

If Worksheet

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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;
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;

2

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 'em up with wornout tools;

3

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";

4

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!

Vocabulary In one or two words define the following terms from the poem.

- 1: doubt, allowance
- 2: triumph, imposters, disaster, knaves
- 3: pitch-and-toss, sinew
- 4: virtue, foes

Word Pictures Word pictures is another way of saying *imagery*. *Imagery* or *figurative language* helps us form a picture of what the author is trying to present. Discuss what these word pictures mean and, perhaps, draw your idea of the *imagery* or *figurative language* the author uses!

- 1: keep your head, wait and not be tired of waiting
- 2: triumph and disaster, trap for fools, wornout tools
- 3: never breathe a word about your loss, nerve and sinew, hold on
- 4: walk with kings, nor lose the common touch, unforgiving minute

Mechanics Verbally discuss

Who is the speaker?

What does the poem reveal about the speaker's character?

Is the speaker addressing someone in particular or is it to anyone?

Does the poem have a setting?

Is the poem about a particular event? Is the event past or present? If it is about a past event, does the remembrance of the event have a particular meaning to the speaker?

Is the theme of the poem stated directly or indirectly?

What point of view or perspective is the speaker?

How did you respond to the poem when you read it the first time?

Comprehension Questions Verbally discuss

1: Explain and discuss “keep your head.” Why would this be important? What does it mean to trust yourself when others doubt you? How does one make allowances for doubting? Why is this important? Do you agree with what the author said about lies? Why? Explain and discuss “being hated, don’t give way to hating.” Why does the author recommend not looking “too good” or “talking too wise”? Overall, what is the message for this portion of the poem?

2: According to the author it is not good to make “dreams your master.” Why? Similarly, the author recommends not to “make thoughts your aim.” Why? Is the author actually talking about “triumph and disaster” or how a person responds to those situations? Why? The author also mentions having your words twisted and distorted by others. How does one normally respond to this type of situation? What does the author recommend? Do you agree/disagree? Overall, what is the message for this portion of the poem?

3: Do you think the author is actually promoting gambling by using the phrase “make one heap of all your winnings and risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss”? Explain and discuss “To serve your turn long after they are gone.” Relate same to “duty.” What does the author mean by “Hold on”? Overall, what is the message for this portion of the poem?

4: It would seem that the author holds that others (crowds) can tempt us or lead us astray of “virtue.” Do you think this can be true? Explain and discuss “walk with kings nor lose the common touch.” Why would this be important (especially from a Christian worldview)? Why do you think the author holds that others should rely or count on you but not too much? (You may want to relate this to the First Commandment). According to the author, it is important to make every minute and second count. Do you agree? Why would the author say “Yours is the Earth and everything that’s in it”? Discuss this phrase in conjunction with Psalm 24:1, “The earth is the LORD’S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.”

After reading this poem, what character traits did you think of? What does the Bible have to say about these character traits?

What Does the Bible Say?

Find Scripture proofs for each of the assertions or statements made for each of the four stanzas.

Basically, perseverance means steadfast persistence. Give some Scripture verses that deal with perseverance. Can you think of anyone in the Bible that demonstrated perseverance? Can you think of anyone, past or present, that demonstrated perseverance?

What does the Bible have to say about courage? Courage is not the absence of fear, but going ahead and standing for the right in spite of one’s fear. Can you think of anyone in the Bible that demonstrated courage? Can you think of anyone, past or present, that demonstrated courage?

The Author/Poet

Based on what you have studied about this poem so far, would you guess that the author was a Christian or a humanist? How did you arrive at your decision?

The author's name for this poem is Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936). He was born in Bombay, India, on 30 December 1865, and died in London 17 January 1936. Kipling was educated in England and, in 1882, went out to India to join the *Civil and Military Gazette*. In 1889, he left India and travelled. By 1892, Mr. Kipling married Miss Caroline Balestier, an American. The couple lived in Vermont for 4 years and then settled in Rottingham-near-the-sea. In 1907, Mr. Kipling was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature and was honored by Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Paris, and Strasbourg. He was a prolific and versatile writer of fiction, poetry, and journalism. His best known works are *Plain Tales from the Hills* (Calcutta 1888), *The Light that Failed* (Calcutta 1890), *Barrack Room Ballads* (1892), *Captains Courageous*, and *Kim* (1901).

Geography

Locate Bombay, India, London, England, Vermont, Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburg, Paris, and the United States of America on a globe, map and atlas.

Challenge Locate Rottingham-near-the-sea and Strasbourg on a map or in an atlas.

Compare/contrast the weather of India, Britain, and/or Vermont with your own for one week.

Make a meal from India, Britain, and/or Vermont for your family.

Activities

- 1) Make your own book! Without making an image of Christ, draw pictures representing each stanza. (Note: that will be four different illustrations). With construction paper and other items readily available at home, make a title page with the name of the poem and the author's name which will be your book's cover. You may want to illustrate your cover and include this poem in your book.
- 2) Make your own play! Re-enact with your siblings or friends the message discussed in this poem. Keep it lively, simple, and short. You may want to end your play with reciting this poem and reading Scripture verses that support it. Videotape your creation.
- 3) Radio Drama! With a handheld tape recorder, create your own radio show dramatizing the message of this poem.
- 4) Be a Reporter! Either with your family camcorder or with a handheld tape recorder, "interview" various individuals that would be in agreement this poem (e.g., Joshua, Caleb, William Tell, Alfred the Great, John Witherspoon, etc.). In order to have the fast paced style of a reporter, watch and/or listen to the news with your parents' permission. Keep the interviews lively, quick, and to the point.

Remain objective! Being objective means just reporting the facts and not giving your opinion of the situation.

5) What is one of the things you most enjoy? Is it literature? math? science? sports? cooking? Take that area of interest and relate that to this poem. If you enjoy dance, for example, develop a dance routine that physically expresses the sentiments of this poem. If you enjoy shop, create something out of wood that helps to clarify this poem. Do you enjoy creating stories? Write a story based on any time period you desire that expresses the sentiments of this poem. Do you enjoy creating things in the kitchen? Make an ancient meal from this time or develop your own meal that symbolizes the many different points this poem makes.

6) Poster. Create a poster illustrating the the author's view of the impact of *If*.

7) Scavenger Hunt. Go to the library to learn what you can about Rudyard Kipling and share it with your family. If possible, discover the story behind this poem.