

Name: _____ Class: _____

Turn, Turn, My Wheel

By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
1893

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882) was an American poet and educator. Longfellow is best known for his poem, "Paul Revere's Ride." In the following poem, a speaker describes watching a potter work. As you read, take notes on what words that the speaker uses to describe the potter and his work.

- [1] *Turn, turn, my wheel! Turn round and round
Without a pause, without a sound:
So spins the flying world away!
This clay, well mixed with marl¹ and sand,*
- [5] *Follows the motion of my hand;
For some must follow, and some command,
Though all are made of clay!*

Thus sang the Potter at his task
Beneath the blossoming hawthorn-tree,
[10] While o'er his features, like a mask,
The quilted sunshine and leaf-shade
Moved, as the boughs² above him swayed,
And clothed him, till he seemed to be
A figure woven in tapestry,

- [15] So sumptuously³ was he arrayed⁴
In that magnificent attire
Of sable⁵ tissue flaked with fire.
Like a magician he appeared,
A conjurer⁶ without book beard;
[20] And while he plied⁷ his magic art —
For it was magical to me —
I stood in silence and apart,
And wondered more and more to see
That shapeless, lifeless mass of clay
[25] Rise up to meet the master's hand,
And now contract and now expand,
And even his slightest touch obey.



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1. a type of soil
2. branches of a tree
3. **Sumptuous** (*adjective*): splendid or expensive-looking
4. displayed or arranged in a particular way
5. black
6. a wizard or magician
7. to practice something with care and attention

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: How does the poet use personification in "Turn, Turn, My Wheel"?
 - A. The poet gives the tree human qualities to show that it respects and wants to protect the potter.
 - B. The poet gives the potter's wheel human qualities to show how it turns smoothly in order to please the potter.
 - C. The poet gives the potter's clothing human qualities to show how it responds to the potter's energetic movement.
 - D. The poet gives the clay human qualities to show that it is compliant with the potter's demands.

2. PART B: Which TWO lines from the poem support the answer to Part A?
 - A. "Without a pause, without a sound" (Line 2)
 - B. "Follows the motion of my hand" (Line 5)
 - C. "The quilted sunshine and leaf-shade" (Line 11)
 - D. "A figure woven in tapestry" (Line 14)
 - E. "In that magnificent attire" (Line 16)
 - F. "And even his slightest touch obey" (Line 27)

3. PART A: In line 22 of "Turn, Turn, My Wheel," the speaker stands "in silence and apart" as the potter creates his work. Why is the speaker "silent"?
 - A. The speaker is in awe of the potter's power and skill.
 - B. The speaker is frightened of the potter's magical powers.
 - C. The speaker dislikes the final product.
 - D. The speaker wants to ask a question but is nervous.

4. PART B: Which line from "Turn, Turn, My Wheel" helps explain the speaker's response in Part A?
 - A. "Of sable tissue flaked with fire." (Line 17)
 - B. "For it was magical to me —" (Line 21)
 - C. "That shapeless, lifeless mass of clay" (Line 24)
 - D. "And now contract and now expand," (Line 26)

5. PART A: How does the first stanza (Lines 1-7) of "Turn, Turn, My Wheel" contribute to the development of its theme?
 - A. It demonstrates how happy the potter is to be outdoors.
 - B. It explains why the potter prefers the kind of clay he is using.
 - C. It shows that the potter knows he can control the clay.
 - D. It suggests that the potter wants to work as quickly and efficiently as possible.