

IF

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or, being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or, being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise;

If you can dream - and not make dreams your master;
If you can think - and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with triumph and disaster
And treat those two imposters just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to broken,
And stoop and build them up with wornout tools;

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breath a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on";

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with kings - nor lose the common touch;
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you;
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And-which is more-you'll be a 'Man' my son!

About the Poem

Amongst the most famous poems written in the English language is Rudyard Kipling's ever popular piece 'If '. The poem is inspirational and motivational. It contains mottos and maxims for life, and the poem is also a blueprint for personal integrity, behaviour and self-development. 'If' is perhaps even more relevant today than when Kipling wrote it, as an ethos and a personal philosophy.

The insight offered by the poet can be summarised in brief as: remain humble, avoid extremes, and enjoy the joys of life at every opportunity. Rise above the fray and find goodness in even the darkest circumstances! He wants to inspire and enlighten, he wants the reader to see the possibilities, and he asks the reader to ponder over the best of the best within that soul.

Rudyard Kipling was an Anglo-Indian Poet. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1907.

GLOSSARY

keep your head	: be sensible
trust yourself	: believe in your self
make allowance	: to forgive, to accept
not make dreams your master	: not let dreams rule over oneself but also act
triumph and disaster	: victory, and an event that causes great damage
imposters	: people who deceive others or who pretend to be what they are not
knaves	: an old-fashioned word for dishonest men
Build'em up	: rebuild the broken parts of your life
the things you gave your life	: the important things in life for which one makes sacrifices
wornout tools	: hard work and determination
all your winnings	: all your achievements
on one turn of pitch-and-toss	: a sort of gamble, take risks

pitch-and-toss	: sinew:a part of your body that connects a muscle to a bone; in a literary meaning, something that gives strength or support
hold on	: to be able to keep, to sustain
common touch	: not becoming corrupted by the machinations of status, the individual not placing importance above anyone else, but showing ultimate humility lead a meaningful life with sixty seconds' worth of distance run:
yours is the Earth	: you become the master of your destiny

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- 1) Who is the speaker? What does the poem reveal about the speaker's character?
- 2) "Keep your head" Why would this be important? What does Kipling mean "to trust yourself when others doubt you"?
- 3) How does one make allowances for doubting? Why is this important?
- 4) Why does the poet recommend not looking "too good" or "talking too wise"?
- 5) According to the poet why is it not good to make "dreams your master"?
- 6) Is the author actually talking about "triumph and disaster" or how a person responds to those situations? What is he conveying here?
- 7) Why does the author say "Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it"?
- 8) What does "unforgiving minute" suggest?

CREATIVE WRITING

1. Write an essay on Inspirational and motivational techniques. Use appropriate imagery or figurative language.