

Name _____

A Closer Look at "The Slave's Dream" by Longfellow

This poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow is about a slave who, while being beaten, escapes into his own mind. He has a dream about his former life in Africa, and is then able to release his pain and die in peace. Let's take a closer look at this poem.

Directions:

Read the poem and answer questions 1-9. Questions 1-4 are in boxes to the right of the poem. The rest are at the end of the poem.

(Below, the parts where the slave is in a dream state are written in gray.)

The Slave's Dream (1842) Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Beside the ungathered rice he lay,
His **sickle** in his hand;
His breast was bare, his matted hair
Was buried in the sand.
Again, in the mist and shadow of sleep,
He saw his Native Land.

He saw through the landscape of his dream
The friendly Niger River;
Beside the palm trees, on the plain
Drove round a king his warriors,
And heard the talking elephants
Descend the mountain-road.

He saw wide rivers, the dark-eyed queen,
Among her children stand;
They clasped his neck, they kissed his cheek,
They held him by the hand —
A lion roared from the whispering reeds,
And fell into the sand.

And there at last he found the mode
Along the Niger's banks
The white-robes, with golden chains,
And with a jeweled crown;
As such he felt he could feel the excitement of power
Smothering his stationer's shame.

Before him, also, a broad-red flag,
The bright musk-scented dew,
Shore winds till night her silver dew-flights,
Orchards where the tamarind grows,
Till he saw the roofs of Carthage built,
Along the coast road to Tunis.

1. Why do you think Longfellow assumes that the slave's "Native Land" is Africa?

2. The importation of slaves from Africa was banned in _____.

The Niger River (pronounced ne-jer) flows through western Africa.

3. What was the slave's former life in Africa like? Why do you think he begins to cry?

4. What imagery in this poem gives the reader a mental picture of Africa?

Slaves Dream And Other Stories

Shasha Hu



Slaves Dream And Other Stories:

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