

## “Writing a Composition” by James Baldwin

Before the half hour was ended he had written a very neat composition on his slate. He then went into the house, and waited while the teacher read it.

The teacher was surprised and pleased. He said, “Henry Longfellow, you have done very well. Today you may stand up before the school and read what you have written about the turnip.”

Many years after that, some funny verses about Mr. Finney’s turnip were printed in a newspaper. Some people

said they were what Henry Longfellow wrote on his slate that day at school.

But this was not true. Henry's composition was not in verse. As soon as it was read to the school, he rubbed it off the slate, and it was forgotten. Perhaps you would like to read those funny verses. Here they are; but you must **NEVER** think that Henry Longfellow wrote them.

Mr. Finney had a turnip,  
And it grew, and it grew;  
It grew behind the barn,  
And the turnip did no harm.

And it grew, and it grew,  
Till it could grow no taller;  
Then Mr. Finney took it up,  
And put it in the cellar.

There it lay, there it lay,  
Till it began to rot;  
Then Susie Finney washed it  
And put it in a pot.

She boiled it, and boiled it,  
As long as she was able;  
Then Mrs. Finney took it,  
And put it on the table.

Mr. Finney and his wife  
Both sat down to sup;  
And they ate, and they ate,  
They ate the turnip up.

All the school children in our country have heard of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. He was the best loved of all our poets. He wrote “The Village Blacksmith,” “The Children’s Hour,” and many other beautiful pieces which you will like to read and remember.