Pre-visit Lessons and Activities: The Longfellow Trail

These pre-visit lessons and activities are suggested exercises to prepare your students for their walking tour on the Longfellow Trail. Each lesson/activity can easily be adapted to meet the needs of students of all grade levels and to fit into your classroom schedule whether you’re looking for a short introduction to or an in depth exploration of the content of the tour.

Visit Longfellow Online (http://www.hwlongfellow.org/): This Maine Historical Society website examines not only Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s life and work, but also his homes (including the Wadsworth-Longfellow House) and the story of his family. The website includes a searchable database of Longfellow’s poems, lesson plans for teachers, a filmography, and more. Whether you have one hour or one or week to prepare prior to your visit, it is a great resource for teachers and/or students to learn a little background on the story Longfellow and his family.

Preview the Trail/Create a Longfellow Trail Map: Using printed maps of Portland, brochures, Google Maps, and other appropriate resources, instruct students to preview the Longfellow Trail and (time permitting) create their own map of the trail route. The map itself could be traditional, digital, pop-up, a poster, etc. and could even include photographs or illustrations. Students could create maps individually, in small groups, or as a class.

The Longfellow Trail Route: The trail route starts in front of the Wadsworth-Longfellow House and Maine Historical Society at 489 Congress Street. The trail continues down Congress Street towards Monument Square stopping at the First Parish Church. The trail then continues to and past City Hall, crossing Congress Street at the fire station and entering Lincoln Park; from here the Observatory is visible. The trail continues through Lincoln Park towards the Court House taking a right onto Federal Street, past the “bubbler”. The trail then turns left down Exchange Street, crossing Federal Street and continuing down Exchange to Post Office Square. From Post Office Square, the trail takes a right onto Middle Street, passing Canal Bank on the left and bearing right around the Nickelodeon movie theater to cross Temple Street at the brick cross walk. Finally, the trail heads up the pedestrian street into Monument Square and back to Maine Historical Society.
Create a Longfellow Trail Album on Maine Memory Network:

Maine Memory Network is a statewide digital museum that provides unprecedented online access to an ever-growing collection of more than 45,000 primary sources contributed by over 270 organizations throughout Maine. MMN’s Album Tool allows students to collect and annotate favorite items from MMN into one place. Students can make as many albums as they want and the albums are a great way to organize and go back to favorite images. Instruct students to make an album that tells the story of the neighborhood Longfellow grew up in, the city of Portland, or about something specific they saw or discussed on the trail (sculptures, architecture, 1866 fire etc.). This activity is equally appropriate as a pre-visit lesson to orient students to Portland and the trail and/or as a post-visit lesson to review what students have learned.

Longfellow’s Poetry: Review with students some of Longfellow’s poetry, specifically “My Lost Youth”, the poem in which he reminisces about the Portland of his childhood; parts of this poem are highlighted on the Longfellow Trail tour and it is helpful if students are familiar with the poem prior to their visit. If time allows, instruct students to research the history behind and writing of “My Lost Youth” and/or create artwork inspired by the poem. All of Longfellow’s poetry can be found on the searchable poetry database on Longfellow Online at http://www.hwlongfellow.org/poems_front.php.