

collected quotes

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To live is so startling it leaves little time for anything else.

Emily Dickenson

We come and go, but the land is always here. And the people who love it and understand it are the people who own it-for a little while.

Willa Cather

If you write three or four pages a day, in a month you have one hundred pages.

Robert Payne

"We grow men."

What Thomas Carlyle said to Ralph Waldo Emerson when Emerson asked what could be grown in the rocky British soil.

Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do only a little.

Edmund Burke

Be good and you will be lonesome.

Mark Twain

In Paris they simply stared when I spoke to them in French; I never did succeed in making those idiots understand their language.

Mark Twain

I think there is only one quality worse than hardness of heart, and that is softness of head.

Theodore Roosevelt

The safest road to Hell is the gradual one-the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts.

C.S. Lewis

I don't want to achieve immortality through my work, I want to achieve it through not dying.

Woody Allen

When I was young, I admired clever people. Now that I am old, I admire kind people.

Abraham Joshua Heschel

Good friends, good books and a sleepy conscience: this is the ideal life.

Mark Twain

Creative activity could be described as a type of learning process where teacher and pupil are located in the same individual.

Arthur Koestler

One of the best ways to get yourself a reputation as a dangerous citizen these days is to go about repeating the very phrases which our founding fathers used in the struggle for independence.

Charles Beard

There is no beautifier of complexion, or form, or behavior, like the wish to scatter joy and not pain around us.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Any activity becomes creative when the doer cares about doing it right, or better.

John Updike

If we don't believe in freedom of expression for people we despise, we don't believe in it at all.

Noam Chomsky

I always wanted to write when I was a kid; it just never occurred to me that you could have a job that didn't involve any actual work ... I felt it would be fun to have a job like that where you could make stuff up and be irresponsible and get paid for it.

Dave Barry

I think we ought to read only the kind of books that wound and stab us. A book must be the axe for the frozen sea inside us.

Franz Kafka

Those who can, do. Those who believe others can also, teach.

John E. King

You know, if people would just learn to keep their secret underground hatches locked...

Dr. McKay, STARGATE ATLANTIS

The meaning of life is to go back to sleep and hope that tomorrow will be a better day.

Charles Schulz

Human kindness has never weakened the stamina or softened the fiber of a free people. A nation does not have to be cruel to be tough.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

I laughed so hard I peed in my girlfriend's hand.

note on test audience card from film *Ninotchka*, 1939

If you want to see your plays performed the way you wrote them, become president.

Vaclav Havel

There is no man so good, who, were he to submit all his thoughts and actions to the laws, would not deserve hanging ten times in his life.

Michel de Montaigne

Lower your voice and strengthen your argument.

Lebanese proverb

If you want to work on your art, work on your life.

Anton Chekhov

When I do a [screenwriting] job, I know the producer's going mad, I feel that pressure and it's death when they call. All the up-front bullshitting about how the Knicks are doing or did you see *Dream Girls* is agony. And even though they say, "Oh, by the way, not important or anything, but how's it coming?" ... --you're bound to say, "Terrific, better than I'd hoped," because if you said, "Horribly, I'm fucking it up beyond repair," everyone would have cardiac arrest.

William Goldman

The question actors most often get asked is how they can bear saying the same things over and over again, night after night, but God knows the answer to that is: Don't we all anyway? Might as well get paid for it.

Richard Brinsley Sheridan

Happiness in intelligent people is the rarest thing I know.

Ernest Hemingway

I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy.

Rabindranath Tagore

Poetry is the clear expression of mixed feelings.

W.H. Auden

The work never gets easier. It gets harder and more provocative. And as it gets harder you are continually reminded there is more to accomplish. It's like digging for gold. And when you find the vein, you know there's a lot more where that came from.

Sam Shepard

You can't do anything about the length of your life, but you can do something about its width and depth.

H.L. Mencken

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How beautiful it is to do nothing, and then rest afterward.
Spanish proverb

Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some hire public relations people.
Daniel J. Boorstin

A sneer is the weapon of the weak.
James Russell Lowell

Ideas are like rabbits. You get a couple and learn how to handle them, and pretty soon you have a dozen.
John Steinbeck

My whole job was to contrive a reason why people, once they hear there are piranhas in the river, don't just stay out of the river but end up getting eaten. That's basically what they paid me \$10,000 for.
John Sayles, on writing his first script: *Piranha*

The greatest compliment that was ever paid me was when one asked me what I thought, and attended to my answer.
Henry David Thoreau

Edith Head gives great wardrobe.
movie studio grafitti, 1940s

Truth does not change according to our ability to stomach it.
Flannery O'Connor

Faith is, at one and the same time, absolutely necessary and altogether impossible.
Stanislaw Lem

A man is likely to mind his own business when it is worth minding. When it is not, he takes his mind off his own meaningless affairs by minding other people's business.
Eric Hoffer

Upon witnessing the first human beings to fly, when someone asked him what practical purpose the Montgolfier's balloon contraption might have, Benjamin Franklin said, "What use is a newborn baby?"

It is a strange thing. A composer studies harmony and theory of musical forms; a painter doesn't paint a picture without knowing something about colors and design; architecture requires basic

schooling. Only when somebody makes a decision to start writing, he believes that he doesn't need to learn anything and that anybody who has learned to put words on paper can be a writer.
Turgenev

One ought, every day at least, to hear a little song, read a good poem, see a fine picture, and if it were possible, to speak a few reasonable words.
Goethe

People who want to share their religious views with you almost never want you to share yours with them.
Dave Barry

Advice to young writers:
Try as much as possible to be wholly alive with all your might, and when you laugh, laugh like hell. And when you get angry, get good and angry. Try to be alive. You will be dead soon enough.
William Saroyan

Smoking cures weight problems... eventually.
Steven Wright

They defend their errors as if they were defending their inheritance.
Edmund Burke

The first man to see an illusion by which men have flourished for centuries surely stands in a lonely place.
Gary Zukav

I invented my life by taking for granted that everything I did not like would have an opposite, which I would like.
Coco Chanel

There is a loftier ambition than merely to stand high in the world. It is to stoop down and lift mankind a little higher.

Henry van Dyke

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

I don't care what is written about me so long as it isn't true.
Dorothy Parker

You can tell whether a man is clever by his answers. You can tell whether a man is wise by his questions.
Naguib Mahfouz

Maybe I am slightly inhuman ... All I ever wanted to do was to paint sunlight on the side of a house.

Edward Hopper

The belief in the possibility of a short decisive war appears to be one of the most ancient and dangerous of human illusions.

Robert Lynd

It is as easy to dream a book as it is hard to write one.

Honore de Balzac

People come over. We start to drink. We start to cook. We continue to drink. And then something *terrible* happens...

Beverly Lowry on dinner parties in Greenville, Mississippi.

Our success will help so many, our failure will help no one.

John Kehoe

True religion is the life we lead, not the creed we profess.

Louis Nizer

Press on: nothing in the world can take the place of perseverance. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.

Calvin Coolidge

It is a glorious thing to be indifferent to suffering, but only to one's own suffering.

Robert Lynd

I love America more than any other country in this world, and, exactly for this reason, I insist on the right to criticize her perpetually.

James Baldwin

It is a double pleasure to deceive the deceiver.

Jean de la Fontaine

Beware the leader who bangs the drum of war in order to whip the citizenry into a patriotic fervor. For patriotism is indeed a double-edged sword. It both emboldens the blood, just as it narrows the mind.

Julius Caesar

Never lend books, for no one ever returns them; the only books I have in my library are those which people have lent me.

Anatole France

Writing a book is a horrible, exhausting struggle, like a long bout of some painful illness. One would never undertake such a thing if one were not driven on by some demon whom one can neither resist nor understand. For all one knows, that demon is simply the same instinct that makes a baby squall for attention.

George Orwell

It is human nature to hate the man whom you have hurt.

Publius Cornelius Tacitus

Wherever you have an efficient government you have a dictatorship.

Harry S. Truman

Oh to have a lodge in some vast wilderness. Where rumors of oppression and deceit, of unsuccessful and successful wars may never reach me anymore.

William Cowper

If you can't annoy somebody, there's little point in writing.

Kingsley Amis

It is kindness immediately to refuse what you intend to deny.

Publilius Syrus

The shepherd always tries to persuade the sheep that their interests and his own are the same.

Stendal

Grasp the subject, the words will follow.

Cato the Elder

Literature, like magic, has always been about the handling of secrets, about the pain, the destruction, and the marvelous liberation that can result when they are revealed. If a writer doesn't give away secrets, his own or those of the people he loves, if he doesn't court disapproval, reproach and general wrath, whether of friends, family or party apparatchiks... the result is pallid, inanimate, a lump of earth.

Michael Chabon

I never killed a man, but I have read many obituaries with a lot of pleasure.

Clarence Darrow

"I am not a pest," Ramona Quimby told her big sister Beezus.

"Then stop acting like a pest," said Beezus.

Beverly Cleary

There is no beautifier of complexion, or form, or behavior, like the wish to scatter joy and not pain around us.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Any activity becomes creative when the doer cares about doing it right, or better.
John Updike

It is impossible to please all the world and one's father.
Jean de la Fontaine

If we don't believe in freedom of expression for people we despise, we don't believe in it at all.
Noam Chomsky

Nothing so completely baffles one who is full of trick and duplicity himself, than straightforward and simple integrity in another.
Charles Caleb Colton

The days come and go like muffled and veiled figures sent from a distant friendly party, but they say nothing, and if we do not use the gifts they bring, they carry them as silently away.
Ralph Waldo Emerson

Singing songs like the "The Man I Love" or "Porgy" is no more work than sitting down and eating Chinese roast duck, and I love roast duck.
Billie Holiday

One father is more than a hundred schoolmasters.
English Proverb

You just can't trust these hired killers. You never know when they're FBI agents.
Randall Houston, district attorney
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Ideals are like stars; you will not succeed in touching them with your hands. But like the seafaring man on the desert of waters, you choose them as your guides, and following them you will reach your destiny.
Carl Schurz

When one door closes another door opens; but we so often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door, that we do not see the ones which open for us.
Alexander Graham Bell

If you're a singer you lose your voice. A baseball player loses his arm. [But] a writer gets more knowledge, and if he's good, the older he gets, the better he writes.

Mickey Spillane

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John Updike

Be kind to thy father, for when thou wert young, / Who loved thee so fondly as he? / He caught the first accents that fell from thy tongue, / And joined in thy innocent glee.

Margaret Courtney

One may have a blazing hearth in one's soul and yet no one ever came to sit by it. Passers-by see only a wisp of smoke from the chimney and continue on their way.

Vincent Van Gogh

And Silence, like a poultice, comes / To heal the blows of sound.

Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr.

What I like in a good author isn't what he says, but what he whispers.

Logan Pearsall Smith

If I had only known, I would have been a locksmith.

Albert Einstein, on the use of his theories to create the atomic bomb

There is no pillow so soft as a clear conscience.

French proverb

Just because they say, "Action!" doesn't mean you have to DO anything.

Marlon Brando

I may not know who I am, but I know where I'm from.

Wallace Stegner

Too many parents make life hard for their children by trying, too zealously, to make it easy for them.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Gay-o, it's OK-o / Tie the knot and spend your dough / Gay-o, come and stay-o / Visit our Web site for further info.

Springfield Chamber of Commerce brochure, promoting same sex marriage on "The Simpsons"

I have never been bored for a minute in my life.

William Shirer

Don't say you don't have enough time. You have exactly the same number of hours per day that were given to Helen Keller, Pasteur, Michaelangelo, Mother Teresa, Leonardo da Vinci, Thomas Jefferson, and Albert Einstein.

H. Jackson Brown, Jr.

My theory on housework is, if the item doesn't multiply, smell, catch fire, or block the refrigerator door, let it be. No one else cares. Why should you?

Erma Bombeck

Smoking is the greatest risk to a guy's sexual performance, at 35, 55, or 75. Smokeless tobacco, too. It's the nicotine that does it. I think labels on cigarette packs, instead of saying you're going to get cancer, ought to say you'll never get a hard-on again.

Ginger Manley, sex therapist

I don't mind that you think slowly but I do mind that you are publishing faster than you think.

Wolfgang Pauli

Life is thickly sown with thorns, and I know no other remedy than to pass quickly through them. The longer we dwell on our misfortunes, the greater is their power to harm us.

Voltaire

If it is committed in the name of God or country, there is no crime so heinous that the public will not forgive it.

Tom Robbins

As I stood before the gates I realized that I never want to be as certain about anything as were the people who built this place.

Rabbi Sheila Peltz, on her visit to Auschwitz

It's not that the Irish are cynical. It's rather that they have a wonderful lack of respect for everything and everybody.

Brendan Behan

Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power.

Abraham Lincoln

The more people are reached by mass communication, the less they communicate with each other. Marya Mannes

I would like, some day before I die, to make love to a woman with an ass smaller than mine.

Anon.

And those who were seen dancing were thought to be insane by those who could not hear the music.

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche

Life is always a tightrope or a feather bed. Give me the tightrope.
Edith Wharton

So long as you write what you wish to write, that is all that matters; and whether it matters for ages or only for hours, nobody can say. But to sacrifice a hair of the head of your vision, a shade of its colour, in deference to some Headmaster with a silver pot in his hand or to some professor with a measuring-rod up his sleeve, is the most abject treachery, and the sacrifice of wealth and chastity, which used to be said to be the greatest of human disasters, a mere flea-bite in comparison.
Virginia Woolf

Dickens makes his books blaze up not by tightening the plot or sharpening the wit, but by throwing another handful of people upon the fire.
Virginia Woolf

A teacher who is attempting to teach, without inspiring the pupil with a desire to learn, is hammering on a cold iron.
Horace Mann
Nothing sickens me more than the closed door of a library.
Barbara Tuchman

Men always want to be a woman's first love - women like to be a man's last romance.
Oscar Wilde

When I am, as it were, completely myself, entirely alone, and of good cheer-say traveling in a carriage, or walking after a good meal, or during the night when I cannot sleep-it is on such occasions that my ideas flow best, and most abundantly. Whence and how they come, I know not, nor can I force them.
Mozart

Neither a lofty degree of intelligence nor imagination nor both together go to the making of genius. Love, love, love, that is the soul of genius.
Mozart

If in the last few years you haven't discarded a major opinion or acquired a new one, check your pulse. You may be dead.
Gelett Burgess, author of "The Purple Cow" poem

My sole inspiration is a phone call from a producer.
Cole Porter

Human kindness has never weakened the stamina or softened the fiber of a free people. A nation does not have to be cruel to be tough.
Franklin Delano Roosevelt

I think we consider too much the good luck of the early bird and not enough the bad luck of the early worm.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt

I die adoring God, loving my friends, not hating my enemies, and detesting superstition.

Voltaire's last words

Remember you are just an extra in everyone else's play.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Today's public figures can no longer write their own speeches or books, and there is some evidence that they can't read them either.

Gore Vidal

I would infinitely rather write than cook, but I would rather run around the world, looking at it, than write.

Storm Jameson

That man is truly good who knows his own dark places.

Beowulf

All art is autobiographical. The pearl is the oyster's autobiography.

Federico Fellini

Since we humans have the better brain, isn't it our responsibility to protect our fellow creatures from, oddly enough, ourselves?

Joy Adamson

Live as if you were living a second time, and as though you had acted wrongly the first time.

Viktor Frankl

Scriptures, n. The sacred books of our holy religion, as distinguished from the false and profane writings on which all other faiths are based.

Ambrose Bierce

If there is a special Hell for writers it would be in the forced contemplation of their own works.

John Dos Passos

In a pond koi can reach lengths of eighteen inches. Amazingly, when placed in a lake, koi can grow to three feet long. The metaphor is obvious. You are limited by how you see the world.

Vince Poscente

I don't want to know your intentions, I want to know your outcomes.

Michael Crichton

Supply your reader with only enough facts to hang his imagination on.
Alexandra Fuller

What really knocks me out is a book that, when you're all done reading it, you wish the author that wrote it was a terrific friend of yours and you could call him up on the phone whenever you felt like it.
J.D. Salinger

I believe that what we become depends on what our fathers teach us at odd moments, when they aren't trying to teach us.
Umberto Eco

A faith that cannot survive collision with the truth is not worth many regrets.
Arthur C Clarke

Should we all confess our sins to one another we would all laugh at one another for our lack of originality.
Khalil Gibran

America will never be destroyed from the outside. If we falter and lose our freedoms, it will be because we destroyed ourselves.
Abraham Lincoln