

# Archibald MacLeish

## Quotes

*Men, Atheism, Should, America, Art, Practice, Freedom, Country, Opposites,  
World, Mirrors, Writing, Giving, Liberty, Love Is, Fall, Ideas, Self, Mean,  
Beautiful*

Beauty is that Medusa's head which men go armed to seek and sever, and dead will starve and sting forever.

~Archibald MacLeish

Democracy is never a thing done. Democracy is always something that a nation must be doing.

~Archibald MacLeish

A man who lives, not by what he loves but what he hates, is a sick man.

~Archibald MacLeish

There is only one thing more painful than learning from experience and that is not learning from experience.

~Archibald MacLeish

Once you permit those who are convinced of their own superior rightness to censor and silence and suppress those who hold contrary opinions, just at that moment the citadel has been surrendered.

~Archibald MacLeish

The only thing about a man that is a man . . . is his mind. Everything else you can find in a pig or a horse.

~Archibald MacLeish

The dissenter is every human being at those moments of his life when he resigns momentarily from the herd and thinks for himself.

~Archibald MacLeish

As things are now going the peace we make, what peace we seem to be making, will be a peace of oil, a peace of gold, a peace of shipping, a peace in brief, without moral purpose or human interest.

~Archibald MacLeish

See the world as it truly is, small and blue, beautiful in that eternal silence where it floats.

~Archibald MacLeish

There is no dusk to be, There is no dawn that was, Only there's now, and now, And the wind in the grass.

~Archibald MacLeish

A poem should not mean but be.

~Archibald MacLeish

Love becomes the ultimate answer to the ultimate human question.

~Archibald MacLeish

That peculiar disease of intellectuals, that infatuation with ideas at the expense of experience, that compels experience to conform to bookish expectations.

~Archibald MacLeish

There are those, I know, who will say that the liberation of humanity, the freedom of man and mind, is nothing but a dream. They are right. It is the American dream.

~Archibald MacLeish

The business of the law is to make sense of the confusion of what we call human life - to reduce it to order but at the same time to give it possibility, scope, even dignity.

~Archibald MacLeish

What is more important in a library than anything else-than everything else-is the fact that it exists.

~Archibald MacLeish

A Poem should be palpable and mute As a globed fruit.

~Archibald MacLeish

A self-advertising writer is always a self-extinguished writer.

~Archibald MacLeish

History, like a badly constructed concert hall, has occasional dead spots where the music can't be heard.

~Archibald MacLeish

We have no choice but to be guilty. God is unthinkable if we are innocent.

~Archibald MacLeish

Journalism is concerned with events, poetry with feelings. Journalism is concerned with the look of the world, poetry with the feel of the world.

~Archibald MacLeish

You burned the city of London in our houses and we felt the flames.

~Archibald MacLeish

Freedom is the right to one's dignity as a man.

~Archibald MacLeish

Writers . . . write to give reality to experience.

~Archibald MacLeish

Conventional wisdom notwithstanding, there is no reason either in football or in poetry why the two should not meet in a man's life if he has the weight and cares about the words.

~Archibald MacLeish

Without guilt / What is a man? An animal, isn't he? / A wolf forgiven at his meat, / A beetle innocent in his copulation.

~Archibald MacLeish

The infantile cowardice of our time which demands an external pattern, a nonhuman authority.

~Archibald MacLeish

They also live Who swerve and vanish in the river.

~Archibald MacLeish

Children know the grace of god better than most of us. They see the world the way the morning brings it back to them; new and born and fresh and wonderful.

~Archibald MacLeish

Keepers of books, keepers of print and paper on the shelves, librarians are keepers also of the records of the human spirit the records of men's watch upon the world and on themselves.

~Archibald MacLeish

Poetry which owes no man anything, owes nevertheless one debt - an image of the world in which men can again believe.

~Archibald MacLeish

The perversion of the mind is only possible when those who should be heard in its defence are silent.

~Archibald MacLeish

The task of man is not to discover new worlds, but to discover his own world in terms of human comprehension and beauty.

~Archibald MacLeish

Man can live his truth, his deepest truth, but cannot speak it.

~Archibald MacLeish

Poets... are literal-minded men who will squeeze a word till it hurts.

~Archibald MacLeish

The American journey has not ended. America is always still to build ...  
West is a country in the mind, and so eternal.

~Archibald MacLeish

America is promises to take! America is promises to us to take them.

~Archibald MacLeish

Young poets are advised by their elders to avoid the practice of  
journalism as they would wet socks and gin before breakfast.

~Archibald MacLeish

If the art of poetry is?the art of making sense of the chaos of human  
experience, it's not a bad thing to see a lot of chaos.

~Archibald MacLeish

The roots of the grass strain, Tighten, the earth is rigid, waits-he is  
waiting- And suddenly, and all at once, the rain!

~Archibald MacLeish

Piety's hard enough to take among the poor who have to practice it. A  
rich man's piety stinks. It's insufferable.

~Archibald MacLeish

If the poem can be improved by the author's explanations, it never  
should have been published.

~Archibald MacLeish

What once was cuddled must learn to kiss The cold wonn's mouth.  
That's all the mystery.

~Archibald MacLeish

The map of America is a map of endlessness, of opening out, of forever  
and ever. No man's face would make you think of it but his hope might,  
his courage might.

~Archibald MacLeish

We are as great as our belief in human liberty - no greater. And our belief in human liberty is only ours when it is larger than ourselves.

~Archibald MacLeish

Around, around the sun we go: The moon goes round the earth. We do not die of death: We die of vertigo.

~Archibald MacLeish

A real writer learns from earlier writers the way a boy learns from an apple orchard -- by stealing what he has a taste for, and can carry off

~Archibald MacLeish

A poem should be wordless As the flight of birds.

~Archibald MacLeish

Poetry is the art of understanding what it is to be alive.

~Archibald MacLeish

If God is God He is not good, if God is good He is not God; take the even, take the odd.

~Archibald MacLeish

A world ends when its metaphor has died.

~Archibald MacLeish

We have learned the answers, all the answers: it is the question that we do not know.

~Archibald MacLeish

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