

## Discussion Questions for Longfellow's Hiawatha

Let's each read a short portion of the poem that you enjoyed. During our Bookies Discussion.

1. Is this the first time you read *Hiawatha*? And was it different reading it now versus in the past?
2. Did you enjoy reading *Hiawatha* and did you finish reading it?
3. How do you feel about the ending? Wikipedia had this to say:

The poem closes with the approach of a birch canoe to Hiawatha's village, containing "the Priest of Prayer, the Pale-face." Hiawatha welcomes him joyously; and the "Black-Robe chief" brings word of [Jesus Christ](#). Hiawatha and the chiefs accept the Christian message. Hiawatha bids farewell to Nokomis, the warriors, and the young men, giving them this charge: "But my guests I leave behind me/ Listen to their words of wisdom,/ Listen to the truth they tell you." Having endorsed the Christian missionaries, he launches his canoe for the last time westward toward the sunset and departs forever.

4. How does *Hiawatha* try to settle the score with his father? How does it work out?
5. Do you think that *Hiawatha* is a racist poem? Why or why not?
6. Do you think people are right to criticize the concept of the "noble savage" that Longfellow draws on in this poem? Why or why not?
7. Why do you think *Hiawatha* was so popular when it came out? Why do you think critics disliked it so much?
8. Does it matter that Longfellow pieced *The Song of Hiawatha* together from all kinds of different Native American stories? Does he have any responsibility to the people whose culture he's borrowing from? Why or why not?
9. What kind of meter does Longfellow use in this poem and how does it contribute to what he's trying to represent?

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