

If By Rudyard Kipling

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 impostors 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 'em up with worn-out 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 breathe 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!

Questions

1. What does the author tell the reader not to 'give way' to? Tick one.

- dreams
- lies
- hating
- thoughts

2. Which pair of words from the poem do **not** rhyme? Tick one.

- you/too
- master/Disaster
- wise /aim
- fools/tools

3. Fill in the missing words.

If you can talk with _____ and keep your _____,

4. Which **two** nouns does the author describe as 'impostors'?

- _____
- _____

5. Find and copy one word from the last verse which means the same as 'enemies'.

6. ... **don't give way to hating,**

Explain what you think this means.

7. Which line of the poem is your favourite? Explain your answer.

8. Discuss why you think that the poem is called 'If'.

Answers

1. What does the author tell the reader not to 'give way' to? Tick one.

- dreams
 lies
 hating
 thoughts

2. Which pair of words from the poem do **not** rhyme? Tick one.

- you/too
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3. Fill in the missing words.

If you can talk with **crowds** and keep your **virtue**,

4. Which **two** nouns does the author describe as 'impostors'?

- **Triumph**
- **Disaster**

5. Find and copy one word from the last verse which means the same as 'enemies'.

foes

6. ... **don't give way to hating,**

Explain what you think this means.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that this means that you shouldn't allow yourself to hate. The author is advising the reader not to let hate win.

7. Which line of the poem is your favourite? Explain your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I like the line 'If you can dream - and not make dreams your master;' because it suggests that it is important to dream but you also need to be realistic with your expectations.

8. Discuss why you think that the poem is called 'If'.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that the poem is called 'If' because the word 'If' is repeated at the start of many lines in the poem. Also, the author says that the Earth and everything that's in it will be his 'if' he can follow all the advice given in the poem.

Questions

1. Which **two** nouns does the author describe as 'impostors'? Tick **two**.

- triumph
- hope
- disaster
- thoughts

2. What is the meaning of the phrase 'keep your head'? Tick one.

- don't let your head fall off
- stay calm
- don't lose important possessions
- keep yourself safe

3. Find and copy one word from the second verse which means the same as 'bend down'.

4. What does the author warn the reader not to make 'their master'?

5. Find and copy one example of direct speech from the poem.

6. Explain what 'never breathe a word' means.

7. **If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,...**

Discuss what you think this means.

8. Explain which piece of advice from the poem you think is the best.

9. Explain why you think that the author wrote this poem.

Answers

- Which **two** nouns does the author describe as 'impostors'? Tick **two**.
 - triumph**
 - hope
 - disaster**
 - thoughts
- What is the meaning of the phrase 'keep your head'? Tick one.
 - don't let your head fall off
 - stay calm**
 - don't lose important possessions
 - keep yourself safe
- Find and copy one word from the second verse which means the same as 'bend down'.
stoop
- What does the author warn the reader not to make 'their master'?
dreams
- Find and copy one example of direct speech from the poem.
'Hold on!'
- Explain what 'never breathe a word' means.
Pupils' own responses, such as: I think 'never breathe a word' means to not tell anyone. The author is advising the reader to move on, start again and not worry about things that they have lost.
- If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,...**
Discuss what you think this means.
Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that 'If you can wait and not be tired by waiting' means that it is important to try to be patient.
- Explain which piece of advice from the poem you think is the best.
Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that the best piece of advice from the poem is 'don't give way to hating' because it is a positive message and means that we shouldn't allow ourselves to hate.
- Explain why you think that the author wrote this poem.
Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that the author wrote this poem for their son in order to give him some valuable advice about life. I also think it could have been intended as advice for anyone.

Questions

1. Which phrase in the poem is written as direct speech? Tick one.

- Hold on!
- build 'em up with worn-out tools
- you'll be a Man, my son!
- don't give way to hating

2. Which word is **not** a synonym of 'knaves'? Tick one.

- scoundrel
- rogue
- hero
- villain

3. Find and copy **two** words from the poem which are intended to rhyme with each other.

- _____
- _____

4. What does the author warn the reader not to 'give way to'?

5. Find and copy one phrase from the poem which means the same as 'stay calm'.

6. **...watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools;...**

Explain what you think this means.

7. Why do you think that the author has repeated the word 'If' throughout the poem?

8. **If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;...**

Why do you think the words Triumph and Disaster are capitalised?

9. Give one piece of advice that you think would be appropriate to add to the poem.

10. Explain what impression you get of the author.

Questions

1. Which phrase in the poem is written as direct speech? Tick one.
 - Hold on!**
 - build 'em up with worn-out tools
 - you'll be a Man, my son!
 - don't give way to hating
2. Which word is **not** a synonym of 'knaves'? Tick one.
 - scoundrel
 - rogue
 - hero**
 - villain
3. Find and copy **two** words from the poem which are intended to rhyme with each other.
Accept any of the following two words together: you/too; waiting/hating; lies/wise; master/disaster; aim/same; spoken/broken; fools/tools; winnings/beginnings; toss/loss; sinew/you; gone/one; virtue/you; touch/much; minute/it; run/son.
4. What does the author warn the reader not to 'give way to'?
The poem says 'don't give way to hating'.
5. Find and copy one phrase from the poem which means the same as 'stay calm'.
keep your head
6. **...watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools;...**
Explain what you think this means.
Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that this means that if something that you have spent a long time growing or building gets destroyed in some way, you should work hard to rebuild or restore it again.
7. Why do you think that the author has repeated the word 'If' throughout the poem?
Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that the author repeats the word 'If' throughout the poem because they are giving their son advice. However, the Earth and everything that's in it will only be his 'if' he takes heed of all of the advice given.

8. **If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster**

And treat those two impostors just the same;...

Why do you think the words Triumph and Disaster are capitalised?

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think the words Triumph and Disaster are capitalised because the author uses personification; they call these emotions impostors so they are capitalised as proper nouns.

9. Give one piece of advice that you think would be appropriate to add to the poem.

Pupils' own responses, such as: One piece of advice that may be appropriate for the poem could be: always treat others as you would wish to be treated yourself.

10. Explain what impression you get of the author.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I get the impression that the author is wise because they have lots of insightful advice to give to their son. I also get the impression that they are concerned because they seem to care a lot about the choices that their son makes in life.