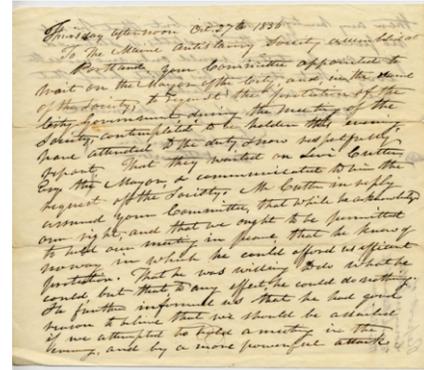


**“The Warning”**  
by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Beware! The Israelite of old, who tore  
The lion in his path,--when, poor and blind,  
He saw the blessed light of heaven no more,  
Shorn of his noble strength and forced to grind  
In prison, and at last led forth to be  
A pander to Philistine revelry,--

Upon the pillars of the temple laid  
His desperate hands, and in its overthrow  
Destroyed himself, and with him those who made  
A cruel mockery of his sightless woe;  
The poor, blind Slave, the scoff and jest of all,  
Expired, and thousands perished in the fall!

There is a poor, blind Samson in this land,  
Shorn of his strength and bound in bonds of steel,  
Who may, in some grim revel, raise his hand,  
And shake the pillars of this Commonweal,  
Till the vast Temple of our liberties.  
A shapeless mass of wreck and rubbish lies.



From [www.MaineMemory.net](http://www.MaineMemory.net), item 7346,  
courtesy of Maine Historical Society



From [www.MaineMemory.net](http://www.MaineMemory.net), item 6434,  
courtesy of Maine State Archives

**Enrichment Links:**

[www.mainememory.net](http://www.mainememory.net)

Browse letters and meeting notes under a search for “slavery” at Maine Memory Network

**Central guiding questions:**

1. What part(s) of this poem reflect Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's attempt to define American identity?
2. What is Longfellow's message in his poem and is this message still relevant today?
3. Looking at his message, what qualities and values as a person do you think HWL lived by?
4. Describe Longfellow's voice in this poem and how does it reflect his message?
5. Which images in the poem strengthen/illuminate Longfellow's message?
6. What traditional poetic conventions (i.e. rhyme, simile, meter, etc.) can you identify in this poem? Do they enhance your appreciation for the poem?