

## IF

*Notes*

Every parent wishes the best for his/her child and as they are the first teachers in every child's life, parents teach their children about the ways of the world and try to give them a matured outlook of life through whatever wisdom they have gained over the years, with the earnest hope that their child will gain something valuable from their words and lead a fruitful life of their own. What do you think a parent would have to say to his/her child? Read the poem by **Rudyard Kipling** to get a father's perspective.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

After completing the lesson, the learners:

- Finds out novel ways of thinking to discover answers for query arising inside;
- Infers the genre of Didactic poems in the Indian English literature;
- Develops the habit of depending on present rather than groping over the past or unnecessary hankering after the future;
- Validates the guidance and wisdom imparted by the poet;

**13.1 SECTION I**

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,

- **Make Allowance For:** To accept behaviour that you would not normally accept because you know why someone has behaved that way.

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Or being hated, don't give way to hating,  
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:



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Fig. : 13.1

### LET US UNDERSTAND 13.1

In times of crisis we often panic and may even try to put the blame on other people or face situations where other people shift their responsibilities on us.

In the first “if” scenario, the poet highlights the importance of staying calm even when those around us are not and are shifting their blame on us.

In the second “if” scenario, the poet emphasises self-trust as well as the ability to understand the thoughts and feelings of others, even if it means understanding that people will not always like or agree with you.

In today’s fast paced world, we have been spoiled with the habit of seeking instant gratification. However, being patient in our lives is a virtue when it is called for and is a sign of maturity, as the poet mentions in the third “if” scenario. The poet further tells us that even if we are lied to, we should not stoop to the level of a liar. Even if we are hated, we must not become hateful and to not retaliate in the same form. Finally, We should not appear to be better than we actually are, nor should we talk in a manner that does not reflect who we are, instead we should stick to our true selves.



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 13.1

1. “If you can keep your head when all about you / Are losing theirs and blaming it on you...” What does the poet mean by keeping or losing one’s head?
2. What should you ideally do when others doubt your decision?
3. Why should we not try to look “too good” nor talk “too wise”?
4. How does the poem advice handling waiting and accusations of lying and hatred?
  - a) Wait impatiently and respond with lies
  - b) Be patient, avoid lying, and respond to hatred with hatred
  - c) Ignore waiting, lie when necessary, and respond to hatred with kindness
  - d) Wait patiently, avoid lying, and don’t give in to hatred

### 13.2 SECTION II

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:

### LET US UNDERSTAND 13.2

We all love to daydream and think about our future. We love thinking about growing up and fulfilling our thoughts and dreams. In the second stanza the poet speaks about dreams and thoughts. The poet asks us to dream but to not get so caught up in those dreams that we lose touch with our present reality, and as for thoughts, he asks us to think and actively work towards those thoughts rather than merely making those thoughts our aim.



### Notes

- **Triumph:** Victory
- **Imposter:** One that assumes false identity or title for the purpose of deception.
- **Knave:** A dishonest man.

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- **Pitch-and-Toss:** A game in which the player who pitches coins nearest to a mark has first chance at tossing up all the coins played and winning those that fall heads up.

A victory or a loss, none lasts forever. We should treat both equally. Getting too carried away by success or too upset by failure is not the right way. The poet refers to both “Triumph” and “Disaster” as “Imposters” because they both deceitfully prevent us from looking at life from a broader perspective. A single failure or a single victory does not decide the end goal, they both are opportunities to learn.

As the poet mentions knaves twisting words and making traps for fools. Oftentimes our words can be taken out of context or can be twisted by dishonest, unscrupulous people for their own personal benefit or simply for causing us harm.

There are times when we see all our hard work, our dreams, into which we have invested a lifetime of time and effort, meeting with failure. It is natural in such a situation for anybody to get overwhelmed. “Worn Out Tools” refers to the state of a person’s mind which is perhaps overwhelmed by the sense of failure, but still has the spirit of getting back up against the odds to overcome the situation. Learning to pick ourselves up even after the hardest of falls is a courageous and commendable act which one learns by facing hardships along the way.



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 13.2

1. What is the meaning of the word “Imposter”? Why is it used to describe “Triumph” and “Disaster”?
2. What should we do in the face of failure according to the poet?
3. What does the poet mean when he says “-and not make Dream your master”?
4. Building things with Worn-out tools means-
  - a) Using blunt, old tools for construction.
  - b) Giving your everything despite failing before.
  - c) Finding a middle way out in the face of conflict.
  - d) Helplessly trying to fix things which cannot be fixed.

### 13.3 SECTION III

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!'



Fig. : 13.2

### LET US UNDERSTAND 13.3

According to the poet, an ideal man is one who can put all of his life's achievements at risk while aiming towards bigger goals. There are times in life when we have a choice to take risks. Sometimes taking those risks cost us everything we have earned so far. In such situations we should not spend time lamenting over the losses we have faced, rather we should prepare ourselves to start again from the very beginning and to spend our energy into getting back on our feet.

At moments of despair, "Will" is a very powerful force. It can make us endure that which we ourselves cannot imagine. If we have the willpower to endure, we can "Hold

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On” in the direst of times, all our intellect, emotions and our body (Nerve, Heart and Sinew) will serve us even when everything seems to be going against us.



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 13.3



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- **Count with:** To support a person

1. What do the words Heart, Sinew and Nerve mean?
2. Should we actually risk all our winnings in a game of Pitch-and- Toss, Or is it a metaphor?
3. Why should we never “*breathe a word*” about our loss?
4. Which of the following best describes “Will”?
  - a) The spirit of never giving up against odds.
  - b) The optimism kept in times of despair.
  - c) The rage felt when we feel wronged.
  - d) The emotion which makes us avoid all danger.

### 13.4 SECTION IV

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!

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*Notes**Fig. : 13.3*

#### **LET US UNDERSTAND 13. 4**

If we ever find ourselves in a position of authority we should not lose touch with the people under our authority, we should remain humble and kind with them and should not become arrogant and inconsiderate. At the same time we should not get influenced by them in a wrong manner.

On the other hand, if we are interacting with people in powerful positions, we should not pretend to be who we are not in order to impress or gain favours, and we should not forget our own roots. We should be able to live with both commoners and kings but not lose the idea of ourselves as individuals.

In the third line the “if” deals with vulnerability, we all have vulnerabilities and when a person is vulnerable he can be hurt. Foes can exploit our weaknesses and well-meaning

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friends themselves can inadvertently become our weakness as well, therefore we should always assess our vulnerabilities from both ends.

The fourth line deals with the aspect of supporters. It is obviously good if every person supports us but everything is bad in excess. Blind support is not a good thing because we should always be answerable to people. There should be people there to criticise us. Otherwise there will be nobody to stop us from doing things that we should be stopped from doing.

There is a common phrase which goes “Make every second count!”. The meaning of it is simple. It says that time is unforgiving as lost time can never be recovered. Time waits for nobody. Therefore, we need to do as much as possible in the limited time we have. Time is the same for everyone. It is only the actions of individuals, the “distance” they “run” in the same time as others, which will distinguish them.

The final lines of the poem finally reveal the significance of the “Ifs” we had read so far, Rudyard Kipling concludes by saying the world is ours to take meaning that we can achieve any goal we set our minds to and no goal is too high. We can conquer the entire world if we wish so. Lastly the poem ends with the note that if we can fulfil every “if” in the poem, we will evolve from a child to a mature and capable individual.


**INTEXT QUESTIONS 13.4**

1. In what manner should we talk to the crowd and with Kings?
2. How can our friends harm us?
3. Why should a person not have people who “count with” them too much?
4. What is the meaning of “filling” a “minute”

**APPRECIATION**
**Rhyme Scheme**

A rhyme scheme is a pattern of rhymes at the end of each line of a poem or song.

This poem follows the AAABCD CD rhyme scheme in the first stanza. In the other three stanzas, it follows an alternating rhyme, A rhyme scheme where consecutive lines rhyme, i.e. ABABCD CD.



**Stanza**

A stanza is a poetic form of some lines. There are four stanzas in this poem. Each stanza comprises eight verses, known as an octave.

**Didactic poem**

A didactic poem is a type of poem that aims to instruct or teach a moral, philosophical, or practical lesson.

The speaker in the poem “If” is teaching his son on what to do and not to do to attain or succeed to the earth. It is a lesson about what is significant in life. Therefore, the poem is a type of didactic poem that teaches how to be an ideal human being.

Examples of other dramatic monologues:

- “The Divine Comedy” by Dante Alighieri, which explores themes of morality, spirituality, and the consequences of human actions.
- “To a Mouse” by Robert Burns, which reflects on the unpredictability of life and the importance of humility and empathy.

**Monologue**

In a dramatic monologue, a single character addresses a silent listener, sharing own thoughts, feelings, and experiences. “If—” doesn’t exactly follow all the rules of a dramatic monologue, but it’s similar because it has one speaker giving advice to someone else, as if they’re having a conversation.

Examples of other didactic poems:

- Robert Frost’s “The Pauper Witch of Grafton”
- Robert Browning’s “My Last Duchess”

**LET’S DO**

1. Create a list of virtues and qualities based on what you have identified in the poem.
2. Exchange dialogue on a given situation in a role play.

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## LET'S LEARN



## GRAMMAR

**Direct-Indirect Speech (Interrogative Sentences)**

In lesson 11, we learnt about Direct and Indirect speech and some rules to convert them into statement sentences. In this lesson we will proceed with the interchanging of Direct and Indirect speech in interrogative sentences.

**Example 1:**

Direct Speech: She said to me, "Are you coming to the party?"

Indirect Speech: She asked me if I was coming to the party.

**Example 2:**

Direct Speech: He said to me, "What is your name?"

Indirect Speech: He asked me what my name was.

Interrogative sentences seek information and can be either yes/no questions or wh-questions. Converting interrogative sentences from direct to indirect speech requires careful consideration of question words, verb changes, and the overall structure.

Let's have a look at the conversion rules for interrogative sentences:

- I. Introduce an appropriate reported verb such as asked, inquired, wondered, etc.
  - a) She said to me, "Did you finish your homework?"  
She asked me if I had finished my homework.
  - b) He said, "When did you go there?"  
He inquired when I had gone there.
  - c) Santha Ram said to me, "Where did you put my keys?"  
Santha Ram wondered where I had put his keys.
- II. In wh-questions, use question words (who, what, where, when, why, how) after the reported verb instead of 'that'. Then change the word order and replace the question mark with a period or full stop. For ex.,

He said, "Where is the nearest bookstore?"  
He asked where the nearest bookstore was.

- III. In yes/no questions, add 'if' after the reported verb and then change the word order and replace the question mark with a period or full stop.
- She said, "Did they arrive on time?"  
She asked if they had arrived on time.
  - "Could you give me a ride to the airport?" he asked.  
He wondered if I could give him a ride to the airport.
- IV. Adjust pronouns based on the context of the reporting sentence.

Direct: She said to me, "Will you help me?"  
Indirect: She asked me if I would help her.



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 13.5

- Change the following questions into indirect speech:
  - He said to me, "Are you going home?"
  - He said, "Did you see my brother yesterday?"
  - He asked me, "Which bus stops here?"
  - My friend said, "What is your brother doing these days?"
  - My brother said, "Does Ram know my address?"
- Match the questions in direct speech with the reported speech in Column B.

Column A	Column B
i. What is your name? comfortable	a) He asked whether I had a journey.
ii. Where do you live?	b) He asked me how long I would stay here.
iii. Could you tell me your date of birth?	c) He asked me what my name is.

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iv. How long will you stay here? date	d) He wondered if I could tell him my of birth.
v. Did you have a comfortable journey?	e) He asked me where I lived.

## LITERARY DEVICES

### Anaphora

It is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is repeated at the beginning of the verses.

The poem “If” shows the use of “If you can” as an anaphora.

### Alliteration

Alliteration is the repetition of consonant sounds in the same line in quick succession, as we found in Lesson 11 and lesson 12. Let’s see the following verses from this poem as instance of alliteration:

- “treat these two”
- “With sixty seconds’ worth of distance run.”

### Assonance

Assonance is the repetition of vowel sounds in the same line.

For example, the sound of /o/ in “And yet don’t **look too good, nor talk too** wise.”

### Irony

Irony refers to the contradictory meanings of the words used in different contexts, as we have seen in Lesson 3, Lesson 8 and Lesson 11.

In this poem Kipling has used irony, such as,

“If you can wait and not be tired by waiting.”

This verse shows that the advice of the poet is about not being tired by waiting though it is quite tiring, as given in this verse



## INTEXT QUESTIONS 13.6

Read the poem and identify the literary devices used in this poem.

**DO NOT GO GENTLE INTO THAT GOOD NIGHT**

by Dylan Thomas

Do not go gentle into that good night,  
 Old age should burn and rave at close of day;  
 Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,  
 Because their words had forked no lightning they  
 Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright  
 Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,  
 Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,  
 And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,  
 Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight  
 Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,  
 Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,  
 Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.  
 Do not go gentle into that good night.  
 Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

**LET'S TALK**

1. Gambling is also a form of risk taking, yet it is known to be a vice and is looked down upon. What do you think the poet was referring to when he mentioned "*risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss*" ?
2. After going through the poem, has your outlook towards failure changed?
3. Suppose you are the class monitor, your best friend is making a ruckus in the classroom. What stanza of the poem will you relate to and how will it affect your action in this case?
4. Do you ever feel bored with a lot of time in one instance and running short of time in another? How should you ideally utilise time?

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**LET'S WRITE**

All of us keep having some experience or the other everyday. But how can one define an experience? We can perhaps say that an experience is an event that affects or influences one in some way.

In this lesson, you are going to learn about reporting or describing experiences.

The language that you will need to use for describing experiences will be in the following areas:

- Expressing the past :
  - ❖ reporting complete actions
  - ❖ describing complete actions
  - ❖ describing thoughts and feelings
  - ❖ using first 'I' in reporting personal experience
  - ❖ active voice
- Sequencing the past
  - ❖ using all forms of past tense
  - ❖ using linking as sequencing device

Read the following paragraph where R.K. Narayan, a very famous Indian writer of 'Malgudi Days' fame, describes his experience as a small child of watching a lamplighter lighting up the street lights. It describes a scene in Madras (now Chennai) in the early twentieth century.

It was exciting, one day, to be asked to go with my uncle to the street of shops. I clung to his arm and marched along. It was the evening hour. I noticed a man with his hand and shoulder stuck through a bamboo ladder, going from post to post lighting the street lamps. The lamp posts were few and far between hexagonal glass shades on top of cast iron pillars. The lamplighter was an old man wearing a khadi coat and a blue turban, equipped with a ladder, a box of matches, rags and a can of oil. He moved from pillar to pillar, unhurriedly. I was fascinated. I had never thought that there could be so much to do to light up the dark nights. Clinging to my uncle's fingers, I watched him. He went up his ladder, opened a little ventilator, took out the lamp, cleaned and wiped it with the rag, filled it with oil, lit up the wick and closed the shutter, climbed down, thrust his shoulder through the ladder again and passed on to the next one. I had numerous questions welling up within me, all sorts of things I wished to know

about the man- his name, where he came from, if he slept wearing the ladder, what he ate and so forth but before I could phrase them properly, I had to be moving along with my questions unuttered.

Now let's analyse this passage.

- i. The writer uses past tense throughout.
- ii. There is description of
  - a) The street lamp (description of an object)
  - b) The lamp lighter (description of a person)
  - c) How he lighted the lamps (description of a process where sequences of action is important)
- iii. The writer expresses his thoughts and feelings about the experience.

The expressions 'it was exciting.....?', 'I was fascinated' convey his feelings. A lot of thought, in the form of questions comes to his mind on watching the lamplighter light the lamp. There is a feeling of disappointment expressed when he says 'I had to be moving along with my questions unuttered.'

Now, describe in about 150 words your pleasant childhood experiences.

1. The day I was declared the best student of my class.
2. The most exciting family gathering in my grandmother's village.
3. On my fourteenth birthday. (Need not be true)



### DO YOU KNOW

- This poem is written as a tribute to Leander Starr Jameson, a British politician.
- It was first published in "Brother Square Toes," a chapter of his historical fantasy book *Rewards and Fairies* in 1910.
- The name of the autobiography of Rudyard Kipling is *Something of Myself*. It was published in 1937.
- Rudyard Kipling and was awarded a Nobel Prize for Literature in 1907.

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### WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT

- The importance of staying calm and collected in challenging situations like when others are panicking or blaming us.
- Believing in your abilities and decisions is vital.
- It encourages the virtue of waiting patiently, enduring falsehoods, and not succumbing to hatred.
- There should be a balance between ambition and practicality.
- The poem teaches resilience in the face of both triumph and disaster.
- It emphasises honesty and determination.
- Being able to withstand both praise and criticism without being overly affected is highlighted.



### TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. What is the significance of trusting oneself while acknowledging others' doubts?
2. What is the message about dreams and thoughts in the poem?
3. What does the poem say about handling criticism and setbacks?
4. What does it mean to "risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss" in the poem?
5. How does the poem emphasise perseverance and determination?
6. What qualities does the poem suggest for interacting with both crowds and influential individuals?
7. What is the ultimate reward mentioned in the poem, and how is it described?



### ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

#### 13.1

1. "Keeping your head" in the poem means maintaining composure and staying calm in the face of chaos or adversity, while "losing one's head" implies succumbing to panic, confusion, or irrational behaviour.
2. When others doubt your decision, ideally, you should "trust yourself" and



have confidence in your choices. However, you should also “make allowance for their doubting too,” which means being open to considering their perspectives and, if necessary, explaining or defending your decisions.

3. The poem advises against looking “too good” or talking “too wise” because it’s a reminder to remain humble and not appear arrogant or self-righteous. It encourages modesty and simplicity in one’s demeanour.
4. d) Wait patiently, avoid lying, and don’t give in to hatred

### 13.2

1. The word “impostor” refers to someone or something that deceives or misrepresents itself, often pretending to be something it’s not.

In the poem, “Triumph” and “Disaster” are described as “impostors” because they can both be misleading. Triumph can make one overconfident, while Disaster can be demoralising. The poet advises treating them both the same, not getting carried away by either extreme.

2. In the face of failure, the poet advises starting again with determination and without complaining about the loss. The key message is to exhibit resilience and the ability to bounce back after setbacks.
3. When the poet says, “-and not make Dream your master,” he means that one should not let their dreams or ambitions completely control and dictate their life. It’s important to pursue dreams but not to the extent that they become an obsession or hinder practicality and balance in life.
4. d) Helplessly trying to fix things which cannot be fixed

### 13.3

1. In the context of the poem, the words “Heart,” “Sinew,” and “Nerve” represent the core elements of a person’s inner strength and determination. They symbolise the physical and emotional fortitude needed to persevere in difficult circumstances.
2. The idea of risking all your winnings in a game of Pitch-and-Toss is a metaphor. It’s not meant to be taken literally but rather symbolises the concept of taking significant risks or chances in life. The poet is encouraging the willingness to risk everything in the pursuit of a goal or in the face of adversity.
3. We should never “breathe a word” about our loss because the poem emphasises maintaining composure, resilience, and not seeking sympathy or attention for our failures. It encourages a quiet, determined resolve to

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start again after a loss.

4. a) The spirit of never giving up against odds

### 13.4

1. The poem suggests that when talking to both crowds and Kings, one should do so in a way that maintains their virtue and common touch. This means treating everyone with respect and not letting social status or power change how you interact with people.
2. Friends can harm us by either becoming overly critical, overly dependent, or by exploiting our trust. When they “hurt” us, it typically means that they may let us down or disappoint us in some way.
3. The poet advises against having people who “count with” us too much because it’s a warning against becoming overly dependent on others or overly influenced by their opinions. Relying too heavily on anyone can compromise one’s independence and decision-making.
4. “Filling a minute” means making the most of each moment by using your time effectively and purposefully. It’s about not wasting time but rather utilising every second to accomplish something worthwhile.

### 13.5

1.
  - i. He asked me whether I was going home.
  - ii. He asked whether I/he saw his brother the previous day.
  - iii. He asked me which bus stopped there.
  - iv. My friend asked what my brother was doing those days.
  - v. My brother asked whether Ram knew his address.
2. (i) c      (ii) e      (iii) d      (iv) b      (v) a

### 13.6

**Anaphora:** repetition of the phrase “Do not go gentle into that good night” at the beginning of several stanzas

**Alliteration:** “burn and rave,” “frail deeds,” and “Blind eyes.”

**Assonance:** “Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay.”

**Irony:** The irony lies in the juxtaposition of the imperative command “do not go gentle” with the inevitability of death. The speaker urges resistance against death, although death is portrayed as an unavoidable and natural part of life.