



Discussion: A Few Bright Stars

January is both Change Your Stars (Choose your destiny) and Rising Stars Month (Reach for the stars). To help you along, we have chosen quotations from four stellar people who, in an unusual *alignment* of the stars, share the same birthday – January 17. We doubt that you can guess all the answers correctly, but we hope you will think about what they've said. Can you apply it to your own life?

The four we've chosen are:

- Benjamin Franklin, who was born in 1706, and rose for 84 stellar years
- The sparkling former First Lady Michelle Obama (born in 1964)
- Boxer/activist Mohammad Ali (born in 1942) who dazzled us until 2013
 - And the actor with a voice that commands the heavens, James Earl Jones (born in 1931).



Benjamin Franklin is one of the most quoted men who ever lived, starting with “Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.” Some of his advice makes him seem like a scold, trying to hold mankind to difficult standards. At other times he seemed cynical: “Blessed is he who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed.” But many of his quotes are humorous or provocative, and those are what we've tried to include here.

Can you match the quote to the person who said it?

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|----------------------|---------------------|
| a. Muhammad Ali | c. James Earl Jones |
| b. Benjamin Franklin | d. Michelle Obama |

1. Choose people who lift you up. ____
2. Keep your eyes wide open before marriage and half-shut afterwards. ____
3. Silence is golden when you can't think of a good answer. ____
4. Trying to make someone fall in love with you is about as pointless as trying to control who you fall in love with. ____

James Earl Jones was born in Mississippi but was raised by his grandparents in Michigan. As a result of early traumas, he developed a stutter and subsequently refused to talk for eight years, until he entered high school. There, nurturing teachers drew him out and the distinctive bass voice that is his hallmark began to thrive.



5. A man who views the world the same at fifty as he did at twenty has wasted thirty years of his life. ____
6. In our resolve to build a better world... we seek to summon what Abraham Lincoln called the better angels of our nature. ____
7. Just try new things. Don't be afraid. Step out of your comfort zones and soar, all right? ____
8. Well done is better than well said. ____



In his early days, Muhammad Ali was famous as a fighter with a poetic tongue whose goal in the ring was to “Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee.” He was known for boasting of his prowess, supposedly saying about one opponent, “I’ll beat him so bad he’ll need a shoehorn to put his hat on.” He said, “At home I am a nice guy: but I don’t want the world to know. Humble people, I’ve found, don’t get very far.” He trained hard, although he claimed to hate it, but he also knew that playing with their minds was part of the art of besting his opponents. After developing Parkinson’s disease, he continued to be an inspiration to others.

9. There never was a good war or a bad peace. ____
10. If they can make penicillin out of moldy bread, they can sure make something out of you. ____
11. When I read great literature, great drama, speeches, or sermons, I feel that the human mind has not achieved anything greater than the ability to share feelings and thoughts through language. ____
12. I have learned that as long as I hold fast to my beliefs and values - and follow my own moral compass - then the only expectations I need to live up to are my own. ____

Former First Lady Michelle Obama is the best-selling author of the book *Becoming*, which is appropriately titled because she has said that she hates the question, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” She says the question assumes that one day, you will “become” something, and then you stop growing as a person. She embraces the idea that she can continue to learn, grow, and change for the rest of her life. The quotes we have chosen from her reflect that philosophy.



13. The man who has no imagination has no wings. ____
14. You can't make decisions based on fear and the possibility of what might happen. ____
15. You don't build a bond without being present. ____
16. She laughs at everything you say. Why? Because she has fine teeth. ____

Talk about it:

- Which of these people do you admire? Share what you know about them.
- With which of these quotes do you agree? Share your thoughts about them.

Answers:

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|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. d | 3. a | 5. a | 7. d | 9. b | 11. c | 13. a | 15. c |
| 2. b | 4. c | 6. c | 8. b | 10. a | 12. d | 14. d | 16. b |

Comedian/actress Betty White, born in 1922, also shares the illustrious January 17th birthday. This feisty, funny lady has long been known for her advocacy for animals, so here's an appropriate quote I found online that I suspect was actually a line in a script for one of the zany characters she played:



All creatures must learn to coexist. That's why the brown bear and the field mouse can share their lives in harmony. Or course, they can't mate, or the mice would explode.

Finally, we couldn't resist a few more B. Franklin quotes:



- Remember not only to say the right thing in the right place, but far more difficult still, to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment.
- Wine is constant proof that God loves us and loves to see us happy. (Some say he said "Beer.")
- He that displays too often his wife and his wallet is in danger of having both of them borrowed.
- When in doubt, don't.