

8th Grade



In School-Days

by John Greenleaf Whittier

Still sits the school-house by the road,

A ragged beggar sleeping;

Around it still the sumachs grow

And blackberry-vines are creeping.

Within, the master's desk is seen,

Deep scarred by raps official;

The warping floor, the battered seats,

The jack-knife's carved initial;

The charcoal frescoes on its wall;

Its door's worn sill, betraying

The feet that, creeping slow to school,

Went storming out to playing!

Long years ago a winter sun

Shone over it at setting;

Lit up its western window-panes,

And low eaves' icy fretting.

It touched the tangled golden curls,

And brown eyes full of grieving;

Of one who still her steps delayed

When all the school were leaving.

For near her stood the little boy

Her childish favor singled;

His cap pulled low upon a face

Where pride and shame were mingled.

Pushing with restless feet the snow

To right and left, he lingered;—

As restlessly her tiny hands

The blue-checked apron fingered.

He saw her lift her eyes; he felt

The soft hand's light caressing,

And heard the tremble of her voice,

As if a fault confessing.

"I'm sorry that I spelt the word:

I hate to go above you,

Because,"—the brown eyes lower fell,—

"Because, you see, I love you!"

Still memory to a gray-haired man

That sweet child-face is showing.

Dear girl! the grasses on her grave

Have forty years been growing!

He lives to learn, in life's hard school,

How few who pass above him

Lament their triumph and his loss,

Like her,—because they love him.