

YOU Worksheet

© 2002 Beverly Schmitt, all rights reserved

1) You are the fellow that has to decide
Whether you'll do it or toss it aside.
You are the fellow who makes up your mind
Whether you'll lead or will linger behind
Whether you'll try for the goal that's afar
Or just be contented to stay where you are.
Take it or leave it. Here's something to do!
Just think it over — It's all up to you!

2) What do you wish? To be known as a shirk,
Known as a good man who's willing to work,
Scorned for a loafer or praised by your chief,
Rich man or poor man or beggar or thief?
Eager or earnest or dull through the day,
Honest or crooked? It's you who must say!
You must decide in the face of the test
Whether you'll shirk it or give it your best.

3) Nobody here will compel you to rise;
No one will force you to open your eyes;
No one will answer for you yes or no,
Whether to stay there or whether to go.
Life is a game, but it's you who must say,
Whether as cheat or as sportsman you'll play.
Fate may betray you, but you settle first
Whether to live to your best or your worst.

4) So, whatever it is you are wanting to be,
Remember, to fashion the choice you are free.
Kindly or selfish, or gentle or strong,
Keeping the right way or taking the wrong,
Careless of honor or guarding your pride,
All these are questions which you must decide.
Yours the selection, whichever you do;
The thing men call character's all up to you!

Vocabulary

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

- 1: linger
- 2: shirk, scorned, loafer, praised, chief, dull
- 3: compel, cheat, sportsman, fate, betray
- 4: honor, character

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: toss it aside, linger behind, try for the goal, think it over
- 2: good man ... willing to work, loafer, rich man or poor man, beggar or thief, honest or crooked, face of the test
- 3: open your eyes, yes or no, life is a game
- 4: kindly or selfish, gentle or strong

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: Who has to decide? What is to be decided? (*Hint: See line 4*) What does the author tell the reader to do in the last line?

2: The author makes a series of comparisons (e.g., shirk or willing to work, etc.). What was the point of these comparisons? Explain and discuss, “You must decide in the face of the test.”

3: Discuss the first four lines. What is the point the author is making? Do you agree/disagree? Why? Do you really think the author thinks that “Life is a game” or is he making a point? Explain and discuss “you settle first whether to live to your best or your worst.” Do you agree with the author’s assertion?

4: According to the author, what is the reader free to do? Again, the author makes a series of comparisons (e.g., kindly or selfish). What is the point of these comparisons? Discuss the last line.

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.

Discuss the following with respect to decision-making: Loyalty (Ruth 1:16), prayer (1 Sam 23:1-13), and faith (Hebrews 11:24-28). Give Bible examples of good decision-making and bad decision-making. Historically, past and present, give examples of good and bad decision-making.

What does the Bible have to say about duty? Should duty be done cheerfully? in secret? Should one make a “grand show” of doing one’s duty?

Give Biblical examples of the series of comparisons the author makes in this poem (e.g., shirker and willing worker, loafer or praised by your chief, etc.). Do any of these comparisons remind you of anyone in history, past or present? Why?

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 Edgar A. Guest (1881-1959). He was born in Birmingham, England, on 20 August 1881, and died 5 August 1959. The Guest family relocated to Detroit in 1891. Edgar started as a copy boy at the Detroit Free Press in 1895 gradually becoming a police reporter, exchange editor, and verse columnist. In 1904, Mr. Guest began a weekly column entitled "Chaff" that later became the daily "Breakfast Table Chat" syndicated to 300 newspapers throughout the United States. Between 1931-1941, he broadcast weekly from Chicago on NBC radio. By 1951 NBC broadcast "A Guest in Your Home" on television.

On 18 June 1906, Edgar Guest and Nellie Crossman married and had two children. Guest was a member of the Episcopal church. He was given several honorary degrees writing over 20 volumes of poetry and was referred to as "the poet of the people." It is estimated that Mr. Guest wrote over 11,000 poems in his lifetime.

Geography

Locate England, Michigan, and Illinois on a globe, map and atlas.

Challenge Locate Detroit (Michigan) and Chicago (Illinois) on a map or in an atlas.

Compare/contrast weather from England, Michigan, and/or Illinois with your own for one week.

Make a meal from either Michigan, England, and/or Illinois 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 singing a rousing chorus of this poem or reading Scripture verses. 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 this poem reflects (e.g., parents/grandparents, George Washington, Dolley Madison, frontier families, Daniel Boone, Francis "the Swamp Fox" Marion, Sergeant York, 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 *You*.

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