



DRAFTING AND EDITING POETRY

Introduction

Longfellow drafted and edited his poems using pencil and paper, and wrote the final versions in longhand with a quill pen. By examining a draft of one of Longfellow's poems, students can see how he edited his work and learn something about his creative process. In this lesson, students try their hands at editing one of Longfellow's poems using one of his early drafts.

Intended Learning Outcomes (Understandings)

1. Students will understand that Longfellow drafted and edited his poems using pencil and paper and that he wrote the final versions of his poems in longhand with a pen.
2. Students will understand that Longfellow went through a series of drafts and edits as he worked on his poems. As he edited, he changed words and phrases until he found the words that expressed his feelings and achieved the effect he sought.
3. Students will understand that an exploration of the process of drafting and editing reveals something about Longfellow's creative writing and thinking.

Intended Learning Outcomes (Skills)

1. Students will be able to read portions of a draft of Longfellow's poem *Haunted Houses* in his own hand.
2. Students will be able to read a typed copy of the draft of *Haunted Houses* and identify the revisions that Longfellow made.
3. Students will be able to make their own editing decisions for Longfellow's poem *Haunted Houses*.
4. Students will be able to compare a draft of Longfellow's *Haunted Houses* with the final version, and speculate as to why Longfellow chose to include or eliminate specific words and phrases.

Lesson Length

45 – 60 minutes

Teacher Preparation

1. Review and be familiar with the draft and final version of the poem *Haunted Houses*.

Materials

1. Copies of the draft of *Haunted Houses* in Longfellow's handwriting on page 37 for all students
2. Copies of the transcription of the draft of *Haunted Houses* on page 38 for all students
3. Copies of the final version of the poem *Haunted Houses* (in typescript) on pages 39-40 for all students

Activities

I. Understanding Longfellow's Draft

A. Distribute copies of Longfellow's hand-written draft of the poem *Haunted Houses*.

B. Explain that:

1. Longfellow wrote his drafts and did all the editing of his poems with paper and pencil.
2. When he was completely satisfied with his work, he copied the final version on a fresh piece of paper using a pen.

C. Ask for student volunteers to try to read a small portion of Longfellow's draft. You may need to help them. Help students to observe (or point out) that:

1. Even though Longfellow crossed out some words and made changes to this draft, it was not his final version. He changed the poem some more after this.

2. Longfellow didn't always draft or work on the stanzas in their final order. The stanzas in the draft are not in order, but you can see that some of the them are numbered. The numbering shows the sequence he wanted the stanzas to follow. Ask students to find STANZAS ONE, TWO, THREE, and FOUR.

D. Distribute the typed copy of the draft poem

1. Explain that this is a typed copy of the hand-written draft.
2. Explain that the words that are crossed out are the ones Longfellow wrote first, and that the underlined words are the changes he made to the draft.
3. Read aloud (or ask individual students to read aloud) the stanzas of the draft, reading the older version (with the crossed out words) first, followed by the second version (with the underlined words).
4. Using one of the first three stanzas as an example, discuss why students think Longfellow may have changed some of his words. *[To improve the imagery or rhythm, change or improve the sense of mood and the appeal to the senses, etc.]*
5. If necessary, look up and/or define words that students do not know.

II. Editing a Poem

A. Remind students that this was not Longfellow's final version of the poem.

B. Explain that they will work on editing the poem themselves, trying to make changes they think will improve the poem.

1. Ask for a suggestion from students for a word change they think will improve the poem. (Allow time for them to think about this.) Discuss how the suggested edit will change the poem.
2. In groups, pairs, or individually, instruct students to try out some other changes they think will improve the poem. They should do this directly on their poem draft. They may change any part of the poem, not just the parts that Longfellow already edited. [Remind students to think about trying to improve the descriptive imagery, the mood or feeling, the way the poem appeals to the senses, and the use of rhyme, rhythm, and descriptive imagery.]

3. Share some of these “edits” with the class and discuss, noting especially the impact the changes have on the effect of the poem.

III. Looking at Longfellow’s Choices

- A. Distribute copies of the final version of *Haunted Houses*.
- B. Read (or have students read) the first four stanzas of the poem aloud.
- C. Compare the final version of the poem to the draft, and discuss, paying particular attention to how Longfellow’s choice of words appeals to the senses, creates imagery, suggests mood, and sets tone.

Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks Standards

English Language Arts:

- Language Strand/Standard 2: Questioning, Listening, and Contributing
Students will pose questions, listen to the ideas of others, and contribute their own information or ideas in group discussions and interviews in order to acquire new knowledge.
- Reading and Literature Strand/Standard 10: Genre
Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the characteristics of different genres.
- Reading and Literature Strand/Standard 14: Poetry
Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of themes, structure, elements of poetry and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.
- Reading and Literature Strand/Learning Standard 15: Style and Language
Students will identify and analyze how an author’s words appeal to the senses, create imagery, suggest mood, and set tone, and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.
- Composition Strand/Standard 22: Standard English Conventions
Students will use knowledge of standard English conventions in their writing, revising, and editing.

HAUNTED HOUSES

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 1852

(excerpts from drafts of poem)

Stanza 1

All houses wherein men have lived and died
Are haunted houses. Through ~~the~~ indoor corridor
The harmless phantoms on their errands glide
With feet that make no sound upon the floor.

Stanza 2

We meet them at the doorway, on the stair
Along the passages they ~~move unheard~~ come and go
Impalpable impressions in the air,
yet ~~witness of every (?) and word~~ a sense of someone
moving to and fro!

Stanza 3

There are more guests at table than the hosts
Invited; ~~and the joyous banquet~~ illuminated hall
Is full of ~~joyless phantoms, harmless ghosts~~ thronged with
quiet, inoffensive ghosts
As silent as the pictures on the wall.

Stanza 4

The stranger at my fireside cannot see
The shapes I see, not hear the sounds I hear;
He only sees what is; alone; - but unto me
All that has been is visible and near.

HAUNTED HOUSES

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 1852

All houses wherein men have lived and died
Are haunted houses. Through the open doors
The harmless phantoms on their errands glide,
With feet that make no sound upon the floors.

We meet them at the doorway, on the stair,
Along the passages they come and go,
Impalpable impressions on the air,
A sense of something moving to and fro.

There are more guests at the table than the hosts
Invited; the illuminated hall
Is thronged with quiet, inoffensive ghosts,
As silent as the pictures on the wall.

The stranger at my fireside cannot see
The forms I see, nor hear the sounds I hear;
He but perceives what is; while unto me
All that has been is visible and clear.

We have no title- deeds to house or lands;
Owners and occupants of earlier dates
From graves forgotten stretch their dusty hands,
And hold in mortmain still their old estates.

The spirit- world around this world of sense
 Floats like an atmosphere, and everywhere
Wafts through these earthly mists and vapors dense
 A vital breath of more ethereal air.

Our little lives are kept in equipose
 By opposite attractions and desires;
The struggle of the instinct that enjoys,
 And the more noble instinct that aspires.

These perturbations, this perpetual jar
 Of earthly wants and aspirations high,
Come from the influences of an unseen star,
 An undiscovered planet in our sky.

And as the moon from some dark gate of cloud
 Throws o'er the sea a floating bridge of light,
Across whose trembling planks our fancies crowd
 Into the realm of mystery and night, -

So from the world of spirits there descends
 A bridge of light, connecting it with this,
O'er whose unsteady floor, that sways and bends,
 Wander our thoughts above the dark abyss.