

## collected quotes

William M. Akers

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We get to think of life as an inexhaustible well. Yet everything happens only a certain number of times, and a very small number, really. How many more times will you remember a certain afternoon of your childhood, some afternoon that's so deeply a part of your being that you can't even conceive of your life without it? Perhaps four or five times more. Perhaps not even that. How many more times will you watch the full moon rise? Perhaps twenty. And yet it all seems limitless.

Paul Bowles

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

The most perfect technique is that which is not noticed at all.

Pablo Casals

The urge to save humanity is almost always a false front for the urge to rule.

H.L. Mencken

Lead us not into temptation. Just tell us where it is; we'll find it.

Sam Levenson

I knew the difference between a declarative sentence and a baseball bat.

Stan Lee, on why he began to write comic book scripts

Where it is a duty to worship the sun, it is pretty sure to be a crime to examine the laws of heat.

John Morley

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

Ford Madox Ford

During times of universal deceit, telling the truth becomes a revolutionary act.

George Orwell

Sometimes I wonder whether the world is being run by smart people who are putting us on or by imbeciles who really mean it.

Mark Twain

The ultimate sin of any performer is contempt for the audience.

Lester Bangs

Knowing ignorance is strength; ignoring knowledge is sickness.

Lao-Tzu

Insanity is sometimes an appropriate response to reality.

Philip K. Dick

Whenever 'A' attempts by law to impose his moral standards upon 'B', 'A' is most likely a scoundrel. H.L. Mencken

Being rich is having money; being wealthy is having time.

Stephen Swid

While writers dearly love to work, they stand with parsons and painters and philosophers in loving just as dearly to be paid for it.

Dalton Trumbo

The wit makes fun of other persons; the satirist makes fun of the world; the humorist makes fun of himself.

James Thurber

If you torture data sufficiently, it will confess to almost anything.

Fred Menger

Go to Heaven for the climate, Hell for the company.

Mark Twain

People may or may not say what they mean... but they always say something designed to get what they want.

David Mamet

The greatest of faults, I should say, is to be conscious of none.

Thomas Carlyle

Substitute damn every time you're inclined to write very; your editor will delete it and the writing will be just as it should be.

Mark Twain

I am persuaded that every time a man smiles--but much more so when he laughs--it adds something to this fragment of life.

Laurence Sterne

I love everything that's old: old friends, old times, old manners, old books, old wine.

Oliver Goldsmith born 1730

Egotism is the anesthetic that dulls the pain of stupidity.

Frank William Leahy, football coach

It is better to fail in originality than to succeed in imitation.  
Herman Melville

Somewhere, something incredible is waiting to be known.  
Carl Sagan

No matter how far you have gone on the wrong road, turn back.  
Turkish proverb

The whole problem with the world is that fools and fanatics are always so certain of themselves, and wiser people so full of doubts.  
Bertrand Russell

It is only those who have neither fired a shot nor heard the shrieks and groans of the wounded who cry aloud for blood, more vengeance, more desolation. War is hell.  
William Tecumseh Sherman

It is inaccurate to say I hate everything. I am strongly in favor of common sense, common honesty, and common decency. This makes me forever ineligible for public office.  
H.L. Mencken

Cold beer is bottled God.  
Dylan Thomas

Nothing stinks like a pile of unpublished writing.  
Sylvia Plath

You will never be happy if you continue to search for what happiness consists of. You will never live if you are looking for the meaning of life.  
Albert Camus

I could inform the dullest author how he might write an interesting book-let him relate the events of his own Life with honesty, not disguising the feelings that accompanied them.  
Samuel Taylor Coleridge

I can write better than anybody who can write faster, and I can write faster than anybody who can write better.  
A. J. Liebling

It is always the secure who are humble.  
G.K. Chesterton

Well I think that you've got to be prepared to write a load of nonsense to start with and then you can tart it up. The business of getting going, getting started, is enormously important, and this

can be physical. Solvitur Ambulando as the Romans used to say, which means 'the solution comes through walking.'

Colin Dexter

A proverb is a short sentence based on long experience.

Miguel de Cervantes

I know what I have given you. I do not know what you have received.

Antonio Porchia

When a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully.

Samuel Johnson

A man ought to read just as inclination leads him, for what he reads as a task will do him little good.

Samuel Johnson

He is no wise man who will quit a certainty for an uncertainty.

Samuel Johnson

Human life is everywhere a state in which much is to be endured and little to be enjoyed.

Samuel Johnson

Marriage has many pains, but celibacy has no pleasures.

Samuel Johnson

It took me fifteen years to discover that I had no talent for writing, but I couldn't give it up because by that time I was too famous.

Robert Benchley

I think all writing is a disease. You can't stop it.

William Carlos Williams

Every murderer is probably somebody's old friend.

Agatha Christie

The best time to plan a book is while you're doing the dishes.

Agatha Christie

If a man will begin with certainties, he shall end in doubts; but if he will be content to begin with doubts, he shall end in certainties.

Francis Bacon

The first forty years of life give us the text; the next thirty supply the commentary on it.

Arthur Schopenhauer

I ask you to judge me by the enemies I have made.  
Franklin D. Roosevelt

I review novels to make money, because it is easier for a sluggard to write an article a fortnight than a book a year.  
Cyril Connolly

All political parties die at last of swallowing their own lies.  
John Arbuthnot

Be still when you have nothing to say; when genuine passion moves you, say what you've got to say, and say it hot.  
D. H. Lawrence

A little nonsense now and then, is cherished by the wisest men.  
Roald Dahl

A person is a fool to become a writer. His only compensation is absolute freedom.  
Roald Dahl

The most important thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother.  
Theodore M. Hesburgh

If there is no struggle, there is no progress.  
Frederick Douglass

Life is either a daring adventure or nothing. To keep our faces toward change and behave like free spirits in the presence of fate is strength undefeatable.  
Helen Keller

If help and salvation are to come, they can only come from the children, for the children are the makers of men.  
Maria Montessori

The best writing is rewriting.  
E.B. White

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.  
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

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

The first method for estimating the intelligence of a ruler is to look at the men he has around him.

Niccolo Machiavelli

Let's see -- compulsion, money -- those are the only two reasons to go through the hell of trying to fill 500 blank sheets of paper.

Frederick Forsyth

I think [as a writer] you have to take your work from your life, but people live intense lives in all sorts of unlikely places ... You can write a perfectly powerful novel about working in a shoe store. You don't have to shoot lions in Africa ... Desperation is universal.

Robert Stone

A man is not old until his regrets take the place of dreams.

Yiddish proverb

He's got to realize that if you don't like what you're getting, you better stop what you're doing.

Bobby Ulich, American cyclist, on Jan Ullrich

Everything is for the eye these days - TV, Life, Look, the movies. Nothing is just for the mind. The next generation will have eyeballs as big as cantaloupes and no brain at all.

Fred Allen

Easy reading is damn hard writing.

Nathaniel Hawthorne

If we were to wake up some morning and find that everyone was the same race, creed and color, we would find some other cause for prejudice by noon.

George D. Aiken

One of the hardest things in life is having words in your heart that you can't utter.

James Earl Jones

We have just enough religion to make us hate but not enough to make us love one another.

Jonathan Swift

It takes a heap of sense to write good nonsense.

Mark Twain

Poetry is the one place where people can speak their original human mind. It is the outlet for people to say in public what is known in private.

Allen Ginsberg

There are no persons capable of stooping so low as those who desire to rise in the world.

Marguerite Gardiner

The notes I handle no better than many pianists. But the pauses between the notes -- ah, that is where the art resides.

Artur Schnabel, pianist

[We] live in a deranged age, more deranged than usual, because in spite of great scientific and technological advances, man has not the faintest idea of who he is or what he is doing.

Walker Percy

There are three ingredients to the good life; learning, earning, and yearning.

Christopher Morley

Meek young men grow up in libraries, believing it their duty to accept the views, which Cicero, which Locke, which Bacon, have given, forgetful that Cicero, Locke, and Bacon were only young men in libraries, when they wrote those books.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

It is surprising what a man can do when he has to, and how little most men will do when they don't have to.

Walter Linn

We can put television in its proper light by supposing that Gutenberg's great invention had been directed at printing only comic books.

Robert M. Hutchins

All happiness depends on courage and work. I have had many periods of wretchedness, but with energy and above all with illusions, I pulled through them all.

Honore de Balzac

To kill time is not murder, it's suicide.

William James

To be a novelist or a short story writer, you first have to pretend to be a novelist or a short story writer.

Charles Baxter

I think I've only spent about ten percent of my energies on writing. The other ninety percent went to keeping my head above water.

Katherine Anne Porter

Power is of two kinds. One is obtained by the fear of punishment and the other by acts of love. Power based on love is a thousand times more effective and permanent than the one derived from fear of punishment.

Mahatma Gandhi

[Writing is] fine, precise, detailed work, the infinitely small motor management of diamond cutters and safecrackers that we do in our heads.

Stanley Elkin'

Promises are like the full moon: if they are not kept at once they diminish day by day.  
German proverb

Every time I see an adult on a bicycle, I no longer despair for the future of the human race.  
H.G. Wells

If you obey all the rules you miss all the fun.  
Katherine Hepburn

The essential is to excite the spectators. If that means playing Hamlet on a flying trapeze or in an aquarium, you do it.  
Orson Welles

The liberty of the individual is no gift of civilization. It was greatest before there was any civilization.  
Sigmund Freud

It (marriage) may be compared to a cage, the birds without try desperately to get in, and those within try desperately to get out.  
Michel de Montaigne

Love is like war; easy to begin but very hard to stop.  
H.L. Mencken

I have always found it difficult to start [writing] with a definite idea about a character, or even a definite emotion. . . . But if I start with a pond that is being drained because of a diesel fuel leak, and a cow named Hortense, and some blackbirds flying over, and a woman in the distance waving, then I might get somewhere.  
Bobbie Ann Mason

It is always the best policy to speak the truth, unless, of course, you are an exceptionally good liar.  
Jerome K. Jerome

Love is like war; easy to begin but very hard to stop.  
H.L. Mencken

Bad luck at fishing and worse with women made me what little writer I am.  
Padgett Powell

In questions of science, the authority of a thousand is not worth the humble reasoning of a single individual.  
Galileo Galilei  
All sorrows can be borne, if you put them into a story.

Isak Dinesen

Never let your sense of morals get in the way of doing what's right.

Isaac Asimov

Boys, I have done the best I could for you. Go home now, and if you make as good citizens as you have soldiers, you will do well, and I shall always be proud of you. Goodbye, and God bless you all.

General Robert E. Lee to his soldiers after surrendering

Growth in wisdom can be measured precisely by decline in bile.

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche

Write about what you're afraid of.

Donald Barthelme

To the complaint, 'There are no people in these photographs,' I respond, 'There are always two people: the photographer and the viewer.'

Ansel Adams

Passion destroys passion; we want what puts an end to wanting what we want.

John Fowles

Never attribute to malice that which can be adequately explained by stupidity.

Hanlon's Razor

It often happens that the real tragedies of life occur in such an inarticulate manner that they hurt one by their crude violence, their absolute incoherence, their absurd want of meaning, their entire lack of style.

Oscar Wilde

You have to be very fond of men. Very, very fond. You have to be very fond of them to love them. Otherwise they're simply unbearable.

Marguerite Duras

I'm not very concerned with beauty or perfection. . . . All I care about is life, struggle, intensity.

Emile Zola

Never eat at a place called Mom's, never play cards with a guy named Doc, and never go to bed with anyone who has more troubles than you.

Nelson Algren

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

The one thing that doesn't abide by majority rule is a person's conscience.  
Harper Lee

No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man.  
Heraclitus

One of the symptoms of an approaching nervous breakdown is the belief that one's work is terribly important.  
Bertrand Russell

When money speaks, the truth keeps silent.  
Russian proverb

Like a bowl of roses, a poem should not have to be explained.  
Lawrence Ferlinghetti

Life is like a library owned by an author. In it are a few books which he wrote himself, but most of them were written for him.  
Harry Emerson Fosdick

Anything we do reveals us.  
Michel de Montaigne

What soap is for the body, tears are for the soul.  
Jewish proverb

I was thirty-seven, too old for a paper route, too young for social security, and too tired for an affair.  
Erma Bombeck, why she started writing again

All of us have moments in our lives that test our courage. Taking children into a house with a white carpet is one of them.  
Erma Bombeck

To be able under all circumstances to practice five things constitutes perfect virtue; these five things are gravity, generosity of soul, sincerity, earnestness and kindness.  
Confucius

To play it safe is not to play.  
Robert Altman

Life is like a ten-speed bike. Most of us have gears we never use.  
Charles Schulz  
A bit beyond perception's reach / I sometimes believe I see / that life is  
two locked boxes / each containing the other's key.  
Piet Hein

It is something-it can be everything-to have found a fellow bird with whom you can sit among the rafters while the drinking and boasting and reciting and fighting go on below.

Wallace Stegner

How simple . . . a thing is happiness: a glass of wine, a roast chestnut, a wretched little brazier, the sound of the sea. . . . All that is required to feel that here and now is happiness is a simple . . . heart.

Nikos Kazantzakis

Never spend your money before you have it.

Thomas Jefferson

You are too literary. You must not be literary. Suppress all the literature and it will work. Colette's advice to Simenon, who later said it was the most useful advice he'd ever gotten in his life.

I envy people who drink -- at least they know what to blame everything on.

Oscar Levant

The less conscious one is of being "a writer," the better the writing. And though reading is the best school of writing, school is the worst place for reading. Writing should . . . be as spontaneous and urgent as a letter to a lover, or a message to a friend who has just lost a parent . . . and writing is, in the end, that oddest of anomalies: an intimate letter to a stranger.

Pico Iyer

The intellectual isolation [in Hollywood] is enormous. Compared to Hollywood, Svendborg is a world center.

Bertolt Brecht

I don't like people who have never fallen or stumbled. Their virtue is lifeless and it isn't of much value. Life hasn't revealed its beauty to them.

Boris Pasternak

Finish every day and be done with it. You have done what you could; Some blunders and absurdities crept in; Forget them as soon as you can. Tomorrow is a new day; You shall begin it serenely and with too high a spirit to be encumbered with your old nonsense.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, and spends himself in a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows in the end the triumph of high achievement; and who, at worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.

Teddy Roosevelt

I knew she had problems, but I thought love would prevail.

David Guest on his marriage to Liza Minelli

I have a total irreverence for anything connected with society except that which makes the roads safer, the beer stronger, the food cheaper, and the old men and old women warmer in the winter and happier in the summer.

Brendan Behan

I lacked sense enough to see that, after five failures, I was foolish to continue writing.

Sinclair Lewis

I am about to tell you the most astonishing thing, the most surprising, the most marvelous, the most miraculous, the most triumphant, the most bewildering, the most unheard of, the most singular. ... I cannot bring myself to give it away. Guess.

Mme. de Sevigne

God is an imaginary friend for grownups.

Elmore Leonard

Absolute faith corrupts as absolutely as absolute power.

Eric Hoffer

The meeting of two personalities is like the contact of two chemical substances: if there is any reaction, both are transformed.

Carl Jung

Any idiot can face a crisis; it is this day-to-day living that wears you out.

Anton Chekhov

Sit down and put down everything that comes into your head and then you're a writer. But an author is one who can judge his own stuff's worth, without pity, and destroy most of it.

Colette

On the outskirts of every agony sits some observant fellow who points.

Virginia Woolf

Few misfortunes can befall a boy which bring worse consequences than to have a really affectionate mother.

Somerset Maugham

You have not converted a man because you have silenced him.

John Morley

The best way to predict the future is to invent it.

Alan Kay

I pretended to be somebody I wanted to be until finally I became that person. Or he became me.  
Cary Grant

The author makes a tacit deal with the reader. You hand them a backpack. You ask them to place certain things in it -- to remember, to keep in mind -- as they make their way up the hill... If you hand them a yellow Volkswagen and they have to haul this to the top of the mountain -- to the end of the story -- and they find that this Volkswagen has nothing whatsoever to do with your story, you're going to have a very irritated reader on your hands.  
Frank Conroy

Fiction is love and hate and agreement and conflict and common adventure, not lonely musing of have-beens and might-have-beens.  
A.B. Guthrie

If I'd known you was comin', I'da had my bitch bake you a cake.  
Snoop Dogg

Southerly gales, squalls, lee rail under water, wet bunks, hard tack, bully beef, wish you were here instead of me.  
Richard Halliburton's last radio transmission, 1939

Think not those faithful who praise all thy words and actions, but those who kindly reprove thy faults.  
Socrates

Our very life depends on everything's  
Recurring till we answer from within.  
Robert Frost

The world in general doesn't know what to make of originality; it is startled out of its comfortable habits of thought, and its first reaction is one of anger.  
W. Somerset Maugham

You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him type.  
John Lloyd Miller

Technology smells fear.  
William M. Akers

Perfection is the enemy of good.  
Voltaire

It's none of their business that you have to learn to write. Let them think you were born that way.  
Ernest Hemingway

Literature stops in the year 1100. After that it's only books.  
J.R.R. Tolkein

Planning to write is not writing. Outlining, researching, talking to people about what you're doing, none of that is writing. Writing is writing... Writing is like driving at night in the fog. You can only see as far as your headlights, but you can make the whole trip that way.  
E.L. Doctorow

My life has been incredible, I don't believe a word of it.  
Katherine Anne Porter