

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW – SELECTED QUOTATIONS

A day's work is a day's work, neither more nor less, and the man who does it needs a day's sustenance, a night's repose and due leisure, whether he be painter or ploughman.

A fashion is nothing but an induced epidemic.

A fool's brain digests philosophy into folly, science into superstition, and art into pedantry. Hence University education.

A life spent making mistakes is not only more honorable, but more useful than a life spent doing nothing.

A lifetime of happiness! No man alive could bear it; it would be hell on earth.

Americans adore me and will go on adoring me until I say something nice about them.

An American has no sense of privacy. He does not know what it means. There is no such thing in the

Criminals do not die by the hands of the law. They die by the hands of other men.

Democracy is a device that ensures we shall be governed no better than we deserve.

England and America are two countries separated by a common language.

Everything happens to everybody sooner or later if there is time enough.

Few people think more than two or three times a year; I have made an international reputation for myself by thinking once or twice a week.

Gambling promises the poor what property performs for the rich--something for nothing.

Hegel was right when he said that we learn from history that man can never learn anything from history.

Hell is full of musical amateurs.

I can forgive Alfred Nobel for having invented dynamite, but only a fiend in human form could have invented the Nobel Prize.

I often quote myself. It adds spice to my conversation.

If all economists were laid end to end, they would not reach a conclusion.

If history repeats itself, and the unexpected always happens, how incapable must Man be of learning from experience.

If the lesser mind could measure the greater as a footrule can measure a pyramid, there would be finality in universal suffrage. As it is, the political problem remains unsolved.

If you cannot get rid of the family skeleton, you may as well make it dance.

Imagination is the beginning of creation. You imagine what you desire, you will what you imagine and at last you create what you will.

Lack of money is the root of all evil.

Life does not cease to be funny when people die any more than it ceases to be serious when people laugh.

Martyrdom is the only way in which a man can become famous without ability.

Patriotism is your conviction that this country is superior to all other countries because you were born in it.

Reading made Don Quixote a gentleman. Believing what he read made him mad.

Self-sacrifice enables us to sacrifice other people without blushing.

The fact that a believer is happier than a skeptic is no more to the point than the fact that a drunken man is happier than a sober one.

The liar's punishment is not in the least that he is not believed but that he cannot believe anyone else.

The longer I live the more I see that I am never wrong about anything, and that all the pains I have so humbly taken to verify my notions have only wasted my time.

The man who writes about himself and his own time is the only man who writes about all people and all time.

The power of accurate observation is commonly called cynicism by those who have not got it.

The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man.

When a thing is funny, search it carefully for a hidden truth.

You are going to let the fear of poverty govern your life and your reward will be that you will eat, but you will not live.

Youth is a wonderful thing. What a crime to waste it on children.

My method is to take the utmost trouble to find the right thing to say, and then to say it with the utmost levity.

You see things; and you say, 'Why?' But I dream things that never were; and I say, "Why not?"

"Back to Methuselah" (1921), part 1, act 1

There are two tragedies in life. One is not to get your heart's desire. The other is to get it.

"Man and Superman" (1903), act 4

A lifetime of happiness! No man alive could bear it: it would be hell on earth.

"Man and Superman" (1903), act I

The more things a man is ashamed of, the more respectable he is.

"Man and Superman" (1903), act I

You'll never have a quiet world till you knock the patriotism out of the human race.

"Misalliance"

People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are. I don't believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and, if they can't find them, make them.

"Mrs. Warren's Profession" (1893) act II

There are no secrets better kept than the secrets that everybody guesses.

"Mrs. Warren's Profession" (1893), act III

Women upset everything. When you let them into your life, you find that the woman is driving at one thing and you're driving at another.

"Pygmalion" (1913)

One man that has a mind and knows it can always beat ten men who haven't and don't.

"The Apple Cart" (1930), act I

The worst sin toward our fellow creatures is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them: that's the essence of inhumanity.

"The Devil's Disciple" (1901), act II

We don't bother much about dress and manners in England, because as a nation we don't dress well and we've no manners.

"You Never Can Tell" (1898), act I

"Do you know what a pessimist is?" "A man who thinks everybody is as nasty as himself, and hates them for it."

All great truths begin as blasphemies.

Silence is the most perfect expression of scorn.

Back to Methuselah (1921) pt. 5

He who has never hoped can never despair.

Caesar and Cleopatra (1901) act 4

When a stupid man is doing something he is ashamed of, he always declares that it is his duty.

Caesar and Cleopatra (1901) Act III

Do you think that the things people make fools of themselves about are any less real and true than the things they behave sensibly about? They are more true: they are the only things that are true.

Candida (1898) act 1

We have no more right to consume happiness without producing it than to consume wealth without producing it.

Candida (1898) act 1

Parentage is a very important profession, but no test of fitness for it is ever imposed in the interest of the children.

Everybody's Political What's What? (1944) ch. 9

A government that robs Peter to pay Paul can always depend on the support of Paul.

Everybody's Political What's What? (1944) ch. 30

My way of joking is to tell the truth. It is the funniest joke in the world.

John Bull's Other Island (1907) act 2

Alcohol is a very necessary article... It makes life bearable to millions of people who could not endure their existence if they were quite sober. It enables Parliament to do things at eleven at night that no sane person would do at eleven in the morning.

Major Barbara (1907) act 2

I am a Millionaire. That is my religion.

Major Barbara (1907) act 2

He knows nothing; and he thinks he knows everything. That points clearly to a political career.

Major Barbara (1907) act 3

Beware of the man whose God is in the skies.

Man and Superman (1903) "Maxims for Revolutionists"

Democracy substitutes election by the incompetent many for appointment by the corrupt few.

Man and Superman (1903) "Maxims for Revolutionists"

Every man over forty is a scoundrel.

Man and Superman (1903) "Maxims for Revolutionists"

He who can, does. He who cannot, teaches.

Man and Superman (1903) "Maxims for Revolutionists"

It is dangerous to be sincere unless you are also stupid.

Man and Superman (1903) "Maxims for Revolutionists"

Liberty means responsibility. That is why most men dread it.

Man and Superman (1903) "Maxims for Revolutionists"

Take care to get what you like or you will be forced to like what you get.

Man and Superman (1903) "Maxims for Revolutionists"

The golden rule is that there are no golden rules.

Man and Superman (1903) "Maxims for Revolutionists"

The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man.

Man and Superman (1903) "Maxims for Revolutionists"

Youth, which is forgiven everything, forgives itself nothing: age, which forgives itself everything, is forgiven nothing.

Man and Superman (1903) "Maxims for Revolutionists"

There is no love sincerer than the love of food.

Man and Superman (1903) act 1

An Englishman thinks he is moral when he is only uncomfortable.

Man and Superman (1903) act 3

Hell is full of musical amateurs: music is the brandy of the damned.

Man and Superman (1903) act 3

Do not do unto others as you would that they should do unto you. Their tastes may not be the same.
Man and Superman (1903), Maxims for Revolutionists

A learned man is an idler who kills time with study. Beware of his false knowledge: it is more dangerous than ignorance.

Man and Superman, 1903

This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of Nature instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.

Man and Superman, Epistle Dedicatory

A perpetual holiday is a good working definition of hell.

Parents and Children (1914) "Children's Happiness"

There is only one religion, though there are a hundred versions of it.

Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant (1898)

It is impossible for an Englishman to open his mouth without making some other Englishman hate or despise him.

Pygmalion (1916) preface

The English have no respect for their language, and will not teach their children to speak it.

Pygmalion (1916) preface

What is life but a series of inspired follies? The difficulty is to find them to do. Never lose a chance: it doesn't come every day.

Pygmalion, Act 2

Assassination is the extreme form of censorship.

Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet (1911) "Limits to Toleration"

I never resist temptation because I have found that things that are bad for me do not tempt me.

The Apple Cart (1930)

Martyrdom... is the only way in which a man can become famous without ability.

The Devil's Disciple (1901) act 3

All professions are conspiracies against the laity.

The Doctor's Dilemma (1911) act 1

The fickleness of the women I love is only equaled by the infernal constancy of the women who love me.

The Philanderer (1898) act 2