



*Thank you for
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The Three Kings
Study Pack!*

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What's In This Poetry Pack?

Printable Version of The Three Kings

As you read *The Three Kings*, have your children pay special attention to where Longfellow follows the gospel account and where he adds in his own imaginative details.

Side-by-side comparison study pages

Use the side-by-side comparison sheets to really see how Longfellow used the bible as the basis for his poem.

A Page of Discussion Questions

Use the discussion questions as a starting point to get your kids thinking about Longfellow's poetic choices as well as the Wise Men and their role in the Christmas story.



The Three Kings

by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Three Kings came riding from far away,
Melchior and Gaspar and Baltasar;
Three Wise Men out of the East were they,
And they traveled by night and they slept by day,
For their guide was a beautiful, wonderful star.

The star was so beautiful, large and clear,
That all the other stars of the sky
Became a white mist in the atmosphere,
And by this, they knew that the coming was near
Of the Prince foretold in the prophecy.

Three caskets they bore on their saddle-bows,
Three caskets of gold with golden keys;
Their robes were of crimson silk with rows
Of bells and pomegranates and furbelows,
Their turbans like blossoming almond-trees.

And so the Three Kings rode into the West,
Through the dusk of the night, over hill and dell,
And sometimes they nodded with beard on breast,
And sometimes talked, as they paused to rest,
With the people, they met at some wayside well.



“Of the child that is born,” said Baltasar,
“Good people, I pray you, tell us the news;
For we in the East have seen his star,
And have ridden fast, and have ridden far,
To find and worship the King of the Jews.”

And the people answered, “You ask in vain;
We know of no King but Herod the Great!”
They thought the Wise Men were men insane,
As they spurred their horses across the plain,
Like riders in haste, who cannot wait.

And when they came to Jerusalem,
Herod the Great, who had heard this thing,
Sent for the Wise Men and questioned them;
And said, “Go down unto Bethlehem,
And bring me tidings of this new king.”

So they rode away, and the star stood still,
The only one in the grey of morn;
Yes, it stopped—it stood still of its own free will,
Right over Bethlehem on the hill,
The city of David, where Christ was born.

And the Three Kings rode through the gate and the guard,
Through the silent street, till their horses turned
And neighed as they entered the great inn-yard;
But the windows were closed, and the doors were barred,
And only a light in the stable burned.



And cradled there in the scented hay,
In the air made sweet by the breath of kine,
The little child in the manger lay,
The child, that would be king one day
Of a kingdom not human, but divine.

His mother Mary of Nazareth
Sat watching beside his place of rest,
Watching the even flow of his breath,
For the joy of life and the terror of death
Were mingled together in her breast.
They laid their offerings at his feet:
The gold was their tribute to a King,
The frankincense, with its odor sweet,
Was for the Priest, the Paraclete,
The myrrh for the body's burying.

And the mother wondered and bowed her head,
And sat as still as a statue of stone.
Her heart was troubled yet comforted,
Remembering what the Angel had said
Of an endless reign and of David's throne.

Then the Kings rode out of the city gate,
With a clatter of hoofs in proud array;
But they went not back to Herod the Great,
For they knew his malice and feared his hate,
And returned to their homes by another way.



The Three Kings

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A side by side comparison with the gospel record

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With the people, they met at some wayside well.

“Of the child that is born,” said Baltasar,
“Good people, I pray you, tell us the news;
For we in the East have seen his star,
And have ridden fast, and have ridden far,
To find and worship the King of the Jews.”

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign:
Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son,
and shall call His name Immanuel.

Isaiah 7:14

Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the
reign of King Herod. About that time some wise
men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem
asking, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews?"

Matthew 2:1-2



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and the guard,
Through the silent street, till their horses turned
And neighed as they entered the great inn-yard;
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and the doors were barred,
And only a light in the stable burned.

King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard
this, as was everyone in Jerusalem.

Matthew 2:3-6

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Then Herod called for a private meeting with the
wise men, and he learned from them the time when
the star first appeared. Then he told them, "Go to
Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And
when you find him, come back and tell me so that I
can go and worship him, too!"

Matthew 2:7-8

*

After their interview the wise men went their way.
And the star they had seen in the east guided them
to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped
over the place where the child was.

Matthew 2:9

*

She gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped
him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a
manger, because there was no lodging available for
them. Luke 2:7



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Then the Kings rode out of the city gate,
With a clatter of hoofs in proud array;
But they went not back to Herod the Great,
For they knew his malice and feared his hate,
And returned to their homes by another way.

"I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior-yes, the Messiah, the Lord- has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger."

Luke 2:10-12

*

You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High, The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David, And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!"

Luke 1:31-33

*

They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Matthew 2:11

*

But Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often.

Luke 2:19

*

When it was time to leave, they returned to their own country by another route, for God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod.

Matthew 2:12



Reading Response Questions for The Three Kings

After reading the poem and comparing it to the gospel account, do you think Longfellow stayed true to the biblical record of Jesus' birth?

Why do you think Longfellow added in the fictional details of the wise men's journey?

How did Longfellow's details about the wise men make you think differently about them?

What is the longest journey you have ever been on and how did you travel?

Why do you think the wise men were included in the biblical record of Jesus' birth?

What details would you have added if you were writing a poem like Longfellow's? Would you add or omit any of Longfellow's details? Why or why not?

In the poem, Longfellow tells us why the wise men brought the gifts they did, gold, frankincense, and myrrh. What does the poem tell us these gifts represent? What does it tell us about the wise men and what they thought of Jesus?