

# PAUL REVERE'S RIDE

**by Henry Wadsworth  
Longfellow**

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## PAUL REVERE'S RIDE

Listen, my children, and you shall hear  
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,  
On the eighteenth of April, in Seventy-  
five;  
Hardly a man is now alive  
Who remembers that famous day and  
year.

He said to his friend, "If the British  
march  
By land or sea from the town to-night,  
Hang a lantern aloft in the belfry arch  
Of the North Church tower as a signal  
light,  
One, if by land, and two, if by sea;

And I on the opposite shore will be,  
Ready to ride and spread the alarm  
Through every Middlesex village and  
farm,  
For the country folk to be up and to  
arm."

Then he said, "Good night!" and with  
muffled oar  
Silently rowed to the Charlestown shore,  
Just as the moon rose over the bay,  
Where swinging wide at her moorings  
lay  
The Somerset, British man-of-war;  
A phantom ship, with each mast and spar  
Across the moon like a prison bar,  
And a huge black hulk, that was  
magnified

By its own reflection in the tide.

Meanwhile, his friend, through alley and street,

Wanders and watches with eager ears,  
Till in the silence around him he hears  
The muster of men at the barrack door,  
The sound of arms, and the tramp of feet,  
And the measured tread of the  
grenadiers,  
Marching down to their boats on the  
shore.

Then he climbed the tower of the Old  
North Church,  
By the wooden stairs, with stealthy  
tread,  
To the belfry-chamber overhead,

And startled the pigeons from their perch  
On the sombre rafters, that round him  
made

Masses and moving shapes of shade,  
By the trembling ladder, steep and tall,  
To the highest window in the wall,  
Where he paused to listen and look  
down

A moment on the roofs of the town,  
And the moonlight flowing over all.

Beneath, in the churchyard, lay the dead,  
In their night-encampment on the hill,  
Wrapped in silence so deep and still  
That he could hear, like a sentinel's  
tread,

The watchful night-wind, as it went  
Creeping along from tent to tent,

And seeming to whisper, "All is well!"  
A moment only he feels the spell  
Of the place and the hour, and the secret  
dread  
Of the lonely belfry and the dead;  
For suddenly all his thoughts are bent  
On a shadowy something far away,  
Where the river widens to meet the bay,  
A line of black that bends and floats  
On the rising tide, like a bridge of boats.

Meanwhile, impatient to mount and ride,  
Booted and spurred, with a heavy stride  
On the opposite shore walked Paul  
Revere.

Now he patted his horse's side,  
Now gazed at the landscape far and  
near,

Then, impetuous, stamped the earth,  
And turned and tightened his saddle-  
girth;

But mostly he watched with eager search  
The belfry-tower of the Old North  
Church,

As it rose above the graves on the hill,  
Lonely and spectral and sombre and  
still.

And lo! as he looks, on the belfry's  
height

A glimmer, and then a gleam of light!  
He springs to the saddle, the bridle he  
turns,

But lingers and gazes, till full on his  
sight

A second lamp in the belfry burns!



A hurry of hoofs in a village street,  
A shape in the moonlight, a bulk in the  
dark,  
And beneath, from the pebbles, in  
passing, a spark  
Struck out by a steed flying fearless and  
fleet:  
That was all! And yet, through the gloom  
and the light,  
The fate of a nation was riding that night;  
And the spark struck out by that steed, in  
his flight,  
Kindled the land into flame with its heat.

He has left the village and mounted the  
steep,  
And beneath him, tranquil and broad and  
deep,

Is the Mystic, meeting the ocean tides;  
And under the alders, that skirt its edge,  
Now soft on the sand, now loud on the  
ledge,  
Is heard the tramp of his steed as he  
rides.

It was twelve by the village clock  
When he crossed the bridge into  
Medford town.

He heard the crowing of the cock,  
And the barking of the farmer's dog,  
And felt the damp of the river fog,  
That rises after the sun goes down.

It was one by the village clock,  
When he galloped into Lexington.  
He saw the gilded weathercock

Swim in the moonlight as he passed,  
And the meeting-house windows, blank  
and bare,  
Gaze at him with a spectral glare,  
As if they already stood aghast  
At the bloody work they would look  
upon.

It was two by the village clock,  
When he came to the bridge in Concord  
town.

He heard the bleating of the flock,  
And the twitter of birds among the trees,  
And felt the breath of the morning breeze  
Blowing over the meadows brown.  
And one was safe and asleep in his bed  
Who at the bridge would be first to fall,  
Who that day would be lying dead,

Pierced by a British musket-ball.

You know the rest. In the books you have read,

How the British Regulars fired and fled,  
How the farmers gave them ball for ball,  
From behind each fence and farm-yard wall,

Chasing the red-coats down the lane,  
Then crossing the fields to emerge again  
Under the trees at the turn of the road,  
And only pausing to fire and load.

So through the night rode Paul Revere;  
And so through the night went his cry of alarm

To every Middlesex village and farm,  
A cry of defiance, and not of fear,

A voice in the darkness, a knock at the  
door,  
And a word that shall echo forevermore!  
For, borne on the nightwind of the Past,  
Through all our history, to the last,  
In the hour of darkness and peril and  
need,  
The people will waken and listen to hear  
The hurrying hoof-beats of that steed,  
And the midnight message of Paul  
Revere.

**THE END**