

Rebecca West Quotes

*Men, Art, People, Writing, Thinking, Real, Believe, Hands, Civilization, War,
Women, Giving, Ideas, Mean, Sex, Race, Simple, History, Law, Music*

God forbid that any book should be banned. The practice is as indefensible as infanticide.

~Rebecca West

I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is: I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat.

~Rebecca West

Motherhood is the strangest thing, it can be like being one's own Trojan horse.

~Rebecca West

The main difference between men and women is that men are lunatics and women are idiots.

~Rebecca West

There is no logical reason why the camel of great art should pass through the needle of mob intelligence.

~Rebecca West

All men should have a drop of treason in their veins, if nations are not to go soft like so many sleepy pears.

~Rebecca West

The world is round and the place which may seem like the end may also be only the beginning.

~Rebecca West

The trouble about man is twofold. He cannot learn truths which are too complicated; he forgets truths which are too simple.

~Rebecca West

The mind is its own enemy, that fights itself with the innumerable pliant

and ineluctable arms of the octopus.

~Rebecca West

Literature must be an analysis of experience and a synthesis of the findings into a unity.

~Rebecca West

Writing has nothing to do with communication between person and person, only with communication between different parts of a person's mind.

~Rebecca West

Whatever happens, never forget that people would rather be led to perdition by a man, than to victory by a woman.

~Rebecca West

Any authentic work of art must start an argument between the artist and his audience.

~Rebecca West

It is the soul's duty to be loyal to its own desires. It must abandon itself to its master passion.

~Rebecca West

You must always believe that life is as extraordinary as music says it is.

~Rebecca West

Existence in itself, taken at its least miraculous, is a miracle.

~Rebecca West

Life ought to be a struggle of desire toward adventures whose nobility will fertilize the soul.

~Rebecca West

I wonder if we are all wrong about each other, if we are just composing unwritten novels about the people we meet?

~Rebecca West

Did St. Francis preach to the birds? Whatever for? If he really liked birds he would have done better to preach to the cats.

~Rebecca West

Motherhood is neither a duty nor a privilege, but simply the way that humanity can satisfy the desire for physical immortality and triumph over the fear of death.

~Rebecca West

There is no such thing as conversation. It is an illusion. There are intersecting monologues, that is all.

~Rebecca West

I find to my astonishment that an unhappy marriage goes on being unhappy when it is over.

~Rebecca West

Once a secret society establishes itself within an open society, there is no end to the hideous mistrust it must cause.

~Rebecca West

Art is not a luxury, but a necessity.

~Rebecca West

Idiocy is the female defect ... It is no worse than the male defect, which is lunacy.

~Rebecca West

Time spent in a casino is time given to death, a foretaste of the hour when one's flesh will be diverted to the purposes of the worm and not of

the will.

~Rebecca West

We all drew on the comfort which is given out by the major works of Mozart, which is as real and material as the warmth given up by a glass of brandy.

~Rebecca West

He is every other inch a gentleman.

~Rebecca West

If the whole human race lay in one grave, the epitaph on its headstone might well be: 'It seemed like a good idea at the time.'

~Rebecca West

Nobody likes having salt rubbed into their wounds, even if it is the salt of the earth.

~Rebecca West

Everyone realizes that one can believe little of what people say about each other. But it is not so widely realized that even less can one trust what people say about themselves.

~Rebecca West

Now different races and nationalities cherish different ideals of society that stink in each other's nostrils with an offensiveness beyond the power of any but the most monstrous private deed.

~Rebecca West

Just how difficult it is to write biography can be reckoned by anybody who sits down and considers just how many people know the real truth about his or her love affairs.

~Rebecca West

There is in every one of us an unending see-saw between the will to live and the will to die.

~Rebecca West

A strong hatred is the best lamp to bear in our hands as we go over the dark places of life, cutting away the dead things men tell us to revere.

~Rebecca West

Journalism: an ability to meet the challenge of filling the space.

~Rebecca West

the reward for total abstinence from alcohol seems, illogically enough, to be the capacity for becoming intoxicated without it.

~Rebecca West

I have no faith in the sense of comforting beliefs which persuade me that all my troubles are blessings in disguise.

~Rebecca West

It is always one's virtues and not one's vices that precipitate one into disaster.

~Rebecca West

Before a war military science seems a real science, like astronomy; but after a war it seems more like astrology.

~Rebecca West

But there are other things than dissipation that thicken the features. Tears, for example.

~Rebecca West

There is no wider gulf in the universe than yawns between those on the hither and thither side of vital experience.

~Rebecca West

Unhappy people are dangerous.

~Rebecca West

The choice between law and justice is an easy one for courageous minds.

~Rebecca West

Because hypocrisy stinks in the nostrils one is likely to rate it as a more powerful agent for destruction than it is.

~Rebecca West

Humanity is never more sphinxlike than when it is expressing itself.

~Rebecca West

A copy of the universe is not what is required of art; one of the damned things is ample.

~Rebecca West

International relationships are preordained to be clumsy gestures based on imperfect knowledge.

~Rebecca West

It is sometimes very hard to tell the difference between history and the smell of skunk.

~Rebecca West

All good biography, as all good fiction, comes down to the study of original sin, of our inherent disposition to choose death when we ought to choose life.

~Rebecca West

I cannot see that art is anything less than a way of making joys perpetual.

~Rebecca West

Great music is in a sense serene; it is certain of the values it asserts.

~Rebecca West

It isn't only living people who die, it is great stretches of living, which can die even when the people who lived there still exist.

~Rebecca West

Those who foresee the future and recognize it as tragic are often seized upon by a madness which forced them to commit the very acts which make it certain that what they dread will happen.

~Rebecca West

There was a definite process by which one made people into friends, and it involved talking to them and listening to them for hours at a time.

~Rebecca West

the law, like art, is always vainly racing to catch up with experience.

~Rebecca West

No great thing happens suddenly.

~Rebecca West

I had come to Yugoslavia to see what history meant in flesh and blood.

~Rebecca West

What is art? It is not decoration. It is the re-living of experience.

~Rebecca West

a good oyster cannot please the palate as acutely as a bad one can revolt it, and a good oyster cannot make him who eats it live for ever though a bad one can make him dead for ever.

~Rebecca West

There is nothing rarer than a man who can be trusted never to throw

away happiness, however eagerly he sometimes grasps it. In history we are as frequently interested in our own doom.

~Rebecca West

Without doubt cats are intellectuals who have been, by some mysterious decree of Providence, deprived of the comfort of the word.

~Rebecca West

She did not suddenly start being disagreeable this afternoon, she was so good at it, she had evidently practised whatever are the scales and arpeggios of rudeness every day of her life.

~Rebecca West

I take it as a prime cause of the present confusion of society that it is too sickly and too doubtful to use pleasure frankly as a test of value.

~Rebecca West

It is not possible that a just God should forgive people who are wicked because another person who was good endured agony by being nailed to a cross.

~Rebecca West

I cannot think that espionage can be recommended as a technique for building an impressive civilization. It's a lout's game.

~Rebecca West

The general tendency [is] to be censorious of the vices to which one has not been tempted.

~Rebecca West

The American struggle for the vote was much more difficult than the English for the simple reason that it was much more easy.

~Rebecca West

A good cause has to be careful of the company it keeps.

~Rebecca West

It seemed a good idea at the time.

~Rebecca West

It is a great pity that every human being does not, at an early stage of his life, have to write a historical work. He would then realize that the human race is in quite a jam about truth.

~Rebecca West

A great many quite good plays could be performed with rhythmic howls in the place of dialogue and lose almost nothing by the change.

~Rebecca West

Were it possible for us to wait for ourselves to come into the room, not many of us would find our hearts breaking into flower as we heard the door handle turn.

~Rebecca West

every human activity, whether it be love, philosophy, art, or revolution, is carried on with a special intensity in Paris.

~Rebecca West

Christianity must be regarded not as a final revelation but as a phase of revelation.

~Rebecca West

Why must you always try to be omnipotent, and shove things about? Tragic things happen sometimes that we just have to submit to.

~Rebecca West

... to lovers innumerable things do not matter.

~Rebecca West

His smile bore the same relation to a real smile as false teeth do to real teeth.

~Rebecca West

Where there is real love one wants to go to church first.

~Rebecca West

If I do not do sensible things about investments I shall spend my old age in a workhouse, where nobody will understand my jokes.

~Rebecca West

I had a glorious father, I had no father at all.

~Rebecca West

Fiction and poetry are the only way one can stop time and give an account of an experience and nail it down so that it lasts for ever.

~Rebecca West

It appears that even the different parts of the same person do not converse among themselves, do not succeed in learning from each other what are their desires and their intentions.

~Rebecca West

History sometimes acts as madly as heredity, and her most unpredictable performances are often her most glorious.

~Rebecca West

It's an absurd error to put modern English literature in the curriculum. You should read contemporary literature for pleasure or not at all. You shouldn't be taught to monkey with it.

~Rebecca West

The memory, experiencing and re-experiencing, has such power over one's mere personal life, that one has merely lived.

~Rebecca West

There is no escape from mystery. It is the character of our being.

~Rebecca West

[The satirist] must fully possess, at least in the world of the imagination, the quality the lack of which he is deriding in others.

~Rebecca West

To make laws is a human instinct that arises as soon as food and shelter have been ensured, among all peoples, everywhere.

~Rebecca West

Women know the damnation of charity because the habit of civilization has always been to throw them cheap alms rather than give them good wages.

~Rebecca West

The adventure is over. Everything gets over, and nothing is ever enough. Except the part you carry with you.

~Rebecca West

The principle of avoiding the unnecessary expenditure of energy has enabled the species to survive in a world full of stimuli; but it prevents the survival of the aristocracy.

~Rebecca West

art is at least in part a way of collecting information about the universe.

~Rebecca West

There is, of course, no reason for the existence of the male sex except that one sometimes needs help with moving the piano.

~Rebecca West

Unfortunately, all gatherings convened for the betterment of the human lot show a tendency to gas themselves, and not with laughing-gas either.

~Rebecca West

The redemptive power of divine grace no longer seemed credible, nor very respectable in the arbitrary performance that was claimed for it.

~Rebecca West

If it be ungentlemanly to kiss and tell, it is still further from gentlemanliness to pray and tell.

~Rebecca West

She saw she had fallen into the hands of one of those doctors who have strayed too far from apparent in the direction of the soul.

~Rebecca West

There is a point, and it is reached more easily than is supposed, where interference with freedom of the arts and literature becomes an attack on the life of society.

~Rebecca West

The earth itself is slightly resistant to routine.

~Rebecca West

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