

Don't Quit – Edgar Albert Guest

Introduction to the Poet:

Edgar A. Guest (1881–1959) was a British-born American poet who became widely known as the “People’s Poet” because of his simple language and practical themes. He wrote poems that reflected everyday struggles, determination, family values, and moral strength. Guest’s poetry was not complex or abstract; instead, it spoke directly to common people, offering encouragement in times of difficulty. His work was regularly published in newspapers and magazines, and he wrote over twenty volumes of poetry. Edgar Guest believed that poetry should inspire hope and courage, and “Don’t Quit” is one of his best-known motivational poems that continues to encourage perseverance even today.

About the Poem:

“Don’t Quit” is a motivational poem that focuses on the importance of perseverance in the face of failure, frustration, and hardship. The poet explains how life often becomes difficult and discouraging, and how success may seem far away during such moments. However, he warns the reader not to give up, because the darkest hour is often just before success arrives. Through simple language, strong imagery, and repeated reminders, Edgar Guest motivates the reader to remain strong and continue the effort even when everything seems hopeless. The poem encourages mental strength, patience, and a determined attitude towards life’s challenges.

Theme of the Poem:

The central theme of the poem is **perseverance in adversity**. Edgar Guest highlights that success often lies just beyond failure. The poem teaches that giving up is the real defeat, while continued effort, even in suffering, leads to eventual victory.

Text

Don't Quit

**When things go wrong, as they sometimes will,
when the road you're trudging seems all uphill,
when the funds are low and the debts are high,
and you want to smile but you have to sigh,
when care is pressing you down a bit - rest if you must, but don't you quit.**

**Life is queer with its twists and turns.
As everyone of us sometimes learns.
And many a fellow turns about when he might have won had he stuck it out.
Don't give up though the pace seems slow - you may succeed with another blow.
Often the goal is nearer than it seems to a faint and faltering man;**

**Often the struggler has given up when he might have captured the victor's cup;
and he learned too late when the night came down,
how close he was to the golden crown.**

**Success is failure turned inside out - the silver tint of the clouds of doubt,
and when you never can tell how close you are,**

**it may be near when it seems afar;
so stick to the fight when you're hardest hit - it's when things seem worst, you must not quit.**

Glossary:

Word	Meaning
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Quit	Give up or stop trying
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Toil	Work very hard
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Fret	Worry or be anxious
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Somber	Dark or gloomy
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Adversity	Difficult situation
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Strive	Make great effort
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Blight	Something that ruins
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Lure	Attraction or temptation
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Spurt	Sudden effort
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Doubt	Feeling of uncertainty
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Stanza-wise Paraphrase:

Stanza	1:
When life becomes difficult and things go wrong, you may feel tired, lonely, and hopeless. Money might be tight, problems may seem endless, and you may feel like running away. But the poet says: don't quit.	

Stanza	2:
Even when life feels slow and dreams seem far away, remember that setbacks are part of life. You may think success is not possible, but often the turning point comes just when you are about to give up.	

Stanza	3:
Many people give up just before they are about to win. Therefore, the poet strongly advises us to stay firm, be patient, and continue striving until the end.	

Summary:

The poem states that when life becomes difficult and we feel tired or defeated, we should not give up. Financial, emotional, or personal struggles can make us feel trapped and hopeless. But the poet reminds us that situations change, and failure is not permanent. The point at which we think we have lost is often the moment just before success. Hard times test our willpower, and those who hold on with courage are the ones who finally achieve their goals. The poem strongly urges the reader to "keep going" no matter how hard the journey becomes.

Critical Appreciation:

“Don’t Quit” by Edgar A. Guest is a powerful inspirational poem that encourages the reader to remain strong during difficult times. The poet uses simple and direct language, making the message very clear and relatable. There is no complicated imagery or unusual structure; instead, the strength of the poem lies in its honesty and emotional impact. Edgar Guest successfully captures the human tendency to give up too soon and challenges it by insisting that perseverance leads to success.

The tone of the poem is highly motivational and assertive. It is suitable for students, professionals, athletes, and anyone facing challenges in life. The poem does not guarantee success immediately, but it highlights that giving up is the only true failure. The repetition of encouraging ideas makes the message strong and memorable.

This poem is especially relevant in today’s fast-paced world where rejection and stress are common. It teaches resilience — an essential life value. In short, “Don’t Quit” stands as a timeless reminder that courage, patience, and persistence are the real keys to victory.

Fill in the Blanks:

1. Edgar A. Guest is known as the _____ Poet.
2. When the road seems all _____, we should not quit.
3. When the funds are low and the _____ are high, life becomes difficult.
4. Life is queer with its _____ and turns.
5. Many people turn back when they might have _____.
6. The goal is often _____ than it seems.
7. The struggler may have captured the _____ cup.
8. The golden _____ stands for final success.
9. Success is failure turned _____ out.
10. When things seem worst, you must not _____.

Match the following:

Column A	Column B
1. Edgar A. Guest	A. Far away
2. Trudging	B. Person who is trying hard
3. Victor’s cup	C. Encouraging motivational poem
4. Golden crown	D. Final victory / achievement
5. Afar	E. Weak and losing courage
6. Faltering	F. Poet of inspiration
7. Success	G. Life’s difficulties and changes
8. Twists and turns	H. Walking slowly and with effort

Column A	Column B
9. Don't Quit	I. Trophy or symbol of success
10. Struggler	J. Failure turned inside out

Answer Key

1 – F 2 – H 3 – I 4 – D 5 – A 6 – E 7 – J 8 – G 9 – C 10 – B

PARAGRAPHS

1. Who is the poet of the poem “Don’t Quit”?

Edgar A. Guest is the poet of the poem “*Don’t Quit*.” He was a British-born American poet who became very popular for his motivational and inspirational poems. He was called the “People’s Poet” because he wrote in a simple and direct way about common people, their struggles, hopes, and dreams. His poems were mostly published in newspapers, so they reached ordinary readers easily. He believed that poetry should encourage people to live better lives. Through his poems, he taught moral values, self-confidence, and perseverance. Even today, his poems continue to inspire students and adults to face challenges with courage and determination.

2. What should a person do when problems press him down?

When problems press a person down, the poet advises that it is natural to feel tired and discouraged. He says it is acceptable to rest for some time when the burden becomes heavy. However, he strongly warns against giving up completely. Difficulties are part of life and they test a person’s strength and patience. If one stops trying, then failure becomes permanent. But if one rests and then continues to work again, success can still be achieved. By facing problems bravely and continuing the effort, a person can overcome even the toughest situations in life.

3. How does the poet describe life in the poem?

The poet describes life as strange, unpredictable, and full of twists and turns. He says that no one’s life is always smooth or easy. Every person experiences difficulties, failures, disappointments, and emotional struggles at times. Life can suddenly change direction, bringing new problems that are unexpected. These changes test a person’s determination and inner strength. The poet makes it clear that such challenges are not signs of weakness but are part of the human experience. By understanding that problems are natural, a person can become stronger and face life with more courage and hope.

4. What mistake do many people make according to the poet?

According to the poet, many people make the serious mistake of giving up too soon. When things become difficult and progress seems slow, they believe that success is impossible. Because of this discouragement, they stop their efforts and turn back. The poet points out that, if they had continued a little longer, they might have achieved their goal. Success is often very close when people feel like quitting. Their lack of patience and confidence becomes the main reason for their failure. The poet teaches that determination and persistence are essential qualities for achieving any goal.

5. What is meant by the “victor’s cup”?

The “victor’s cup” in the poem is a symbol of success, achievement, and reward. It does not refer to a real physical cup but to the victory that comes after hard work, struggle, and perseverance. It represents the moment when a person finally reaches their goal after many difficulties. The poet uses this image to show that success is not easily achieved, but it is worth all the effort. If a person does not give up and keeps trying, he or she will finally hold the “victor’s cup” and feel the joy of success.

6. Why does the poet say the goal is often nearer than it seems?

The poet says that the goal is often nearer than it seems because a person cannot always see how close success really is. When someone is tired, frightened, or confused, everything appears more difficult than it actually is. Self-doubt makes the distance to success appear longer. In reality, a person may be just one more effort away from achieving the goal. The poet wants the reader to understand that difficult moments are often signs that success is very near. Therefore, instead of giving up, one should continue with renewed courage and confidence.

7. What lesson does the line “rest if you must, but don’t you quit” teach?

This line teaches an important lesson about balance and perseverance. The poet understands that human beings are not machines and that everyone gets tired at times. Rest is necessary to regain strength, both physically and mentally. However, resting should not turn into quitting. Quitting means completely giving up on one’s goal. The poet encourages the reader to take a short break if needed, but then to stand up again and continue the journey. This line reminds us that success belongs to those who keep going, even after repeated failures.

8. What does the “golden crown” represent in the poem?

The “golden crown” represents final success, honour, victory, and personal achievement. It is the reward for a person who remains strong, patient, and determined, even during the most difficult times. The poet says that many people never get the golden crown because they quit just before reaching it. This symbol teaches that success is not always far away as we imagine. If one can remain hopeful and continue trying without giving up, the golden crown will eventually be theirs and their hard work will be rewarded.

9. How are success and failure connected in the poem?

In the poem, success and failure are not seen as completely separate or opposite. Instead, the poet shows that failure is often just a hidden form of success in the making. Many people experience several failures before they finally succeed. If they stop trying after one failure, then success is lost. But if they continue, failure can transform into victory. The poet even describes success as “failure turned inside out.” This means that what appears to be failure may actually be the final step towards success, if one remains strong and determined.

10. What is the central message of “Don’t Quit”?

The central message of “*Don’t Quit*” is that a person must never give up, no matter how difficult life becomes. Problems, disappointments, and failures are temporary, but quitting can cause permanent loss. The poem encourages the reader to keep fighting, keep trying, and keep believing in themselves. Determination, courage, patience, and hard work are the keys to success. Even when everything seems hopeless, one more effort can change the situation. The poet’s message is simple yet powerful: success always belongs to those who refuse to quit.

Essay-Type Questions

1. Explain the central theme and message of the poem "*Don't Quit*" by Edgar A. Guest.
2. Describe how the poet presents the struggles and challenges of life in "*Don't Quit*."
3. Discuss the ideas of success and failure as shown in the poem "*Don't Quit*."
4. Why is "*Don't Quit*" considered an inspirational and motivational poem?

Introduction to the Poem

"Don't Quit" is a powerful motivational poem written by Edgar A. Guest. The poet speaks about the difficulties that a person faces in life and strongly advises never to give up. Through simple language and strong images, he encourages the reader to remain firm and hopeful even in the worst situations. The poem reflects real-life struggles and gives emotional strength to overcome them.

Life as a Struggle

The poet describes life as full of twists and turns. Sometimes everything goes wrong: money becomes scarce, debts increase, and worries grow heavy. At such times, a person feels tired and hopeless. The road seems long and difficult, like walking uphill. Many people become discouraged and turn back from their goals. However, the poet reminds us that these moments are temporary and are part of every human life.

Success and Failure

Guest explains that success and failure are very closely connected. Failure is not the end of the road. The "victor's cup" and "golden crown" symbolise success, while "dark clouds" and "doubt" represent failure and fear. Often, people give up just when success is very near. The poet stresses that one more effort can make the difference between failure and success.

The Central Message and Conclusion

The main message of the poem is clear: never quit. Rest if necessary, but do not give up. When situations seem the worst, that is the very time one should hold on and continue the fight. The poem teaches perseverance, hope, and determination. It is highly inspirational and encourages every individual to move forward despite hardships.