

# H. L. Mencken

## Quotes

*Men, Believe, Freedom, Funny, War, Government, Thinking, Ideas, People,  
Democracy, Writing, Political, Law, Love, Religion, Lying, Marriage, Life,  
Literature, Liberty*

On some great and glorious day the plain folks of the land will reach their heart's desire at last, and the White House will be adorned by a downright moron.

~H. L. Mencken

The demagogue is one who preaches doctrines he knows to be untrue to men he knows to be idiots.

~H. L. Mencken

Love is like war: easy to begin but very hard to stop.

~H. L. Mencken

The whole aim of practical politics is to keep the populace alarmed (and hence clamorous to be led to safety) by menacing it with an endless series of hobgoblins, all of them imaginary.

~H. L. Mencken

Morality is doing what is right, no matter what you are told. Religion is doing what you are told, no matter what is right.

~H. L. Mencken

Every normal man must be tempted, at times, to spit on his hands, hoist the black flag, and begin slitting throats.

~H. L. Mencken

Democracy is a pathetic belief in the collective wisdom of individual ignorance.

~H. L. Mencken

It is inaccurate to say that I hate everything. I am strongly in favor of common sense, common honesty, and common decency. This makes me forever ineligible for public office.

~H. L. Mencken

Democracy is also a form of worship. It is the worship of Jackals by Jackasses.

~H. L. Mencken

Puritanism. The haunting fear that someone, somewhere, may be happy.

~H. L. Mencken

The urge to save humanity is almost always a false front for the urge to rule.

~H. L. Mencken

We are here and it is now. Further than that, all human knowledge is moonshine.

~H. L. Mencken

Every election is a sort of advance auction sale of stolen goods.

~H. L. Mencken

Life is a constant oscillation between the sharp horns of dilemmas.

~H. L. Mencken

Have you ever watched a crab on the shore crawling backward in search of the Atlantic Ocean, and missing? That's the way the mind of man operates.

~H. L. Mencken

The men the American people admire most extravagantly are the most daring liars; the men they detest most violently are those who try to tell them the truth.

~H. L. Mencken

Under democracy one party always devotes its chief energies to trying to prove that the other party is unfit to rule—and both commonly

succeed, and are right.

~H. L. Mencken

Most people want security in this world, not liberty.

~H. L. Mencken

Love is the triumph of imagination over intelligence.

~H. L. Mencken

For every problem, there is a solution that is simple, neat, and wrong.

~H. L. Mencken

A good politician is quite as unthinkable as an honest burglar.

~H. L. Mencken

Every decent man is ashamed of the government he lives under.

~H. L. Mencken

There is always an easy solution to every problem - neat, plausible, and wrong.

~H. L. Mencken

As the arteries grow hard, the heart grows soft.

~H. L. Mencken

War will never cease until babies begin to come into the world with larger cerebrums and smaller adrenal glands.

~H. L. Mencken

If a politician found he had cannibals among his constituents, he would promise them missionaries for dinner.

~H. L. Mencken

An idealist is one who, on noticing that roses smell better than a

cabbage, concludes that it will also make better soup.

~H. L. Mencken

Democracy is the art and science of running the circus from the monkey cage.

~H. L. Mencken

All human progress, even in morals, has been the work of men who have doubted the current moral values, not of men who have whooped them up and tried to enforce them.

~H. L. Mencken

A man of active and resilient mind outwears his friendships just as certainly as he outwears his love affairs, his politics and his epistemology.

~H. L. Mencken

The chief contribution of Protestantism to human thought is its massive proof that God is a bore.

~H. L. Mencken

To denounce moralizing out of hand is to pronounce a moral judgment.

~H. L. Mencken

It is hard to believe that a man is telling the truth when you know that you would lie if you were in his place.

~H. L. Mencken

Historian: an unsuccessful novelist.

~H. L. Mencken

The opera is to music what a bawdy house is to a cathedral.

~H. L. Mencken

Poetry has done enough when it charms, but prose must also convince.

~H. L. Mencken

The way to hold a husband is to keep him a little jealous; the way to lose him is to keep him a little more jealous.

~H. L. Mencken

Socialist: A man suffering from an overwhelming conviction to believe what is not true.

~H. L. Mencken

The older I grow the more I distrust the familiar doctrine that age brings wisdom.

~H. L. Mencken

Immortality is the condition of a dead man who doesn't believe he is dead

~H. L. Mencken

Nothing is so abject and pathetic as a politician who has lost his job, save only a retired stud-horse.

~H. L. Mencken

The war on privilege will never end. Its next great campaign will be against the special privileges of the underprivileged.

~H. L. Mencken

The State doesn't just want you to obey, it wants to make you WANT to obey.

~H. L. Mencken

To be in love is merely to be in a state of perceptual anesthesia - to mistake an ordinary young woman for a goddess.

~H. L. Mencken

The military caste did not originate as a party of patriots, but as a party of bandits

~H. L. Mencken

On one issue, at least, men and women agree. They both distrust women.

~H. L. Mencken

We must respect the other fellow's religion, but only in the sense and to the extent that we respect his theory that his wife is beautiful and his children smart.

~H. L. Mencken

Laws are no longer made by a rational process of public discussion; they are made by a process of blackmail and intimidation, and they are executed in the same manner

~H. L. Mencken

A cynic is a man who, when he smells flowers, looks around for a coffin.

~H. L. Mencken

It is the classic fallacy of our time that a moron run through a university and decorated with a Ph.D. will thereby cease to be a moron.

~H. L. Mencken

A judge is a law student who marks his own examination papers.

~H. L. Mencken

It is even harder for the average ape to believe that he has descended from man.

~H. L. Mencken

The most dangerous man to any government is the man who is able to think things out for himself.

~H. L. Mencken

Dachshund: A half-a-dog high and a dog-and-a-half long.

~H. L. Mencken

The lunatic fringe wags the underdog.

~H. L. Mencken

The state remains, as it was in the beginning, the common enemy of all well-disposed, industrious and decent men.

~H. L. Mencken

The best teacher is not the one who knows most but the one who is most capable of reducing knowledge to that simple compound of the obvious and wonderful.

~H. L. Mencken

Misogynist: A man who hates women as much as women hate one another.

~H. L. Mencken

You can't do anything about the length of your life, but you can do something about its width and depth.

~H. L. Mencken

Equality before the law is probably forever unattainable. It is a noble ideal, but it can never be realized, for what men value in this world is not rights but privileges.

~H. L. Mencken

I believe that religion, generally speaking, has been a curse to mankind.



~H. L. Mencken

Love is photogenic. It needs darkness room to develop

~H. L. Mencken

It is impossible to imagine Goethe or Beethoven being good at billiards or golf.

~H. L. Mencken

In this world of sin and sorrow there is always something to be thankful for; as for me, I rejoice that I am not a Republican.

~H. L. Mencken

It is not materialism that is the chief curse of the world, as pastors teach, but idealism. Men get into trouble by taking their visions and hallucinations too seriously.

~H. L. Mencken

All government is, in its essence, organized exploitation, and in virtually all of its existing forms it is the implacable enemy of every industrious and well-disposed man.

~H. L. Mencken

The great artists of the world are never Puritans, and seldom even ordinarily respectable.

~H. L. Mencken

All men are frauds. The only difference between them is that some admit it. I myself deny it.

~H. L. Mencken

the average man does not want to be free. he simply wants to be safe.

~H. L. Mencken

The ideal Government of all reflective men, from Aristotle onward, is one which lets the individual alone - one which barely escapes being no government at all.

~H. L. Mencken

The essence of science is that it is always willing to abandon a given idea for a better one; the essence of theology is that it holds its truths to be eternal and immutable.

~H. L. Mencken

Alimony - the ransom that the happy pay to the devil.

~H. L. Mencken

How little it takes to make life unbearable: a pebble in the shoe, a cockroach in the spaghetti, a woman's laugh.

~H. L. Mencken

No married man is genuinely happy if he has to drink worse whisky than he used to drink when he was single.

~H. L. Mencken

Nobody ever went broke underestimating the taste of the American public.

~H. L. Mencken

Sometimes the idiots outvote the sensible people.

~H. L. Mencken

There is always a well-known solution to every human problem - neat, plausible, and wrong.

~H. L. Mencken

School days, I believe, are the unhappiest in the whole span of human existence.

~H. L. Mencken

The only kind of freedom that the mob can imagine is freedom to annoy and oppress its betters, and that is precisely the kind that we mainly have.

~H. L. Mencken

The one permanent emotion of the inferior man is fear - fear of the unknown, the complex, the inexplicable. What he wants above everything else is safety.

~H. L. Mencken

Freedom of press is limited to those who own one.

~H. L. Mencken

If, after I depart this vale, you ever remember me and have thought to please my ghost, forgive some sinner and wink your eye at some homely girl.

~H. L. Mencken

Religion is fundamentally opposed to everything I hold in veneration - courage, clear thinking, honesty, fairness, and, above all, love of the truth.

~H. L. Mencken

I believe that it is better to tell the truth than to lie. I believe that it is better to be free than to be a slave. And I believe that it is better to know than be ignorant.

~H. L. Mencken

I believe that all government is evil, and that trying to improve it is largely a waste of time.

~H. L. Mencken

Government is actually the worst failure of civilized man.

~H. L. Mencken

Bachelors know more about women than married men; if they didn't they'd be married too.

~H. L. Mencken

The common argument that crime is caused by poverty is a kind of slander on the poor.

~H. L. Mencken

There's really no point to voting. If it made any difference, it would probably be illegal.

~H. L. Mencken

We must be willing to pay a price for freedom.

~H. L. Mencken

Democracy is the theory that the common people know what they want, and deserve to get it good and hard.

~H. L. Mencken

When somebody says it's not about the money, it's about the money.

~H. L. Mencken

The martini: the only American invention as perfect as the sonnet.

~H. L. Mencken

Faith may be defined briefly as an illogical belief in the occurrence of the improbable.

~H. L. Mencken

The older I get the more I admire and crave competence, just simple competence, in any field from adultery to zoology.

~H. L. Mencken

I believe in only one thing: liberty; but I do not believe in liberty enough to want to force it upon anyone.

~H. L. Mencken

Conscience is a mother-in-law whose visit never ends.

~H. L. Mencken

The worst government is often the most moral. One composed of cynics is often very tolerant and humane. But when fanatics are on top there is no limit to oppression.

~H. L. Mencken

Honor is simply the morality of superior men.

~H. L. Mencken

Conscience is the inner voice that warns us that someone might be looking.

~H. L. Mencken

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