

William Empson

Quotes

*Men, Literature, Waiting, Art, Long, Reading, Impossible, Different, Boys,
Poetry, Blood, Remember, Refined, Effort, Accommodations, Seems, Sea,
Haphazard, Regard, Analysis*

This world is good enough for me, if only I can be good enough for it.

~William Empson

Liberal hopefulness Regards death as a mere border to an improving picture.

~William Empson

Life involves maintaining oneself between contradictions that can't be solved by analysis.

~William Empson

The machinations of ambiguity are among the very roots of poetry.

~William Empson

Poetry contains nothing haphazard.

~William Empson

The heart of standing is that you cannot fly.

~William Empson

The central function of imaginative literature is to make you realize that other people act on moral convictions different from your own.

~William Empson

Law makes long spokes of the short stakes of men.

~William Empson

Twixt devil and deep sea, man hacks his caves; Birth, death; one, many; what is true, and seems; Earth's vast hot iron, cold space's empty waves.

~William Empson

The difficult part of good temper consists in forbearance, and accommodation to the ill-humors of others.

~William Empson

Proust has listed a great many reasons why it is impossible to be happy, but, in the course of being happy, one finds it difficult to remember them.

~William Empson

Shall I make it clear, boys, for all to apprehend, Those that will not hear,
boys, waiting for the end, Knowing it is near, boys, trying to pretend,
Sitting in cold fear, boys, waiting for the end?

~William Empson

All those large dreams by which men long live well Are magic-lanterned
on the smoke of hell.

~William Empson

To produce pure proletarian art the artist must be at one with the
worker; this is impossible, not for political reasons, but because the
artist never is at one with any public.

~William Empson

I'm afraid I take ... this rather clinical view of love: it's saving you from
madness. I'm not so enthusiastic as other poets have been.

~William Empson

It seems unpleasantly refined to put things off till someone knows.

~William Empson

Slowly the poison the whole blood stream fills. It is not the effort nor the
failure tires. The waste remains, the waste remains and kills.

~William Empson

Waiting for the end, boys, waiting for the end. What is there to be or
do? What's become of me or you? Are we kind or are we true? Sitting

two and two, boys, waiting for the end.

~William Empson

Buddhists and Christians contrive to agree about death Making death their ideal basis for different ideals. The Communists however disapprove of death Except when practical.

~William Empson

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- Remember Quotes
- Refined Quotes
- Effort Quotes
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- Seems Quotes
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