

Alan Bennett

Quotes

*Book, Reading, People, Play, Thinking, Mean, Children, Men, Writing, Life,
School, Film, Boys, Long, Inspirational, Humanity, Expression, Wall, Science,
Artist*

Sometimes there is no next time, no time-outs, no second chances. Sometimes it's now or never.

~Alan Bennett

Life is rather like a tin of sardines - we're all of us looking for the key.

~Alan Bennett

History is a commentary on the various and continuing incapacibilities of men. What is history? History is women following behind with the bucket.

~Alan Bennett

A bookshelf is as particular to its owner as are his or her clothes; a personality is stamped on a library just as a shoe is shaped by the foot.

~Alan Bennett

If you think squash is a competitive activity, try flower arranging.

~Alan Bennett

The majority of people perform well in a crisis and when the spotlight is on them; it's on the Sunday afternoons of this life, when nobody is looking, that the spirit falters.

~Alan Bennett

Mark my words, when a society has to resort to the lavatory for its humour, the writing is on the wall.

~Alan Bennett

I saw someone peeing in Jermyn Street the other day. I thought, is this the end of civilization as we know it? Or is it simply someone peeing in Jermyn Street?

~Alan Bennett

Above literature?' said the Queen. 'Who is above literature? You might

as well say one was above humanity.

~Alan Bennett

We started off trying to set up a small anarchist community, but people wouldn't obey the rules.

~Alan Bennett

Life is like a box of sardines and we are all looking for the key.

~Alan Bennett

What she was finding also was how one book led to another, doors kept opening wherever she turned and the days weren't long enough for the reading she wanted to do.

~Alan Bennett

The Breed never dies. Sapper, Buchan, Dornford Yates, practitioners in that school of Snobbery with Violence that runs like a thread of good-class tweed through twentieth-century literature.

~Alan Bennett

A book is a device to ignite the imagination.

~Alan Bennett

What I'm above all primarily concerned with is the substance of life, the pith of reality. If I had to sum up my work, I suppose that's it really: I'm taking the pith out of reality.

~Alan Bennett

That's a bit like asking a man crawling across the Sahara whether he would prefer Perrier or Malvern water.

~Alan Bennett

I don't talk very well. With writing, you've time to get it right. Also I've found the more I talk the less I write, and if I didn't write no one would

want me to talk anyway.

~Alan Bennett

You don't put your life into your books, you find it there.

~Alan Bennett

Books are not about passing the time. They're about other lives. Other worlds.

~Alan Bennett

So boring you fall asleep halfway through her name.

~Alan Bennett

Reading is untidy, discursive and perpetually inviting.

~Alan Bennett

At eighty things do not occur; they recur.

~Alan Bennett

Memories are not shackles, Franklin, they are garlands.

~Alan Bennett

Never read the Bible as if it means something. Or at any rate don't try and mean it. Nor prayers. The liturgy is best treated and read as if it's someone announcing the departure of trains.

~Alan Bennett

Your whole life is on the other side of the glass. And there is nobody watching.

~Alan Bennett

Have you ever thought, headmaster, that your standards might perhaps be a little out of date? Of course they're out of date. Standards are always out of date. That is what makes them standards.

~Alan Bennett

One reads for pleasure...it is not a public duty.

~Alan Bennett

Art comes out of art; it begins with imitation, often in the form of parody, and it's in the process of imitating the voice of others that one comes to learn the sound of one's own.

~Alan Bennett

I'm not good at precise, coherent argument. But plays are suited to incoherent argument, put into the mouths of fallible people.

~Alan Bennett

You always know when you're going to arrive. If you go by car, you don't. Apart from anything else, I prefer cycling. It puts you in a good mood, I find.

~Alan Bennett

It seems to me the mark of a civilized society that certain privileges should be taken for granted such as education, health care and the safety to walk the streets.

~Alan Bennett

It's subjunctive history. You know, the subjunctive? The mood used when something may or may not have happened. When it is imagined.

~Alan Bennett

Life is generally something that happens elsewhere.

~Alan Bennett

f they'd been working with Alec Guinness, for instance, they wouldn't have known they were born if they'd not towed the line!

~Alan Bennett

The days weren't long enough for the reading she wanted to do.

~Alan Bennett

Children always assume the sexual lives of their parents come to a grinding halt at their conception.

~Alan Bennett

My films are about embarrassment.

~Alan Bennett

We were put to Dickens as children but it never quite took. That unremitting humanity soon had me cheesed off.

~Alan Bennett

I turned down a knighthood. It would be like having to wear a suit every day of your life.

~Alan Bennett

Cancer, like any other illness, is a bore.

~Alan Bennett

Those who have known the famous are publicly debriefed of their memories, knowing as their own dusk falls that they will only be remembered for remembering someone else.

~Alan Bennett

I lack what the English call character, by which they mean the power to refrain.

~Alan Bennett

I'm all in favour of free expression provided it's kept rigidly under control.

~Alan Bennett

No mention of God. They keep Him up their sleeves for as long as they can, vicars do. They know it puts people off.

~Alan Bennett

Philip Larkin used to cheer himself up by looking in the mirror and saying the line from Rebecca, 'I am Mrs de Winter now!'

~Alan Bennett

If I am doing nothing, I like to be doing nothing to some purpose. That is what leisure means.

~Alan Bennett

An article on playwrights in the Daily Mail, listed according to Hard Left, Soft Left, Hard Right, Soft Right and Centre. I am not listed. I should probably come under Soft Centre.

~Alan Bennett

I'm not "happy" but I'm not unhappy about it.

~Alan Bennett

The longer I practise medicine, the more convinced I am there are only two types of cases: those that involve taking the trousers off and those that don't.

~Alan Bennett

I have never understood disliking for war. It panders to instincts already catered for within the scope of any respectable domestic establishment.

~Alan Bennett

Nature played a cruel trick on her by giving her a waxed mustache.

~Alan Bennett

Schweitzer in the Congo did not derive more moral credit than Larkin

did for living in Hull.

~Alan Bennett

Definition of a classic: a book everyone is assumed to have read and often thinks they have.

~Alan Bennett

If you find yourself born in Barnsley and then set your sights on being Virginia Woolf it is not going to be roses all the way.

~Alan Bennett

Polly: Education with socialists, it's like sex, all right as long as you don't have to pay for it.

~Alan Bennett

To play Trivial Pursuit with a life like mine could be said to be a form of homeopathy.

~Alan Bennett

Were we closer to the ground as children, or is the grass emptier now?

~Alan Bennett

Here I sit, alone at 60, Bald and fat and full of sin
Cold the seat, and loud the cistern
As I read the (Harpic) (Lysol) tin

~Alan Bennett

... Once I start a book I finish it. That was the way one was brought up. Books, bread and butter, mashed potato - one finishes what's on one's plate. That's always been my philosophy.

~Alan Bennett

Clichés can be quite fun. That's how they got to be clichés.

~Alan Bennett

All the effort went into getting there and then I had nothing left. I thought I'd got somewhere, then I found I had to go on.

~Alan Bennett

The thing I think about is that once you've done it, you then start to think about what you're going to do next. It's much easier to follow something that's not been as successful as this.

~Alan Bennett

It was the kind of library he had only read about in books.

~Alan Bennett

...she felt about reading what some writers felt about writing: that it was impossible not to do it and that at this late stage of her life she had been chosen to read as others were chosen to write.

~Alan Bennett

Cloisters, ancient libraries ... I was confusing learning with the smell of cold stone.

~Alan Bennett

One of the hardest things for boys to learn is that a teacher is human. One of the hardest things for a teacher to learn is not to try and tell them.

~Alan Bennett

It's the one species I wouldn't mind seeing vanish from the face of the earth. I wish they were like the White Rhinosix of them left in the Serengeti National Park, and all males.

~Alan Bennett

There is no such thing as a good script, only a good film, and I'm conscious that my scripts often read better than they play.

~Alan Bennett

Had your forefathers, Wigglesworth, been as stupid as you are, the human race would never have succeeded in procreating itself.

~Alan Bennett

One recipe for happiness is to have to sense of entitlement.' To this she added a star and noted at the bottom of the page: 'This is not a lesson I have ever been in a position to learn.

~Alan Bennett

Standards are always out of date. That's what makes them standards.

~Alan Bennett

Our father the novelist; my husband the poet. He belongs to the ages - just don't catch him at breakfast. Artists, celebrated for their humanity, they turn out to be scarcely human at all.

~Alan Bennett

God doesn't do notes, either. Did Jesus Christ say, "Can I be excused the Crucifixion?" No!

~Alan Bennett

I've never seen the point of the sea, except where it meets the land. The shore has a point. The sea has none.

~Alan Bennett

I write plays about things that I can't resolve in my mind. I try to root things out.

~Alan Bennett

Why is it always the "intelligent" people who are socialists?

~Alan Bennett

Of course my standards are out of date! That's why they're called standards.

~Alan Bennett

I can walk. It's just that I'm so rich I don't need to.

~Alan Bennett

I'm for the freedom of expression, given that it will be under strict control.

~Alan Bennett

To read is to withdraw. To make oneself unavailable. One would feel easier about it if the pursuit in itself were less...selfish.

~Alan Bennett

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