90 Best Quotes on Comparison

With Simple Meanings for Students

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Comparison quietly steals our peace and joy. These 90 quotes on comparison – from Theodore Roosevelt, Allama Iqbal, Emerson, Shakespeare, Saadi, the Quran and Hadith 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 48–90 also give the exact book, chapter or verse, so you can check every source.

1 *"Don't compare your beginning to someone else's middle."*

— Jon Acuff, American author and speaker

Meaning: When you are just starting something – like learning a skill, starting a business, or preparing for exams – do not compare yourself to a person who has been doing it for many years. Instead, compare yourself with your own yesterday.

2 *"Comparison is the thief of joy."*

— Theodore Roosevelt, 26th President of the USA

Meaning: Measuring your life against others destroys your personal happiness.

3 *"Personality begins where comparison leaves off."*

— Karl Lagerfeld, famous German fashion designer

Meaning: As long as you keep copying others and comparing yourself with them, you have no real personality. You are just a copy. Stop comparing, start living your own life.

4 *"Comparison is a death knell to a sibling relationship."*

— Elizabeth Fishel

Meaning: When parents or family constantly compare brothers and sisters – "Why can't you be like your brother? He gets better marks," or "Your sister is more beautiful and more obedient than you are" – it destroys the love between them. In a family, never compare children; appreciate each child's unique qualities.

5 *"To compare is to injure."*

— Noam Chomsky

Meaning: If you compare, you are directly hurting that person. Comparison is not just a small comment; it is like an emotional wound. It tells the person, "You are not enough as you are."

6 *"Comparison is the death of peace."*

— Anonymous, motivational saying, not from one single book but widely used by self-help speakers and writers

Meaning: Peace means calmness of mind. The moment you start comparing your life with others – their money, their mobile, their marks, their beauty – your inner peace dies. So if you want peace, stop comparing. Be thankful for what you have.

7 *"Comparison is a thug that robs your joy."*

— Anonymous, a modern, powerful version of Theodore Roosevelt's famous quote "Comparison is the thief of joy"

Meaning: You might be happy with your life, but as soon as comparison enters your mind – your joy is robbed.

8 *"Never compare your inside with somebody else's outside."*

— John Mason / Hugh MacLeod, often attributed to both

Meaning: Never compare your real life with other people's highlights.

9 *"Comparison is the most poisonous element in the human heart."*

— C.S. Lewis

Meaning: Poison kills you slowly from the inside. In the same way, comparison is poison for your heart.

10 *"Comparison is an act of violence against the self."*

— Iyanla Vanzant

Meaning: When you compare yourself to others, you are not hurting others – you are doing violence to yourself. You are beating yourself from the inside.

11 *"The only person you should try to be better than is the person you were yesterday."*

— Matty Mullins, often attributed to him, and also to Anonymous

Meaning: Do not waste your energy trying to be better than your friends, your brothers or someone on Instagram. The only healthy competition is with yourself.

12 *"Don't compare yourself to others. Compare yourself to the person you were yesterday."*

— Jordan Peterson, from his book 12 Rules for Life

Meaning: Do not compete with others; compete with your own past. Aim for small daily improvement – you versus the person you were yesterday.

13 *"Winners focus on winning. Losers focus on winners."*

— Eric Thomas, popular motivational quote, often attributed to him

Meaning: A winner thinks only about his own goal, his own work, his own practice and how to improve. He is busy in his own race. A loser does not work on himself. He is always watching the winners – what are they doing, how much do they have, why are they successful? He wastes his time in jealousy and gossip instead of working.

14 *"Focus on your growth, not your status."*

— Anonymous, the main lesson of Rule #4 from Jordan Peterson's 12 Rules for Life

Meaning: If you focus on growth, you will always be happy because every day you can be a little better than yesterday. No one can take that from you. If you focus on status, you will always be unhappy because there will always be someone richer, more beautiful or more famous than you. Lesson: Do not ask, "Am I better than him?" Ask, "Am I better than I was yesterday?"

15 *"Do not look at others. Look at your own work."*

— Anonymous, common proverb and motivational saying with no single famous source

Meaning: Looking at others is a trap. When you look at others, two bad things happen: (i) If they are ahead of you, you feel jealous and sad. (ii) If you are ahead of them, you feel proud and stop working. Both feelings stop your progress. When you look at your own work, you grow. Your work is the only thing in your control; others are not in your control.

16 *"Be yourself; everyone else is already taken."*

— Oscar Wilde, Irish poet and playwright (1854–1900)

Meaning: Almighty Allah made you as ONE piece. There is no copy of you in the world. If you try to copy someone else – their style, their way of talking, their Instagram life – you will become a second-class copy of them. But if you are yourself, you will be a first-class original. Lesson: Do not waste your life trying to be someone else. Your biggest power is being real.

17 *"Run your own race."*

— Idiom / Common Saying, it comes from athletics

Meaning: Imagine you are in a 400-meter race. If you keep looking left and right to see how fast other runners are going, what will happen? You will stumble and fall, or you will slow down. But if you look straight ahead at YOUR lane and YOUR finish line, you will run your fastest. When you run someone else's race, you get tired and lose. When you run your own race, you win. Lesson: Do not worry about who is ahead or behind. Just stay in your lane and keep running.

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18 *"Your game is with yourself."*

— Anonymous, a modern locker-room and sports-psychology line that coaches say often

Meaning: There are two games in life: (i) Outside Game: You vs. other people. In this game, you can never win peacefully. Someone will always be stronger, richer and smarter. You will always be stressed. (ii) Inside Game: You vs. You. Yesterday's you vs. today's you. This is the only real game. Did I wake up earlier today than yesterday? Did I work harder today than yesterday? If yes, you won today; if no, you lost today. No other person is involved. Final Lesson: The opponent is not in front of you. The opponent is inside you – your laziness, your fear and your excuses. Beat that, and no one else can beat you.

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19 *"A flower does not think of competing with the flower next to it. It just blooms."*

— Zen Shin, a Japanese wisdom-style proverb that some people attribute to him

Meaning: A rose never worries that the sunflower is taller. It just opens in its own time, with its own beauty. You should do the same. Stop comparing with others. Focus on your own growth and you will bloom – your time will come.

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20 *"I will not let anyone walk through my mind with their dirty feet."*

— Mahatma Gandhi

Meaning: Your mind is like your clean house. Do not let people enter with dirty, negative thoughts and make it dirty.

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21 *"Comparison is the root of all feelings of inadequacy."*

— Anonymous, often said by life coaches; a modern self-help truth with no single famous author

Meaning: The feeling "I am not enough" never comes from inside you. It only comes when you compare yourself to someone else. Without comparison, you are always enough.

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22 ***"If you compare yourself with others, you may become vain or bitter, for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself."***

— Max Ehrmann, from Desiderata, one of the most famous poems about how to live peacefully

Meaning: If you think you are better than others, you become proud (vain). If you think others are better than you, you become sad and angry (bitter). Either way, you lose your peace. So just do not compare at all.

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23 ***"Blessed is he who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed."***

— Alexander Pope

Meaning: If you expect too much from people or life, you will be hurt. If you expect nothing, everything that comes will feel like a gift, and you will never be disappointed.

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24 ***"Comparisons, most noble Prince, are odious."***

— John Fortescue, chief justice of England (1394–1476), from his book De Laudibus Legum Angliae, written for King Henry VI to explain why English law is better than French law

Meaning: Every time you compare two people or two things, someone will feel insulted or hurt. Comparison never brings happiness, only dislike.

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25 ***"We are all unique. Never compare."***

— Anonymous, modern motivational saying

Meaning: Think of your fingerprints – no one in the whole world has the same. You are made like that for a reason. When you compare, you insult your own uniqueness. You were not born to be a copy. Be yourself. That is your real power.

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26 ***"Comparison implies a standard. What is yours?"***

— Unknown

Meaning: When you say "A is better than B," you are secretly using a third thing, C, as your ruler. For example, you say, "His life is better than mine." Your standard (your C) might be money, followers or beauty. So the question "What is yours?" asks you: What hidden ruler are you using to judge yourself? Is that ruler even true? Change the standard, and the comparison changes.

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27 ***"Enjoy your own life without comparing it with that of another."***

— Marquis de Condorcet, French philosopher (1743–1794)

Meaning: Be happy with what you have in your own life. Do not ruin that happiness by looking at other people's lives and thinking theirs is better.

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28 ***"Each life is unique. Do not compare. Comparison will make you go mad."***

— *Sadhguru*

Meaning: No two lives have the same starting point, the same karma, the same body or the same time – comparing them is foolish. It is like comparing a mango and a coconut.

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29 ***"Nature never repeats herself, and the possibilities of one human soul will never be found in another."***

— *Elizabeth Cady Stanton*

Meaning: Nature never makes copies. Just as no two leaves are exactly the same, no two human souls are the same. What you can do, feel and become – that combination will never exist again in anyone else. Therefore, you should not try to be a copy of others.

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30 ***"No two minds ever come together without, thereby, creating a third."***

— *Napoleon Hill, from his famous 1937 book Think and Grow Rich*

Meaning: When two people truly sit together and think in harmony, something new is born. It is not just your thought + my thought. A third energy, a third mind is created – more powerful and wiser than both. This is why Hill created the concept of the "Mastermind Group" – great ideas come from this third mind.

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31 ***"The chief enemy of creativity is 'good' sense."***

— *Pablo Picasso, Spanish painter*

Meaning: Creativity dies when you try to be too logical, too "sensible." Good sense tells you: this will look foolish, people will laugh, this is not practical. If you listen to that voice, you will never make anything new. All great art looks crazy at first. Creativity needs the courage to be nonsensical.

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32 ***"To be beautiful means to be yourself. You don't need to be accepted by others."***

— *Thich Nhat Hanh*

Meaning: Most people think beauty is how others see you. Therefore, they change themselves to get acceptance – makeup, style, words and personality. When you stop trying to be accepted and just accept yourself completely, with your flaws, your nature and your truth – that peace makes you beautiful. When you are yourself, you shine naturally.

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33 *"Don't try to be original, just try to be good."*

— Paul Rand, legendary graphic designer who designed the IBM, ABC and UPS logos

Meaning: Everyone is stressed about being original – doing something no one has ever done before. That pressure makes you fake, complicated and weird for no reason. Forget originality; just focus on doing your work really well – honestly, with skill and heart. When you try to be good, originality will come by itself. Your natural style, your hand, your way of solving the problem – that makes it original without forcing it.

34 *"You are a manuscript of a divine letter. You are a mirror reflecting a noble face."*

— Rumi

Meaning: You are not small. You are not random. You are sacred writing, and you are the mirror of the Beloved. When you polish the mirror (your heart) by being true to yourself, by not imitating, by not comparing – that noble face shines clearly through you.

35 *"Be a first-rate version of yourself, not a second-rate version of someone else."*

— Judy Garland, famous American actress and singer

Meaning: Do not waste your life trying to be someone else's duplicate. Be the original masterpiece, not a photocopy. Imitation kills your originality; to be beautiful means to be yourself.

36 *"Copying one person is plagiarism; copying many is research."*

— Wilson Mizner

Meaning: If you copy word-for-word from one book, person or website – that is stealing. Everyone can see it. That is called plagiarism, and it is dishonest. But if you read 10 books and 20 articles, talk to 5 people, and then combine their ideas in your own words with your own understanding – that is not stealing anymore. That is called research, learning and studying.

37 *"A lion doesn't lose sleep over the opinion of sheep."*

— African Proverb, popularly attributed as an African proverb, but made famous by Game of Thrones (Tywin Lannister)

Meaning: Think of the lion as a strong, confident person. Think of the sheep as weak, jealous, gossiping people. A lion is the king. Sheep will always bleat and talk behind his back. Does the lion care? No. He does not lose sleep. He does not argue with sheep. Lesson: When you are doing something big and true to yourself, small-minded people will always comment, criticize and have opinions. Do not waste your energy replying to them. A king does not explain himself to the crowd. Stay focused. Let the sheep talk.

38 *"I don't compete with anyone else. I run my own race."*

— Usain Bolt

Meaning: Life is not a 100-meter race where everyone is next to you. Your path is YOUR lane. Your timing is different. Your destination is different. If you keep looking left and right to see what others are doing, you will fail. Do not waste energy on jealousy. Focus only on becoming better than you were yesterday.

39 *"Care about what other people think and you will always be their prisoner."*

— Lao Tzu, ancient Chinese philosopher, Tao Te Ching philosophy

Meaning: If you need other people's clapping to feel good, then other people own your happiness. You will always be scared: What will they say if I wear this? What will they think if I fail? When you live like that, you are not free. You are a prisoner – and other people are holding the key. Lesson: If you stop asking, "What will they think?" you take the key back. Then you are free to run your own race, like we just talked about.

40 *"No one can make you feel inferior without your consent."*

— Eleanor Roosevelt, First Lady of the USA, from her 1937 book This Is My Story

Meaning: Nobody has the power to make you feel small. They can insult you, laugh at you and say you are not good enough – but that feeling of being inferior only happens INSIDE you. And that door can only be opened from the inside. If you don't give them permission – consent – their words just bounce off. Power is yours: they throw the words; you decide whether to catch them.

41 *"The reason we struggle with insecurity is because we compare our behind-the-scenes with everyone else's highlight reel."*

— Steven Furtick, American pastor and author, made hugely popular on social media

Meaning: The messy room, the 10 takes, the mistakes, the crying, the doubt – you know everything about your own life. About theirs, you see only the best 15-second clip: the vacation, the new car, the smile, the win. You see only the final edited version. So you are comparing your full, unedited, ugly truth with their perfect, filtered, best moment. Lesson: Do not believe the reel. Everyone has a messy behind-the-scenes too – they just don't post it.

42 *"I am not in this world to live up to your expectations and you are not in this world to live up to mine."*

— Fritz Perls, founder of Gestalt therapy; Bruce Lee loved it and made it famous in his own words

Meaning: You came here to live YOUR life – not to become the person your parents, friends or society want you to be. The same is true for others. They do not owe you perfection either. If we meet and help each other – beautiful. If not – that's also okay. It frees you from two prisons at once: (i) the pressure you put on yourself to please everyone, and (ii) the disappointment you feel when others don't please you.

43 ***"What others think of you is none of your business."***

— *Anonymous*

Meaning: It is not your job. Their thoughts are happening in their head, with their fears, their jealousy, their story. You cannot control it, and you cannot even know it for sure. Your business is only 3 things: (1) what you think, (2) what you say, (3) what you do.

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44 ***"There is nothing noble in being superior to your fellow man; true nobility is being superior to your former self."***

— *Ernest Hemingway, American novelist and Nobel Prize winner*

Meaning: Stop comparing, stop reacting, stop seeking permission. Just focus on becoming a better version of you. Be better than yesterday's you, not better than them.

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45 ***"Jealousy is simply a lack of understanding."***

— *Unknown*

Meaning: When you are jealous of someone, it is not actually about them. It is about what you don't understand yet. You don't understand their full struggle behind the win, or your own path and value. If you truly understood how hard they worked, and how different your journey is, jealousy disappears. It turns into learning.

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46 ***"You wouldn't worry so much about what others think of you if you realized how seldom they do."***

— *Eleanor Roosevelt*

Meaning: We spend 80% of our energy thinking, "What will they think about my clothes, my job, my English, my life?" But the truth is, they are hardly thinking about you at all. Everyone is busy thinking about themselves and what you think about them.

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47 ***"Stay in your lane."***

— *Common Saying, an old American street and driving proverb, made popular in hip-hop and self-help culture; no single author*

Meaning: Stop looking left and right to see how fast others are going. Focus on your own road, your own speed, your own destination. When you switch lanes just to chase someone else, you crash. Your lane has its own traffic and its own timing. Water your own grass, run your own race.

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48 ***"Do not wish for what Allah has given to some of you over others."***

— The Holy Quran, Surah An-Nisa 4:32 (translation of the meaning)

Meaning: Every person receives a different share of talent, wealth, looks and opportunity. Wishing for someone else's share – their marks, their money or their life – only makes your heart restless. The verse teaches us to work for our own share and to ask Allah for His bounty instead of staring at what others have.

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49 ***"Do not extend your eyes toward what We have given some of them to enjoy – the splendor of worldly life... And the provision of your Lord is better and more lasting."***

— The Holy Quran, Surah Ta-Ha 20:131 (translation of the meaning)

Meaning: Do not keep staring at other people's big houses, new phones and expensive clothes. Allah says this show of worldly life is only a test for them, and what He has kept for you is better and lasts longer. Looking at what others own makes your own blessings look small.

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50 ***"Look at those who are below you, and do not look at those who are above you, for that is more likely to hold you back from belittling the blessing of Allah upon you."***

— Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), Sahih Muslim 2963, narrated by Abu Hurairah

Meaning: In worldly matters – money, marks, looks, gadgets – do not compare upward. If you always look at the richer or luckier person, you stop seeing what you already have. Looking at those who have less makes you thankful. (In good deeds and knowledge, we are encouraged to race ahead.)

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51 ***"True richness is not having many possessions; true richness is the richness of the soul."***

— Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), Sahih al-Bukhari 6446, narrated by Abu Hurairah

Meaning: A person with a lot of money can still feel poor if he is never satisfied, while a person who is content with what Allah gave him feels rich. Contentment ends comparison, because you stop asking, "Who has more than me?"

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52 ***"None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself."***

— Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), Sahih al-Bukhari 13, narrated by Anas ibn Malik

Meaning: Envy says, "Why did he get it and not me?" This hadith teaches the opposite: be as happy for your friend's success as you would be for your own. When a classmate scores high marks, you can celebrate with him instead of comparing.

53

"...they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."

— The Bible (King James Version), 2 Corinthians 10:12

Meaning: If you use yourself or your small circle of friends as the measuring stick, you will fool yourself. Someone will always look better and someone will always look worse. Real growth comes from measuring yourself against what is right and true, not against the person sitting next to you.

54

"But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another."

— The Bible (King James Version), Galatians 6:4

Meaning: Test your own work honestly. If it is good, your happiness is in the work itself – not in being better than someone else. Pride that depends on another person's failure never lasts.

55

"A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones."

— The Bible (King James Version), Proverbs 14:30

Meaning: A calm and peaceful heart keeps a person healthy and alive, but envy slowly rots a person from the inside – like rust on iron. Comparison is the seed of envy, so guard your heart.

56

"Who is rich? The one who is happy with his portion."

— Ben Zoma, Jewish sage, Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Fathers) 4:1 (English rendering)

Meaning: Real richness is not the size of your bank account but the size of your satisfaction. If you are happy with your "portion" – what you have and who you are – nobody can make you poor just by owning more than you.

57

"...beheld a man without feet I offered thanks to the bounty of God, consoled myself for my want of shoes..."

— Saadi Shirazi, Persian poet (c. 1210–1291), Gulistan, Chapter 3, Story 19 (Rehatsek translation)

Meaning: Saadi says he never complained about his hard life except once, when he had no shoes. Then he saw a man who had no feet – and thanked God. This story is the origin of the famous saying, "I complained that I had no shoes until I met a man who had no feet." Lesson: when you feel poor, look at what you still have. Gratitude is the cure for comparison.

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58 ***"Some things are in our control, and others not."***

— Epictetus, Greek Stoic philosopher, Enchiridion 1 (c. 125 AD, Elizabeth Carter translation)

Meaning: Your effort, your habits and your choices are in your control. Other people's marks, money, looks and luck are not. Comparison wastes your energy on things you cannot control. Spend it on what you can.

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59 ***"I have often wondered how it is that every man loves himself more than all the rest of men, but yet sets less value on his own opinion of himself than on the opinion of others."***

— Marcus Aurelius, Roman emperor and Stoic philosopher, Meditations 12.4 (George Long translation)

Meaning: Marcus finds it strange that we love ourselves most, yet trust other people's opinion of us more than our own. This is the root of comparison: we let others decide whether we are "good enough." Learn to trust your own honest judgment of your work.

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60 ***"Do not waste the remainder of thy life in thoughts about others, when thou dost not refer thy thoughts to some object of common utility."***

— Marcus Aurelius, Roman emperor and Stoic philosopher, Meditations 3.4 (George Long translation)

Meaning: Do not spend your precious time wondering what others are doing, saying or owning – unless that thinking is useful for a good purpose. Every minute spent watching other people's lives is a minute taken away from your own.

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61 ***"It is not the man who has too little, but the man who craves more, that is poor."***

— Seneca, Roman Stoic philosopher, Letters to Lucilius 2 (Richard Gummere translation)

Meaning: Poverty is not only about how much you own; it is about how much you keep wanting. Two people can own exactly the same – one feels rich and the other feels poor. Comparison keeps raising the amount you think you "need."

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62 ***"Nothing is enough for the man to whom enough is too little."***

— Epicurus, Greek philosopher (341–270 BC), Vatican Sayings 68

Meaning: If you never feel that you have enough, then no amount of money, marks or fame will ever satisfy you. Comparison keeps moving the finish line, so you never feel you have arrived. Decide what is "enough" for you.

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63 ***"He who knows other men is discerning; he who knows himself is intelligent."***

— Lao Tzu, ancient Chinese philosopher, Tao Te Ching, Chapter 33 (James Legge translation)

Meaning: Studying and judging other people takes cleverness, but knowing yourself – your strengths, your weaknesses, your purpose – is the higher wisdom. The same chapter says that mastering yourself is true power. Look inward more than outward.

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64 ***"The harvest is always richer in another man's field."***

— Ovid, Roman poet (43 BC–17 AD), Ars Amatoria 1.349 (English rendering of the Latin)

Meaning: This is the ancient version of "the grass is always greener on the other side." Other people's fields look fuller because we only see them from the road. Every field has weeds and bad weather that you cannot see from outside.

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65 ***"If we only wanted to be happy it would be easy; but we want to be happier than other people, which is almost always difficult, since we think them happier than they are."***

— Montesquieu, French philosopher (1689–1755), Mes Pensées (English rendering)

Meaning: Being happy would be easy if we did not also want to be happier than everyone else. The trouble is that we imagine others to be happier than they really are, so we chase a target that does not exist. Be happy first, and forget the race.

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66 ***"We are never so happy nor so unhappy as we imagine."***

— François de La Rochefoucauld, French author, Maxims (1678)

Meaning: Our imagination exaggerates. When we look at others, their life seems perfect; when we look at our own problems, they seem huge. Both pictures are wrong. Your life is never as bad – or as perfect – as you imagine.

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67 ***"A man that hath no virtue in himself, ever envieth virtue in others."***

— Francis Bacon, English philosopher and statesman, Essays – "Of Envy" (1625)

Meaning: A person who has not built any goodness or skill in himself often hates it in others. Envy shows an empty place inside us. The cure is not to pull others down but to build up your own character and skill.

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68 *"Content makes poor men rich; discontent makes rich men poor."*

— *Benjamin Franklin, American statesman and writer, Poor Richard's Almanack*

Meaning: A poor person who is satisfied is rich in peace, and a rich person who always wants more is poor in peace. Wealth is a state of mind: contentment is the real money.

69 *"This above all: to thine own self be true."*

— *William Shakespeare, Hamlet, Act 1, Scene 3 (advice of Polonius to his son)*

Meaning: Before you try to be like others, be honest with yourself – your values, your talents and your voice. If you stay true to yourself, you do not need to pretend to be someone else.

70 *"Desiring this man's art and that man's scope."*

— *William Shakespeare, Sonnet 29*

Meaning: Even Shakespeare felt this! In this sonnet he feels sad and low and wishes he had one man's talent ("art") and another man's reach ("scope"). The poem turns happy when he thinks of the one he loves – and he says he would not swap places with kings. Lesson: gratitude and love are the cure for comparison.

71 *"It is the green-eyed monster which doth mock the meat it feeds on."*

— *William Shakespeare, Othello, Act 3, Scene 3 (spoken by Iago)*

Meaning: Jealousy is pictured as a green-eyed monster that plays with the person it feeds on. The more attention you give it, the bigger it grows. Notice it early and do not feed it.

72 *"Comparisons are odorous."*

— *William Shakespeare, Much Ado About Nothing, Act 3, Scene 5 (spoken by Dogberry)*

Meaning: Dogberry is a funny character who mixes up words. He says "odorous" (smelly) instead of "odious" (hateful) – compare quote 24, which says comparisons are odious. Either way, comparisons leave a bad smell! A funny way to remember how unpleasant comparison is.

73 *"We must cultivate our garden."*

— *Voltaire, French writer and philosopher, Candide (1759), the last line*

Meaning: After many adventures, Candide learns that endless arguing and chasing what others have brings nothing. Instead, he says, we should tend our own garden – do our own work, patiently. It is the same message as "water your own grass" in quote 47.

74 *"One Law for the Lion & Ox is Oppression."*

— William Blake, English poet and artist, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (c. 1790)

Meaning: A lion and an ox are very different animals, so judging both by the same rule is unfair. In the same way, people have different talents, backgrounds and speeds. Do not judge yourself – or anyone else – by a yardstick that was never made for you.

75 *"Pride relates more to our opinion of ourselves, vanity to what we would have others think of us."*

— Jane Austen, English novelist, Pride and Prejudice (1813), Chapter 5 (spoken by Mary Bennet)

Meaning: Pride is about how you see yourself; vanity is about how you want others to see you. Comparison feeds vanity, because we start living for other people's eyes. Try to be content with your own honest opinion of your effort.

76 *"Imitation is the sincerest of flatteries."*

— Charles Caleb Colton, English writer, Lacon (1820)

Meaning: When you copy someone, you are paying that person a compliment – you are saying he is worth copying. Learning from role models is good, but if you only imitate, you stay a shadow. Learn from others, then add your own voice.

77 *"Envy is ignorance; imitation is suicide."*

— Ralph Waldo Emerson, American essayist and poet, "Self-Reliance" (1841)

Meaning: Envy comes from not knowing your own worth, and trying to be like others kills the real you. Emerson says every person must accept himself, for better or worse, as the portion that was given to him.

78 *"Insist on yourself; never imitate."*

— Ralph Waldo Emerson, American essayist and poet, "Self-Reliance" (1841)

Meaning: Stand by your own thoughts, voice and style. Your own gift grows stronger with a lifetime of practice, but a borrowed talent is only half yours. Do not imitate – develop.

79 *"Nothing can bring you peace but yourself."*

— Ralph Waldo Emerson, American essayist and poet, "Self-Reliance" (1841)

Meaning: Peace does not come from beating others, owning more or being praised. It comes from living by your own principles. Emerson ends his essay by saying the same: nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles.

80

"If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer."

— Henry David Thoreau, American writer, Walden (1854)

Meaning: If you move at a different speed from your friends – learning later, earning later, starting later – it may not be failure. You may simply be following a different "music." Let each person step to the music he hears.

81

"However mean your life is, meet it and live it; do not shun it and call it hard names."

— Henry David Thoreau, American writer, Walden (1854)

Meaning: Here "mean" means small or humble. Even if your life looks small next to someone else's, face it, live it and make the best of it. Do not run away from it or insult it. Thoreau goes on to say: love your life, poor as it is.

82

"He who lets the world, or his own portion of it, choose his plan of life for him, has no need of any other faculty than the ape-like one of imitation."

— John Stuart Mill, English philosopher, On Liberty (1859)

Meaning: If you let society, friends or trends choose how you live, you only need one ability – imitation, like a monkey. But humans also have judgment, reasoning and choice. Use them to design your own life instead of copying the crowd.

83

"Everybody is a moon, and has a dark side which he never shows to anybody."

— Mark Twain, American author, Following the Equator (1897)

Meaning: We only see the bright side of other people, just like we only see the bright face of the moon. But everyone has a dark side – worries, mistakes and secret struggles – that they never show. So never judge your whole life by someone else's bright side (see quote 41).

84

"Most people are other people. Their thoughts are someone else's opinions, their lives a mimicry, their passions a quotation."

— Oscar Wilde, Irish poet and playwright, De Profundis (written 1897, published 1905)

Meaning: Wilde says that many people only repeat other people's opinions and copy other people's lives and feelings, like a quotation. Do not live as a copy. Think your own thoughts and feel your own feelings.

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85 ***"I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference."***

— Robert Frost, American poet, "The Road Not Taken" (1916)

Meaning: The speaker follows his own road instead of the crowd's. Notice that the poem itself says both roads were "really about the same" – what made the difference was choosing and owning his own path.

86 ***"It is not the critic who counts."***

— Theodore Roosevelt, 26th President of the USA, "Citizenship in a Republic" speech, Sorbonne, Paris (1910)

Meaning: Roosevelt says the credit belongs to the person who is actually in the arena – working, failing and trying again – not to the one standing outside, comparing and criticising. Do not spend your life judging others; be the one who tries.

87 ***"Raise your selfhood so high that, before every decree of destiny, God Himself asks His servant: 'Tell me, what is your wish?'"***

— Allama Iqbal, poet-philosopher of the East, Bal-e-Jibril (1935), English translation of the Urdu couplet

Meaning: Iqbal's idea of khudi (selfhood) is to build your own strength, character and purpose so strongly that you stop copying and chasing others. A person with a strong self does not live by other people's measure – he shapes his own destiny with hard work and faith.

88 ***"Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life."***

— Steve Jobs, co-founder of Apple, Stanford University commencement speech (2005)

Meaning: Your time is short, so do not spend it trying to live like another person or to match their life. Jobs also told the graduates to have the courage to follow their own heart and intuition. Every year spent copying someone else is a year not lived as yourself.

89 ***"The race is long and, in the end, it's only with yourself."***

— Mary Schmich, Chicago Tribune columnist, "Advice, Like Youth, Probably Just Wasted on the Young" (1997), often called "Wear Sunscreen" and wrongly credited to Kurt Vonnegut

Meaning: The writer tells young people not to waste time on jealousy, because sometimes you are ahead and sometimes you are behind. Life is a long race, and the only person you are really racing is your own self. It is the same message as quotes 11, 12 and 18.

90 ***"There is no one alive who is Youer than You."***

— Dr. Seuss, American children's author, Happy Birthday to You! (1959)

Meaning: In his playful way, Dr. Seuss says nobody is more "you" than you are. You are the only person who can be you, so there is no point competing with others at being you. Be proud of your own uniqueness (see quote 25).