

# Paul Reveres Ride - song lyrics

American Old-time song lyrics from [www.traditionalmusic.co.uk](http://www.traditionalmusic.co.uk)

PAUL REVERES RIDE

A Recitation-By H. W. Longfellow.

Listen, my children, and you shall hear  
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,  
On the eighteenth of April, in Seventy-Five;  
Hardly a man is now alive  
Who remembers that famous day and year.

He said to his friend-"If the British march  
By land or sea from the town to-night;  
Hang a lantern aloft in the belfry arch  
Of the North Church tower, as a signal light-  
One if by land, and two if by sea;  
And I on the opposite shore will be,  
Ready to ride and spread the alarm  
Through every Middlesex village and farm,  
For the country-folk to be up and to arm."

Then he said good-night, and with muffled oar  
Silently rowed to the Charlestown shore,  
Just as the moon rose over the bay.  
Where, swinging wide at her moorings, lay  
The Somerset, British man-of-war:  
A phantom ship, with each mast and spar  
Across the moon like a prison-bar,  
And a huge black hulk, that was magnified  
By its own reflection in the tide.

Meanwhile, his friend through alley and street  
Wanders and watches with eager ears.  
Till in the silence around him he hears  
The muster of men at the barrack-door,  
The sound of arms, and the tramp of feet,  
And the measured tread of the grenadiers  
Marching down to their boats on the shore.

Then he climbed to the tower of the church,  
Up the wooden stairs, with stealthy tread,  
To the belfry-chamber overhead,  
And startled the pigeons from their perch  
On the sombre rafters, that round him made  
Masses and moving shapes of shade-  
Up the light ladder, slender and tall,  
To the highest window in the wall,  
Where he paused to listen and look down  
A moment on the roofs of the quiet town,  
And the moonlight flowing over all.

Beneath in the church-yard, lay the dead  
In their night-encampment on the hill,  
Wrapped in silence so deep and still  
That he could hear, like a sentinel's tread,  
The watchful night-wind, as it went  
Creeping along from tent to tent,  
And seeming to whisper, "All is well!"  
A moment only he feels the spell  
Of the place and the hour, the secret dread

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Of the lonely belfry and the dead;  
For suddenly all his thoughts are cent  
On a shadowy something far away,  
Where the river widens to meet the bay-  
A line of black, that bends and floats  
On the rising tide, like a bridge of boats.

Meanwhile, impatient to mount and ride,  
Booted and spurred, with a heavy stride,  
On the opposite shore walked Paul Revere.  
Now he patted his horse's side,  
Now gazed on the landscape far and near,  
Then impetuous stamped the earth.  
And turned and tightened his saddle-girth;  
But mostly he watched with eager search  
The belfry tower of the old North Church,  
As it rose above the graves on the hill,  
Lonely, and spectral, and sombre, and still.  
And lo! as he looks, on the belfry's height,  
A glimmer, and then a gleam of light!  
He springs to the saddle, the bridle he turns,  
But lingers and gazes, till full on his sight  
A second lamp in the belfry burns!

A hurry of hoofs in a village street,  
A shape in the moonlight, a bulk in the dark,  
And beneath from the pebbles, in passing, a spark  
Struck out by a steed that flies fearless and fleet:  
That was all! And yet, through the gloom and the light,  
The fate of a nation was riding that night;  
And the spark struck out by that steed, in hit flight,  
Kindled the land into flame with its heat.

It was twelve by the village-clock  
When he crossed the bridge into Medford town;  
He heard the crowing of the cock  
And the barking of the farmer's dog  
And felt the damp of the river-fog  
That rises when the sun goes down.

It was one by the village-clock  
When he rode into Lexington.  
He saw the gilded weathercock  
Swim in the moonlight as he passed,  
And the meeting-house windows, blank and bare,  
Gaze at him with a spectral glare,  
As if they already stood aghast  
At the bloody work they would look upon.

It was two by the village-clock  
When he came to the bridge in Concord town.  
He heard the bleating of the flock,  
And the twitter of birds among the trees.  
And felt the breath of the morning breeze  
Blowing over the meadows brown.  
And one was safe and asleep in his bed  
Who at the bridge would be first to fall,  
Who that day would be lying dead,  
Pierced by a British musket-ball.

You know the rest. In the books you have read  
How the British regulars fired and fled-

How the farmers gave them ball for ball,  
From behind each fence and farmyard wall,  
Chasing the red coats down the lane,  
Then crossing the fields to emerge again  
Under the trees at the turn of the road,  
And only pausing to fire and load.

So through the night rode Paul Revere;  
And so through the night went his cry of alarm  
To every Middlesex village and farm-  
A cry of defiance and not of fear-  
A voice in the darkness, a knock at the door,  
And a word that shall echo for evermore!  
For, borne on the night-wind of the Past,  
Through all our history, to the last.  
In the hour of darkness, and peril, and need,  
The people will waken and listen to hear  
The hurrying hoof-beat of that steed,  
And the midnight message of Paul Revere.