

# Barbara Tuchman

## Quotes

*War, Book, Government, History, Power, Writing, Men, Church, Humanity, Thinking, Sin, Ideas, Reality, Years, World, Law, Military, People, Art, Kings*

War is the unfolding of miscalculations.

~Barbara Tuchman

Books are the carriers of civilization. Without books, history is silent, literature dumb, science crippled, thought and speculation at a standstill.

~Barbara Tuchman

The nastiness of women [in the 14th century] was generally perceived at the close of life when a man began to worry about hell, and his sexual desire in any case fading.

~Barbara Tuchman

Books are humanity in print.

~Barbara Tuchman

More than a code of manners in war and love, Chivalry was a moral system, governing the whole of noble life.

~Barbara Tuchman

To put on the garment of legitimacy is the first aim of every coup.

~Barbara Tuchman

Strong prejudices in an ill-formed mind are hazardous to government, and when combined with a position of power even more so.

~Barbara Tuchman

The fleet sailed to its war base in the North Sea, headed not so much for some rendezvous with glory as for rendezvous with discretion.

~Barbara Tuchman

What his imagination is to the poet, facts are to the historian. His exercise of judgment comes in their selection, his art in their arrangement.

~Barbara Tuchman

Business, like a jackal, trotted on the heels of war.

~Barbara Tuchman

One must stop conducting research before one has finished.  
Otherwise, one will never stop and never finish.

~Barbara Tuchman

Diplomacy means all the wicked devices of the Old World, spheres of influence, balances of power, secret treaties, triple alliances, and, during the interim period, appeasement of Fascism.

~Barbara Tuchman

Every successful revolution puts on in time the robes of the tyrant it has deposed.

~Barbara Tuchman

An essential element for good writing is a good ear: One must listen to the sound of one's own prose.

~Barbara Tuchman

The unrecorded past is none other than our old friend, the tree in the primeval forest which fell without being heard

~Barbara Tuchman

Money was the crux. Raising money to pay the cost of war was to cause more damage to 14th century society than the physical destruction of war itself.

~Barbara Tuchman

The better part of valor is to spend it learning to live with differences, however hostile, unless and until we can find another planet.

~Barbara Tuchman

Words are seductive and dangerous material, to be used with caution.

~Barbara Tuchman

The writer's object is - or should be - to hold the reader's attention.

~Barbara Tuchman

To a historian libraries are food, shelter, and even muse. They are of two kinds: the library of published material, books, pamphlets, periodicals, and the archive of unpublished papers and documents.

~Barbara Tuchman

Without books, history is silent, literature dumb, science crippled.

~Barbara Tuchman

Woman was the Church's rival, the temptress, the distraction, the obstacle to holiness, the Devil's decoy.

~Barbara Tuchman

Books are the carriers of civilization... Books are humanity in print.

~Barbara Tuchman

The power to command frequently causes failure to think.

~Barbara Tuchman

Reasonable orders are easy enough to obey; it is capricious, bureaucratic or plain idiotic demands that form the habit of discipline.

~Barbara Tuchman

in the midst of war and crisis nothing is as clear or as certain as it appears in hindsight

~Barbara Tuchman

To put away one's own original thoughts in order to take up a book is a sin against the Holy Ghost.

~Barbara Tuchman

I have always been in a condition in which I cannot not write.

~Barbara Tuchman

For most people reform meant relief from ecclesiastical extortions.

~Barbara Tuchman

To gain victory over the flesh was the purpose of fasting and celibacy, which denied the pleasures of this world for the sake of reward in the next.

~Barbara Tuchman

Honor wears different coats to different eyes.

~Barbara Tuchman

Nothing sickens me more than the closed door of a library.

~Barbara Tuchman

When people don't have an objective, there's much less dynamic effort, and that makes life a lot less interesting.

~Barbara Tuchman

One constant among the elements of 1914—“as of any era”—was the disposition of everyone on all sides not to prepare for the harder alternative, not to act upon what they suspected to be true.

~Barbara Tuchman

I want the reader to turn the page and keep on turning to the end.

~Barbara Tuchman

bureaucracy, safely repeating today what it did yesterday, rolls on as ineluctably as some vast computer, which, once penetrated by error, duplicates it forever.

~Barbara Tuchman

To be a bestseller is not necessarily a measure of quality, but it is a measure of communication.

~Barbara Tuchman

Historians who stuff in every item of research they have found, every shoelace and telephone call of a biographical subject, are not doing the hard work of selecting and shaping a readable story.

~Barbara Tuchman

No more distressing moment can ever face a British government than that which requires it to come to a hard, fast and specific decision.

~Barbara Tuchman

Nothing is more satisfying than to write a good sentence.

~Barbara Tuchman

Dead battles, like dead generals, hold the military mind in their dead grip.

~Barbara Tuchman

Nothing so comforts the military mind as the maxim of a great but dead general.

~Barbara Tuchman

In individuals as in nations, contentment is silent, which tends to unbalance the historical record.

~Barbara Tuchman

A phenomenon noticeable throughout history regardless of place or period is the pursuit by governments of policies contrary to their own interests.

~Barbara Tuchman

Wisdom - meaning judgment acting on experience, common sense, available knowledge, and a decent appreciation of probability.

~Barbara Tuchman

Friendship of a kind that cannot easily be reversed tomorrow must have its roots in common interests and shared beliefs.

~Barbara Tuchman

Above all, discard the irrelevant.

~Barbara Tuchman

Government remains the paramount area of folly because it is there that men seek power over others - only to lose it over themselves.

~Barbara Tuchman

If I had taken a doctoral degree, it would have stifled any writing capacity.

~Barbara Tuchman

When commerce with Moslems flourished, zeal for their massacre declined.

~Barbara Tuchman

Learning from experience is a faculty almost never practiced

~Barbara Tuchman

Human behavior is timeless.

~Barbara Tuchman

satire is a wrapping of exaggeration around a core of reality.

~Barbara Tuchman

Theology being the work of males, original sin was traced to the female.

~Barbara Tuchman

In the midst of events there is no perspective.

~Barbara Tuchman

If wisdom in government eludes us, perhaps courage could substitute-the moral courage to terminate mistakes.

~Barbara Tuchman

Arguments can always be found to turn desire into policy.

~Barbara Tuchman

I have always felt like an artist when I work on a book. I see no reason why the word should always be confined to writers of fiction and poetry.

~Barbara Tuchman

Governments do not like to face radical remedies; it is easier to let politics predominate.

~Barbara Tuchman

Voluntary self-directed religion was more dangerous to the Church than any number of infidels.

~Barbara Tuchman

Vainglory, however, no matter how much medieval Christianity insisted it was a sin, is a motor of mankind, no more eradicable than sex.

~Barbara Tuchman

Of all the ills that our poor ... society is heir to, the focal one, it seems to me, from which so much of our uneasiness and confusion derive, is the absence of standards.

~Barbara Tuchman



That conflict between the reach for the divine and the lure of earthly things was to be the central problem of the Middle Ages.

~Barbara Tuchman

To be right and overruled is not forgiven to persons in responsible positions.

~Barbara Tuchman

To a historian libraries are food, shelter, and even muse.

~Barbara Tuchman

The social damage was not in the failure but in the undertaking, which was expensive. The cost of war was the poison running through the 14th century.

~Barbara Tuchman

The Hundred Years' War, like the crises of the Church in the same period, broke apart medieval unity.

~Barbara Tuchman

Completeness is rare in history.

~Barbara Tuchman

No nation in the world has so many drastic problems squeezed into so small a space, under such urgent pressure of time and heavy burden of history, as Israel.

~Barbara Tuchman

Christianity in its ideas was never the art of the possible.

~Barbara Tuchman

The fact of being reported increases the apparent extent of a deplorable development by a factor of ten.

~Barbara Tuchman

The Church [in the 14th century] gave ceremony and dignity to lives that had little of either. It was the source of beauty and art to which all had some access and which many helped to create.

~Barbara Tuchman

For belligerent purposes, the 14th century, like the 20th, commanded a technology more sophisticated than the mental and moral capacity that guided its use.

~Barbara Tuchman

The reality of a question is inevitably more complicated than we would like to suppose.

~Barbara Tuchman

The costliest myth of our time has been the myth of the Communist monolith.

~Barbara Tuchman

For me, the card catalog has been a companion all my working life. To leave it is like leaving the house one was brought up in.

~Barbara Tuchman

Whatever solace the Christian faith could give was balanced by the anxiety it generated.

~Barbara Tuchman

If it is not profitable for the common good that authority should be retained, it ought to be relinquished.

~Barbara Tuchman

Human beings, like plans, prove fallible in the presence of those ingredients that are missing in maneuvers - danger, death, and live ammunition.

~Barbara Tuchman

Human beings of any age need to approve of themselves; the bad times in history come when they cannot.

~Barbara Tuchman

We seem to be afflicted by a widespread and eroding reluctance to take any stand on any values, moral, behavioral or esthetic.

~Barbara Tuchman

Rome had Caesar, a man of remarkable governing talents, although it must be said that a ruler who arouses opponents to resort to assassination is probably not as smart as he ought to be.

~Barbara Tuchman

When the gap between ideal and real becomes too wide, the system breaks down.

~Barbara Tuchman

Russians, in the knowledge of inexhaustible supplies of manpower, are accustomed to accepting gigantic fatalities with comparative calm.

~Barbara Tuchman

That the Jews were unholy was a belief so ingrained by the Church [by the 14th century] that the most devout persons were the harshest in their antipathy, none more so than St. Louis.

~Barbara Tuchman

The story and study of the past, both recent and distant, will not reveal the future, but it flashes beacon lights along the way and it is a useful nostrum against despair.

~Barbara Tuchman

Fateful moments tend to evoke grandeur of speech, especially in French.

~Barbara Tuchman

If all were equalized by death, as the medieval idea constantly emphasized, was it not possible that inequalities on earth were contrary to the will of God?

~Barbara Tuchman

The poets have familiarized more people with history than have the historians.

~Barbara Tuchman

Doctrine tied itself into infinite knots over the realities of sex.

~Barbara Tuchman

[T]he obverse of facile emotion in the 14th century was a general insensitivity to the spectacle of pain and death.

~Barbara Tuchman

The conduct of war was so much more interesting than its prevention.

~Barbara Tuchman

When truth and reason cannot be heard, then must presumption rule.

~Barbara Tuchman

In the United States we have a society pervaded from top to bottom by contempt for the law.

~Barbara Tuchman

I ask myself, have nations ever declined from a loss of moral sense rather than from physical reasons or the pressure of barbarians? I think that they have.

~Barbara Tuchman

No female iniquity was more severely condemned than the habit of plucking eyebrows and the hairline to heighten the forehead.

~Barbara Tuchman

The appetite for power is old and irrepressible in humankind, and in its action almost always destructive.

~Barbara Tuchman

If power corrupts, weakness in the seat of power, with its constant necessity of deals and bribes and compromising arrangements, corrupts even more.

~Barbara Tuchman

Confronted by menace, or what is perceived as menace, governments will usually attempt to smash it, rarely to examine it, understand it, define it.

~Barbara Tuchman

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