

# Stephen Spender

## Quotes

*Eye, Writing, Light, Memories, People, Thinking, Children, Poetry, Years, Air, Heart, Goal, Genius, Ambition, Civilization, Self, Certain, Ideas, Lying, Men*

When you read and understand a poem, comprehending its rich and formal meanings, then you master chaos a little.

~Stephen Spender

Great poetry is always written by somebody straining to go beyond what he can do.

~Stephen Spender

The greatest poets are those with memories so great that they extend beyond their strongest experiences to their minutest observations of people and things far outside their own self-centeredness.

~Stephen Spender

History is the ship carrying living memories to the future.

~Stephen Spender

When a child, my dreams rode on your wishes, I was your son, high on your horse, My mind a top whipped by the lashes Of your rhetoric, windy of course.

~Stephen Spender

I think continually of those who were truly great.

~Stephen Spender

There is a certain justice in criticism. The critic is like a midwife - a tyrannical midwife.

~Stephen Spender

All that you can imagine you already know.

~Stephen Spender

So i learned both to accept myself and to aim beyond myself

~Stephen Spender

All the posters on the walls  
All the leaflets in the streets  
Are mutilated,  
destroyed or run in rain,  
Their words blotted out with tears,  
Skins  
peeling from their bodies  
In the victorious hurricane.

~Stephen Spender

There is a certain justice in criticism.

~Stephen Spender

I think of those who were truly great. The names of those who in their  
lives fought for life, Who wore at their hearts the fire's center.

~Stephen Spender

My single pair of eyes  
Contain the universe they see;  
Their mirrored  
multiplicity  
Is packed into a hollow body  
Where I reflect the many, in my  
one.

~Stephen Spender

For I had expected always  
Some brightness to hold in trust,  
Some final  
innocence  
To save from dust

~Stephen Spender

Never allow gradually the traffic to smother with noise and fog the  
flowering of the spirit.

~Stephen Spender

Paul Valery speaks of the 'une ligne donnee' of a poem. One line is  
given to the poet by God or by nature, the rest he has to discover for  
himself.

~Stephen Spender

No one Shall hunger: Man shall spend equally. Our goal which we  
compel: Man shall be man.

~Stephen Spender

I'm struggling at the end to get out of the valley of hectoring youth, journalistic middle age, imposture, moneymaking, public relations, bad writing, mental confusion.

~Stephen Spender

All one can do is to achieve nakedness, to be what one is with all one's faculties and perceptions, strengthened by all the skill which one can acquire. And then to stand before the judgement of time.

~Stephen Spender

Death to the killers, bringing light to life.

~Stephen Spender

If Rilke cut himself shaving, he would bleed poetry.

~Stephen Spender

What we call the freedom of the individual is not just the luxury of one intellectual to write what he likes to write but his being a voice which can speak for those who are silent.

~Stephen Spender

Never being, but always at the edge of Being.

~Stephen Spender

Whatever happens, I shall never be alone, I shall always have a fare, an affair, or a revolution.

~Stephen Spender

Poetry cannot take sides except with life.

~Stephen Spender

An English poet writes, I think, just for people who are interested in poetry. An American poet writes, and feels that everyone ought to appreciate this. Then he has a deep sense of grievance . . .

~Stephen Spender

I think continually of those who were truly great...Born of the sun they traveled a short while towards the sun, and left the vivid air signed with their honor.

~Stephen Spender

Deep in the winter plain, two armies Dig their machinery, to destroy each other. Men freeze and hunger. No one is given leave On either side, except the dead, and wounded.

~Stephen Spender

Religion stands, the Church blocking the sun.

~Stephen Spender

Sometimes when I am writing, I am aware of a rhythm, a dance, a fury, which is as yet empty of words.

~Stephen Spender

The only true hope for civilization-the conviction of the individual that his inner life can affect outward events and that, whether or not he does so he is responsible for them.

~Stephen Spender

If you get to a certain age, all people want to know about you is people you knew. ...An American student once said to me, you know, isn't it extraordinary that I am alive and you're not dead.

~Stephen Spender

Since we are what we are, what shall we be But what we are? We are, we have Six feet and seventy years, to see The light , and then resign it for the grave .

~Stephen Spender

Of course, the entire effort is to put myself Outside the ordinary range  
Of what are called statistics. A hundred are killed In the outer suburbs.  
Well, well, I carry on.

~Stephen Spender

Bright clasp of her whole hand around my finger My daughter as we  
walk together now. All my life I'll feel a ring invisibly Circle this bone  
with shining When she is grown.

~Stephen Spender

Paint here no draped despairs, no saddening clouds, Where the soul  
rests, proclaims eternity. But let the wrong cry out as raw as wounds,  
This Time forgets and never heals, far less transcends.

~Stephen Spender

What the eye delights in, no longer dictates My greed to enjoy: boys,  
grass, the fenced-off deer. It leaves those figures that distantly play On  
the horizon's rim: they sign their peace, in games.

~Stephen Spender

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