One of the beautiful things about many of our best-loved hymns is that they were written by people from many different cultures and backgrounds. Some were wealthy while others were quite poor. Some wrote when they were in their nineties, while others died very early in life. Some wrote thousands of wonderful hymns, while others wrote only one. God uses many people in many ways to help spread the good news of the Gospel. That was certainly the case with this song, not for the writer of the words, but for the musician who wrote the comforting melody of this hymn, for this musician is not as well-known for his hymns as for his comic operas.

Sir Arthur Seymour Sullivan was born in London in 1842 into a musically gifted family. His father was a band director at the Royal Military College which helps explain why young Arthur was able to play nearly every instrument in the band by age twelve. Arthur studied music and became a professor, teacher and organist. Oddly, however, he didn’t become extremely popular until he joined with a fellow musician, W.S. Gilbert, to write comic operas. For many years Sullivan wrote the melodies and Gilbert wrote the lyrics to the humorous songs performed on stage in their operas like “The Mikado”, “HMS Pinafore”, and “Pirates of Penzance”. Finally in 1883, Sullivan was knighted by Queen Victoria as his name was changed to Sir Arthur Sullivan.

Sadly, Sullivan also suffered ill health throughout much of his life. Some say there were many times that he had to conduct the orchestra sitting down because it was too painful for him to stand. He died of pneumonia in 1900, at age 58. His wish to be buried with his parents in Bromley Cemetery did not come true. Instead Queen Victoria decided he should be buried in the famous St. Paul’s Cathedral in London.

In Christian circles, Sir Arthur Seymour Sullivan is best known for the two melodies of “I’m but a Stranger Here” and “Onward Christian Soldiers.”

Thomas Rawson Taylor, the writer of the words to this hymn, is little known. The only records found state that he was a minister in England who died of tuberculosis at age 28.
The Study of . . .
I'M BUT A STRANGER HERE

I'm but a stranger here, Heaven is my home;
Earth is a desert drear, Heaven is my home.
Danger and sorrow stand round me on every hand;
Heaven is my fatherland, Heaven is my home.

1. How many times does the writer mention heaven?
2. Why are Christians strangers here on earth?
3. What is a fatherland?

What though the tempest rage, Heaven is my home;
Short is my pilgrimage, Heaven is my home.
And times wild wintry blast soon shall be overpast;
I shall reach home at last, Heaven is my home.

4. Name some tempests that rage around us.
5. A pilgrimage is a trip with a purpose.
6. What other weather will not bother us? See Revelation 7:16.

There at my Savior's side, Heaven is my home;
I shall be glorified, Heaven is my home.
There are the good and blest, those I love most and best;
And there I too shall rest, Heaven is my home.

7. What does it mean to be glorified?
8. Who will we all meet again in heaven?
9. Read about the heavenly rest in Hebrews 4:9,10.

Therefore I murmur not, Heaven in my home;
Whate'er my earthly lot, Heaven is my home.
And I shall surely stand there at my Lord's right hand.
Heaven is my fatherland, Heaven is my home.

10. What should we not complain about?
11. Why do you think a song like this has given comfort to so many?
12. Memorize three stanzas

Your Project . . .
Read Revelation 21 and describe what John saw when he looked into heaven.