that are harder to take in the
21st century, and the welcoming of the
missionary will raise eyebrows in an
environment respectful of Native Indian
traditions. Yet it is difficult to deny that *The
Song of Hiawatha* has an engaging charm
even now and, as an important stepping-
stone in American poetry, deserves to be
read – and heard – more widely.

Notes by Nicolas Soames

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

The Song of Hiawatha

Read by **William Hootkins**

By the shores of Gitche Gumee
By the shining Big-Sea-Water
Stood the wigwam of Nokomis
Daughter of the Moon, Nokomis

The Song of Hiawatha was one of the most loved and quoted narrative poems of the 19th century. It tells the story of a young Ojibway chief growing up, facing his father, the West Wind, in a revenge battle from which they emerge reconciled, and wooing and marrying Minehaha. The lively narrative, coloured by vivid descriptions of nature and underpinned by the famous Hiawatha metre, makes it a powerful experience to hear, even in the 21st century.



William Hootkins' numerous readings for the audiobook industry include novels, best-sellers, poetry, drama, political satires, comic thrillers and short stories; as well as the original novels of *Psycho* and *On The Waterfront*. He is best known for the award-winning Paul Theroux travel books and classics of American literature. He also reads *Moby Dick* for Naxos AudioBooks. His films include *Star Wars*, *Batman* and *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

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