

Questions on Longfellow's Evangeline.

[We have been requested to reprint the following questions, which were written by the late A. Cameron, and which appeared in the REVIEW for April, 1899. The student may well take these as a model for his interpretation of any poem or prose selection in our literature.—EDITOR.]

1. What do you suppose was Longfellow's purpose in writing this poem? Back your answer with any quotations that seem appropriate.
2. Did he intend his story to be taken for an authentic record of events? Quote.
3. What kind of a story would one be apt to expect after reading only lines 1 to 6? What makes you think so?
4. What kind of a story does Longfellow say it is? Quote.
5. Compare and contrast the Acadians of the poem with the real Acadians of that day, and with the Acadians of today.
6. Draw a map showing all the places mentioned in the scene of the action of Part I; and another to illustrate the wanderings of Evangeline in Part II.
7. Make drawings to illustrate lines 35-6, 43-4, 74-5, 125-8, 176-8, 180-3, 407-11, 489-92. Pick out other passages suitable for pictorial illustrations.
8. Collect the passages containing information about Basil, and write a sketch of his life and character based on these passages.
9. Name any other blacksmiths famous in history, or poetry, or myth, or fiction. Tell something about them, or at least in what books we may read about them.
10. Make up questions similar to the last two about the other characters in the poem, and answer them.
11. What is the historical time of the action in Part I, and what is your authority?
12. Ditto for the end of Part II, and ditto.
13. (a) Collect all the notes of time in Part I; and from them determine these things: (b) What is the season of the year? (c) Are the notes of time for the season of the year all consistent with each other, and are they consistent with the historical time? If not, what have you to say by way of explanation? (d) How much time elapses between the beginning and the end of the action in Part I? Which lines indicate the lapse of time from day to day, and from one part of the day to another?
14. Why are such questions unnecessary for Part II?
15. What do you learn from this poem of the accuracy of the poet as an observer of natural phenomena?
16. What does he say of the following, and how does it agree with what you have learned from observation or otherwise?
Tides, moonrise, magpie's nests, dawn and sunrise, sunset and twilight, the appearance of the

dying, sea-fogs, spinning, the sign of the scorpion, Acadian ale, cow's-breath, etc., etc.

17. "Distant, secluded, still." There are many examples in the poem of triads of epithets like this. Find a dozen or so of them and cite the lines where they occur.

18. Here are some various readings that occur in the different editions of the poem; which do you think is the better one in each case, and why do you think so?

(a) Line 353—Thus passed the evening away.

Thus was the evening passed.

(b) Line 518—The whispering rain.

The disconsolate rain.

(c) Line 564—The weary heart.

The heavy heart.

(d) Line 1217—Look at this delicate plant.

Look at this vigorous plant.

(e) Line 1218—See how its leaves all point.

See how its leaves are turned.

(f) Line 1219—It is the compass flower, that the finger of God has suspended.

This is the compass flower, that the finger of God has planted.

(g) Line 1220—Here on its fragile stalk.

Here in the houseless wild.

And there are probably others.

19. There are a dozen or more Biblical allusions in the poem. Cite the lines where they occur and the passages of the Bible to which they refer.

20. For what does Longfellow use the following as similes: Forget-me-nots, roe, day, clock, rivers, oak-leaves, hollyhocks, oar, a storm in summer, Hagar and Ishmael, the thoughts of God. Find a lot more of his images, and say what you think of their appropriateness.

21. What was your experience in reading *Evangeline* aloud? Did you find it easy for the voice and pleasant to the ear?

22. The metre requires many awkward and violent inversions. Mention some that you have noticed.

23. Tennyson advised budding poets to beware of their "geese." How do you think he would have liked Longfellow's many hissing sibilant lines? Look out some of the most extreme cases, and, if you can find them, any lines which contain no sibilant sounds.

24. In the selection and arrangement of proper names, especially place-names, does Longfellow satisfy your sense of melody? If so, quote a few of what you consider his most felicitous passages in this kind. How do you think *Evangeline* compares in this respect with *Paradise Lost*, or with Scott's poems, or with Macaulay's *Lays* and his *Armada*?

25. What is the smallest and what the largest number of syllables in a line of the poem? Give the numbers of lines containing all the different num-