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Quotes about Twentieth Century

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The defiance of established authority, religious and secular, social and political, as a world-wide phenomenon may well one day be accounted the outstanding event of the last decade.

- Arendt, Hannah

All that Swinging Sixties nonsense, we all thought it was pass? at the time.

- Bailey, David

The marriage of reason and nightmare which has dominated the 20th century has given birth to an ever more ambiguous world. Across the communications landscape move the specters of sinister technologies and the dreams that money can buy. Thermonuclear weapons systems and soft drink commercials coexist in an overlit realm ruled by advertising and pseudo-events, science and pornography. Over our lives preside the great twin leitmotifs of the 20th century -- sex and paranoia.

- Ballard, J. G.

As the end of the century approaches, all our culture is like the culture of flies at the beginning of winter. Having lost their agility, dreamy and demented, they turn slowly about the window in the first icy mists of morning. They give themselves a last wash and brush-up, their oscillated eyes roll, and they fall down the curtains.

- Baudrillard, Jean

At no previous period has mankind been faced by a half-century which so paradoxically united violence and progress. Its greater and lesser wars and long series of major assassinations have been strangely combined with the liberation of more societies and individuals than ever before in history, and by the transformation of millions of second-class citizens -- women, workers and the members of subject races -- to a stage at which first-rate achievement is no longer inhibited even if opportunities are not yet complete.

- Brittain, Vera

Our civilization survives in the complacency of cowardly or malignant minds -- a sacrifice to the vanity of aging adolescents. In 1953, excess is always a comfort, and sometimes a career.

- Camus, Albert

The real passion of the twentieth century is servitude.

- Camus, Albert

The white youth of today have begun to react to the fact that the American Way of Life is a fossil of history. What do they care if their old baldheaded and crew-cut elders don't dig their caveman mops? They couldn't care less about the old, stiff-assed honkies who don't like their new dances: Frog, Monkey, Jerk, Swim, Watusi. All they know is that it feels good to swing to way-out body-rhythms instead of dragging across the dance floor like zombies to the dead beat of mind-smothered Mickey Mouse music.

- Cleaver, Eldridge

Many people I know in Los Angeles believe that the Sixties ended abruptly on August 9, 1969, ended at the exact moment when word of the murders on Cielo Drive traveled like brushfire through the community, and in a sense this is true. The tension broke that day. The paranoia was fulfilled.

- Didion, Joan

We were that generation called silent, but we were silent neither, as some thought, because we shared the period's official optimism nor, as others thought, because we feared its official repression. We were silent because the exhilaration of social action seemed to many of us just one more way of escaping the personal, of masking for a while that dread of the meaningless which was man's fate.

- Didion, Joan

I confidently predict the collapse of capitalism and the beginning of history. Something will go wrong in the machinery that converts money into money, the banking system will collapse totally, and we will be left having to barter to stay alive. Those who can dig in their garden will have a better chance than the rest. I'll be all right; I've got a few veg.

- Drabble, Margaret

Maybe in the 90s or possibly in the next century people will look upon the 80s as the age of masturbation, when it was taken to the limit; that might be all that's going on right now in a big way.

- Dylan, Bob

People today are still living off the table scraps of the sixties. They are still being passed around -- the music and the ideas.

- Dylan, Bob

In economics, we borrowed from the Bourbons; in foreign policy, we drew on themes fashioned by the nomad warriors of the Eurasian steppes. In spiritual matters, we emulated the braying intolerance of our archenemies, the Shite fundamentalists.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

The 1950s to me is darkness, hidden history, perversion behind most doors waiting to creep out. The 1950s to most people is kitsch and Mickey Mouse watches and all this intolerable stuff...

- Ellroy, James

We can safely abandon the doctrine of the eighties, namely that the rich were not working because they had too little money, the poor because they had much.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

By all but the pathologically romantic, it is now recognized that this is not the age of the small man.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

For me, the lame part of the Sixties was the political part, the social part. The real part was the spiritual part.

- Garcia, Jerry

It is in our interests to let the police and their employers go on believing that the Underground is a conspiracy, because it increases their paranoia and their inability to deal with what is really happening. As long as they look for ringleaders and documents they will miss their mark, which is that proportion of every personality which belongs in the Underground.

- Greer, Germaine

The fifties -- they seem to have taken place on a sunny afternoon that asked nothing of you except a drifting belief in the moment and its power to satisfy.

- Hardwick, Elizabeth

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

I wouldn't wish the eighties on anyone, it was the time when all that was rotten bubbled to the surface. If you were not at the receiving end of this mayhem you could be unaware of it. It was possible to live through the decade preoccupied by the mortgage and the pence you saved on your income tax. It was also possible for those of us who saw what was

happening to turn our eyes in a different direction; but what, in another decade, had been a trip to the clap clinic was now a trip to the mortuary.

- Jarman, Derek

The Great Society is a place where every child can find knowledge to enrich his mind and to enlarge his talents. It is a place where the city of man serves not only the needs of the body and the demands of commerce but the desire for beauty and the hunger for community. It is a place where men are more concerned with the quality of their goals than the quantity of their goods.

- Johnson, Lyndon B.

We stand today on the edge of a new frontier -- the frontier of the 1960s, a frontier of unknown opportunities and perils, a frontier of unfulfilled hopes and threats. The new frontier of which I speak is not a set of promises -- it is a set of challenges.

- Kennedy, John F.

My advice to people today is as follows: If you take the game of life seriously, if you take your nervous system seriously, if you take your sense organs seriously, if you take the energy process seriously, you must turn on, tune in, and drop out.

- Leary, Timothy

We were all on this ship in the sixties, our generation, a ship going to discover the New World. And the Beatles were in the crow's nest of that ship.

- Lennon, John

The thing the sixties did was to show us the possibilities and the responsibility that we all had. It wasn't the answer. It just gave us a glimpse of the possibility.

- Lennon, John

I was lucky enough to see with my own eyes the recent stock-market crash, where they lost several million dollars, a rabble of dead money that went sliding off into the sea. Never as then, amid suicides, hysteria, and groups of fainting people, have I felt the sensation of real death, death without hope, death that is nothing but rottenness, for the spectacle was terrifying but devoid of greatness... I felt something like a divine urge to bombard that whole canyon of shadow, where ambulances collected suicides whose hands were full of rings.

- Lorca, Federico Garcia

The horror of the Twentieth Century was the size of each new event, and the paucity of its reverberation.

- Mailer, Norman

It has to be acknowledged that in capitalist society, with its herds of hippies, originality has become a sort of fringe benefit, a mere convention, accepted obsolescence, the Beatnik model being turned in for the Hippie model, as though strangely obedient to capitalist laws of marketing.

- Mccarthy, Mary

It is the mission of the twentieth century to elucidate the irrational.

- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice

The new man is born too old to tolerate the new world. The present conditions of life have not yet erased the traces of the past. We run too fast, but we still do not move enough. He looks but he does not contemplate, he sees but he does not think. He runs away from time, which is made of thought, and yet all he can feel is his own time, the present.

- Montale, Eugenio

I like to think of my behavior in the sixties as a learning experience. Then again, I like to think of anything stupid I've done as a learning experience. It makes me feel less stupid.

- O'Rourke, P. J.

To say I accept in an age like our own is to say that you accept concentration-camps, rubber truncheons, Hitler, Stalin, bombs, aeroplanes, tinned food, machine guns, putsches, purges, slogans, Bedaux belts, gas-masks, submarines, spies, provocateurs, press-censorship, secret prisons, aspirins, Hollywood films and political murder.

- Orwell, George

My generation of the Sixties, with all our great ideals, destroyed liberalism, because of our excesses.

- Paglia, Camille

The 1990s, after the reign of terror of academic vandalism, will be a decade of restoration:

restoration of meaning, value, beauty, pleasure, and emotion to art and restoration of art to its audience.

- Paglia, Camille

The Sixties, of course, was the worst time in the world to try and bring up a child. They were exposed to all these crazy things going on.

- Reagan, Nancy

If anything characterizes the cultural life of the seventies in America, it is an insistence on preventing failures of communication.

- Rosen, Richard D.

This filthy twentieth century. I hate its guts.

- Rowse, A. L.

I knew the youthfulness of the sixties: Talitha and Paul Getty lying on a starlit terrace in Marrakesh, beautiful and damned, and a whole generation assembled as if for eternity where the curtain of the past seemed to lift before an extraordinary future.

- Saint-Laurent, Yves

History is hard to know, because of all the hired bullshit, but even without being sure of history it seems entirely reasonable to think that every now and then the energy of a whole generation comes to a head in a long fine flash, for reasons that nobody really understands at the time -- and which never explain, in retrospect, what actually happened.

- Thompson, Hunter S.

Though the Jazz Age continued it became less and less an affair of youth. The sequel was like a children's party taken over by the elders.

- Unknown, Source

The early twenties when we drank wood alcohol and every day in every way grew better and better, and there was a first abortive shortening of the skirts, and girls all looked alike in sweater dresses, and people you didn't want to know said Yes, we have no bananas, and it seemed only a question of a few years before the older people would step aside and let the world be run by those who saw things as they were -- and it all seems rosy and romantic to us who were young then, because we will never feel quite so intensely about our surroundings any more.

- Unknown, Source

Never before has a civilization reached such a degree of a contempt for life; never before has a generation, drowned in mortification, felt such a rage to live.

- Vaneigem, Raoul

All in all, I would not have missed this century for the world.

- Vidal, Gore

The last best hope of earth, two trillion dollars in debt, is spinning out of control, and all we can do is stare at a flickering cathode-ray tube as Ollie answers questions on TV while the

press, resolutely irrelevant as ever, asks politicians if they have committed adultery. From V-J Day 1945 to this has been, my fellow countrymen, a perfect nightmare.

- Vidal, Gore

Infantilism is possibly the hallmark of our generation.

- Wells, John



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