Synopsis

I. Verses 1‑12 Lars Porsena of Clusium summons a force from Etruria and Umbria to attack Rome and restore Tarquin to the throne. Men come from far and wide to join the army of Porsena.

II. Verses 13‑20 Romans in the countryside flee to Rome. The Senate meets.

III. Verses 21‑33 Porsena’s forces gather outside Rome. The hated Sextus is seen. A consul calls for the destruction of the only bridge across the Tiber into Rome. Horatius, captain of the bridge, volunteers to defend the bridge if two others will join him. Two men step forward. The Roman people unite in the defense of the city.

IV. Verses 34‑52 The Romans begin to weaken the bridge as the battle begins. Horatius, Spurius Lartius, and Herminius stand in the bridge. Three Etruscans attack them and are defeated. Three more attack and are defeated. Finally the champion Astur comes forward and is killed. The Etruscans begin to have doubts.

V. Verses 53‑70 As the bridge begins to fall, the Romans call their three champions back. Two retreat, but Horatius stays. As the bridge falls, he dives into the river and struggles back to the Roman shore. His bravery is admired, even by his enemies. The Romans declare him a hero and grant him honors and land.

Characters

Lars Porsena king of Clusium; commander of the Etruscan forces
Sextus son of Tarquin Superbus; raped Lucretia; hated by Romans
Horatius captain of the bridge; offers to defend the bridge
Spurius Lartius joins Horatius to defend the bridge
Herminius joins Horatius to defend the bridge
Aunus, Seius, Picus first three Etruscans to attack the bridge
Oenus, Lausulus, Aruns second trio to attack the bridge
Astur Etruscan champion; killed by Horatius
Teaching Guidelines

Preparation

Before beginning the study of *Horatius at the Bridge*, reread the story of Horatius in *Famous Men of Rome*. Help students understand the relationship between Rome and Etruria by reviewing the stories leading up to Horatius. An overview of Roman history and the significance and date of the establishment of the Roman Republic are important background knowledge for a full enjoyment of the poem. Include some map work of Italy and the Roman Empire, found in the Study Guide to *Famous Men of Rome* or *Latina Christiana*.

Read about the author, Lord Macaulay, and why he wrote the poem, specifically how the patriotism and virtues celebrated in the poem served well the goal of nurturing children to be leaders in the expanding British Empire. Help students understand the timetable of the ballad: the date of its actual composition, its imagined composition date, and the date of the event which it celebrates.

Briefly go over the synopsis and major characters on the preceding page. After introducing the poem, read it to your students. (Practice first in order to give a spirited reading that will engage your students.) You may want to start with a slightly shorter version by skipping stanzas 3-10, 17, 23, 32-33, 37-39. After introducing the ballad, answer the first seven questions in Section I of the Study Guide in the back of the book.

Suggested Lesson Plan

The five sections outlined on the previous page are to help students follow the storyline of the ballad. The breakdown below divides each of these sections into 20 smaller groupings of 2-5 stanzas each. Each of these groupings makes a convenient lesson of about 20-30 minutes. Be sure to allow for additional time for review, recitation, and testing.

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(1) READ
For each lesson, read aloud the two to three stanzas on each page. Ask students to silently study the explanatory notes and reread each page. Then begin the discussion of each stanza, focusing on comprehension. Ask students to summarize each stanza orally in a sentence or phrase.

(2) STUDY GUIDE
Complete the comprehension questions in the Study Guide in the back of the book. In the Study Guide, stanza numbers are given in the inside columns. Find locations on maps.

(3) REREAD
Ask students to reread each page silently, and then ask for a volunteer to read a page aloud, with expression!

(4) MEMORIZE
All students should memorize some of Horatius at the Bridge. You may let students choose stanzas they like, or you may want to divide the number of stanzas by your students and have all stanzas memorized for a class presentation.

The following 24 stanzas tell the story in abbreviated form: 1, 11, 13, 19-21, 27, 29-31, 34-36, 38, 53, 57-60, 64-66, 69, 70.

For a shorter selection of six stanzas, I recommend: 1, 27, 29-31, 70.

(5) RECITATION
If memorization is assigned, grade students on accuracy, expression, and pronunciation. Do not accept mediocre work. Four criteria for a recitation grade include:

1. **Accuracy and mastery.** Require students to master each stanza, without hesitation, stumbling, changing words, etc. A student cannot work on improving the quality of his recitation until he first has complete mastery of the memory work. Once a student can recite a passage “without thinking” he can begin to concentrate on the three factors below.

2. **Pace and enunciation.** Students tend to recite very quickly, their major goal being to just finish. In addition, students tend to rush even more at the end of a sentence or stanza, often trailing off inaudibly. It takes much practice and constant reminders to train students to slow down, enunciate each word, and emphasize dramatic parts.

3. **Expression.** Students tend to recite in a monotone with no expression. Help students to think about what they are saying and recite with variety of tone and emphasis, expression, and emotion.

4. **Posture, hands, eye contact, facial expression.** Help students to be aware of their posture, appearance, and body movements.
HORATIUS

A lay made about the year of the City CCCLX.

I.

Lars Porsena of Clusium
By the Nine Gods he swore
That the great house of Tarquin
Should suffer wrong no more.
By the Nine Gods he swore it,
And named a trysting day,
And bade his messengers ride forth.
East and west and south and north,
To summon his array.

II.

East and west and south and north,
The messengers ride fast,
And tower and town and cottage
Have heard the trumpet’s blast.
Shame on the false Etruscan
Who lingers in his home,
When Porsena of Clusium
Is on the march for Rome.