

Inspirational Quotes

Inspiration occurs when we see our *ideals*—that is, overarching beliefs about how the world should function—in action during our everyday lives. Teachers can easily incorporate quotations into class as a means to help students identify and analyze their own ideals. For more information on how to use inspirational quotes in the classroom as well as other strategies related to how to foster student inspiration, see *Motivating and Inspiring Students: Strategies to Awaken the Learner* (Marzano, Scott, Boogren, & Newcomb, 2017).

Here, we present a list of selected inspirational quotes that could be used in the classroom.

Quotes

“Don’t count the days; make the days count.”

—**Muhammad Ali**, American boxer and activist (USA Today Sports, 2016)

“Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth.”

—**Muhammad Ali**, American boxer and activist (USA Today Sports, 2016)

“The man who insists upon seeing with perfect clearness before he decides, never decides. Accept life, and you must accept regret.”

—**Henri-Frédéric Amiel**, Swiss philosopher and writer (Price, 2004, p. 19)

“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

—**Maya Angelou**, American poet (*The Guardian*, 2014)

“Nothing will work unless you do.”

—**Maya Angelou**, American poet (*The Guardian*, 2014)

“If you don’t like something, change it. If you can’t change it, change your attitude. Don’t complain.”

—**Maya Angelou**, American poet (*The Guardian*, 2014)

“Life is an echo. What you send out—you get back. What you give—you get.”

—**Anonymous** (Price, 2004, p. 21)

“Worry is like a rocking chair, it will give you something to do, but it won’t get you anywhere.”

—**Anonymous** (Price, 2004, p. 63)

“Experience is a hard teacher. She gives the test first and the lessons afterwards.”

—**Anonymous** (Price, 2004, p. 47)

“Education is the best provision for the journey to old age.”

—**Aristotle**, ancient Greek philosopher (Quotes.net, n.d.b)

“It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it.”

—**Aristotle**, ancient Greek philosopher (Quotes.net, n.d.b)

“We are what we repeatedly do, Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.”

—**Aristotle**, ancient Greek philosopher (Quotes.net, n.d.b)

“People travel to wonder at the height of the mountains, at the huge waves of the seas, at the long course of the rivers, at the vast compass of the ocean, at the circular motion of the stars, and yet they pass by themselves without wondering.”

—**Saint Augustine**, Christian theologian (Price, 2004, p. 27)

“Knowledge is power.”

—**Francis Bacon**, English philosopher (BrainyQuote, n.d.b)

“Choose the life that is the most useful, and habit will make it the most agreeable.”

—**Francis Bacon**, English philosopher (BrainyQuote, n.d.b)

“A wise man will make more opportunities than he finds.”

—**Francis Bacon**, English philosopher (Daskal, 2015)

“If a man will begin with certainties, he shall end in doubts, but if he will be content to begin with doubts, he shall end in certainties.”

—**Francis Bacon**, English philosopher (BrainyQuote, n.d.b)

“I’m not young enough to know everything.”

—**J. M. Barrie**, Scottish writer (*Signature*, 2014)

“Shall we make a new rule of life from tonight: always be a little kinder than necessary?”

—**J. M. Barrie**, Scottish writer (*Signature*, 2014)

“One of the secrets of a long and fruitful life is to forgive everybody everything every night before you go to bed.”

—**Bernard Baruch**, American investor and philanthropist (BrainyQuote, n.d.a)

“Be who you are and say what you feel, because those who mind don’t matter and those who matter don’t mind.”

—**Bernard Baruch**, American investor and philanthropist (BrainyQuote, n.d.a)

“Having once decided to achieve a certain task, achieve it at all costs of tedium and distaste. The gain in self-confidence of having accomplished a tiresome labor is immense.”

—**Arnold Bennett**, English writer (Chang, 2006, p. 226)

“Genius ain’t anything more than elegant common sense.”

—**Josh Billings**, American writer and satirist (Price, 2004, p. 241)

“Forgiveness does not change the past, but it does enlarge the future.”

—**Paul Boese**, American writer (Sarkis, 2011)

“If you enjoy living, it is not difficult to keep the sense of wonder.”

—**Ray Bradbury**, American writer (Price, 2004, p. 63)

“To do good things in the world, first you must know who you are and what gives meaning to your life.”

—**Robert Browning**, English writer (Daskal, 2015)

“We’re so engaged in doing things to achieve purposes of outer value that we forget the inner value, the rapture that is associated with being alive, is what it is all about.”

—**Joseph Campbell**, American writer (Morgan, 2012)

“When you follow your bliss . . . doors will open where you would not have thought there would be doors, and where there wouldn’t be a door for anyone else.”

—**Joseph Campbell**, American writer (Morgan, 2012)

“One reason why birds and horses are not unhappy is because they are not trying to impress other birds and horses.”

—**Dale Carnegie**, American writer and self-improvement trainer (Price, 2004, p. 20)

“The man who strikes first admits that his ideas have given out.”

—**Chinese proverb** (Price, 2004, p. 282)

“Success is the ability to go from one failure to another with no loss of enthusiasm.”

—**Winston Churchill**, British politician (Daskal, 2015)

“For myself, I am an optimist—it does not seem to be much use being anything else.”

—**Winston Churchill**, British politician (Chang, 2006, p. 537)

“Everything has beauty, but not everyone can see.”

—**Confucius**, ancient Chinese philosopher (Kruse, 2013)

“It does not matter how slowly you go so long as you do not stop.”

—**Confucius**, ancient Chinese philosopher (Daskal, 2015)

“Life is an adventure in forgiveness.”

—**Norman Cousins**, American author (Sarkis, 2011)

“The person who makes a success of living is the one who sees his goal steadily and aims for it unswervingly.”

—**Cecil B. DeMille**, American filmmaker (Daskal, 2015)

“Failure is instructive. The person who really thinks learns quite as much from his failures as from his successes.”

—**John Dewey**, American philosopher (Chang, 2006, p. 293)

“Reflect on your present blessings, of which every man has many; not on your past misfortunes of which all men have some.”

—**Charles Dickens**, English writer (Quotes.net, n.d.c)

“A loving heart is the truest wisdom.”

—**Charles Dickens**, English writer (Quotes.net, n.d.c)

“Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration.”

—**Thomas Alva Edison**, American inventor (Price, 2004, p. 121)

“The only person you are destined to become is the person you decide to be.”

—**Ralph Waldo Emerson**, American writer (Kruse, 2013)

“The best and safest thing is to keep a balance in your life, acknowledge the great powers around us and in us. If you can do that, and live that way, you are really a wise man.”

—**Euripides**, ancient Greek writer (Price, 2004, p. 11)

“Failure is success if we learn from it.”

—**Malcolm S. Forbes**, American businessman (Chang, 2006, p. 295)

“I keep my ideals, because in spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart.”

—**Anne Frank**, German writer (Quotes.net, n.d.a)

“How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.”

—**Anne Frank**, German writer (Quotes.net, n.d.a)

“I didn’t fail the test. I just found 100 ways to do it wrong.”

—**Benjamin Franklin**, American writer, scientist, and politician (Kruse, 2013)

“You’ll always miss 100 percent of the shots you don’t take.”

—**Wayne Gretzky**, Canadian ice hockey player (Daskal, 2015)

“Who does not grow, declines.”

—**Rabbi Hillel**, ancient Babylonian Jewish scholar (Price, 2004, p. 17)

“By mutual confidence and mutual aid, great deeds are done, and great discoveries made.”

—**Homer**, ancient Greek poet (Chang, 2006, p. 125)

“Vision without action is daydream. Action without vision is nightmare.”

—**Japanese proverb** (Price, 2004, p. 315)

“All wish to possess knowledge, but few, comparatively speaking, are willing to pay the price.”

—**Juvenal**, ancient Roman poet (Price, 2004, p. 237)

“Life is a great big canvas; throw all the paint you can at it.”

—**Danny Kaye**, American entertainer (Price, 2004, p. 12)

“Forgiveness is not an occasional act; it is a constant attitude.”

—**Martin Luther King Jr.**, American activist (Tabaka, 2016)

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

—**Martin Luther King Jr.**, American activist (Tabaka, 2016)

“A man who won’t die for something is not fit to live.”

—**Martin Luther King Jr.**, American activist (Tabaka, 2016)

“We judge ourselves by what we feel capable of doing, while others judge us by what we have already done.”

—**Henry Wadsworth Longfellow**, American poet and educator (Chang, 2006, p. 120)

“The secret to success is to learn to accept the impossible, to do without the indispensable, and to bear the intolerable.”

—**Nelson Mandela**, South African politician and revolutionary (Chang, 2006, p. 24)

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

—**Nelson Mandela**, South African politician and revolutionary (Chang, 2006, p. 444)

“We cannot choose how many years we will live, but we can choose how much life those years will have. We cannot control the beauty of our face, but we can control the expression on it. We cannot control life’s difficult moments but we can choose to make life less difficult. We cannot control the negative atmosphere of the world, but we can control the atmosphere of our minds. Too often we try to choose and control things we cannot. Too seldom we choose to control what we can . . . our attitude.”

—**John C. Maxwell**, American author and pastor (Chang, 2006, p. 72)

“The greatest danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short, but in setting our aim too low, and achieving our mark.”

—**Michelangelo**, Italian artist (Price, 2004, p. 130)

“Even if you fail at your ambitious thing, it’s very hard to fail completely. That’s the thing that people don’t get.”

—**Larry Page**, cofounder of Google (Friedman, 2014, p. 12)

“Ain’t no man can avoid being born average, but there ain’t no man got to be common.”

—**Satchel Paige**, American baseball player (Price, 2004, p. 5)

“This is the first test of a gentleman: his respect for those who can be of no possible value to him.”

—**William Lyon Phelps**, American author and scholar (Price, 2004, p. 24)

“Don’t be afraid to give up the good to go for the great.”

—**John D. Rockefeller Jr.**, American businessman and philanthropist (Daskal, 2015)

“Nothing is a waste of time if you use the experience wisely.”

—**Auguste Rodin**, French sculptor (Daskal, 2015)

“Either you run the day, or the day runs you.”

—**Jim Rohn**, American businessman and author (Kruse, 2013)

“A good objective of leadership is to help those who are doing poorly to do well and to help those who are doing well to do even better.”

—**Jim Rohn**, American businessman and author (Price, 2004, p. 155)

“You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You must do the thing which you think you cannot do.”

—**Eleanor Roosevelt**, American politician (Lewis, 2015)

“A mature person is one who does not think only in absolutes, who is able to be objective even when deeply stirred emotionally, who has learned that there is both good and bad in all people and all things, and who walks humbly and deals charitably with the circumstances of life.”

—**Eleanor Roosevelt**, American politician (Lewis, 2015)

“We all create the person we become by our choices as we go through life. In a real sense, by the time we are adults, we are the sum total of the choices we have made.”

—**Eleanor Roosevelt**, American politician (Lewis, 2015)

“No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.”

—**Eleanor Roosevelt**, American politician (Lewis, 2015)

“Tell me who your friends are and I will tell you who you are.”

—**Russian proverb** (Price, 2004, p. 115)

“If you think about disaster, you will get it. Brood about death and you hasten your demise. Think positively and masterfully, with confidence and faith, and life becomes more secure, more fraught with action, richer in achievement and experience.”

—**Swami Sivananda**, Indian spiritual teacher (Price, 2004, p. 71)

“To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you.”

—**Lewis B. Smedes**, American author and theologian (Sarkis, 2011)

“An unexamined life is not worth living.”

—**Socrates**, ancient Greek philosopher (Kruse, 2013)

“The indispensable first step to getting the things you want out of life is this: Decide what you want.”

—**Ben Stein**, American writer and political and economic commentator (Daskal, 2015)

“It is a bad plan that admits of no modification.”

—**Publilius Syrus**, ancient Roman writer (Price, 2004, p. 149)

“Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you’ve imagined.”

—**Henry David Thoreau**, American writer (Kruse, 2013)

“Let us not look back in anger, nor forward in fear, but around in awareness.”

—**James Thurber**, American cartoonist and writer (NotableQuotes, n.d.)

“All men should strive to learn before they die what they are running from, and to, and why.”

—**James Thurber**, American cartoonist and writer (NotableQuotes, n.d.)

“In reading the lives of great men, I found that the first victory they won was over themselves . . . self-discipline with all of them came first.”

—**Harry S. Truman**, American politician (Price, 2004, p. 127)

“If you tell the truth, you don’t have to remember anything.”

—**Mark Twain**, American writer and satirist (Inspirational Words of Wisdom, n.d.)

“Always do right; this will gratify some people and astonish the rest.”

—**Mark Twain**, American writer and satirist (Inspirational Words of Wisdom, n.d.)

“The best way to cheer yourself up is to try to cheer somebody else up.”

—**Mark Twain**, American writer and satirist (Inspirational Words of Wisdom, n.d.)

“Any activity becomes creative when the doer cares about doing it right, or better.”

—**John Updike**, American writer (Price, 2004, p. 124)

“I have learned that to be with those I like is enough.”

—**Walt Whitman**, American poet (BrainyQuote, n.d.c)

“Be curious, not judgmental.”

—**Walt Whitman**, American poet (BrainyQuote, n.d.c)

“I exist as I am, that is enough.”

—**Walt Whitman**, American poet (BrainyQuote, n.d.c)

“Simplicity is the glory of expression.”

—**Walt Whitman**, American poet (BrainyQuote, n.d.c)

“It is extraordinary how extraordinary the ordinary person is.”

—**George F. Will**, American writer and political commentator (Price, 2004, p. 15)

“Be more concerned with your character than your reputation, because your character is what you really are, while your reputation is merely what others think you are.”

—**John R. Wooden**, American basketball player and coach (ESPN.com Staff, 2010)

“If you’re not making mistakes, then you’re not doing anything. I’m positive that a doer makes mistakes.”

—**John R. Wooden**, American basketball player and coach (ESPN.com Staff, 2010)

“Things turn out best for the people who make the best of the way things turn out.”

—**John R. Wooden**, American basketball player and coach (ESPN.com Staff, 2010)

“Failure is not fatal, but failure to change might be.”

—**John R. Wooden**, American basketball player and coach (ESPN.com Staff, 2010)

“The best portion of a good man’s life is his little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love.”

—**William Wordsworth**, English poet (Price, 2004, p. 48)

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