

Say Hello to
your very own book of
Quotes



QuotationsBook

Quotes by Chandler, Raymond

from QuotationsBook.com

Raymond Thornton Chandler (July 23, 1888 March 26, 1959) was an American author of crime stories and novels. His influence on modern crime fiction has been immense, particularly in the writing style and attitudes that much of the field has adopted over the last 60 years.

It is pretty obvious that the debasement of the human mind caused by a constant flow of fraudulent advertising is no trivial thing. There is more than one way to conquer a country.

- Chandler, Raymond

Would you convey my compliments to the purist who reads your proofs and tell him or her that I write in a sort of broken-down patois which is something like the way a Swiss waiter talks, and that when I split an infinitive, God damn it, I split it so it will stay split, and when I interrupt the velvety smoothness of my more or less literate syntax with a few sudden words of bar-room vernacular, that is done with the eyes wide open and the mind relaxed but attentive.

- Chandler, Raymond

It's fairly obvious that American education is a cultural flop. Americans are not a well-educated people culturally, and their vocational education often has to be learned all over again after they leave school and college. On the other hand, they have open quick minds and if their education has little sharp positive value, it has not the stultifying effects

of a more rigid training.

- Chandler, Raymond

The agent never receipts his bill, puts his hat on and bows himself out. He stays around forever, not only for as long as you can write anything that anyone will buy, but as long as anyone will buy any portion of any right to anything that you ever did write. He just takes ten per cent of your life.

- Chandler, Raymond

Throughout the history of commercial life nobody has ever quite liked the commission man. His function is too vague, his presence always seems one too many, his profit looks too easy, and even when you admit that he has a necessary function, you feel that this function is, as it were, a personification of something that in an ethical society would not need to exist. If people could deal with one another honestly, they would not need agents.

- Chandler, Raymond

Alcohol is like love. The first kiss is magic, the second is intimate, the third is routine. After that you take the girl's clothes off.

- Chandler, Raymond

The keynote of American civilization is a sort of warm-hearted vulgarity. The Americans have none of the irony of the English, none of their cool poise, none of their manner. But they do have friendliness. Where an Englishman would give you his card, an American would very likely give you his shirt.

- Chandler, Raymond

It was a blonde. A blonde to make a bishop kick a hole in a stained-glass window.

- Chandler, Raymond

Down these mean streets a man must go who is not himself mean, who is neither tarnished nor afraid... He is the hero, he is everything. He must be a complete man and a common man and yet an unusual man. He must be, to use a rather weathered phrase, a man of honor, by instinct, by inevitability, without thought of it, and certainly without saying it. He must be the best man in his world and a good enough man for any world.

- Chandler, Raymond

If my books had been any worse, I should not have been invited to Hollywood, and if they had been any better, I should not have come.

- Chandler, Raymond

Its idea of production value is spending a million dollars dressing up a story that any good writer would throw away. Its vision of the rewarding movie is a vehicle for some glamour-puss with two expressions and eighteen changes of costume, or for some male idol of the muddled millions with a permanent hangover, six worn-out acting tricks, the build of a lifeguard, and the mentality of a chicken-strangler.

- Chandler, Raymond

Some are able and humane men and some are low-grade individuals with the morals of a

goat, the artistic integrity of a slot machine, and the manners of a floorwalker with delusions of grandeur.

- Chandler, Raymond

That's one thing I like about Hollywood. The writer is there revealed in his ultimate corruption. He asks no praise, because his praise comes to him in the form of a salary check. In Hollywood the average writer is not young, not honest, not brave, and a bit overdressed. But he is darn good company, which book writers as a rule are not. He is better than what he writes. Most book writers are not as good.

- Chandler, Raymond

They don't want you until you have made a name, and by the time you have made a name, you have developed some kind of talent they can't use. All they will do is spoil it, if you let them.

- Chandler, Raymond

The motion picture made in Hollywood, if it is to create art at all, must do so within such strangling limitations of subject and treatment that it is a blind wonder it ever achieves any distinction beyond the purely mechanical slickness of a glass and chromium bathroom.

- Chandler, Raymond

The overall picture, as the boys say, is of a degraded community whose idealism even is largely fake. The pretentiousness, the bogus enthusiasm, the constant drinking, the incessant squabbling over money, the all-pervasive agent, the strutting of the big shots

(and their usually utter incompetence to achieve anything they start out to do), the constant fear of losing all this fairy gold and being the nothing they have never ceased to be, the snide tricks, the whole damn mess is out of this world.

- Chandler, Raymond

It is a mass language only in the same sense that its baseball slang is born of baseball players. That is, it is a language which is being molded by writers to do delicate things and yet be within the grasp of superficially educated people. It is not a natural growth, much as its proletarian writers would like to think so. But compared with it at its best, English has reached the Alexandrian stage of formalism and decay.

- Chandler, Raymond

The law isn't justice. It's a very imperfect mechanism. If you press exactly the right buttons and are also lucky, justice may show up in the answer. A mechanism is all the law was ever intended to be.

- Chandler, Raymond

The kind of lawyer you hope the other fellow has.

- Chandler, Raymond

He looked about as inconspicuous as a tarantula on a slice of angel food.

- Chandler, Raymond

The creative artist seems to be almost the only kind of man that you could never meet on

neutral ground. You can only meet him as an artist. He sees nothing objectively because his own ego is always in the foreground of every picture.

- Chandler, Raymond

When a book, any sort of book, reaches a certain intensity of artistic performance it becomes literature. That intensity may be a matter of style, situation, character, emotional tone, or idea, or half a dozen other things. It may also be a perfection of control over the movement of a story similar to the control a great pitcher has over the ball.

- Chandler, Raymond

However toplofty and idealistic a man may be, he can always rationalize his right to earn money.

- Chandler, Raymond

The boys with their feet on the desks know that the easiest murder case in the world to break is the one somebody tried to get very cute with; the one that really bothers them is the murder somebody only thought of two minutes before he pulled it off.

- Chandler, Raymond

An age which is incapable of poetry is incapable of any kind of literature except the cleverness of a decadence.

- Chandler, Raymond

A really good detective never gets married.

- Chandler, Raymond

There are people who can write their memoirs with a reasonable amount of honesty, and there are people who simply cannot take themselves seriously enough. I think I might be the first to admit that the sort of reticence which prevents a man from exploiting his own personality is really an inverted sort of egotism.

- Chandler, Raymond

In jail a man has no personality. He is a minor disposal problem and a few entries on reports. Nobody cares who loves or hates him, what he looks like, what he did with his life. Nobody reacts to him unless he gives trouble. Nobody abuses him. All that is asked of him is that he go quietly to the right cell and remain quiet when he gets there. There is nothing to fight against, nothing to be mad at. The jailers are quiet men without animosity or sadism. All this stuff you read about men yelling and screaming, beating against the bars, running spoons along them, guards rushing in with clubs -- all that is for the big house. A good jail is one of the quietest places in the world. Life in jail is in suspension.

- Chandler, Raymond

The reading public is intellectually adolescent at best, and it is obvious that what is called significant literature will only be sold to this public by exactly the same methods as are used to sell it toothpaste, cathartics and automobiles.

- Chandler, Raymond

The minute you try to talk business with him he takes the attitude that he is a gentleman

and a scholar, and the moment you try to approach him on the level of his moral integrity he starts to talk business.

- Chandler, Raymond

The more you reason the less you create.

- Chandler, Raymond

There are two kinds of truth; the truth that lights the way and the truth that warms the heart. The first of these is science, and the second is art. Without art science would be as useless as a pair of high forceps in the hands of a plumber. Without science art would become a crude mess of folklore and emotional quackery.

- Chandler, Raymond

I've found that there are only two kinds that are any good: slang that has established itself in the language, and slang that you make up yourself. Everything else is apt to be pass? before it gets into print.

- Chandler, Raymond

She gave me a smile I could feel in my hip pocket.

- Chandler, Raymond

A good story cannot be devised; it has to be distilled.

- Chandler, Raymond

The most durable thing in writing is style, and style is the most valuable investment a writer can make with his time. It pays off slowly, your agent will sneer at it, your publisher will misunderstand it, and it will take people you have never heard of to convince them by slow degrees that the writer who puts his individual mark on the way he writes will always pay off.

- Chandler, Raymond

At least half the mystery novels published violate the law that the solution, once revealed, must seem to be inevitable.

- Chandler, Raymond

A good title is the title of a successful book.

- Chandler, Raymond

Such is the brutalization of commercial ethics in this country that no one can feel anything more delicate than the velvet touch of a soft buck.

- Chandler, Raymond

I said something which gave you to think I hated cats. But gad, sir, I am one of the most fanatical cat lovers in the business. If you hate them, I may learn to hate you. If your allergies hate them, I will tolerate the situation to the best of my ability.

- Chandler, Raymond

Your rat tail is all the fashion now. I prefer a bushy plume, carried straight up. You are Siamese and your ancestors lived in trees. Mine lived in palaces. It has been suggested to me that I am a bit of a snob. How true! I prefer to be.

- Chandler, Raymond

The moment a man begins to talk about technique that's proof that he is fresh out of ideas.

- Chandler, Raymond

So by all means let's have a television show quick and long, even if the commercial has to be delivered by a man in a white coat with a stethoscope hanging around his neck, selling ergot pills. After all the public is entitled to what it wants, isn't it? The Romans knew that and even they lasted four hundred years after they started to putrefy.

- Chandler, Raymond

Television's perfect. You turn a few knobs, a few of those mechanical adjustments at which the higher apes are so proficient, and lean back and drain your mind of all thought. And there you are watching the bubbles in the primeval ooze. You don't have to concentrate. You don't have to react. You don't have to remember. You don't miss your brain because you don't need it. Your heart and liver and lungs continue to function normally. Apart from that, all is peace and quiet. You are in the man's nirvana. And if some poor nasty minded person comes along and says you look like a fly on a can of garbage, pay him no mind. He probably hasn't got the price of a television set.

- Chandler, Raymond

There is something about the literary life that repels me, all this desperate building of castles on cobwebs, the long-drawn acrimonious struggle to make something important which we all know will be gone forever in a few years, the miasma of failure which is to me almost as offensive as the cheap gaudiness of popular success.

- Chandler, Raymond

Any man who can write a page of living prose adds something to our life, and the man who can, as I can, is surely the last to resent someone who can do it even better. An artist cannot deny art, nor would he want to. A lover cannot deny love.

- Chandler, Raymond

The making of a picture ought surely to be a rather fascinating adventure. It is not; it is an endless contention of tawdry egos, some of them powerful, almost all of them vociferous, and almost none of them capable of anything much more creative than credit-stealing and self-promotion.

- Chandler, Raymond

The motion picture is like a picture of a lady in a half-piece bathing suit. If she wore a few more clothes, you might be intrigued. If she wore no clothes at all, you might be shocked. But the way it is, you are occupied with noticing that her knees are too bony and that her toenails are too large. The modern film tries too hard to be real. Its techniques of illusion are so perfect that it requires no contribution from the audience but a mouthful of popcorn.

- Chandler, Raymond

Common sense always speaks too late. Common sense is the guy who tells you ought to have had your brakes relined last week before you smashed a front end this week.

Common sense is the Monday morning quarterback who could have won the ball game if he had been on the team. But he never is. He's high up in the stands with a flask on his hip. Common sense is the little man in a gray suit who never makes a mistake in addition. But it's always somebody else's money he's adding up.

- Chandler, Raymond

It is wrong to be harsh with the New York critics, unless one admits in the same breath that it is a condition of their existence that they should write entertainingly about something which is rarely worth writing about at all.

- Chandler, Raymond

Most critical writing is drivel and half of it is dishonest. It is a short cut to oblivion, anyway. Thinking in terms of ideas destroys the power to think in terms of emotions and sensations.

- Chandler, Raymond

Good critical writing is measured by the perception and evaluation of the subject; bad critical writing by the necessity of maintaining the professional standing of the critic.

- Chandler, Raymond

What did it matter where you lay once you were dead? In a dirty sump or in a marble tower on top of a high hill? You were dead, you were sleeping the big sleep, you were not bothered by things like that. Oil and water were the same as wind and air to you.

- Chandler, Raymond

Woe, woe, woe... in a little while we shall all be dead. Therefore let us behave as though we were dead already.

- Chandler, Raymond



QuotationsBook