

Jack Johnson

Mrs. Lamp

English 11

19 October 2018

### Happy Little Clouds

Attitude is everything, yet so many people choose to grumble and fuss all the time. This world could be a better place if each person chose to be more positive. In “A Psalm of Life,” by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, a forceful message of positivity greets the reader. The speaker in the poem has a positive attitude toward life, and he encourages people to be more positive and to make the most of their lives.

Longfellow writes about how people should not worry about the past. The speaker says, enthusiastically, “Let the dead past bury its dead! / Act,—act in the living present!” (Longfellow 22-23). This shows that people should leave the past in the past and live in the moment instead. The only things that really matter are the things folks choose to do from one moment to the next.

Next, Longfellow also writes about not following the crowd, but being a leader instead. The speaker says, “Be not like dumb, driven cattle! / Be a hero in the strife!” (Longfellow 19-20). When he says this, it means it is beneath human beings to be little followers; that’s something stupid animals do. Instead, he encourages readers to be themselves, which is a heroic thing to do. He wants people to live their own lives in their own way rather than shadowing someone else’s life.

Finally, Longfellow’s speaker encourages people to live the best life possible and make it great. The poem states, “Lives of great men all remind us / We can make our lives sublime” (Longfellow 25-26). These lines argue that if other people can make their lives sublime, so can

each and every reader. Everyone knows about famous people who made their lives really great and memorable, so Longfellow makes readers realize that they should strive to reach the success of those famous people they have heard about!

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wants people to live in the present, act as leaders instead of followers, and set high goals. People should be way more positive than they usually are. If people were more confident in themselves, less concerned with things from their pasts, and more optimistic about what they were capable of, the world would get better and better very quickly.

Sample Essay

Work Cited

Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth. “A Psalm of Life.” *Poetry Foundation*, Poetry Foundation, 2018.

Sample Essay