



Question Book:

Year 6, pages 22-23

Author / Source:

Rudyard Kipling

Genre:

Classic poetry

Cross-curricular links:

- PSHE (personal development)

Introduction

Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) is an extremely well-known author, and pupils may previously have come across this poem, or his other works for children, such as *The Jungle Book* or the *Just So Stories*. *If—*, written in 1895 but first published in 1910, remains highly popular, and has repeatedly been voted the nation's favourite poem, even though some of the ideals it presents may seem outdated to a modern audience. Pupils should read the poem closely in order to gain a clear understanding of the ideas that Kipling puts across. Encourage them to form their own opinions about the model of behaviour presented in the poem.

Answers

1. the second person
2. "If you can wait and not be tired by waiting"
3. d. not tell lies
4. b. perseverance
5. E.g. moral behaviour; dignity; honour
6. c. personification
7. Any appropriate answer. E.g. Difficult, because normally you react to them in different ways — you're usually happy about a triumph, and very upset about a disaster.
8. Any appropriate answer. E.g. I think some parts of the poem give good advice, such as the line that says "trust yourself when all men doubt you". However, I don't agree with some of the advice. For example, if things go wrong, I don't think you should keep it a secret like the poem suggests in lines 19-20.

Extra Activities

- Work through the poem with the whole class, asking pupils to explain the meaning of each statement beginning with "If—" in their own words. Encourage pupils to discuss whether they agree or disagree with each point, and to explain the reasons for their opinions.
- Give pupils a list of abstract nouns and ask them to match each noun to the appropriate part(s) of the poem.

confidence, patience,
honesty, determination...
- Kipling wrote *If—* for his son, John. Once pupils have a good understanding of the ideas in the poem, get them to rewrite it in their own words, in the form of a letter from Kipling to his son.
- With the whole class, discuss the poetic techniques used in the poem, including the ABAB CDCD rhyme scheme and the alternation between lines of 11 and 10 syllables.
- Ask pupils to identify the qualities they think children should develop while growing up. Get them to write statements beginning with the word 'If' to describe these qualities (e.g. 'If you can keep working at something, even when it's really difficult'), and use their statements to write a poem in the style of *If—*.