

My Favorite Poems



Susan Lam

Lifestyle4seniors.com

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Invictus

by William Ernest Henley

Out of the night that covers me,

Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance

I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears

Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,

How charged with punishments the
scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.

Invictus Poem Explained

The Invictus poem is an inspiring poem.

It was written in 1875 and first published in 1888.

Nelson Mandela had the poem written on a scrap of paper on his prison cell while he was incarcerated.

Background

At the age of 12, Henley contracted tuberculosis of the bone. A few years later, the disease progressed to his foot, and physicians announced that the only way to save his life was to amputate directly below the knee. It was amputated when he was 17. Despite his disability, he survived with one foot intact and led an active life until his death at the age of 53.

What is the meaning of Invictus?

Invictus, meaning “unconquerable” or “undefeated” in Latin.

What were the circumstances when this poem was written?

This poem is written by William Ernest Henley in 1875. It was written when Henley was in the hospital being treated for tuberculosis of the bone. He had had the disease since he was young (age 12), and his foot had been amputated shortly (age 17) before he wrote the poem.

This poem is about courage in the face of death and holding on to one's own dignity despite the indignity's life places before us.

Why is Invictus poem inspiring?

This poem simply means, we must strive to make each day a good one no matter what our circumstances maybe. How we think determines how we feel.

What is the meaning of Black as the Pit from pole to pole?

It is implying someone's life being surrounded by darkness of their life. Every aspect of their life is like the 'pit' or hell.

What is the meaning of In the fell clutch of circumstance?

'Circumstance' means on outside event or events that shaped your life - often negatively. It is a bit like talking about your fate. So 'in the fell clutch of circumstance" means "in the evil grip of events beyond my control".

What does the poem Invictus say about human nature?

There is praise for the unique aspect of human nature that allows one to suffer terrible wrongs but still soldier on, unbroken.

What is the mean I am the master of my fate and the captain of my soul?

What is the meaning “I am the master of my fate and the captain of my soul”?

It deals with the idea that you and only you are responsible for your destiny.

Poem Collectors

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