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Quotes by Hemingway, Ernest

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Ernest Miller Hemingway (July 21, 1899 July 2, 1961) was an American novelist and short story writer whose works, drawn from his wide range of experiences in World War I, the Spanish Civil War, and World War II, are characterized by terse minimalism and understatement; they exerted a significant influence on the development of twentieth century fiction.

Hemingway's protagonists are typically stoic male individuals, often interpreted as projections of his own character, who must master "grace under pressure". Many of his works, like *The Sun Also Rises*, *A Farewell to Arms* and *The Old Man and the Sea*, are now considered classics in the canon of American literature.

The world breaks everyone and afterward many are stronger at the broken places.

- Hemingway, Ernest

As you get older it is harder to have heroes, but it is sort of necessary.

- Hemingway, Ernest

Decadence is a difficult word to use since it has become little more than a term of abuse applied by critics to anything they do not yet understand or which seems to differ from their moral concepts.

- Hemingway, Ernest

A man can be destroyed but not defeated.

- Hemingway, Ernest

That terrible mood of depression of whether it's any good or not is what is known as The Artist's Reward.

- Hemingway, Ernest

Actually if a writer needs a dictionary he should not write. He should have read the dictionary at least three times from beginning to end and then have loaned it to someone who needs it. There are only certain words which are valid and similes (bring me my dictionary) are like defective ammunition (the lowest thing I can think of at this time).

- Hemingway, Ernest

I have noticed that doctors who fail in the practice of medicine have a tendency to seek one another's company and aid in consultation. A doctor who cannot take out your appendix properly will recommend you to a doctor who will be unable to remove your tonsils with success.

- Hemingway, Ernest

The first panacea for a mismanaged nation is inflation of the currency; the second is war. Both bring a temporary prosperity; both bring a permanent ruin. But both are the refuge of political and economic opportunists.

- Hemingway, Ernest

Some people show evil as a great racehorse shows breeding. They have the dignity of a hard chancre.

- Hemingway, Ernest

Eschew the monumental. Shun the Epic. All the guys who can paint great big pictures can paint great small ones.

- Hemingway, Ernest

It's enough for you to do it once for a few men to remember you. But if you do it year after year, then many people remember you and they tell it to their children, and their children and grandchildren remember and, if it concerns books, they can read them. And if it's good enough, it will last as long as there are human beings.

- Hemingway, Ernest

You're an expatriate. You've lost touch with the soil. You get precious. Fake European standards have ruined you. You drink yourself to death. You become obsessed by sex. You spend all your time talking, not working. You are an expatriate, see? You hang around caf?s.

- Hemingway, Ernest

In going where you have to go, and doing what you have to do, and seeing what you have to see, you dull and blunt the instrument you write with. But I would rather have it bent and dulled and know I had to put it on the grindstone again and hammer it into shape and put

a whetstone to it, and know that I had something to write about, than to have it bright and shining and nothing to say, or smooth and well oiled in the closet, but unused.

- Hemingway, Ernest

To be a successful father... there's one absolute rule: when you have a kid, don't look at it for the first two years.

- Hemingway, Ernest

You know that fiction, prose rather, is possibly the roughest trade of all in writing. You do not have the reference, the old important reference. You have the sheet of blank paper, the pencil, and the obligation to invent truer than things can be true. You have to take what is not palpable and make it completely palpable and also have it seem normal and so that it can become a part of experience of the person who reads it.

- Hemingway, Ernest

When writing a novel a writer should create living people; people not characters. A character is a caricature.

- Hemingway, Ernest

I'm not going to get into the ring with Tolstoy.

- Hemingway, Ernest

Somebody just back of you while you are fishing is as bad as someone looking over your shoulder while you write a letter to your girl.

- Hemingway, Ernest

There is no friend as loyal as a book

- Hemingway, Ernest

I wish I could write well enough to write about aircraft. Faulkner did it very well in Pylon but you cannot do something someone else has done though you might have done it if they hadn't.

- Hemingway, Ernest

Always do sober what you said you'd do drunk. That will teach you to keep your mouth shut.

- Hemingway, Ernest

Don't you drink? I notice you speak slightly of the bottle. I have drunk since I was fifteen and few things have given me more pleasure. When you work hard all day with your head and know you must work again the next day what else can change your ideas and make them run on a different plane like whisky? When you are cold and wet what else can warm you? Before an attack who can say anything that gives you the momentary well-being that rum does? The only time it isn't good for you is when you write or when you fight. You have to do that cold. But it always helps my shooting. Modern life, too, is often a mechanical oppression and liquor is the only mechanical relief.

- Hemingway, Ernest

My attitude toward punctuation is that it ought to be as conventional as possible. The game of golf would lose a good deal if croquet mallets and billiard cues were allowed on the putting green. You ought to be able to show that you can do it a good deal better than anyone else with the regular tools before you have a license to bring in your own improvements.

- Hemingway, Ernest

To me heaven would be a big bull ring with me holding two barrera seats and a trout stream outside that no one else was allowed to fish in and two lovely houses in the town; one where I would have my wife and children and be monogamous and love them truly and well and the other where I would have my nine beautiful mistresses on nine different floors.

- Hemingway, Ernest

You write a book like that you're fond of over the years, then you see that happen to it, it's like pissing in your father's beer.

- Hemingway, Ernest

When you have shot one bird flying you have shot all birds flying. They are all different and they fly in different ways but the sensation is the same and the last one is as good as the first.

- Hemingway, Ernest

All things truly wicked start from an innocence.

- Hemingway, Ernest

That is what we are supposed to do when we are at our best --make it all up --but make it up so truly that later it will happen that way.

- Hemingway, Ernest

Personal columnists are jackals and no jackal has been known to live on grass once he had learned about meat -- no matter who killed the meat for him.

- Hemingway, Ernest

There are some things which cannot be learned quickly, and time, which is all we have, must be paid heavily for their acquiring. They are the very simplest things and because it takes a man's life to know them the little new that each man gets from life is very costly and the only heritage he has to leave.

- Hemingway, Ernest

Or don't you like to write letters. I do because it's such a swell way to keep from working and yet feel you've done something.

- Hemingway, Ernest

Every man's life ends the same way. It is only the details of how he lived and how he died that distinguish one man from another.

- Hemingway, Ernest

I do not think I had ever seen a nastier-looking man. Under the black hat, when I had first seen them, the eyes had been those of an unsuccessful rapist.

- Hemingway, Ernest

I like to listen. I have learned a great deal from listening carefully. Most people never listen.

- Hemingway, Ernest

You know lots of criticism is written by characters who are very academic and think it is a sign you are worthless if you make jokes or kid or even clown. I wouldn't kid Our Lord if he was on the cross. But I would attempt a joke with him if I ran into him chasing the money changers out of the temple.

- Hemingway, Ernest

How simple the writing of literature would be if it were only necessary to write in another way what has been well written. It is because we have had such great writers in the past that a writer is driven far out past where he can go, out to where no one can help him.

- Hemingway, Ernest

All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called Huckleberry Finn. American writing comes from that. There was nothing before. There has been nothing as good since.

- Hemingway, Ernest

All you can be sure about in a political-minded writer is that if his work should last you will have to skip the politics when you read it. Many of the so-called politically enlisted writers change their politics frequently . Perhaps it can be respected as a form of the pursuit of happiness.

- Hemingway, Ernest

Now a writer can make himself a nice career while he is alive by espousing a political cause, working for it, making a profession of believing in it, and if it wins he will be very well placed. All politics is a matter of working hard without reward, or with a living wage for a time, in the hope of booty later. A man can be a Fascist or a Communist and if his outfit gets in he can get to be an ambassador or have a million copies of his books printed by the Government or any of the other rewards the boys dream about.

- Hemingway, Ernest

The hardest thing to do is to write straight honest prose on human beings. First you have to know the subject; then you have to know how to write. Both take a lifetime to learn, and anybody is cheating who takes politics as a way out. All the outs are too easy, and the thing itself is too hard to do.

- Hemingway, Ernest

There are events which are so great that if a writer has participated in them his obligation is to write truly rather than assume the presumption of altering them with invention.

- Hemingway, Ernest

Madame, it is an old word and each one takes it new and wears it out himself. It is a word that fills with meaning as a bladder with air and the meaning goes out of it as quickly. It may be punctured as a bladder is punctured and patched and blown up again and if you have not had it does not exist for you. All people talk of it, but those who have had it are marked by it, and I would not wish to speak of it further since of all things it is the most ridiculous to talk of and only fools go through it many times.

- Hemingway, Ernest

Only one marriage I regret. I remember after I got that marriage license I went across from the license bureau to a bar for a drink. The bartender said, What will you have, sir? And I said, A glass of hemlock.

- Hemingway, Ernest

I don't like to write like God. It is only because you never do it, though, that the critics think you can't do it.

- Hemingway, Ernest

What is moral is what you feel good after, and what is immoral is what you feel bad after.

- Hemingway, Ernest

Here is the piece. If you can't say fornicate can you say copulate or if not that can you say co-habit? If not that would have to say consummate I suppose. Use your own good taste and judgment.

- Hemingway, Ernest

A beautiful vacuum filled with wealthy monogamists, all powerful and members of the best families all drinking themselves to death.

- Hemingway, Ernest

I've seen a lot of patriots and they all died just like anybody else if it hurt bad enough and once they were dead their patriotism was only good for legends; it was bad for their prose and made them write bad poetry. If you are going to be a great patriot i.e. loyal to any existing order of government (not one who wishes to destroy the existing for something better) you want to be killed early if your life and works won't stink.

- Hemingway, Ernest

The only thing that could spoil a day was people. People were always the limiters of happiness except for the very few that were as good as spring itself.

- Hemingway, Ernest

Man is not made for defeat.

- Hemingway, Ernest

Our nada who art in nada, nada be thy name thy kingdom nada thy will be nada in nada as it is in nada. Give us this nada our daily nada and nada us our nada as we nada our nadas and nada us not into nada but deliver us from nada; pues nada. Hail nothing full of nothing, nothing is with thee.

- Hemingway, Ernest

When you give power to an executive you do not know who will be filling that position when the time of crisis comes.

- Hemingway, Ernest

Having books published is very destructive to writing. It is even worse than making love too much. Because when you make love too much at least you get a damned clarte that is like no other light. A very clear and hollow light.

- Hemingway, Ernest

It is good to have an end to journey toward; but it is the journey that matters, in the end

- Hemingway, Ernest

I still need more healthy rest in order to work at my best. My health is the main capital I have and I want to administer it intelligently.

- Hemingway, Ernest

Retirement is the ugliest word in the language.

- Hemingway, Ernest

The rich were dull and they drank too much or they played too much backgammon. They were dull and they were repetitious. He remembered poor Julian and his romantic awe of

them and how he had started a story once that began, The very rich are different from you and me. And how someone had said to Julian, Yes, they have more money.

- Hemingway, Ernest

They say the seeds of what we will do are in all of us, but it always seemed to me that in those who make jokes in life the seeds are covered with better soil and with a higher grade of manure.

- Hemingway, Ernest

My aim is to put down on paper what I see and what I feel in the best and simplest way.

- Hemingway, Ernest

Bullfighting is the only art in which the artist is in danger of death and in which the degree of brilliance in the performance is left to the fighter's honor.

- Hemingway, Ernest

Madame, all stories, if continued far enough, end in death, and he is no true-story teller who would keep that from you.

- Hemingway, Ernest

I might say that what amateurs call a style is usually only the unavoidable awkwardnesses in first trying to make something that has not heretofore been made.

- Hemingway, Ernest

I am opposed to writing about the private lives of living authors and psychoanalyzing them while they are alive. Criticism is getting all mixed up with a combination of the Junior F.B.I.-men, discards from Freud and Jung and a sort of Columnist peep-hole and missing laundry list school. Every young English professor sees gold in them dirty sheets now. Imagine what they can do with the soiled sheets of four legal beds by the same writer and you can see why their tongues are slavering.

- Hemingway, Ernest

The good parts of a book may be only something a writer is lucky enough to overhear or it may be the wreck of his whole damn life --and one is as good as the other.

- Hemingway, Ernest

All good books are alike in that they are truer than if they had really happened and after you are finished reading one you will feel that all that happened to you and afterwards it all belongs to you; the good and the bad, the ecstasy, the remorse, and sorrow, the people and the places and how the weather was.

- Hemingway, Ernest

It wasn't by accident that the Gettysburg address was so short. The laws of prose writing are as immutable as those of flight, of mathematics, of physics.

- Hemingway, Ernest

Survival, with honor, that outmoded and all-important word, is as difficult as ever and as

all-important to a writer. Those who do not last are always more beloved since no one has to see them in their long, dull, unrelenting, no-quarter-given-and-no-quarter-received, fights that they make to do something as they believe it should be done before they die. Those who die or quit early and easy and with every good reason are preferred because they are understandable and human. Failure and well-disguised cowardice are more human and more beloved.

- Hemingway, Ernest

I've tried to reduce profanity but I reduced so much profanity when writing the book that I'm afraid not much could come out. Perhaps we will have to consider it simply as a profane book and hope that the next book will be less profane or perhaps more sacred.

- Hemingway, Ernest

There isn't any symbolism. The sea is the sea. The old man is an old man. The boy is a boy and the fish is a fish. The shark are all sharks no better and no worse. All the symbolism that people say is shit. What goes beyond is what you see beyond when you know.

- Hemingway, Ernest

Writing and travel broaden your ass if not your mind and I like to write standing up.

- Hemingway, Ernest

I know now that there is no one thing that is true -- it is all true.

- Hemingway, Ernest

There's no one thing that is true. They're all true.

- Hemingway, Ernest

The age demanded that we dance and jammed us into iron pants. And in the end the age was handed the sort of shit that it demanded.

- Hemingway, Ernest

Hesitation increases in relation to risk in equal proportion to age.

- Hemingway, Ernest

I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious and sacrifice and the expression in vain. We had heard them, sometimes standing in the rain almost out of earshot, so that only the shouted words came through, and had read them, on proclamations that were slapped up by billposters over other proclamations, now for a long time, and I had seen nothing sacred, and the things that were glorious had no glory and the sacrifices were like the stockyards at Chicago if nothing was done with the meat except to bury it.

- Hemingway, Ernest

There is no lonelier man in death, except the suicide, than that man who has lived many years with a good wife and then outlived her. If two people love each other there can be no happy end to it.

- Hemingway, Ernest

This wine is too good for toast-drinking, my dear. You don't want to mix emotions up with a wine like that. You lose the taste.

- Hemingway, Ernest

All my life I've looked at words as though I were seeing them for the first time.

- Hemingway, Ernest

All our words from loose using have lost their edge.

- Hemingway, Ernest

Poor Faulkner. Does he really think big emotions come from big words? He thinks I don't know the ten-dollar words. I know them all right. But there are older and simpler and better words, and those are the ones I use.

- Hemingway, Ernest

The world is a fine place worth the fighting for and I hate very much to leave it.

- Hemingway, Ernest

Writing, at its best, is a lonely life. Organizations for writers palliate the writer's loneliness, but I doubt if they improve his writing. He grows in public stature as he sheds his loneliness and often his work deteriorates. For he does his work alone and if he is a good enough writer he must face eternity, or the lack of it, each day.

- Hemingway, Ernest

I have tried simply to write the best I can. Sometimes I have good luck and write better than I can.

- Hemingway, Ernest

They can't yank a novelist like they can a pitcher. A novelist has to go the full nine, even if it kills him.

- Hemingway, Ernest

A serious writer is not to be confounded with a solemn writer. A serious writer may be a hawk or a buzzard or even a popinjay, but a solemn writer is always a bloody owl.

- Hemingway, Ernest

We are all apprentices in a craft where no one ever becomes a master.

- Hemingway, Ernest

Prose is architecture, not interior decoration, and the Baroque is over.

- Hemingway, Ernest

The most essential gift for a good writer is a built-in, shock-proof, shit detector. This is the writer's radar and all great writers have had it.

- Hemingway, Ernest

The writer must write what he has to say, not speak it.

- Hemingway, Ernest

There is nothing to writing. All you do is sit down at a typewriter and bleed.

- Hemingway, Ernest

If you are lucky enough to have lived in Paris as a young man, then wherever you go for the rest of your life, it stays with you, for Paris is a movable feast.

- Hemingway, Ernest

A man's got to take a lot of punishment to write a really funny book.

- Hemingway, Ernest

If the book is good, is about something that you know, and is truly written, and reading it over you see that this is so, you can let the boys yip and the noise will have that pleasant sound coyotes make on a very cold night when they are out in the snow and you are in your own cabin that you have built or paid for with your work.

- Hemingway, Ernest

Courage is grace under pressure.

- Hemingway, Ernest

Cowardice, as distinguished from panic, is almost always simply a lack of ability to suspend the functioning of the imagination.

- Hemingway, Ernest

From things that have happened and from things as they exist and from all things that you know and all those you cannot know, you make something through your invention that is not a representation but a whole new thing truer than anything true and alive, and you make it alive, and if you make it well enough, you give it immortality. That is why you write and for no other reason that you know of. But what about all the reasons that no one knows?

- Hemingway, Ernest

God knows people who are paid to have attitudes toward things, professional critics, make me sick; camp following eunuchs of literature. They won't even whore. They're all virtuous and sterile. And how well meaning and high minded. But they're all camp followers.

- Hemingway, Ernest

All the critics who could not make their reputations by discovering you are hoping to make them by predicting hopefully your approaching impotence, failure and general drying up of natural juices. Not a one will wish you luck or hope that you will keep on writing unless you have political affiliations in which case these will rally around and speak of you and Homer, Balzac, Zola and Link Steffens.

- Hemingway, Ernest

But man is not made for defeat. A man can be destroyed but not defeated.

- Hemingway, Ernest

You make your own luck, Gig. You know what makes a good loser? Practice.

- Hemingway, Ernest

All good books are alike in that they are truer than if they had really happened and after you are finished reading one you will feel that all that happened to you and afterwards it all belongs to you; the good and the bad, the ecstasy, the remorse and sorrow, the people and the places and how the weather was.

- Hemingway, Ernest



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