



Meditation by the Sea (early 1860s) by an unidentified American artist. Oil on canvas (3 1/2" x 19 1/4") (34.6 cm x 49.8 cm).

The Tide Rises, the Tide Falls

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

A The tide rises, the tide falls,
The twilight darkens, the curlew° calls;
Along the sea-sands damp and brown
The traveler hastens toward the town,
5 And the tide rises, the tide falls.

B Darkness settles on roofs and walls,
C But the sea, the sea in the darkness calls;
D The little waves, with their soft, white hands,
E Efface° the footprints in the sands,
10 And the tide rises, the tide falls.

F The morning breaks; the steeds in their stalls
G Stamp and neigh, as the hostler° calls;
H The day returns, but nevermore
I Returns the traveler to the shore,
15 And the tide rises, the tide falls.

2. curlew (kur'loo') n.: large, brownish shore-bird with long legs.

9. efface (ə·fās') v.: wipe out; erase.

12. hostler (hās'lər) n.: person who takes care of horses.

DIFFERENTIATING INSTRUCTION

Supporting Learners Having Difficulty

Students use *Meditation by the Sea* to identify the images of "The Tide Rises, the

Instruct learners having difficulty to read "The Tide Rises, the Tide Falls" in interactive format in *The Holt Reader* and

Response and Analysis

The Tide Rises, the Tide Falls

Thinking Critically

1. Look closely at each stanza. What does each stanza tell you about the passage of time?
2. "Footsteps on the sands of time" is a common expression referring to our mortality and to the passage of time. In the second stanza a similar image appears. What does this **image** suggest has happened to the traveler?
3. What words in the third stanza hint at the traveler's fate? How does the image of the lively horses contrast with what probably has happened to the traveler?
4. In the second stanza the poet **personifies** the sea and the waves—that is, he gives the sea and the waves attributes of a human being. What words personify the sea and the waves? Do these images create a disturbing effect or a gentle, comforting feeling? Explain.
5. Longfellow was a master craftsman. Identify the places where he uses **alliteration**, or the repetition of consonant sounds. How would you describe the emotional effect of these sounds—are they soothing, haunting, upsetting, or something else?
6. Read the poem aloud. How does the **meter** of the poem sound like the rising and falling movement of the tides?



Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in his study in the house in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

7. At the end of the poem, the tide continues to rise and fall, although the human traveler does not return. How does this contrast reveal the poem's **theme**—its central insight into the relationship between human life and nature?
8. Do you think this is a poem about one specific traveler, or could it be seen as a drama about everyone's life? Explain.

Literary Criticism

9. How does this poem reflect the Romantics' view of nature and death? How would you compare Longfellow's attitude with William Cullen Bryant's in "Thanatopsis" (page 191)?