75 Best Quotes on Fear and Courage

With Simple Meanings for Students

thestudyguys.com

Fear holds us back, and courage moves us forward. These 75 quotes on fear and courage – from Franklin D. Roosevelt, Nelson Mandela, Marie Curie, Mark Twain, Eleanor Roosevelt, Emerson, Shakespeare, Aristotle and more – each come with an easy explanation, so you can learn from them and use them in your essays, speeches and daily life. Quotes 1–25 are about fear; quotes 26–75 are about courage.

PART 1 • QUOTES ON FEAR (1–25)

1 ***"There is nothing in the dark that is not there when the lights are on."***

— Rod Serling, Screenwriter and producer

Meaning: The dark doesn't bring new dangers. Whatever is in the dark was already there when the lights were on. We only get scared because we can't see it clearly. When the light comes on, the fear goes away. **In one line for exams:** Fear is in our mind, not in the dark.

---

2 ***"Fear is implanted in us as a preservative from evil."***

— Samuel Johnson, Writer

Meaning: Fear is not a weakness, it's a safety alarm that stops us from doing bad things.

---

3 ***"People are usually afraid of change because they fear the unknown. But the single greatest constant of history is that everything changes."***

— Yuval Noah Harari, Historian

Meaning: We are scared of change because we don't know what will happen next. But the truth is, change never stops. History proves that everything always changes. So being afraid of change is useless. **In one line:** We fear change because we fear the unknown, but change is the only thing that never changes.

---

4 ***"The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."***

— Franklin D. Roosevelt, Former US President

Meaning: Our real enemy is not the problem, but our own fear of the problem. Fear stops us from trying. If we remove fear, most problems become small. **In one line:** Fear is more dangerous than the actual danger.

---

5 ***"Knowing your own darkness is the best method for dealing with the darknesses of other people."***

— Carl Jung, Psychiatrist

Meaning: We all have bad inside us – anger, jealousy, selfishness. That is our "darkness". If you understand your own bad side, you will easily understand why other people do bad things too. And you won't hate them quickly. **In one line:** If you know your own faults, you can understand and forgive the faults of others.

---

6 ***"The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown."***

— H. P. Lovecraft, Writer

Meaning: Fear is the oldest and most powerful feeling in humans. And out of all fears, we are most afraid of things we don't know or don't understand. **In one line:** We fear most what we don't know.

---

7 ***"One thing about being successful is that I stopped being afraid of dying. Once you're a star you're dead already. You're embalmed."***

— Dustin Hoffman, Actor

Meaning: When you become too famous, you stop living a normal, free life. Everyone watches you, you can't be yourself. You become like a dead body kept in a museum (embalmed) – people see you, but you are not really alive. So a very famous person is not afraid of death, because he has already lost his real life. **In one line:** Too much fame takes away your real life, you become like a statue – seen by all, but not truly alive.

---

8 ***"I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear."***

— Nelson Mandela, Statesman

Meaning: Being brave does not mean you have no fear. Being brave means you feel fear, but you still face it and defeat it. **In one line:** Courage is not having no fear, courage is winning over your fear.

---

9 ***"Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less."***

— Marie Curie, Scientist

Meaning: We should not be afraid of things in life. We should try to understand them. If we learn and understand more, our fear will become less. **In one line:** Knowledge removes fear.

---

10 ***"I was a very fearful little kid, and I would always see the worst in everything. The glass was half-empty. I would see people kissing, and I would think one was trying to bite the other."***

— Daniel Clowes

Meaning: When he was a small child, he was very afraid. Because of fear, he saw everything in a negative way. He always thought the worst would happen. Even a lovely thing like a kiss looked to him like someone biting. Fear makes your thinking negative. **In one line:** When you are full of fear, even good things look bad to you.

---

11 ***"Ultimately we know deeply that the other side of every fear is freedom."***

— Marilyn Ferguson

Meaning: Behind every fear, there is freedom waiting. If you cross your fear, you become free. **In one line:** If you defeat your fear, you get freedom.

---

12 ***"We should not be afraid to go into a new era, to leave the old behind."***

— Zach Wamp

Meaning: We should not fear to move forward. We should not be afraid to leave our old life, old habits, and old times behind. To grow, we must enter a new time. **In one line:** Don't be afraid to leave the old and start the new.

---

13 ***"There is no such thing as paranoia. Your worst fears can come true at any moment."***

— Hunter S. Thompson

Meaning: Paranoia means thinking without reason that something bad will happen. The writer says paranoia is not fake. Because in real life, your worst fear can really happen at any time. So your fear is not just in your mind, it can become true. **In one line:** Sometimes what we think is just fear in our mind can actually happen in real life.

---

14 ***"Tell us your phobias and we will tell you what you are afraid of."***

— Robert Benchley

Meaning: A phobia means a strong fear of something – like fear of heights, fear of darkness. The writer is making a joke. He is saying, if you tell me your phobia, I will tell you what you fear – which is obvious! If you say you have fear of dogs, I will say you are afraid of dogs. It means sometimes experts say very obvious things that everyone already knows. **In one line:** This is a joke – it says experts sometimes tell us things we already know.

---

15 ***"So then learn to conquer your fear. This is the only art we have to master nowadays: to look at things without fear, and to fearlessly do right."***

— Friedrich Dürrenmatt

Meaning: We should learn to control and overcome our fears instead of allowing them to control our actions. We should face difficult situations calmly, see things honestly, and have the courage to do what is right even when it is difficult or frightening.

---

16 ***"Hate is the consequence of fear; we fear something before we hate it; a child who fears noises becomes a man who hates noise."***

— Cyril Connolly

Meaning: It suggests that fear can sometimes develop into dislike or hatred. When a person repeatedly feels afraid or uncomfortable about something, those feelings may eventually turn into strong dislike. The example of a child who fears loud noises shows how an early fear can remain and become a lasting dislike.

---

17 ***"As soon as the fear approaches near, attack and destroy it."***

— Chanakya

Meaning: It teaches us not to run away from fear or allow it to grow stronger. Instead, when we face something that frightens us, we should confront it with courage and take positive action to overcome it.

---

18 ***"Feel the fear, and do it anyway."***

— Susan Jeffers, From her book Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway

Meaning: You do not have to wait until you stop being afraid. You can acknowledge your fear and still take the necessary step forward. Courage means moving ahead even when you feel afraid.

---

19 ***"Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear—not absence of fear."***

— Mark Twain, From Pudd'nhead Wilson's Calendar in Pudd'nhead Wilson (1894)

Meaning: Courage does not mean having no fear. A courageous person recognizes fear but learns to control it rather than allowing it to control their actions.

---

20 ***"The way to develop self-confidence is to do the thing you fear and get a record of successful experiences behind you."***

— William Jennings Bryan

Meaning: Facing challenges can gradually build confidence. Each time we successfully deal with something that frightens us, we learn that we are capable of handling difficult situations.

---

21 ***"He who is not every day conquering some fear has not learned the secret of life."***

— Ralph Waldo Emerson, Commonly attributed to Emerson; the exact source is not firmly documented

Meaning: Personal growth often requires us to face things that make us uncomfortable or afraid. Overcoming small fears can help us become stronger and more confident.

---

22 ***"Fear is the mind-killer."***

— Frank Herbert, From the "Litany Against Fear" in Dune (1965)

Meaning: Fear can interfere with clear thinking. When we become overwhelmed by fear, it can make it harder to reason calmly and make good decisions.

---

23 ***"Expose yourself to your deepest fear; after that, fear has no power, and the fear of freedom shrinks and vanishes. You are free."***

— Jim Morrison

Meaning: Facing our deepest fears can reduce their power over us. When we stop allowing fear to control our choices, we can feel more independent and free.

---

24 ***"Fear doesn't shut you down; it wakes you up."***

— Veronica Roth, From Divergent

Meaning: Fear can alert us to danger and make us pay closer attention. Instead of always allowing fear to stop us, we can use that awareness to respond carefully.

---

25 ***"The greatest mistake you can make in life is to be continually fearing you will make one."***

— Elbert Hubbard

Meaning: Constantly worrying about making mistakes can prevent us from learning, trying new things, and moving forward. Mistakes are often part of learning and growth.

PART 2 • QUOTES ON COURAGE (26–75)

26 ***"Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear—not absence of fear."***

— Mark Twain

Meaning: Courage does not mean having no fear. It means controlling fear and not allowing it to control you.

---

27 ***"It is curious—curious that physical courage should be so common in the world, and moral courage so rare."***

— Mark Twain

Meaning: Physical bravery may be common, but standing up for what is right can require a different and rarer kind of courage.

---

28 ***"There are not enough morally brave men in stock."***

— Mark Twain

Meaning: Society needs more people who have the courage to stand up for what is morally right.

---

29 ***"You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face."***

— Eleanor Roosevelt, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Project; You Learn by Living

Meaning: Facing fear directly can make us stronger, more courageous, and more confident.

---

30 ***"Courage is more exhilarating than fear and in the long run it is easier."***

— Eleanor Roosevelt, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Project; You Learn by Living

Meaning: Although courage can be difficult at first, facing problems bravely can ultimately feel better than living under fear.

---

31 ***"You must do the thing you think you cannot do."***

— Eleanor Roosevelt, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Project; You Learn by Living

Meaning: We often discover our strength by attempting difficult things that we initially believe are beyond us.

---

32 ***"Do not stop thinking of life as an adventure."***

— Eleanor Roosevelt, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Project; You Learn by Living

Meaning: Courage grows when we remain willing to face new experiences and challenges instead of always choosing comfort.

---

33 ***"Grace under pressure."***

— Ernest Hemingway, The accurately sourced short expression of his definition of courage; "Courage is grace under pressure" is a later wording

Meaning: True courage can mean remaining calm, dignified, and composed when facing pressure or difficulty.

---

34 *“Courage is equality to the problem before us.”*

— *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Meaning: Courage comes from believing that we can meet the challenge in front of us.

35 *“Courage consists in equality to the problem.”*

— *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Meaning: A courageous person faces a difficulty with confidence that they are capable of dealing with it.

36 *“Courage, the perfect will, which no terrors can shake.”*

— *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Meaning: True courage is a strong determination that fear cannot easily break.

37 *“There is a courage of the cabinet as well as a courage of the field.”*

— *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Meaning: Courage is not only shown in physical danger; it can also be shown through wise decisions and difficult responsibilities.

38 *“I thought there were as many courages as men.”*

— *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Meaning: Courage can take many forms because different people face different kinds of challenges.

39 *“Always do what you are afraid to do.”*

— *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Meaning: Facing reasonable fears instead of always avoiding them can help us develop courage.

40 *“The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena.”*

— *Theodore Roosevelt, Citizenship in a Republic (1910)*

Meaning: Courage belongs to people who participate, take responsibility, and face challenges rather than simply watching and criticizing.

41 *"If he fails, at least fails while daring greatly."*

— *Theodore Roosevelt, Citizenship in a Republic (1910)*

Meaning: An honest attempt at something difficult is more courageous than avoiding action because of fear of failure.

---

42 *"It is hard to fail, but it is worse never to have tried to succeed."*

— *Theodore Roosevelt, The Strenuous Life (1899)*

Meaning: Failure can be disappointing, but never trying because of fear can mean missing an important opportunity.

---

43 *"In this life we get nothing save by effort."*

— *Theodore Roosevelt, The Strenuous Life (1899)*

Meaning: Achievement generally requires effort, determination, and the courage to keep working.

---

44 *"It is only through labor and painful effort, by grim energy and resolute courage, that we move on to better things."*

— *Theodore Roosevelt, The Strenuous Life (1899)*

Meaning: Progress often requires hard work, determination, and courage rather than an easy path.

---

45 *"You must have courage, the virtue that teaches you positively and aggressively to do right."*

— *Theodore Roosevelt, Presidential-era speeches*

Meaning: Courage gives people the strength to actively do what they believe is right.

---

46 *"We need courage, and we need honesty, and finally we need the saving grace of common sense."*

— *Theodore Roosevelt, Presidential-era speeches*

Meaning: Courage is most useful when it is combined with honesty and good judgment.

---

47 *"We need courage, civil courage, and the courage that will show itself, if need be, in war; moral courage and physical courage."*

— *Theodore Roosevelt, Presidential-era speeches*

Meaning: Courage can be civic, moral, or physical, depending on the situation.

---

48 *"It is a test of our courage—of our resolve—of our wisdom."*

— *Franklin D. Roosevelt*

Meaning: Difficult times test not only our bravery but also our determination and judgment.

---

49 *"It is America's purpose that we shall not fail."*

— *Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1945 Inaugural Address*

Meaning: Courage includes maintaining determination and refusing to give up when facing serious challenges.

---

50 *"Cowards die many times before their deaths; the valiant never taste of death but once."*

— *William Shakespeare, Julius Caesar*

Meaning: Constant fear can make a person suffer repeatedly, while courage helps a person face danger with greater strength.

---

51 *"Out of this nettle, danger, we pluck this flower, safety."*

— *William Shakespeare, Henry IV, Part 1*

Meaning: Courage and careful action can sometimes turn a dangerous situation into a safer one.

---

52 *"For courage mounteth with occasion."*

— *William Shakespeare, King John*

Meaning: Courage can grow when a difficult situation demands it.

---

53 *"Why, courage then! What cannot be avoided / 'Twere childish weakness to lament or fear."*

— *William Shakespeare, Henry VI, Part 3*

Meaning: When something cannot be avoided, courage is better than wasting our strength in fear.

---

54 *"But screw your courage to the sticking-place, / And we'll not fail."*

— *William Shakespeare, Macbeth*

Meaning: Strengthening our determination can help us face difficult tasks without giving up.

---

55 *"The thing of courage / As rous'd with rage doth sympathise."*

— *William Shakespeare*

Meaning: Strong emotions can awaken courage and give a person greater determination.

56 *"Confident against the world in arms."*

— *William Shakespeare*

Meaning: Courage can give a person confidence even when facing powerful opposition.

57 *"Courage never to submit or yield."*

— *John Milton, Paradise Lost*

Meaning: Courage includes refusing to surrender when facing hardship or opposition.

58 *"All is not lost."*

— *John Milton, Paradise Lost*

Meaning: Even after a serious setback, hope and determination can remain.

59 *"To the brave even danger is an ally."*

— *Henry David Thoreau*

Meaning: A courageous person can use difficult situations as opportunities to show strength and learn.

60 *"The state of complete manhood is virtue, and virtue and bravery are one."*

— *Henry David Thoreau*

Meaning: Thoreau connects true bravery with strong moral character.

61 *"The exploit of a brave life consists in its momentary completeness."*

— *Henry David Thoreau*

Meaning: True bravery is found not only in dramatic acts but in living with courage and integrity.

62 *"Be of good courage! That is the main thing."*

— *Henry David Thoreau*

Meaning: Maintaining courage is one of the most important qualities when facing difficulty.

63 ***"Bravery deals not so much in resolute action, as in healthy and assured rest."***

— Henry David Thoreau, From his journals

Meaning: Courage does not always require dramatic action; sometimes it means remaining calm and secure.

---

64 ***"Courage is a mean state in respect of objects inspiring boldness or fear."***

— Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Book III

Meaning: Aristotle viewed courage as a balanced response to fear—not cowardice and not reckless bravery.

---

65 ***"The Brave man cannot be frighted from his propriety."***

— Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Book III

Meaning: A courageous person does not easily abandon proper conduct because of fear.

---

66 ***"Courage involves pain and is justly praised."***

— Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Book III

Meaning: Courage is valuable because facing difficult and painful situations can require great strength.

---

67 ***"Confidence (courage) then ought to be employed against death, and caution against the fear of death."***

— Epictetus, The Discourses and Encheiridion

Meaning: Epictetus teaches that courage should help us face things that cannot be controlled, while wisdom should guide our caution.

---

68 ***"No one then who is in a state of fear or sorrow or perturbation is free."***

— Epictetus, The Discourses and Encheiridion

Meaning: Constant fear can limit our freedom, while self-control can help us live more independently.

---

69 ***"I will be as prudent as I can, but not timorous or careless."***

— Seneca, Morals of a Happy Life, Benefits, Anger and Clemency

Meaning: Wisdom requires caution, but it does not require living in constant fear.

---

70 ***"It is a shameful and an unmanly thing to be doubtful, timorous, and uncertain."***

— Seneca, Morals of a Happy Life, Benefits, Anger and Clemency

Meaning: Seneca encourages firmness and determination instead of allowing fear to make every decision.

---

71 ***"Fortune favors the brave."***

— Terence, Phormio; related versions appear in Virgil and other classical writers

Meaning: The saying expresses the idea that courageous people are more willing to take action and face uncertainty.

---

72 ***"Fortune aids the bold."***

— Virgil, Aeneid, Book X; wording varies among translations

Meaning: Courage and willingness to act can help people take advantage of opportunities.

---

73 ***"There is a difference between a man's setting a high value on courage, and setting a low value on his own life."***

— Plutarch, Life of Pelopidas

Meaning: True courage should not be confused with reckless disregard for one's life.

---

74 ***"I'm not afraid of storms, for I'm learning how to sail my ship."***

— Louisa May Alcott, Little Women, Chapter 44, "My Lord and Lady" (Amy March)

Meaning: Learning and gaining experience can give us the courage to face life's difficulties.

---

75 ***"Do not pray for easy lives. Pray to be stronger men!"***

— Phillips Brooks, Twenty Sermons (1886)

Meaning: Instead of asking for a life without difficulties, we can seek the strength and courage to face difficulties well.
