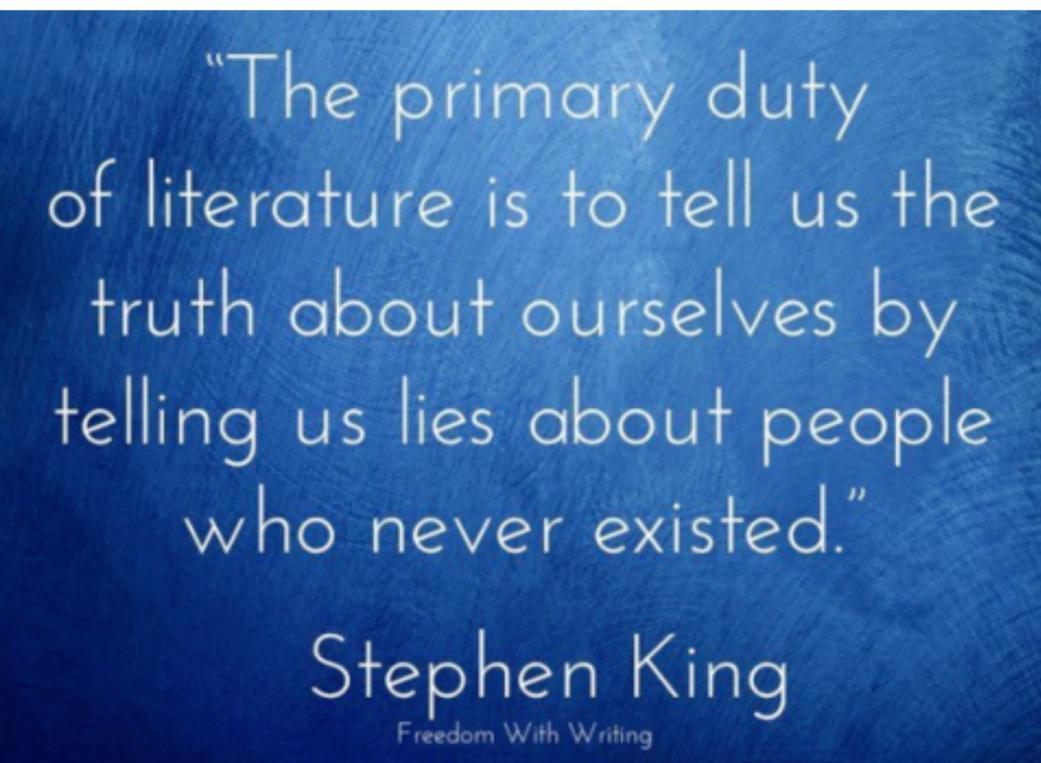


## 10 Offers of Wisdom From Fictional Characters

By [Starr Sackstein](#) on December 4, 2016 6:00 AM

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Literature is a cozy escape for many that offers refuge from an often cruel world. As we read, we're engulfed in new realities that can make the "real" world a little more manageable.

Authors have a way of elevating characters, fiction or otherwise, to a level of respect and likeability or pure evil. In the words of these characters we learn great truths and immeasurable wisdom.

Here's a list of great quotes from characters throughout history that allow us to really understand the world (in no order):

1. **Dumbledore**, one of my most beloved teachers said in *The Chamber of Secrets* to Harry, "It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities." There are many great quotes JK Rowling has given to Dumbledore throughout the series, but this one is poignant in how we teach kids. It shows how Dumbledore believes in a growth mindset and despite the natural abilities we each come to an experience with, it is the choices we make in important moments that define us, not those talents.
2. **Atticus Finch**, *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee: "You just hold your head high and keep those fists down. No matter what anyone says to you, don't let 'em get your goat. Try fighting with your head for a change...it's a good one, even if it does resist learning." We must always teach our children that despite what the bullies of the world do and say to us, we mustn't let them reduce us to fighting. We all have our triggers, but we must rise above it and try to take the high road.
3. **Mrs. Whatsit**, *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle: "Life, with its rules, its obligations, and its freedoms, is like a sonnet: You're given the form, but you have to write the sonnet yourself." We are all given these things in life but like what Dumbledore suggested, what we do with it is what matters. Mrs. Whatsit reminds us that we are all poetry and how we choose to write ourselves is a matter for our creativity and longing.
4. **The Fox**, *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry: "Here is my secret. It is very simple: It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye." Too often we don't see clearly when we focus with our eyes and the fox is so right about this. Our hearts guide us divinely, unafraid of the vulnerability that our minds put forth. This [great children's novella](#) has many great moments worth considering, but I liked the depth that this one added to the list.
5. **Nick Carraway**, *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald: "Reserving judgements is a matter of infinite hope." I think it's easy for all of us to say that we don't judge or perhaps it's our deepest desire not to. However, we each come to every encounter with certain experiences and judgments that color our perceptions. I think Nick is being a realist here. He tells us that he is capable of telling us this story without judgment, but his perception is clearly clouded and he tells us this right from the beginning.
6. **Elizabeth Bennett**, *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen: "I hope I never ridicule what is wise or good. Follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies, do divert me, I own, and I laugh at them whenever I can." Lizzy Bennett is one my favorite characters of all times. She's honest and proud, but also flawed and self-aware. She's bold and humble - able to recognize if not right away her strengths and shortcomings and laugh at them when needed. We all need to see the world as it is and not take it too seriously. We're human and if we were serious all of the time, our lives wouldn't be too long or too enjoyable.
7. **Hazel Grace Lancaster**, *The Fault in Our Stars* by John Green: "As he read, I fell in love the way you fall asleep: slowly, and then all at once." Love is a funny thing and I think this quote encapsulates it well. The deep kinds of love that are out there happen like this and I'd never quite heard it put this way. "Slowly and all at once." Such a true paradox and one worth recognizing. Sometimes we must succumb to the feeling if we hope to sleep or to love.
8. **Sirius Black**, *Harry Potter and The Order of the Phoenix* by JK Rowling: "We've all got both light and dark inside us. What matters is the part we choose to act on. That's who we really are." Aside from loving the way Gary Oldman shares this advice with Harry in the movie, it's an important idea that keeps recurring in the novels and of course in life. We are all capable of great things and horrific things, but what we actually choose is what should define us. Talents are great to have but if they aren't nurtured, what good is it. Perhaps we must remember that every choice good or bad is an opportunity and as long as we are learning than that can be what defines us.
9. **Mr. Antolini**, *Catcher in the Rye* by JD Salinger: "The mark of the immature man is that he wants to die nobly for a cause, while the

9. **Mr. Antolini**, *Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger. "The mark of the immature man is that he wants to die nobly for a cause, while the mark of the mature man is that he wants to live humbly for one." I love this quote. When I read *Catcher* as a teenager, I remember scoffing at Holden's teacher and really connecting with how Holden saw the world. As an adult, rereading the novel and teaching it to teenagers, I'd be lying if I said my reverence for the novel hasn't changed. Certainly, I can appreciate why adolescents like it (as I did when I was one), but as an adult, I connect way more with the adults in the novel trying to steer Holden in the right direction. This quote is one of those moments. Humility is essential in life and living with it makes for a much better one especially in pursuit of big changes in the world.

10. **Gandalf**, *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien: "There is a lot more in Bilbo than you guess, and a deal more than he has any idea of himself." This quote speaks to our inability to trust all of the power and adventure we have inside of ourselves. Others may see that sparkle that we are too afraid to acknowledge, but it doesn't mean it doesn't exist. We must courageously look at ourselves the way others see us and be unafraid to take the risks that lie ahead. Comfort and security are nice, but learning and growing outside of our own comfort zones is what propels growth and Bilbo shows us that over and over again until is changed forever and you don't need to be a wizard to see that.

There are so many truly inspirational and thoughtful pieces of wisdom we learn from characters. We connect to them in their strengths and we something aspirational and in their follies and foibles we see ourselves in their humanity. Literature helps us see the best in the world and the worst and offers us opportunities to discuss it in lieu of politics or current events.

With this great wisdom, we must live and not only read so we have great wisdom of our own to share.

*What's your favorite quote from literature? Please share.*

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