

if - rudyard kipling

Rudyard Kipling's inspirational poem - 'If'

Rudyard Kipling's (1865-1936) inspirational poem 'If' first appeared in his collection 'Rewards and Fairies' in 1909. The poem 'If' is inspirational, motivational, and a set of rules for 'grown-up' living. Kipling's 'If' 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. Lines from Kipling's 'If' appear over the player's entrance to Wimbledon's Centre Court - a poignant reflection of the poem's timeless and inspiring quality.

The beauty and elegance of 'If' contrasts starkly with Rudyard Kipling's largely tragic and unhappy life. He was starved of love and attention and sent away by his parents; beaten and abused by his foster mother; and a failure at a public school which sought to develop qualities that were completely alien to Kipling. In later life the deaths of two of his children also affected Kipling deeply.

Rudyard Kipling achieved fame quickly, based initially on his first stories and poems written in India (he returned there after College), and his great popularity with the British public continued despite subsequent critical reaction to some of his more conservative work, and critical opinion in later years that his poetry was superficial and lacking in depth of meaning.

Significantly, Kipling turned down many honours offered to him including a knighthood, Poet Laureate and the Order of Merit, but in 1907 he accepted the Nobel Prize for Literature. Kipling's wide popular appeal survives through other works, notably *The Jungle Book* (1894) the novel, *Kim* (1901), and *Just So Stories* (1902).

'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 all 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!

Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936)