

Directions: Read the poem a few times.

Sample Answers

❧ A Nation's Strength ❧

William Ralph Emerson

What makes a nation's pillars high
And its foundations strong?
What makes it mighty to defy
The foes that round it throng?

It is not gold. Its kingdoms grand
Go down in battle shock;
Its shafts are laid on sinking sand,
Not on abiding rock.

Is it the sword? Ask the red dust
Of empires passed away;
The blood has turned their stones to rust,
Their glory to decay.

And is it pride? Ah, that bright crown
Has seemed to nations sweet;
But God has struck its luster down
In ashes at his feet.

Not gold but only men can make
A people great and strong;
Men who for truth and honor's sake
Stand fast and suffer long.

Brave men who work while others sleep,
Who dare while others fly...
They build a nation's pillars deep
And lift them to the sky.

Directions: Write the underlined words or phrases in the table. Next, circle the context clues that tell their meaning. Then define the words or phrases.

Words or Phrases	Context Clues	Meaning
<u>nation's pillars</u>	<u>Brave men who work</u> <u>Mighty</u> <u>They build a nation's pillars deep</u>	<u>The nation's pillars are the foundation of the nation that keeps it strong and enduring.</u>
<u>shafts</u>	<u>pillars</u> <u>laid on sinking sand</u>	<u>Shafts are pillars that can hold something up.</u>
<u>red dust</u>	<u>Sword</u> <u>blood</u>	<u>Red dust refers to the blood and destruction of nations in the past. It can refer to the phrase "from dust to dust."</u>
<u>luster</u>	<u>bright crown</u> <u>in ashes</u>	<u>The light, or luster, of the crown has burned up and died out and is now left in ash. The nation is not as appealing as it once was.</u>