

collected quotes

William M. Akers

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For sustained speed and freedom from trouble, the Ford has got every other car skinned.
Clyde Barrow, letter to Ford Motor Company

We're born alone, we live alone, we die alone. Only through our love and friendship can we create the illusion for the moment that we're not alone.

Orson Welles

Kindness is loving people more than they deserve.

Joseph Joubert

A reporter doesn't have a right to be tired.

David Halberstam

The dust of exploded beliefs may make a fine sunset.

Geoffrey Madan

If you're going to break the law, only break one law at a time.

adage for high school children

There's no money in poetry, but then there's no poetry in money, either.

Robert Graves

Do something for somebody every day for which you do not get paid.

Albert Schweitzer

An intellectual is a person who has discovered something more interesting than sex.

Aldous Huxley

Writing the last page of the first draft is the most enjoyable moment in writing. It's one of the most enjoyable moments in life, period.

Nicholas Sparks

Most of us are much more acquainted with losing than we are with winning. Winning is great, but it isn't funny.

Charles Schulz

If having a soul means being able to feel love and loyalty and gratitude, then animals are better off than a lot of humans.

James Herriot

Manners are a sensitive awareness of the feelings of others. If you have that awareness, you have good manners, no matter what fork you use.

Emily Post

How idiotic civilization is! Why be given a body if you have to keep it shut up in a case like a rare, rare fiddle?

Katherine Mansfield

The American male doesn't mature until he has exhausted all other possibilities.

Wilfred Sheed

What the mind doesn't understand, it worships or fears.

Alice Walker

God help us. You come yourself. Don't send Jesus. This is no place for children.

G.I. in WWII

To suffering there is a limit; to fearing, none.

Francis Bacon

The best work is done with the heart breaking, or overflowing.

Mignon McLaughlin

[It] struck most people like quitting the Supreme Court to become a bail bondsman.

Michael Crichton, on finishing medical school and becoming a writer

Every decent man is ashamed of the government he lives under.

H.L. Mencken

The universe is like a safe to which there is a combination. But the combination is locked up in the safe.

Peter De Vries

I don't want to make money, I just want to be wonderful.

Marilyn Monroe

He has Van Gogh's ear for music.

Billy Wilder

Let your tears come. Let them water your soul.

Eileen Mayhew

We love those who know the worst of us and don't turn their faces away.

Walker Percy

Underground nuclear testing, defoliation of the rain forests, toxic waste... Let's put it this way: if the world were a big apartment, we wouldn't get our deposit back.

John Ross

The hardest-learned lesson: that people have only their kind of love to give, not our kind.

Mignon McLaughlin

The crucial disadvantage of aggression, competitiveness, and skepticism as national characteristics is that these qualities cannot be turned off at five o'clock.

Margaret Halsey

After ecstasy, the laundry.

Zen saying

A writer is someone for whom writing is more difficult than it is for other people.

Thomas Mann

You have to sit there churning out draft after draft of crap, waiting like a neglected baby for just one drop of mother's milk.

Phillip Roth

Time is nature's way of preventing everything from happening at once.

graffito

People are like stained glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in, their true beauty is revealed only if there is a light from within.

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

It is an ironic habit of human beings to run faster when we have lost our way.

Rollo May

The world is a skirt I want to lift up.

Hanif Kureishi

Teachers, principals, clergymen, politicians - for the Simpsons, they're all goofballs, and I think that's a great message for kids.

Matt Groening

In questions of science, the authority of a thousand is not worth the humble reasoning of a single individual.

Galileo

All kids are gifted; some just open their packages earlier than others.

Michael Carr

The proper study of mankind is woman.

Henry Adams

Try to talk yourself out of it. As a life, it's much too solitary, it makes you obsessive, the rewards seem to be much too inward for most people, and too much rides on luck. Other than that, it's great.

Richard Ford, when asked what his advice is for aspiring writers

Profits, like sausages... are esteemed most by those who know least about what goes into them.
Alvin Toffler

Heavy hearts, like heavy clouds in the sky, are best relieved by the letting of a little water.
Christopher Morley

I have a great deal of company in my house; especially in the morning, when nobody calls.
Henry David Thoreau

Would you like to go someplace and fuck, or do I owe you an apology?
Drunk to woman at The Gold Rush, a Nashville bar

Only enemies speak the truth; friends and lovers lie endlessly, caught in the web of duty.
Stephen King

I got ... the idea that what you were supposed to do was be plenty morbid and predict the end of civilization many times, but civilization has ended so many times during my brief term on earth that I got a little bored with the theme, and in old age I concluded that the model was really Mother Goose.
Howard Nemerov, on writing poetry

Too often I would hear men boast of the miles covered that day, rarely of what they had seen.
Louis L'Amour

Lots of times you have to pretend to join a parade in which you're not really interested in order to get where you're going.
Christopher Morley

War will never cease until babies begin to come into the world with larger cerebrums and smaller adrenal glands.
H.L. Mencken

The easiest way to attract a crowd is to let it be known that at a given time and a given place someone is going to attempt something that in the event of failure will result in sudden death.
Harry Houdini

It is impossible to imagine Goethe or Beethoven being good at billiards or golf.
H.L. Mencken

For truly it is to be noted, that children's plays are not sports, and should be deemed as their most serious actions.

Michel De Montaigne

Being in politics is like being a football coach. You have to be smart enough to understand the game and dumb enough to think it's important.

Eugene McCarthy

We have in fact, two kinds of morality, side by side: one which we preach, but do not practice, and another which we practice, but seldom preach.

Bertrand Russell

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

Clarence Darrow

If you're half evil, nothing soothes you more than to think the person you are opposed to is totally evil.

Norman Mailer

True remorse is never just a regret over consequences; it is a regret over motive.

Mignon McLaughlin

For the first time in my life I felt free, quiet, and alone ... carried along by a power alien to my life as a normal man.

Henri Matisse, on painting for the first time

I overdid everything as a matter of course.

Henri Matisse

Life is too short to deal with psychopaths, knowingly.

Cissy Akers

I used to be Snow White, but I drifted.

Mae West

My greatest skill has been to want but little.

Henry David Thoreau

There is no such thing as bad publicity except your own obituary.

Brendan Behan

Some people walk in the rain, others just get wet.

Roger Miller

You take some horrible, mean, vicious, nasty conspiracy over here, you put a very sympathetic hero or heroine in the middle of it, you reach a point where their lives are at stake - and you get them out of it.

John Grisham

In a completely rational society, the best of us would be teachers and the rest of us would have to settle for something less, because passing civilization along from one generation to the next ought to be the highest honor and the highest responsibility anyone could have.

Lee Iacocca

We are all of us resigned to death: it's life we aren't resigned to.

Graham Greene

The human mind treats a new idea the same way the body treats a strange protein; it rejects it.

Peter. B. Medawar

Marriage has many pains, but celibacy has no pleasures.

Samuel Johnson

Muddiness is not merely a disturber of prose, it is also a destroyer of life, of hope.

The Elements of Style

Globalization, as defined by rich people like us, is a very nice thing... you are talking about the Internet, you are talking about cell phones, you are talking about computers. This doesn't affect two-thirds of the people of the world.

Jimmy Carter

Those who know how to win are much more numerous than those who know how to make proper use of their victories.

Polybius

Cynicism is often the shamefaced product of inexperience.

A. J. Liebling

I never vote for anyone. I always vote against.

W.C. Fields

I am constantly struck by the strangeness of reading works that seem addressed, personally and intimately, to me, and yet were written by people who crumbled to dust long ago.

Stephen Greenblatt

It's no disgrace not to be able to run a country nowadays, but it is a disgrace to keep on trying when you know you can't.

Will Roger

Though God hath raised me high, yet this I count the glory of my crown: that I have reigned with your loves. And though you have had, and may have, many mightier and wiser princes sitting in this seat; yet you never had, nor shall have any that will love you better.

Queen Elizabeth I, near the end of her reign

Politeness is to human nature what warmth is to wax.
Arthur Schopenhauer

I was a late bloomer. But anyone who blooms at all, ever, is very lucky.
Sharon Olds

You start chasing a ball and your brain immediately commands your body to 'run forward, bend, scoop up the ball, peg it to the infield,' then your body says, "Who me?"
Joe DiMaggio

When asked what he thinks of George W. Bush:
Well, I really think he shatters the myth of white supremacy once and for all.
Charles Rangel

To freely bloom - that is my definition of success.
Gerry Spence

The fist to show Black Power, the strength and unity of black people. The shoeless feet to show the anguish of black people all through the years. The bowed head because the words of the anthem were not being applied to blacks.
Tommie Smith, on his protest in the 1968 Olympics

He has all the virtues I dislike and none of the vices I admire.
Winston Churchill

I object to violence because when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary; the evil it does is permanent.
Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

He has never been known to use a word that might send a reader to the dictionary.
William Faulkner (about Ernest Hemingway)

Poor Faulkner. Does he really think big emotions come from big words?
Ernest Hemingway (about William Faulkner)

The witty woman is a tragic figure in American life. Wit destroys eroticism and eroticism destroys wit, so women must choose between taking lovers and taking no prisoners.
Florence King

He who dares not offend cannot be honest.
Thomas Paine

"That's a great deal to make one word mean," Alice said in a thoughtful tone.
"When I make a word do a lot of work like that," said Humpty Dumpty, "I always pay it extra."
Lewis Carroll

There is nothing like standing before 50 students at 8 a.m. to start talking about an event that occurred 100 years ago, because the look on their faces is a challenge - "Let's see you keep me awake." You learn what works and what doesn't in a hurry.

Stephen Ambrose

No sensible decision can be made any longer without taking into account not only the world as it is, but the world as it will be.

Isaac Asimov

The northernmost of the banana republics and the westernmost of the Arab states

A.J. Liebling on Louisiana

Common sense and a sense of humor are the same thing, moving at different speeds. A sense of humor is just common sense, dancing.

William James

When I was a kid I used to pray every night for a new bicycle. Then I realized that the Lord doesn't work that way, so I stole one and asked for forgiveness.

Emo Philips

It is not often that someone comes along who is a true friend and a good writer. Charlotte was both.

E.B. White *Charlotte's Web*

There is only one true thing: Instantly paint what you see. When you've got it, you've got it. When you haven't, you begin again. All the rest is humbug.

Edouard Manet

Information is the currency of democracy.

Thomas Jefferson

Imagine a world in which generations of human beings come to believe that certain films were made by God or that specific software was coded by him. Imagine a future in which millions of our descendants murder each other over rival interpretations of Star Wars or Windows 98. Could anything -- anything -- be more ridiculous? And yet, this would be no more ridiculous than the world we are living in.

Sam Harris

The president of the United States has claimed, on more than one occasion, to be in dialogue with God. If he said that he was talking to God through his hairdryer, this would precipitate a national emergency. I fail to see how the addition of a hairdryer makes the claim more ridiculous or offensive.

Sam Harris

Many a false step is taken by standing still.

Tommy Dewar

Always give your best, never get discouraged, never be petty. Always remember, others may hate you, but those who hate you don't win unless you hate them, and then you destroy yourself.
Richard Nixon

The whole art of teaching is only the art of awakening the natural curiosity of young minds for the purpose of satisfying it afterwards.
Anatole France

I am much the happier.
Thomas Jefferson, after giving up reading newspapers to spend more time reading books

A modest little person, with much to be modest about.
Winston Churchill

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

Above all, discard the irrelevant.
Barbara Tuchman, on writing history

It's a nervous work. The state that you need to write is the state that others are paying large sums to get rid of.
Shirley Hazzard, on writing

The truly creative mind in any field is no more than this: A human creature born abnormally, inhumanly sensitive. To him... a touch is a blow, a sound is a noise, a misfortune is a tragedy, a joy is an ecstasy, a friend is a lover, a lover is a god, and failure is death. Add to this cruelly delicate organism the overpowering necessity to create, create, create -- so that without the creating of music or poetry or books or buildings or something of meaning, his very breath is cut off from him. He must create, must pour out creation. By some strange, unknown, inward urgency he is not really alive unless he is creating.
Pearl S. Buck

Lots of people think they're charitable if they give away their old clothes and things they don't want. It isn't charity to give away things you want to get rid of and it isn't a sacrifice to do things you don't mind doing.
Myrtle Reed

In some circumstances, the refusal to be defeated is a refusal to be educated.
Margaret Halsey

A film writer is very much like a party girl. While you're good-looking and still unlined, the possibilities seem endless. But your appeal doesn't last long and you're quickly discarded.
James Salter

It is not bigotry to be certain we are right; but it is bigotry to be unable to imagine how we might possibly have gone wrong.

G.K. Chesterton

Achievements, seldom credited to their source, are the result of unspeakable drudgery and worries.

Richard Wagner

There's an elegiac quality in watching [American wilderness] go, because it's our own myth, the American frontier, that's deteriorating before our eyes. I feel a deep sorrow that my kids will never get to see what I've seen, and their kids will see nothing; there's a deep sadness whenever I look at nature now.

Peter Matthiessen

What religion a man shall have is a historical accident, quite as much as what language he shall speak.

George Santayana

I don't want to socialize with a pinko liberal Democrat commie. Say what you like about Republicans. We stick to our convictions. Even when we know we're dead wrong.

Denny Crane, Boston Legal

Who is more to be pitied, a writer bound and gagged by policemen or one living in perfect freedom who has nothing more to say?

Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

What loneliness is more lonely than distrust?

George Eliot

The only man I know who behaves sensibly is my tailor; he takes my measurements anew each time he sees me. The rest go on with their old measurements and expect me to fit them.

George Bernard Shaw

Musicians don't retire; they stop when there's no more music in them.

Louis Armstrong

A good gulp of hot whiskey at bedtime—it's not very scientific, but it helps.

Sir Alexander Fleming

Anyone can do any amount of work, provided it isn't the work he is supposed to be doing at that moment.

Robert Benchley

If all our misfortunes were laid in one common heap whence everyone must take an equal portion, most people would be contented to take their own and depart.

Socrates

The vast majority of human beings dislike and even dread all notions with which they are not familiar. Hence it comes about that at their first appearance innovators have always been derided as fools and madmen.

Aldous Huxley

I was thirty two when I started cooking; up until then, I just ate.

Julia Child

Every little girl needed a doll through which to project herself into her dreams of the future. If she was going to do role playing of what she would be like when she was 16 or 17, it was a little stupid to play with a doll that had a flat chest. So I gave it beautiful breasts.

Ruth Handler, creator of Barbie

The barriers are not erected which can say to aspiring talents and industry, "Thus far and no farther."

Ludwig van Beethoven

Don't be yourself. Be someone a little nicer.

Mignon McLaughlin

When nothing seems to help, I go and look at a stone-cutter hammering away at his rock perhaps a hundred times without as much as a crack showing in it. Yet at the hundred and first blow it would split in two, and I know it was not that blow that did it, but all that had gone before together.

Jacob A. Riis

If I read a book [and] it makes my whole body so cold no fire ever can warm me, I know that is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry.

Emily Dickinson

A novelist may lose his readers for a few pages; a playwright never dares lose his audience for a minute.

Terence Rattigan

You write and then you erase. You call that a profession?

Saul Bellow's father

Few people think more than two or three times a year; I have made an international reputation for myself by thinking once or twice a week.

George Bernard Shaw

Youth is a wonderful thing. What a crime to waste it on children.

George Bernard Shaw

Nothing produces such odd results as trying to get even.
Franklin P. Jones

To create a work of art that the critic cannot even begin to talk about ought to be the artist's chief concern.
John Ashbery

The man who thinks he can do without the world is indeed mistaken; but the man who thinks the world cannot do without him is mistaken even worse.
Francois, duc de La Rochefoucauld

Mike Swale: I'm trying to figure out whether you're a total fucking bitch or not.
Bridget Gregory: I am a total fucking bitch.
THE LAST SEDUCTION

Selfish, adj. Devoid of consideration for the selfishness of others.
Ambrose Bierce

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

Do not believe that it is very much of an advance to do the unnecessary three times as fast.
Peter Drucker

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 find that principles have no real force except when one is well fed.
Mark Twain

That man has offered me unsolicited advice for six years, all of it bad.
President Calvin Coolidge on his Secretary of Commerce, Herbet Hoover

By the time a man realizes that maybe his father was right, he usually has a son who thinks he's wrong.
Charles Wadsworth

To achieve great things, two things are needed: a plan and not quite enough time.
Leonard Bernstein

The difference between the right word and almost the right word is the difference between lightning and lightning bug.
Mark Twain

I refused to attend his funeral. But I wrote a very nice letter explaining that I approved of it.
Mark Twain

Infidel, n. In New York, one who does not believe in the Christian religion; in Constantinople, one who does.
Ambrose Bierce

I write from obsession, habit, and because I have a thorn in my foot, head and heart and it hurts and I can't walk or think or feel until I remove it.
Janet Frame

They know enough who know how to learn.
Henry Adams

All science is either physics or stamp collecting.
Ernest Rutherford, who, in 1908, won the Nobel Prize for Chemistry

What does a kid know about pressure? What is pressure anyway?
Nadia Comenci, on feeling no pressure in the 1976 Olympics

Just as a cautious businessman avoids tying up all his capital in one concern, so, perhaps, worldly wisdom will advise us not to look for the whole of our satisfaction from a single aspiration.
Sigmund Freud

No man is clever enough to know all the evil he does.
La Rochefoucauld

"He took out the mechanical pencil he always carried in his inside jacket pocket, and ... made his characteristically neat proofreading marks on a sentence that said 'the book remains as fresh and unique as ever.' He changed it to read, 'remains unique and as fresh as ever.' 'There are no degrees of uniqueness,' Mr. Shawn said politely."
Lillian Ross on William Shawn

Cash is good.
Donald Trump, when asked about investing by David Letterman
It's very weird to succeed at 39 years old and realize that in the midst of your failure, you were slowly building the life that you wanted.
Alice Sebold

Getting a movie made in Hollywood is like trying to grill a steak by having a succession of people coming into the room and breathing on it.
Douglas Adams

It was a splendid spectacle, but it would have been better to be alone, or else surrounded by intelligent people in order to enjoy it.

Stendhal, witnessing Moscow burning during Napoleon's invasion

If I have a good trait, it's probably relentlessness...

Bruce Springsteen

What people are ashamed of usually makes a good story.

F. Scott Fitzgerald

The shortest distance between two points is always under construction.

Rebecca McClanahan

Sin lies only in hurting others unnecessarily. All other "sins" are invented nonsense.

Robert A. Heinlein

Do I believe God is going to take away my illness when he turned an entirely deaf ear to the six million Jews who went into the gas chambers?

Karen Armstrong

I prefer the sign NO ENTRANCE to the sign which says NO EXIT.

Stanislaw J. Lec

A painter is a man who paints what he sells; an artist, on the other hand, is a man who sells what he paints.

Pablo Picasso

A politician is a man who thinks of the next election; while the statesman thinks of the next generation.

James Freeman Clarke

There is one thing certain, namely, that we can have nothing certain; therefore it is not certain that we can have nothing certain.

Samuel Butler

There are few things more disturbing than to find, in somebody we detest, a moral quality which seems to us demonstrably superior to anything we ourselves possess. It augurs not merely an unfairness on the part of creation, but a lack of artistic judgment. Sainthood is acceptable only in saints.

Pamela Hansford Johnson

When the law is against you, pound the facts, when the facts are against you, pound the law, and when they're both against you, pound the table.

lawyer's adage

[the action of a short story is] "an apocalypse served in a very small cup."

Hortense Calisher

I cannot conceive otherwise than that He, the Infinite Father, expects or requires no worship or praise from us, but that He is even infinitely above it.
Benjamin Franklin

No one's ever gonna pay a dime to see a dwarf picture.
regarding SNOW WHITE: Lillian Disney to husband, Walt

If you want a happy ending, that depends, of course, on where you stop your story.
Orson Welles

I opened the door for a lot of people, and they just ran through and left me holding the knob.
Bo Diddley

Be who you are and say what you feel because those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind.
Dr. Seuss

True friendship isn't about being there when it's convenient; it's about being there when it's not.
Anonymous

An error does not become truth by reason of multiplied propagation, nor does the truth become error because nobody will see it.
Mohandas K. Gandhi

I like grit, I like love and death, I'm tired of irony... A lot of good fiction is sentimental... The novelist who refuses sentiment refuses the full spectrum of human behavior, and then he just dries up... I would rather give full vent to all human loves and disappointments, and take a chance on being corny.
Jim Harrison

I've made an odd discovery. Every time I talk to a savant I feel quite sure that happiness is no longer a possibility. Yet when I talk with my gardener, I'm convinced of the opposite.
Bertrand Russell

To be stupid, selfish, and have good health are three requirements for happiness, though if stupidity is lacking, all is lost.
Gustave Flaubert

Only two classes of books are of universal appeal: the very best and the very worst.
Ford Madox Ford

Man thrives where angels would die of ecstasy and where pigs would die of disgust.
Kenneth Rexroth

I'll admit it does make things a lot easier. When I was working on a typewriter and I whited

out a line, often I would choose a word to go in the space just because it fit. Now I don't have to do that.

David Sedaris, on writing with a computer

The soul should always stand ajar, ready to welcome the ecstatic experience.

Emily Dickinson

Neither a Fortress nor a Maidenhead will hold out long after they begin to parley.

Benjamin Franklin

A speech belongs half to the speaker and half to the listener.

Michel de Montaigne

There are worse crimes than burning books. One of them is not reading them.

Joseph Brodsky

It's hard to be religious when certain people are never incinerated by bolts of lightning.

Bill Watterson

Today I bent the truth to be kind, and I have no regret, for I am far surer of what is kind than I am of what is true.

Robert Brault

Good prose is like a windowpane.

George Orwell

The thing that makes you exceptional, if you are at all, is inevitably that which must also make you lonely.

Lorraine Hansberry

You come into the world alone and you go out of the world alone, yet it seems to me you are more alone while living than even going and coming.

Emily Carr

We are for the most part more lonely when we go abroad among men than when we stay in our chambers. A man thinking or working is always alone, let him be where he will.

Henry David Thoreau

Show me a sane man and I will cure him for you.

Carl Jung

Some cause happiness wherever they go; others, whenever they go.

Oscar Wilde

and, to hurl us into the new year, this delightful example of the value of an American education:

Q: Recent polls have shown a fifth of Americans can't locate the U.S. on a world map. Why do you think this is?

A: I personally believe that U.S. Americans are unable to do so because, um, some people out there in our nation don't have maps and, uh, I believe that our, uh, education like such as, uh, South Africa and, uh, the Iraq and everywhere like such as, and I believe that they should, uh, our education over here in the U.S. should help the U.S., uh, should help South Africa and should help Iraq and the Asian countries, so we will be able to build up our future.

Caitlin Upton, Miss South Carolina Teen