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# Quotes by Conrad, Joseph

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Joseph Conrad (December 3, 1857 – August 3, 1924) was a Polish-born British novelist. Some of his works have been labelled romantic, although Conrad's romanticism is tempered with irony and a fine sense of man's capacity for self-deception. Many critics have placed him as a forerunner of modernism. His most famous work is in fact that of "Heart of Darkness," which is a fine piece of literature still studied today in most modern senior high schools.

A man that is born falls into a dream like a man who falls into the sea. If he tries to climb out into the air as inexperienced people endeavor to do, he drowns.

- Conrad, Joseph

It is very difficult to be wholly joyous or wholly sad on this earth. The comic, when it is human, soon takes upon itself a face of pain; and some of our grieves... have their source in weaknesses which must be recognized with smiling compassion as the common inheritance of us all.

- Conrad, Joseph

The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it.

- Conrad, Joseph

You shall judge a man by his foes as well as by his friends.

- Conrad, Joseph

The belief in a supernatural source of evil is not necessary; men alone are quite capable of every wickedness.

- Conrad, Joseph

Danger lies in the writer becoming the victim of his own exaggeration, losing the exact notion of sincerity, and in the end coming to despise truth itself as something too cold, too blunt for his purpose -- as, in fact, not good enough for his insistent emotion. From laughter and tears the descent is easy to sniveling and giggles.

- Conrad, Joseph

How does one kill fear, I wonder? How do you shoot a specter through the heart, slash off its spectral head, take it by its spectral throat?

- Conrad, Joseph

What is a novel if not a conviction of our fellow-men's existence strong enough to take upon itself a form of imagined life clearer than reality and whose accumulated verisimilitude of selected episodes puts to shame the pride of documentary history?

- Conrad, Joseph

A noble man compares and estimates himself by an idea which is higher than himself; and a mean man, by one lower than himself. The one produces aspiration; the other ambition, which is the way in which a vulgar man aspires.

- Conrad, Joseph

Gossip is what no one claims to like, but everybody enjoys.

- Conrad, Joseph

Nations it may be have fashioned their Governments, but the Governments have paid them back in the same coin.

- Conrad, Joseph

Going home must be like going to render an account.

- Conrad, Joseph

As to honor -- you know -- it's a very fine mediaeval inheritance which women never got hold of. It wasn't theirs.

- Conrad, Joseph

A caricature is putting the face of a joke on the body of a truth.

- Conrad, Joseph

Hang ideas! They are tramps, vagabonds, knocking at the back-door of your mind, each taking a little of your substance, each carrying away some crumb of that belief in a few simple notions you must cling to if you want to live decently and would like to die easy!

- Conrad, Joseph

It is respectable to have no illusions, and safe, and profitable and dull.

- Conrad, Joseph

Only in men's imagination does every truth find an effective and undeniable existence.

Imagination, not invention, is the supreme master of art as of life.

- Conrad, Joseph

There are men here and there to whom the whole of life is like an after-dinner hour with a cigar; easy, pleasant, empty, perhaps enlivened by some fable of strife to be forgotten -- before the end is told -- even if there happens to be any end to it.

- Conrad, Joseph

You can't, in sound morals, condemn a man for taking care of his own integrity. It is his clear duty. And least of all can you condemn an artist pursuing, however humbly and imperfectly, a creative aim. In that interior world where his thought and his emotions go seeking for the experience of imagined adventures, there are no policemen, no law, no pressure of circumstance or dread of opinion to keep him within bounds. Who then is going to say Nay to his temptations if not his conscience?

- Conrad, Joseph

Each blade of grass has its spot on earth whence it draws its life, its strength; and so is man rooted to the land from which he draws his faith together with his life.

- Conrad, Joseph

To a teacher of languages there comes a time when the world is but a place of many words and man appears a mere talking animal not much more wonderful than a parrot.

- Conrad, Joseph

Perhaps life is just that... a dream and a fear.

- Conrad, Joseph

It's extraordinary how we go through life with eyes half shut, with dull ears, with dormant thoughts. Perhaps it's just as well; and it may be that it is this very dullness that makes life to the incalculable majority so supportable and so welcome.

- Conrad, Joseph

There is nothing more enticing, disenchanting, and enslaving than the life at sea.

- Conrad, Joseph

Who knows what true loneliness is -- not the conventional word, but the naked terror? To the lonely themselves it wears a mask. The most miserable outcast hugs some memory or some illusion. Now and then a fatal conjunction of events may lift the veil for an instant.

For an instant only. No human being could bear a steady view of moral solitude without going mad.

- Conrad, Joseph

Some great men owe most of their greatness to the ability of detecting in those they destine for their tools the exact quality of strength that matters for their work.

- Conrad, Joseph

Vanity plays lurid tricks with our memory.

- Conrad, Joseph

There is something haunting in the light of the moon; it has all the dispassionateness of a disembodied soul, and something of its inconceivable mystery.

- Conrad, Joseph

What all men are really after is some form, or perhaps only some formula, of peace.

- Conrad, Joseph

A man's real life is that accorded to him in the thoughts of other men by reason of respect or natural love.

- Conrad, Joseph

It is when we try to grapple with another man's intimate need that we perceive how

incomprehensible, wavering, and misty are the beings that share with us the sight of the stars and the warmth of the sun.

- Conrad, Joseph

He who wants to persuade should put his trust not in the right argument, but in the right word. The power of sound has always been greater than the power of sense.

- Conrad, Joseph

To have his path made clear for him is the aspiration of every human being in our beclouded and tempestuous existence.

- Conrad, Joseph

An artist is a man of action, whether he creates a personality, invents an expedient, or finds the issue of a complicated situation.

- Conrad, Joseph

Any work that aspires, however humbly, to the condition of art should carry its justification in every line.

- Conrad, Joseph

I would not unduly praise the virtue of restraint. It is often merely temperamental. But it is not always a sign of coldness. It may be pride. There can be nothing more humiliating than to see the shaft of one's emotion miss the mark of either laughter or tears. Nothing more humiliating! And this for the reason that should the mark be missed, should the open

display of emotion fail to move, then it must perish unavoidably in disgust or contempt.

- Conrad, Joseph

Resignation, not mystic, not detached, but resignation open-eyed, conscious, and informed by love, is the only one of our feelings for which it is impossible to become a sham.

- Conrad, Joseph

The scrupulous and the just, the noble, humane, and devoted natures; the unselfish and the intelligent may begin a movement -- but it passes away from them. They are not the leaders of a revolution. They are its victims.

- Conrad, Joseph

The revolutionary spirit is mighty convenient in this, that it frees one from all scruples as regards ideas. Its hard absolute optimism is repulsive to my mind by the menace of fanaticism and intolerance it contains. No doubt one should smile at these things; but, imperfect Esthete, I am no better Philosopher. All claim to special righteousness awakens in me that scorn and anger from which a philosophical mind should be free.

- Conrad, Joseph

The sea -- this truth must be confessed -- has no generosity. No display of manly qualities -- courage, hardihood, endurance, faithfulness -- has ever been known to touch its irresponsible consciousness of power.

- Conrad, Joseph

The sea has never been friendly to man. At most it has been the accomplice of human restlessness.

- Conrad, Joseph

A man's most open actions have a secret side to them.

- Conrad, Joseph

Truth of a modest sort I can promise you, and also sincerity. That complete, praiseworthy sincerity which, while it delivers one into the hands of one's enemies, is as likely as not to embroil one with one's friends.

- Conrad, Joseph

They talk of a man betraying his country, his friends, his sweetheart. There must be a moral bond first. All a man can betray is his conscience.

- Conrad, Joseph

Woe to the man whose heart has not learned while young to hope, to love -- and to put its trust in life.

- Conrad, Joseph

The East Wind, an interloper in the dominions of Westerly Weather, is an impassive-faced tyrant with a sharp poniard held behind his back for a treacherous stab.

- Conrad, Joseph

The Westerly Wind asserting his sway from the south-west quarter is often like a monarch gone mad, driving forth with wild imprecations the most faithful of his courtiers to shipwreck, disaster, and death.

- Conrad, Joseph

It is a maudlin and indecent verity that comes out through the strength of wine.

- Conrad, Joseph

I dare say I am compelled, unconsciously compelled, now to write volume after volume, as in past years I was compelled to go to sea, voyage after voyage. Leaves must follow upon each other as leagues used to follow in the days gone by, on and on to the appointed end, which, being truth itself, is one -- one for all men and for all occupations.

- Conrad, Joseph

Words, as is well known, are the great foes of reality.

- Conrad, Joseph

A word carries far -- very far -- deals destruction through time as the bullets go flying through space.

- Conrad, Joseph

I don't like work... but I like what is in work -- the chance to find yourself. Your own reality -- for yourself, not for others -- which no other man can ever know.

- Conrad, Joseph

A man is a worker. If he is not that he is nothing.

- Conrad, Joseph

I remember my youth and the feeling that will never come back any more --the feeling that I could last for ever, outlast the sea, the earth, and all men; the deceitful feeling that lures us on to joys, to perils, to love, to vain effort --to death; the triumphant conviction of strength, the heat of life in the handful of dust, the glow in the heart that with every year grows dim, grows cold, grows small, and expires --and expires, too soon, too soon --before life itself.

- Conrad, Joseph

Facing it, always facing it, that's the way to get through. Face it.

- Conrad, Joseph

History repeats itself, but the special call of an art which has passed away is never reproduced. It is as utterly gone out of the world as the song of a destroyed wild bird.

- Conrad, Joseph

Criticism, that fine flower of personal expression in the garden of letters.

- Conrad, Joseph

I have wrestled with death. It is the most unexciting contest you can imagine. It takes place in an impalpable grayness, with nothing underfoot, with nothing around, without spectators, without clamor, without glory, without the great desire of victory, without the great fear of defeat.

- Conrad, Joseph





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