

COMMON CORE

RL 1 Cite evidence to support analysis of inferences drawn from the text. **RL 4** Analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including language that is fresh, engaging, or beautiful. **RL 10** Read and comprehend literature.

from *Snowbound*

Poem by John Greenleaf Whittier

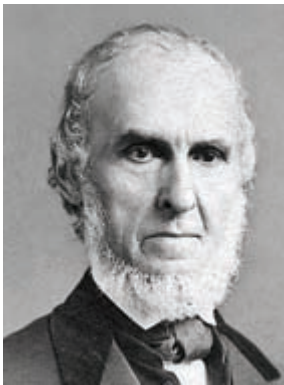
The First Snowfall

Poem by James Russell Lowell

Meet the Authors

John Greenleaf Whittier

1807–1892



John Greenleaf Whittier embodied the idealism of his age, which combined social activism and literary activity. He devoted most of his waking hours to the abolition of slavery, even risking his own life for the cause. Yet he also managed to write hundreds of poems. Many express an idyllic view of rural life and a profound moral aversion to slavery.

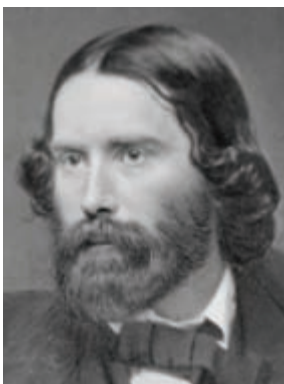
Rural Childhood Whittier's social consciousness derived from his modest background. Born to devout Quakers, Whittier was taught to believe in the equality of all people, the immorality

of war, and the importance of thrift. Working long days on his family's farm in Haverhill, Massachusetts, Whittier also learned about nature.

Poet and Politician Unlike most of his literary contemporaries, Whittier received little formal schooling. He was, however, an avid reader, devouring the poetry of John Milton, Robert Burns, and other poets. When Whittier was 19, his poetry was discovered by the abolitionist and editor William Lloyd Garrison. In later years, Whittier contributed poems to various newspapers.

James Russell Lowell

1819–1891



To his contemporaries, James Russell Lowell was the quintessential New England man of letters. He wrote poetry that stirred the emotions, newspaper editorials that influenced public opinion, and literary criticism.

Rebel with a Cause Lowell was born into a prominent New England family. In 1834, he entered Harvard, where he exasperated his teachers with his spoiled, immature behavior. His flouting of school rules and his disregard for his studies eventually led to his suspension. In 1844, Lowell married Maria White, who set her husband on the path to more mature

behavior. In later years, Lowell published several volumes of verse and numerous articles in support of the abolitionist movement. He opposed slavery, the Mexican War, and corruption in politics.

Poet and Diplomat Lowell's talents were not limited to writing. He served as editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*, as an American diplomat in Spain, and as ambassador to Great Britain. While he enjoyed much public success in these roles, Lowell is today best remembered for his poetry.

Author Online

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● **TEXT ANALYSIS: MOOD**

Mood is the feeling or atmosphere that a writer creates for the reader. Although it may seem that mood is simply inherent in a piece, it is actually achieved through the use of various devices, such as the following:

- **figurative language:** language that communicates ideas beyond the literal meaning of words
- **imagery:** descriptive words and phrases a writer uses to re-create sensory experiences
- **meter:** repetition of a regular rhythmic unit in a line of poetry
- **rhyme:** similarity of sound between two words

Notice, for example, how Lowell uses all four devices in the following stanza from “The First Snowfall”:

*I stood and watched by the window
The noiseless work of the sky,
And the sudden flurries of snowbirds,
Like brown leaves whirling by.*

As you read the poems by Lowell and Whittier, look for the devices that help to create a different mood in each poem.

■ **READING STRATEGY: PARAPHRASE**

Sometimes, the surest way to get through a difficult passage is to **paraphrase** it, or restate the ideas in simpler words. To paraphrase a line or stanza in a poem, determine its main idea and replace difficult words with easier ones. In some cases, footnotes will help you clarify meaning. Consider the following lines from Lowell’s poem “The First Snowfall”:

*And the poorest twig on the elm-tree
Was ridged inch deep with pearl.*


Here is a paraphrase of the lines above in simpler language:

An inch of snow covered the slender twig on the elm tree.

As you read, use a chart like the one shown to record difficult words or phrases and how you might paraphrase them.

| <i>Original Word(s)</i> | <i>My Paraphrase</i> |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| | |

Review: Make Inferences

 Complete the activities in your **Reader/Writer Notebook**.

What can NATURE teach us?

What lessons about life have you learned from nature? Perhaps waiting out a thunderstorm taught you something about patience. Or maybe watching monkeys at the zoo helped you to understand group behavior. The selections that follow describe kernels of wisdom two poets gleaned from the natural world.

QUICKWRITE In your notebook, list some insights you have gained from nature. How could you apply these insights to your own life? Write down your thoughts and ideas in a short paragraph.

| <i>Scene or Event</i> | <i>Insights</i> |
|-----------------------|---|
| <i>thunderstorm</i> | <i>Nature puts things in perspective.</i> |

SNOWBOUND

A Winter Idyll

John Greenleaf Whittier

The sun that brief December day
Rose cheerless over hills of gray,
And, darkly circled, gave at noon
A sadder light than waning¹ moon.
5 Slow tracing down the thickening sky
Its mute and ominous prophecy,
A portent² seeming less than threat,
It sank from sight before it set. **A**
A chill no coat, however stout,
10 Of homespun stuff could quite shut out,
A hard, dull bitterness of cold,
That checked, mid-vein, the circling race
Of lifeblood in the sharpened face,
The coming of the snowstorm told.
15 The wind blew east; we heard the roar
Of Ocean on his wintry shore,
And felt the strong pulse throbbing there
Beat with low rhythm our inland air.

Meanwhile we did our nightly chores,—
20 Brought in the wood from out of doors,
Littered the stalls, and from the mows
Raked down the herd's grass for the cows:
Heard the horse whinnying for his corn;
And, sharply clashing horn on horn,
25 Impatient down the stanchion rows³

1. **waning**: lessening in intensity.

2. **portent**: omen.

3. **stanchion** (stăn'chən) **rows**: lines of devices that fit loosely around the necks of animals such as cows in order to limit their motion.

A MOOD

Poets often use structural elements, such as meter and rhyme scheme, to help create a particular **mood**. **Meter** is simply the repetition of a rhythmic unit, and **rhyme** is the use of words (most often at the end of lines) that share a similar sound. Reread the first eight lines of the poem, and write down the words that rhyme. How many pairs of rhyme words do you see? What mood do these words help create?

Analyze Visuals ►

To what senses does this photograph appeal, in addition to sight?



The cattle shake their walnut bows;
 While, peering from his early perch
 Upon the scaffold's pole of birch,
 The cock his crested helmet bent
 30 And down his querulous⁴ challenge sent.

Unwarmed by any sunset light
 The gray day darkened into night,
 A night made hoary with the swarm
 And whirl-dance of the blinding storm,
 35 As zigzag, wavering to and fro,
 Crossed and recrossed the winged snow:
 And ere the early bedtime came
 The white drift piled the window frame,
 And through the glass the clothesline posts
 40 Looked in like tall and sheeted ghosts. **B**

So all night long the storm roared on:
 The morning broke without a sun;
 In tiny spherule⁵ traced with lines
 Of Nature's geometric signs,
 45 In starry flake, and pellicle,⁶
 All day the hoary meteor fell;
 And, when the second morning shone,
 We looked upon a world unknown,
 On nothing we could call our own.
 50 Around the glistening wonder bent
 The blue walls of the firmament,
 No cloud above, no earth below—
 A universe of sky and snow! **C**
 The old familiar sights of ours
 55 Took marvelous shapes; strange domes and towers
 Rose up where sty or corncrib stood,
 Or garden wall, or belt of wood;
 A smooth white mound the brush pile showed,
 A fenceless drift what once was road;
 60 The bridle post an old man sat
 With loose-flung coat and high cocked hat;
 The well curb⁷ had a Chinese roof;

COMMON CORE L 3

Language Coach

Oral Fluency The two dots over the e in *wingëd* (line 36) indicate that the e should be pronounced. *Winged* is normally pronounced in one syllable as /weengd/, but here it is pronounced in two syllables as /weeng ehd/. Read lines 35–36, pronouncing *winged* in one syllable, then in two syllables. How does the sound of the lines change?

B MOOD

A **simile** is a figure of speech comparing two things using the words *like* or *as*. What mood does the poet create with the simile in lines 39–40?

C PARAPHRASE

How has the world been transformed by snow in lines 50–53?

4. **querulous** (kwër'ə-ləs): complaining.

5. **spherule** (sfîr'ōöl): a little sphere.

6. **pellicle**: a thin film or skin.

7. **well curb**: framing around the neck of a well.

And even the long sweep,⁸ high aloof,
In its slant splendor, seemed to tell
65 Of Pisa's leaning miracle.⁹

A prompt, decisive man, no breath
Our father wasted: "Boys, a path!"
Well pleased, (for when did farmer boy
Count such a summons less than joy?)
70 Our buskins¹⁰ on our feet we drew;
With mittened hands, and caps drawn low,
To guard our necks and ears from snow,
We cut the solid whiteness through.
And, where the drift was deepest, made
75 A tunnel walled and overlaid
With dazzling crystal: we had read
Of rare Aladdin's wondrous cave,¹¹
And to our own his name we gave,
With many a wish the luck were ours
80 To test his lamp's supernal¹² powers.
We reached the barn with merry din,
And roused the prisoned brutes within.
The old horse thrust his long head out,
And grave with wonder gazed about;
85 The cock his lusty greeting said,
And forth his speckled harem led;
The oxen lashed their tails, and hooked,
And mild reproach of hunger looked;
The horned patriarch of the sheep,
90 Like Egypt's Amun¹³ roused from sleep,
Shook his sage head with gesture mute,
And emphasized with stamp of foot. **D**

All day the gusty north wind bore
The loosening drift its breath before;
95 Low circling round its southern zone,
The sun through dazzling snow-mist shone.
No church bell lent its Christian tone

COMMON CORE RL.5

TEXT STRUCTURE

Whittier's narrative poem "Snowbound" vividly describes the events and setting of one snowy evening. In a poem, each event is often set off in a separate stanza. In a novel, however, the events are usually separated into chapters. Can you think of other poems, novels, plays, or films that describe events that occur in a natural setting? How does the text structure of the work affect the way descriptions of setting are presented?

D MOOD

Identify examples of **figurative language** and **imagery** in lines 66–92. What is the mood created by this language?

8. **sweep**: a long pole connected to a bucket, used for raising water from a well.

9. **Pisa's leaning miracle**: the Leaning Tower of Pisa, Italy.

10. **buskins**: high leather boots.

11. **Aladdin's wondrous cave**: In *The Thousand and One Nights*, the boy Aladdin used a magic lamp to discover a treasure in a cave.

12. **supernal**: heavenly; supernatural.

13. **Amun** (ä'mən): the supreme god of the ancient Egyptians, often represented as having a ram's head.

To the savage air, no social smoke
 Curled over woods of snow-hung oak.
 100 A solitude made more intense
 By dreary-voiced elements,
 The shrieking of the mindless wind,
 The moaning tree boughs swaying blind,
 And on the glass the unmeaning beat
 105 Of ghostly fingertips of sleet.
 Beyond the circle of our hearth
 No welcome sound of toil or mirth
 Unbound the spell, and testified
 Of human life and thought outside. **E**
 110 We minded that the sharpest ear
 The buried brooklet could not hear,
 The music of whose liquid lip
 Had been to us companionship,
 And, in our lonely life, had grown
 115 To have an almost human tone.

As night drew on, and, from the crest
 Of wooded knolls that ridged the west,
 The sun, a snow-blown traveler, sank
 From sight beneath the smothering bank,
 120 We piled, with care, our nightly stack
 Of wood against the chimney back,—
 The oaken log, green, huge, and thick,
 And on its top the stout backstick;
 The knotty forestick laid apart,
 125 And filled between with curious art
 The ragged brush; then, hovering near,
 We watched the first red blaze appear,
 Heard the sharp crackle, caught the gleam
 On whitewashed wall and sagging beam,
 130 Until the old, rude-furnished room
 Burst, flowerlike, into rosy bloom;
 While radiant with a mimic flame
 Outside the sparkling drift became,
 And through the bare-boughed lilac tree
 135 Our own warm hearth seemed blazing free.
 The crane and pendent trammels showed,
 The Turks' heads on the andirons¹⁴ glowed;

E PARAPHRASE

Reread lines 106–109.
 What effect does the
 snowstorm have on the
 family's sense of itself and
 the world outside?

14. **The crane . . . the andirons:** The crane was the movable arm on which the trammels, or adjustable pothooks, hung. The andirons, or metal supports holding the fireplace wood, were topped with turbanlike knots.

While childish fancy, prompt to tell
 The meaning of the miracle,
 140 Whispered the old rhyme: “*Under the tree,
 When fire outdoors burns merrily,
 There the witches are making tea.*” **F**

The moon above the eastern wood
 Shone at its full; the hill range stood
 145 Transfigured in the silver flood,
 Its blown snows flashing cold and keen,
 Dead white, save where some sharp ravine
 Took shadow, or the somber green
 Of hemlocks turned to pitchy black
 150 Against the whiteness at their back.
 For such a world and such a night
 Most fitting that unwarming light,
 Which only seemed where’er it fell
 To make the coldness visible.

155 Shut in from all the world without,
 We sat the clean-winged hearth¹⁵ about,
 Content to let the north wind roar
 In baffled rage at pane and door,
 While the red logs before us beat
 160 The frost line back with tropic heat; **G**
 And ever, when a louder blast
 Shook beam and rafter as it passed,
 The merrier up its roaring draught
 The great throat of the chimney laughed;
 165 The house dog on his paws outspread
 Laid to the fire his drowsy head,
 The cat’s dark silhouette on the wall
 A couchant¹⁶ tiger’s seemed to fall;
 And, for the winter fireside meet,
 170 Between the andirons’ straddling feet,
 The mug of cider simmered slow,
 The apples sputtered in a row,
 And, close at hand, the basket stood
 With nuts from brown October’s wood.

F MOOD

In lines 116–142, what techniques does the poet use to create a mood of security and warmth in the midst of nature’s cold and snow?

COMMON CORE L 4a

Language Coach

Word Definitions At the end of line 155, you might read the word *without* and think “without what?” Here, *without* means “outside.” In lines 155–160, how does the world *within* differ from the world *without*?

G MAKE INFERENCES

Reread lines 155–160. Why is the north wind baffled?

15. **clean-winged hearth:** Hearths were commonly swept with a turkey wing.

16. **couchant** (kou’chənt): lying down, but with head raised.

THE FIRST SNOWFALL

James Russell Lowell

The snow had begun in the gloaming,¹
And busily all the night
Had been heaping field and highway
With a silence deep and white.

5 Every pine and fir and hemlock
Wore ermine² too dear for an earl,
And the poorest twig on the elm-tree
Was ridged inch deep with pearl.

From sheds new-roofed with Carrara³
10 Came Chanticleer's⁴ muffled crow,
The stiff rails softened to swan's-down,
And still fluttered down the snow.

I stood and watched by the window
The noiseless work of the sky,
15 And the sudden flurries of snowbirds,
Like brown leaves whirling by. **H**

I thought of a mound in sweet Auburn⁵
Where a little headstone stood;
How the flakes were folding it gently,
20 As did robins the babes in the wood. **I**

Up spoke our own little Mabel,
Saying, "Father, who makes it snow?"
And I told of the good All-father
Who cares for us here below.

1. **gloaming:** twilight.

2. **ermine:** the expensive white fur of a type of weasel.

3. **Carrara:** Carrara marble, a white marble named after the Italian city where it is mined.

4. **Chanticleer's:** a rooster's.

5. **Auburn:** Mount Auburn Cemetery, located in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

COMMON CORE L.5b

Language Coach

Synonyms Often the word *dear* (line 6) is used as a term of affection. However, *dear* can also mean "high-priced." Other words with similar meanings, or **synonyms**, of *dear* include *costly*, *valuable*, and *precious*. Read lines 5–8, and write down the words related to wealth or luxury. How are the descriptions in the poem enhanced by these words?

H MOOD

Reread lines 1–16. How would you describe the mood created by the poet's use of **rhyme** and **meter**? Explain your answer.

I PARAPHRASE

Paraphrase lines 17–20. How does the mood shift in these lines?



◀ Analyze Visuals

This photograph shows Mount Auburn Cemetery, which is mentioned in the poem. What **mood** is suggested by the photograph, what details support the mood, and how does the mood of the picture match that of the poem?

25 Again I looked at the snowfall,
 And thought of the leaden sky
 That arched o'er our first great sorrow,
 When that mound was heaped so high. **J**

I remembered the gradual patience
 30 That fell from that cloud like snow,
 Flake by flake, healing and hiding
 The scar that renewed our woe.

And again to the child I whispered,
 "The snow that husheth all,
 35 Darling, the merciful Father
 Alone can make it fall!" **K**

Then, with eyes that saw not, I kissed her;
 And she, kissing back, could not know
 That *my* kiss was given to her sister,
 40 Folded close under deepening snow.

J MAKE INFERENCES

In line 17, "mound" refers to the daughter's grave. What else does "mound" refer to in line 28?

K MOOD

What mood does the speaker create at the end of the poem by invoking the "merciful Father"?

Comprehension

1. **Recall** In what ways does the family in “Snowbound” prepare for and cope with the storm?
2. **Clarify** How does the family in “Snowbound” feel about being snowed in?
3. **Summarize** How does the snowfall transform the landscape in lines 1–14 of “The First Snowfall”?
4. **Clarify** In “The First Snowfall,” what has happened to the family?

Text Analysis

5. **Make Inferences** How do the people in “Snowbound” react to the storm? What do their responses say about their relationship to one another?
6. **Interpret Figurative Language** Reread lines 29–32 of “The First Snowfall.” What does the figurative language in this stanza suggest about the family’s grief and the relation of their sorrow to the natural world?
7. **Paraphrase to Draw Conclusions** Review the paraphrases you made in your chart as you read Lowell’s poem. Describe the speaker’s religious beliefs. How do they help him cope with his pain?
8. **Analyze Mood** Poets can use a variety of devices to establish mood, including **figurative language, imagery, rhyme, and meter**. In each of the poems, identify two devices used to create mood, giving examples. For each poem, which device would you say is the more important? Explain.
9. **Associate Ideas** In these poems and elsewhere, snow is often referred to as having a quieting effect. What are some common metaphors or images used to express our associations with other kinds of weather, such as downpours, torrid heat, windstorms, and Indian summers?

Text Criticism

10. **Historical Context** Whittier and Lowell were two of a group known as the Fireside Poets. (See page 310.) This name refers to a popular family pastime of the period: reading poetry aloud in front of the fireplace after dinner. The poems of the group were very popular and read as entertainment not only in homes but also in schools. Why might the poetry of this group have played such an important role in people’s lives? Support your opinion.

COMMON CORE

RL 1 Cite evidence to support analysis of inferences drawn from the text. **RL 4** Analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including language that is fresh, engaging, or beautiful. **RL 9** Demonstrate knowledge of how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics. **RL 10** Read and comprehend poetry.

*What can **NATURE** teach us?*

In “The First Snowfall,” the speaker draws a parallel between a natural weather event and the healing of a great grief. How does nature speak to you? Can you think of a natural object or event that has held special meaning for you?

Fireside Poets in Perspective

The Fireside Poets were extremely popular in their day. Indeed, they were so beloved that many families read their works aloud by the fire as a form of nightly entertainment. They were respected as well, becoming the first poets to be considered on equal footing with their British counterparts. Over the years, however, the group's works fell out of favor with critics, who began to look upon them with more affection than respect. Only in recent years have critics again begun to appreciate the craft of the Fireside Poets.

Writing to Evaluate

With a group of classmates, come up with several criteria for evaluating the poems on pages 344–363. Then use your criteria to write a brief evaluation of the work of the Fireside Poets as a whole.

Consider

- what elements (vivid imagery, precise word choice, or thought-provoking themes) you think distinguish “good” poetry from “bad”
- whether the poems contain those elements
- whether your opinion of the poems changed upon rereading

Extension

SPEAKING & LISTENING Perform an **oral interpretation** of one poem from this group of Fireside Poets' work. Let your opinion of the Fireside Poets in general and of this work in particular inform your reading. For example, if you admire a particular poem, you may wish to read it in a lively and engaging voice. If, on the other hand, you found a poem too sentimental, let your reading reflect this judgment.

COMMON CORE

W 2 Write explanatory texts to examine complex ideas, concepts, and information through the analysis of content. **SL 6** Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks.

