

Name: _____ Class: _____

If

By Rudyard Kipling
From Rewards And Fairies • 1910

Rudyard Kipling (1865-1939) was an English short story writer, poet, and novelist. He is best known for The Jungle Book (1894). Kipling wrote in Victorian England, and "If" is considered representative of the ideal qualities of a "proper Englishman" during that time. As you read, take note of Kipling's tone and message.

- [1] 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;
- [5] 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;

- [10] 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 knaves¹ to make a trap for fools,
- [15] 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

- [20] And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew²
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!'



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1. **Knave (noun):** a dishonest man
2. **Sinew (noun):** tissue connecting muscle to bone; something that binds together

- [25] 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
- [30] 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!

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Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. Who is the speaker? Who is the audience? Cite evidence to support your answer. [RL.6]

2. What is the speaker's tone? Support your answer with evidence. [RL.4]

3. Reread lines 13 to 16. Rewrite this advice in your own words. [RL.4]

4. According to the speaker, how should you respond if you fail in meeting your goals? [RL.1]

5. Explain the line “don’t look too good, nor talk too wise.” In other work the speaker is advising his audience to act _____. [RL.4]

6. What is the structure of this poem? What patterns do you notice? [RL.5]

7. PART A: Which of the following best supports the effect of this structure on the poem overall? [RL.5]

- A. The structure of this poem mimics the journey of becoming a man.
- B. The structure of this poem indicates the failure of the boy.
- C. The structure contributes to the eerie mood of this poem.

8. PART B: Record a piece of evidence from the poem that supports the answer to Part A. [RL.1]

9. According to the speaker, what kind of qualities should a man have? List five qualities [RL.1] supported by evidence from the text.

Discussion Questions

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. Consider the line, "If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,/But make allowance for their doubting too." Do you think it's important to allow people to doubt you? Explain your answer.

2. The speaker says it's important to not make your dreams your master. What does he mean by this? Do you agree or disagree? Explain your answer.

3. In the context of this poem, what does it mean to be grown up?