

# KIM

by Rudyard Kipling



## THE AUTHOR

Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936), poet and short story writer, is by far the greatest chronicler of British imperialism, and was, for three decades at the height of his powers, the most popular writer in the English-speaking world. He was born in Bombay, India, the son of a British art teacher who served as curator of the Lahore Museum pictured in the opening pages of *Kim*. After establishing an indifferent record in school, he returned to India in 1881, where he began working in the newspaper business, first for the *Civil and Military Gazette* and later for the *Pioneer*, writing poetry and short stories on the side. In 1886, some of his poems were published in *Departmental Ditties*. In 1888, many of his poems and short stories were published in short anthologies with titles like *Plain Tales from the Hills* and *The Phantom 'Rickshaw*, which included *The Man Who Would Be King*. In 1889 he left India, traveling in the years that followed all over the world, including an extensive stay in the United States, where he met and married his wife. He hated the U.S., however, and eventually returned to England. Later writings included his first novel, *The Light That Failed* (1890), the children's stories collected in *The Jungle Books* (1894-1895), and the novels *Captains Courageous* (1897) and *Kim* (1901). During regular visits to South Africa, he met and befriended British imperialist Cecil Rhodes. In 1907, he became the first Englishman to win the Nobel Prize for Literature. After winning the Nobel Prize, discouragements associated with a less than happy marriage and the deaths of his son, who was killed in World War I, and his young daughter, who died of tuberculosis, conspired to reduce his literary output significantly. He died of a brain hemorrhage in 1936.

Between 1890 and 1920, Kipling was celebrated as the greatest living British writer, heir to the legacy of the great Charles Dickens. His writings celebrated the British Empire, particularly the *raj* in India and Burma, along with the Industrial Revolution that made it possible. As popular opinion of these achievements changed, however, so did Kipling's reputation. The paternalism expressed in his poem *The White Man's Burden* came to be viewed as inexcusably jingoist and racist, and Kipling, who had once been lionized, came to be vilified. While Kipling's writings certainly shared the flaws of the era in which he lived, there can be no doubt that he was the greatest spokesman for that era, and honest critics have recognized his mastery of the craft of writing even if they dislike the content of his works.

*Kim* (1901) is widely considered to be Kipling's masterpiece. Children have enjoyed it as a coming-of-age story, while readers of all ages have wondered at the authentic detail used in the novel to describe the infinite variety of people, religions, superstitions, sights, sounds, and smells in the Indian subcontinent. The story takes place in the 1890s in the years following the Second Afghan War and portrays the Great Game, a contest between Great Britain and Russia for control of central Asia, especially what are now the nations of Iran and Afghanistan. Though the racist attitudes of the day are assumed without criticism in the novel, Kipling shows both knowledge of and appreciation for Indian people, cultures, and religions; if anything, the protagonist prefers these over the ways of the British, and Kipling at no time interferes with such preferences.

## **PLOT SUMMARY**

We first meet young Kimball O'Hara sitting astride a great cannon in the Lahore town square. Kim is an orphan whose mother died of cholera and whose father succumbed to opium addiction several years later. He has been raised by a half-caste woman, is as much at home among the street urchins of the city as any native, and is known as the "Little Friend of All the World." He often undertakes errands in the seamier parts of town to earn gratuities from fashionable young men, and in the process learns to change clothing according to his environment and pass himself off as almost anything and remain inconspicuous in the process.

While Kim and his friends play around the cannon they are approached by an old man unlike any they have ever seen. They strike up a conversation and find that he is a Tibetan Lama on a pilgrimage to see the Four Holy Places of Buddhism before he dies. Kim then shows him through the Lahore Museum. Soon he meets the British curator, who invites him into his office while Kim listens through the door [the character is based on Kipling's father, who was the curator of this very museum, which still has a cannon in the square in front of it]. The two men then go through the museum collection with great care, enjoying one another's company and learning. The Lama then asks the curator for the location of the river that flowed from an arrow shot by Buddha that can bestow freedom from the Wheel of Things, but he assures him that he knows of no such river. Before the Lama continues on his journey, the two exchange gifts, with the curator giving the Lama pencils, a notebook, and his spectacles, and the Tibetan giving him his antique Chinese pen-holder in return.

Kim follows the Lama outside and, seeing that he is hungry, offers to take his begging bowl and fill it for him. He goes to the booth of a vegetable-seller and convinces her to fill the bowl after Kim drives away a Brahma bull that is about to help itself to the woman's wares. Kim and the Lama enjoy dinner together, after which Kim offers to accompany the old man on his journey to find the River of the Arrow. He tells him that he also is in search of something – a Red Bull on a green field that his father had prophesied he would one day find.

Before leaving for Benares, Kim leads the Lama to a bazaar near the train station, where he begs money from his friend Mahbub Ali, a horse trader, in exchange for carrying a message for him to Umballa. That night while a prostitute gets Mahbub drunk, men search his belongings looking for the letter. Realizing the danger he is in, Kim rouses the Lama and the two leave quietly on foot for their destination.

In the railway station the Lama is overwhelmed, but Kim shepherds him through the ticketing process and onto the train, making sure he is not cheated in the process. On the train, Kim manages to wheedle the price of a fare from a young prostitute so that he can avoid paying for the entire trip

to Benares. The Lama then asks their fellow-travelers about the River of the Arrow he seeks, and they think he means the Gunga, but he knows this is not the answer, and proceeds to tell them the story of his god, Buddha, and the river that sprang from his arrow, after which Kim speaks of his Red Bull in a green field. When they reach Umballa, a woman on the train offers Kim and the Lama lodging for the night. As soon as he can, Kim excuses himself and takes the message from Mahbub Ali to an Englishman named Creighton, who sees in it an indication of impending military action. When Kim returns to the Lama, one of their companions reads Kim's horoscope and prophesies that Kim will see his Red Bull in three days, but in the context of war.

Kim and the Lama then strike out across the fields, encountering an angry farmer who tries to shoo them away as beggars. The Lama responds courteously, however, and the farmer changes his tone to one of respect, offering them milk and water. As they prepare to cross a stream, they see a cobra, but the Lama shows no fear, walking within a few feet of this troubled soul and wishing it swift release from its current round on the Wheel of Things. Kim asks the Lama how he will know his River when he finds it, but the old man simply assures him that he will know. When they arrive at a small village, the priest there directs them to the Grand Trunk Road, which he assures them crosses every river and stream in the region. Kim then shares with them his confidence that war will break out very soon. The villagers invite them to stay the night, but Kim realizes that the priest intends to drug and rob the old man while he sleeps, so he takes their purse from him for safekeeping. The next morning, an old soldier guides them to the Great Trunk Road and tells them tales of his experiences in the Sepoy Mutiny as they travel. As they approach the Great Trunk Road, which goes in a straight line for fifteen hundred miles across India, they meet the old soldier's son, a brutal officer in the army.

The old soldier's son confirms Kim's news of impending war and, at his father's insistence, rewards Kim with a four-anna coin. A constable who witnesses the transaction tries to charge Kim and the Lama two annas apiece for entering the road, but Kim is too wily for him and skips away with the Lama in tow. As the two travel the Grand Trunk Road they encounter a great variety of people, and Kim finds them fascinating, though the Lama keeps his eyes to the ground and seems not to notice them at all. When they stop at the end of their first day on the road, Kim charms an old woman on pilgrimage to pray for more grandsons into giving them food and a blanket, and she invites them to accompany her on the next stage of her journey, engaging the Lama in long conversations and providing them with all the food they need.

Every time they passed a stream, the Lama looked for some sign that it was his River, but to no avail. When Kim wanders the countryside during a rest period, he encounters the advance guard of a British regiment known as the Mavericks. They carry a green flag with the insignia of a red bull, and Kim is convinced that he is seeing the fulfillment of the prophecy about his destiny. The Lama is afraid, however, so the two go back to their own camp. Kim returns to spy on the soldiers and sneaks up to the mess tent. He watches them offer a toast to a golden bull stolen from the Summer Palace in Peking, now their regimental mascot, and thinks they are praying to their god. Reverend Arthur Bennett, the chaplain of the regiment, stumbles upon Kim as he leaves the mess tent and drags him back to his own tent. He calls in the Catholic priest, Father Victor, who discovers from the documents in Kim's pouch that he was not only baptized Catholic, but that the priest attended his parents' wedding. Kim tells them a little of his history and offers to bring the Lama to them to confirm his story. Bennett wants to send the boy to the Masonic Orphanage, but Father Victor insists that the regiment take him in, arguing that one boy finding his father's regiment in all of India was obviously some sort of miracle. Kim tells the Lama that he is indeed the son of a white man and

insists that he return to the wealthy old woman who is caring for him. Soon, he promises, he will run away from the regiment and the two can resume their quest. The Lama, however, realizes that his attachment to Kim was just another manifestation of the Wheel of Things and determines to continue his search alone. He then offers to pay for Kim's education despite its exorbitant cost. Father Victor tells Kim he is to be sent to school in Sanawar, and Kim warns him of the great war to come, of which the regiment as yet knows nothing.

When the Mavericks take to the road the next morning, Kim is with them. By midmorning news of the coming engagement reaches the regiment, and the soldiers are both overjoyed at the chance for action and awed by Kim's fulfilled "prophecy." When the troops get on a train to the front, Kim is left behind to go to school – a prospect he finds unattractive since he knows no more than his letters. At the first opportunity he convinces a scribe to write a letter for him to Mahbub Ali in Lahore in which he asks the horse-trader to get him out of the clutches of the regiment or at least send him some money. Soon he is summoned to Father Victor's tent, where he is reading a letter sent by the Lama, though again written by a scribe. He is still looking for his River, having escaped the clutches of the overbearing Indian noblewoman. The Lama promises to send three hundred rupees each year to pay for Kim's education. Father Victor agrees to send Kim to St. Xavier's school if the money arrives in three days; otherwise he will be committed to an Anglican orphanage. Meanwhile he suffers at the hands of the tutor, who beats him for no observable reason as he puzzles over indiscernible characters on a piece of paper, is tormented by the other boys in camp, and is unable to escape because of the red uniform they make him wear. On the morning of the fourth day, Kim is spirited away by Mahbub Ali; he is completely unaware that another letter from the Lama arrived that morning containing the promised three hundred rupees. Soon Colonel Creighton catches up to Mahbub and insists he bring Kim back to the regiment, which to Kim's great consternation he promptly does, essentially selling him back to the English. The Colonel then promises to fulfill the Lama's wishes and take Kim to the boarding school.

After being told that he is being sent to school in Lucknow three days hence, Kim tries to wait out the interval patiently. He engages the letter-writer whom he had used before to write a letter to the Lama informing him that he will soon be in Lucknow. Father Victor purchases clothes for him prior to his departure and puts him on a train. Colonel Creighton warns him to work hard at St. Xavier's and promises him a job in the Survey of India when he comes of age. Upon arrival in Lucknow, the Colonel arranges for a driver to take Kim to the school, but Kim convinces him to give him a tour of the city first. As they approach the school, Kim is overjoyed to see the Lama, who has been waiting for him for a day and a half. Kim begs him to stay, but the Lama insists on returning to Benares to continue the search for his River, promising to visit Kim from time to time.

Kim gradually adjusts to life at St. Xavier's, getting into predictable kinds of trouble and sharpening his skills and knowledge rapidly. When summer vacation arrives, Kim longs to take to the road again and visit the Lama, but Colonel Creighton wants him to go to a barracks school in the north. He goes to the house of disreputable women and has them disguise him, complete with dye on his skin, as a low-caste Hindu boy, and in this disguise he leaves Lucknow. He writes a letter to Mahbub Ali, for he can now read and write, promising to arrive in Umballa at the appointed time and asking Mahbub to pass on the message to the Colonel. A month later Kim indeed arrives and tells Mahbub of his fantastic adventures on the road.

Kim decides not to go to school immediately, but to return to Umballa with Mahbub Ali to work with his horses. He promptly discards his Hindu garb and dresses like a Muslim, then tells the horse trader of his adventures. He decides that he will return to the school and learn surveying, but

when his course is completed he will be his own man and roam freely over the land he loves. Mahbub sends Kim ahead to his encampment, where Kim overhears men plotting to kill Mahbub in the night. He slips out of the camp and intercepts Mahbub on the road, warning him of the ambush set for him. The two summon the police, fully confident that the noise made by the officers would scare the assassins away. The police fall upon and arrest the two men, however, and Mahbub is safe for one more night. The next day they begin the journey to Simla, where Kim again changes his identity, this time becoming a Eurasian boy.

In Simla he stays with a gem merchant named Lurgan whose shop is full of wonders. In the middle of the night he walks cautiously around the shop and inadvertently turns on a phonograph, which startles him so badly that he breaks it to silence it. The next morning he explores the wares in the shop with amazement, giving special attention to the jewels. The curiosities are not the only wonders in the shop, however. During breakfast Lurgan teleports a water jug across the room without touching it. He tells Kim to throw it back, and it smashes into fifty pieces on the floor. Kim then watches with amazement as the jug slowly reassembles, piece by piece, before his eyes. A small Hindu boy in the shop then challenges him to a memory game in which the two look at a tray of objects, then describe them after they are covered. The boy beats Kim every time, and Lurgan announces that the boy will teach him this very valuable skill during the ten days of his stay. Day by day Kim learns by observing the customers in the shop to detect character, and by night Lurgan teaches him the secrets of disguise, using both clothing and makeup. One day an obese man enters the shop and Lurgan tells Kim he is a spy for the British – a title to which Kim might one day aspire. On the trip back to Lucknow, the Babu (the spy never used his real name) lectures Kim about the importance of a good education, including literature, languages, science, mathematics, and surveying, and upon his departure gives Kim a box containing various medicines. Kim, with such motivation in mind, excels in school, especially in mathematics and surveying, after which he receives a government appointment. Meanwhile the Lama travels the length and breadth of India searching for his River, finally seeing in a dream that the River will never be found except in the company of his faithful disciple. Though he visits Lucknow periodically in search of Kim, he decides that the boy must acquire more wisdom before the time is right for them to travel together.

As his holiday continues, Kim travels with Mahbub as he buys and sells horses, even convincing the trader to cross the Indian Ocean to buy some excellent Arabian mounts. On the way home, Kim gathers intelligence that Mahbub says will eventually help them to intercept a shipment of rifles. Another holiday is spent with Lurgan learning about medicines and memorizing parts of the Koran. The next one was again spent with Mahbub traveling to Bikaner in a native feudatory state and drawing careful maps and recording observations. Mahbub rewards his diligence by getting him new clothes along with a .45 revolver. Kim then returns to St. Xavier's, but both Mahbub and Lurgan beg the Colonel to release him from further studies and turn him loose to full-fledged service. Creighton reluctantly agrees to allow Kim to wander for a few months with his friend the Lama with the intention of eventually using him in the Ethnological Survey. Kim, of course, is delighted. Before he leaves Mahbub takes him to the house of a blind prostitute to have his skin dyed for safety on the Road, for which she also casts a spell of Protection by calling on a long list of demons to leave him alone. Hurree Babu then gives him a charm and tells him how to use it in case he finds himself in danger, then teaches him a series of passwords to use should he meet others engaged in the Game.

Kim revels in his freedom, but as he prepares to leave he muses about his identity; he has taken on so many different personas that he doesn't know who he really is. He soon forgets his reveries as he travels by train, entertaining the other passengers with his wild stories. Upon arriving

in Benares he immediately sets out to find his friend and mentor the Lama, but first encounters a man carrying a sick child. He gives him some of the medicine he had received from Lurgan and instructs him about how to use it. The Lama greets him with great joy and the two reminisce, but soon determine to take to the Road. The Lama knows that he will never see Benares again because he has been told in a dream that he will never find his River apart from the company of his faithful disciple. Before they leave, however, the man with the sick child returns to tell them that his child is better, and praises Kim as a great healer. He provides food for their journey, since Kim is very hungry and unable to sate himself on the old man's simple diet. He also offers to accompany them as they travel northward toward Delhi, since his home is in the same direction. On the train they encounter a strange man who speaks the words that Kim recognized as passwords used by those involved in the Game. Kim takes him aside and learns that the supposed merchant is really a spy known as E.23. He has obtained a letter of vital importance to the British and concealed it in a hiding place known to British agents, but he is fleeing from his enemies, who have already attacked him in search of the letter and want to take his life. Kim uses some of the food they brought with them to alter the man's skin color, and by the time he is finished the prosperous merchant has disappeared and been replaced by an almost-naked Hindu holy man - the others in the compartment don't even recognize him as the same person, and Kim assures him that his enemies will not recognize him either.

At the Delhi station E.23 passes unobserved in his disguise and soon encounters another agent by whom he sends a message concerning the hiding place of the letter he obtained; he is now safe from his pursuers. Kim is disappointed that he has learned no secrets from E.23, but is pleased at having saved his life and that of the sick child. The Lama, however, rebukes him for his pride, arguing that he had healed the child to obtain merit but had transformed the spy in order to impress his mentor. Kim acknowledges that the old man has seen through him and apologizes. At this point they leave the train and set out on foot. Kim supports them by begging along the way, and at night they stay in the homes of kindly villagers. Meanwhile the Lama instructs Kim concerning the Wheel of Life and speaks of his life in Tibet, including his meeting with the Dalai Lama in Lhasa. Eventually they are approached by a messenger from the talkative rich woman who had taken care of the Lama years before on the Road, begging them on her behalf to come to her house. She seeks a charm for her grandchild. While there, Kim encounters a master of medicine with whom he enters into a dispute, only to find out that the man is none other than Hurree Babu in disguise. He brings praises for Kim's work at Delhi, and tells him that he had been sent to retrieve the letter at Chitor where E.23 had concealed it. He had come to find Kim because of disturbances in the North; the earlier war against five kings had not been pursued to its conclusion and those left to guard the northern passes had admitted Russians, who clearly meant no good, bringing with them surveying equipment to set up fortifications. Hurree Babu is going to meet the Russians and wants Kim to accompany him because of his ability to present himself as a European. The Lama joins them in their northward journey, but before leaving he writes a meaningless charm for their host and she loads them down with food for the trip.

As they journey ever northward, the Lama gains strength from his native environment, though Kim, unaccustomed to traversing mountainous terrain, is perpetually exhausted. As the Lama longs for the mountains before them, Kim shivers in the cold and is thankful when a village tribesman gives him a blanket coat. The exertion slowly has its effect and Kim grows stronger by the day. Hurree Babu is also heading northward, though he stays to the road while Kim and the Lama often take shortcuts through the hills. Hurree soon meets two hunters, one French and one Russian, and attaches himself to them in hopes of relieving them of the books and letters they carry

in a diplomatic pouch. When they meet the Lama and Kim on the road, the hunters are fascinated by the Lama's drawing of the Wheel of Life. They try to buy it from him and he refuses, after which the Russian grabs and tears the Wheel and strikes the old man. Kim leaps upon him and begins smashing his head on a rock, while the superstitious coolies throw stones at the Frenchman. In the confusion Kim, the Lama, and the coolies escape, and Hurree Babu tells Kim to be sure to get the books and letters now held by the coolies. The coolies want to kill the hunters for their horrible sacrilege, but the Lama forbids it, telling them that the strangers have earned for themselves many humiliating and painful reincarnations, and they relent. Kim easily tricks them out of the diplomatic pouch containing the valuable documents and he and the Lama go on their way.

The Lama is weakened by the blow he received and is ashamed of himself for reacting in anger to the aggression of the Russian. Kim, meanwhile, is sorry he didn't kill the man. The next morning he sorts out the contents of the pouch, wrapping the documents in oilcloth and jettisoning the rest into a deep ravine despite its monetary value. He then sends a message to Hurree Babu by the hand of a village woman informing him of what he had found. The Lama knows he is dying, and concludes from the thin sliver of the picture of the Wheel that remains that his days are short indeed. He intends to return to the plains in the time that remains. The village woman tries to seduce Kim, but he refuses. She angrily informs him that she was educated in a mission school, was formerly a Christian, and had taken an English lover, expecting him to marry her; when he had deserted her, she had renounced all faith and departed for the hills. She then gives Kim a litter and native bearers to carry the sick old man. She gives him silver for the journey, which he intends to use to pay the bearers, who are her husbands.

Hurree Babu safely escorts his Russian charges to Simla, being careful to guide them around any sensitive British outposts. They are grateful, unaware of how he has tricked them. He then returns northward in search of Kim and the Lama only to find that they have departed for the plains, where he reluctantly follows. As Kim and his companions travel, villagers compete for the honor of bearing the Lama's litter, eager for his blessings. Soon the stretcher-bearers leave and Kim, carrying all their supplies, supports the weight of the Lama as they move more and more slowly toward the plain. He is weighed down by a combination of grief at the impending loss of his mentor and guilt over perceived slights and failures, but the Lama comforts him, assuring him that no holy man has ever had such a faithful disciple. Kim sends word to the wealthy old woman they had met earlier on the road and she sends a palanquin, which bears the Lama to her home. There she nurses Kim, weak with exhaustion, back to health. While he is recuperating, the Lama wanders the fields and at one point falls into a stream from which he is dragged bodily by Hurree Babu, who has come in search of Kim. The widow takes him in as well and fattens him up after his long journey. Hurree really wants the papers carried by Kim, of course, and they turn out to be worth their weight in gold, clearly revealing the native rulers who had conspired with the Russians against British rule in the north. The corpulent spy rushes to take the evidence to Lurgan, assuring Kim that he will give him a good report for his excellent work. When Kim finally ventures outside the house, he falls asleep under a banyan tree, where he is awakened by the Lama and Mahbub Ali. The Lama tells him that he has achieved Enlightenment – the stream into which he had fallen was for him the River of the Arrow – and that Kim, too, would be enlightened, after which he would become a teacher of the Way. Mahbub would much prefer that Kim become a scribe in the service of the government, but the Lama cares not, for of what matter are the things of this world? Mahbub then leaves and Kim wakes up. The Lama then explains how he had achieved Enlightenment and tells him that he had returned from union with the World Soul so he could bring Kim to his reward as well.

## MAJOR CHARACTERS

- .Kimball O'Hara, Jr. – The title character is an impoverished Irish orphan in India, the “Little Friend of All the World.” Despite his European heritage, he is totally enculturated to Indian life and few realize that he is white. The novel recounts his adventures as he grows from childhood to manhood.
- Teshoo Lama – A Tibetan holy man, formerly the abbot of the monastery at Such-zen, who meets Kim in Lahore. Kim offers to accompany him on his search for the River of the Arrow as he attempts to escape from the Wheel of Things and becomes the old man's *chela* (disciple) as they travel the Grand Trunk Road. The Lama pays for Kim's education despite the enforced separation of the two it requires.
- Mahbub Ali - A Pashtun horse trader who works for the British and befriends Kim.
- Reverend Arthur Bennett – The chaplain of the British regiment called the Mavericks, he stumbles over Kim while he is observing the soldiers at dinner and recognizes documents he carries that had been given to him by his father.
- Father Victor – The Catholic chaplain of the Mavericks, he argues that the regiment should take Kim under its care and sees that he is sent to St. Xavier's, a British Catholic private school, for a proper education.
- Colonel Creighton – The head of the Ethnological Survey, which serves as the cover for British intelligence work, he makes sure that Kim is taken to St. Xavier's boarding school to get an education and later engages him in the Great Game of British espionage in India.
- Mr. Lurgan – A gem merchant in Simla with whom Kim lives before returning to the school in Lucknow for a second term, he oversees the spy ring of which Kim becomes a part.
- Hurree Chunder Mookerjee – An obese Indian who serves as a spy for the British; Kim first meets him in Lurgan's shop and he becomes Kim's supervisor in the Great Game.
- The Woman of Kulu – A widow encountered by Kim and the Lama on the Grand Trunk Road, she takes a liking to them and shows them hospitality on several occasions, nursing Kim back to health after his run-in with the Russian spy. The Lama respects her but thinks she talks too much.
- The Woman of Shamlegh – The polygamous head of a small village in the Himalayas, she cares for Kim and the Lama after they escape the Russian spies. She tries and fails to seduce Kim, then gives them provisions for their journey back to the plains and arranges for a litter and bearers to carry the weak and sickly Lama.

## NOTABLE QUOTATIONS

“Kim did nothing with an immense success.” (ch.1, p.20)

“This is the great world, and I am only Kim. Who is Kim?” (Kim, ch.7, p.126)

“Son, I am wearied of that *madrissah*, where they take the best years of a man to teach him what he can only learn upon the Road. The folly of the Sahibs has neither top nor bottom. No matter. Maybe thy written report shall save thee further bondage; and God He knows we need men more and more in the Game.” (Mahbub Ali, ch.10, p.176)

“Friend of the Stars, thou hast acquired great wisdom. Beware that it do not give birth to pride.” (Lama, ch.11, p.207)

“To abstain from action is well – except to acquire merit.” (Lama, ch.12, p.213)

“Ignorance and Lust met Ignorance and Lust upon the road, and they begat Anger.” (Lama, ch.14, p.258)

“Thou leanest on me in the body, Holy One, but I lean on thee for some other things.” (Kim, ch.15, p.269)

“This very night he will be as free as I am from the taint of all sin – assured as I am when he quits this body of Freedom from the Wheel of Things. I have a sign that my time is short; but I shall have safe-guarded him throughout the years. Remember, I have reached Knowledge, as I told thee only three nights back.” (Lama, ch.15, p.279)

“He crossed his hands on his lap and smiled, as a man may who has won salvation for himself and his beloved.” (ch.15, p.28)

## ESSAY QUESTIONS

Discuss the following in a five-paragraph essay:

1. In Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim*, the Lama who is the protagonist’s mentor speaks constantly of actions that “acquire merit.” Discuss how his understanding of salvation by works affects his lifestyle and the decisions he makes. Be sure to consider the ending of the novel in your analysis.
2. Critic Edward Said spoke of Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* as “a master work of imperialism.” He considered it a “rich and absolutely fascinating, but nevertheless profoundly embarrassing novel.” Cite evidence from the novel to support Said’s assessment. What details and quotations indicate Kipling’s approval of British rule over the Indian subcontinent?

3. Compare Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* and *The Man Who Would Be King* as critiques of British imperialism in India. Though the differences, whether in plot, characterization, or style, seem miles apart, do the two works have any similarities in their view of the British *raj*? If so, what are they?
4. Compare and contrast the pictures of friendship found in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* and *The Man Who Would Be King*. Consider especially the idea of love as sacrifice for a friend as you examine the relationships of Kim and the Lama on the one hand and Daniel and Peachey on the other.
5. Discuss the treatment of religion in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*. How does the author's treatment of the subject, especially as seen through the eyes of the protagonist, illustrate the religious syncretism that characterizes Indian culture? Does the author approve of such syncretism? Why or why not? What does his attitude imply about his feelings toward religion in general?
6. In Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*, the protagonist encounters people from many religious backgrounds. Most are remarkably tolerant of one another, with the Christians being the notable exception. Is this picture an accurate one? Consider what you know of Indian history, both past and present, in your answer.
7. One critic of Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* said, "*Kim* will endure because it is a beginning like all masterly ends." Given that the protagonist has barely entered into adulthood when the novel comes to an end, to what extent is this assessment true? Do you consider the ambiguity of the ending, which gives no indication as to the direction Kim's life will take - master spy or Buddhist devout - an asset or a liability?
8. One critic of Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* said, "*Kim* will endure because it is a beginning like all masterly ends." The protagonist, in fact, has barely entered into adulthood when the novel comes to an end. What do you think the future holds for young Kim? Do not hesitate to speculate, but be sure to support your speculation with specifics from the novel that would indicate the arc of the protagonist's later life.
9. Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* is full of authentic local color drawn from the author's early years in India. Does the detailed picture of India make you want to visit the country, especially if it were possible to do so a century ago? Why or why not? What aspects of Kipling's portrayal do you find most attractive and which least attractive? Why? Be specific.
10. One of the great themes of Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* is the protagonist's search for his identity. In chapter seven he says, and not for the only time, "This is the great world, and I am only Kim. Who is Kim?" Neither fully white nor fully Indian, he belongs nowhere yet can fit in anywhere by altering his outward appearance and behavior. While this makes him an ideal spy, it does nothing to help him solve his identity crisis. Does Kim ever answer his great question? Why or why not? Support your conclusion with specifics from the novel.

11. Discuss the role of women in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*. Kim and the Lama see women as a distraction from their personal quests, yet each is assisted at key points by women, who are never pictured as objects of sexual attraction for the central characters. Can this be explained by the fact that the novel was intended to be read by adolescent boys, or is a deeper meaning to be gleaned from this peculiarity? You need not follow the ever-popular modern tendency to see homosexual subtexts under every rock in answering the question.
12. Compare and contrast the role of women in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* and *The Man Who Would Be King*. In the first, women are seen as distractions from the personal quests of the central characters, while in the latter the two ne'er-do-well adventurers swear off the company of women as they begin their quest and are brought to disaster when they violate their oath. What do these treatments tell the reader about the author's attitude toward women? May one draw general conclusions on the subject, or should one simply affirm that the author was trying to write engaging adventure stories under the assumption that most of his readers would be male?
13. Compare and contrast the personal quests of the protagonist and the Lama in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*. Though the Great Game and the River of the Arrow are as different as can be, they nonetheless have certain similarities. Consider in your assessment the qualities and life choices required of those who would pursue the quests in question. Do these similarities explain the friendship that develops between the boy and the old man?
14. In Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*, the protagonist is an orphan. To what extent does the novel represent his search for surrogate parents, and to what extent is that search successful? Be sure not to restrict yourself to the obvious example of the Lama, who clearly becomes a father figure, but choose at least two other examples as well, including at least one woman.
15. In Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*, the author opens each chapter with a bit of poetry. The ditty that begins chapter five is a rather cynical picture of the Prodigal Son. Why does Kipling draw on this particular parable of Jesus? To what extent is Kim a prodigal. Does the arc of the story have more in common with Jesus' actual tale or the view of it quoted by Kipling? Support your answer with details from the novel.
16. Discuss the view of human nature portrayed in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*. Does the author, and through him the protagonist, believe that people are essentially good or basically evil? Why do you think so? Does this assessment detract from the realism or enjoyable qualities of the story? Support your conclusions with specifics from the novel.
17. The protagonist of Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*, like Mowgli in *The Jungle Book*, is an orphan - a condition he shares with many of Charles Dickens' heroes, including David Copperfield, Oliver Twist, and Philip Pirrip (Pip from *Great Expectations*). Compare and contrast the portrayal of orphans by the two authors. Why does one picture the condition of the parentless child as a tragedy to be remedied while the other sees it as a source of glorious independence to be cherished? Choose one of Dickens' novels and compare and contrast it with Kipling's masterpiece in this regard.

18. The protagonist of Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* is alienated from the society around him. He has no home, no family, no friends, not even a country or ethnic identity he can call his own. Even when he befriends the Lama, he is more the parent than the child in a relationship with someone who is every bit as much an isolated outsider as he is. Some critics have suggested that Kim thus becomes a metaphor for the novelist - the all-seeing eye who is completely disengaged with the world of which he is a careful and detailed observer. Evaluate this assessment. Is Kipling here describing the life of the novelist, or at least his own tendency to remain disengaged from the world about which he writes?
19. The alienation of the protagonist in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* has been noted by many commentators. Critic Raymond Carney called Kim "one of the first fully modern heroes" because of this alienation, noting that many twentieth-century protagonists share his detachment from the world around them. Choose a work of twentieth-century literature in which the protagonist is alienated from his society and compare and contrast it with Kipling's masterpiece. To what extent do you agree or disagree with Carney's statement?
20. Discuss the view of Christianity in general and missionaries in particular pictured in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*. What are Kipling's major complaints about Christians in India and the missionaries who represent them? Be sure to cite specifics from the novel to support your analysis.
21. The protagonist of Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* is nicknamed the "Friend of All the World." What is the significance of the nickname, both for the plot of the story and for its major themes? What does it tell the reader about what traits the author admires?
22. In Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*, the Lama spends the entire novel searching for the River of the Arrow, a symbol of Enlightenment, and finds it as the novel ends. What is the nature of the Enlightenment he achieves, and how does he find it? What is the author's attitude toward this quest and its conclusion?
23. The Lama in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* emphasizes the unity and equality of all souls in the teachings he passes on to his young disciple. Are these themes that a Christian can affirm? Are the themes treated in a way that is coherent with Christianity? Why or why not? Use details from the book and specific Bible references to support your argument.