

## 87 QUOTATIONS



**Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.**

(1922-2007)

Kurt Vonnegut is a Postmodern fantasy writer--humorous to some--who embodies the glib cynicism that followed the utopian countercultural revolution of the 1960s, after the world failed to “give peace a chance” and “make love not war.” Vonnegut imitated Mark Twain every way he could, even in his hairy appearance, but the comparison diminishes him to a pipsqueak in girly curls. An icon of politically correct attitudes, he will survive for awhile like an old rock concert poster as a comfort to nostalgic liberals. Some of the following quotations are among those celebrated on one website as “Things Kurt Vonnegut Said Better Than Anyone Else Ever Has Or Will.

ORDER OF TOPICS: youth, profundities, literary education, Political Correctness, utopian primitivism, vegetarianism, people suck, pacifism, America is evil, Marxism, atheism, Postmodernism, women, writing, popularity, prophecies, confessions:

### YOUTH

If somebody says, I love you, to me, I feel as though I had a pistol pointed at my head.

### PROFUNDITIES

All people are insane.

In nonsense is strength.

The universe is a big place, perhaps the biggest.

Actually, practically nothing is going on.

All persons, living and dead, are purely coincidental.

Here we are, trapped in the amber of the moment. There is no why.

Life happens too fast for you ever to think about it.

I tell you, we are here on Earth to fart around, and don't let anybody tell you different.

Ignore the awful times and concentrate on the good ones.

Why don't you take a flying fuck at a rolling doughnut?

He had a tremendous wang, incidentally.

My soul knows my meat is doing bad things, and is embarrassed.

Do you realize that all great literature is all about what a bummer it is to be a human being?

Literature should not disappear up its own asshole, so to speak.

And so it goes.

#### LITERARY EDUCATION

I couldn't play games with my literary ancestors, since I had never studied them systematically.

I wrote without having made a systematic study of great literature.

I am a hopelessly clumsy discussor of books. My experience is nil.

Through dumb luck, I read *Look Homeward, Angel* exactly when I was supposed to.

#### POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

I was a victim.

In the interests of survival, they trained themselves to be agreeing machines instead of thinking machines. All their minds had to do was to discover what other people were thinking, and then they thought that too.

Religions were exhibited and studied as the Rube Goldberg inventions I'd always thought they were. We weren't allowed to find one culture superior to any other.

Cultural relativity is defensible and attractive.

Everybody knew that the dumbest people in any American university are in the education department, and English after that.

#### UTOPIAN PRIMITIVISM

As children we were taught to memorialize this year [1492] with pride and joy as the year people began living full and imaginative lives on the continent of North America. Actually, people had been living full and imaginative lives on the continent of North America for hundreds of years before that. 1492 was simply the year sea pirates began to rob, cheat, and kill them.

I like Utopian talk, speculation about what our planet should be, anger about what our planet is.

Human beings will be happier...when they find ways to inhabit primitive communities again. That's my utopia.

## VEGETARIANISM

People have started looking at these big hunks of bloody meat on their plates, you know, and wondering what on earth they think they're doing.

## PEOPLE SUCK

We're terrible animals. I think that the Earth's immune system is trying to get rid of us, and well it should.

Even as we speak, the very last polar bear may be dying of hunger on account of climate change, on account of us.

I really wonder what gives us the right to wreck this poor planet of ours.

We could have saved the Earth but we were too damned cheap.

We are all addicts of fossil fuels in a state of denial.

## PACIFISM

That there are such devices as firearms...should be proof enough that being alive is a crock of shit.

Every time I say I hate officers, which I still do fairly frequently, I have to remind myself that practically none of the officers I served under survived. Christmas was in there somewhere.

Many people see the Dresden massacre as correct and quite minimal revenge for what had been done by the camps. Maybe so.

I think he [Dresden bomber pilot] felt the bombing was necessary, and it may have been.

## AMERICA IS EVIL

I thought scientists were going to find out exactly how everything worked, and then make it better.... What actually happened...was that we dropped scientific truth on Hiroshima.

Before we attacked Iraq, the majestic *New York Times* guaranteed there were weapons of mass destruction there.

In case you haven't noticed, we are now feared and hated all over the world as the Nazis once were. And with good reason.

The only difference between Bush and Hitler is that Hitler was elected.

There is not a chance in hell of America becoming humane and reasonable.

"You hate America, don't you."

"That would be as silly as loving it," I said.

## MARXISM

Karl Marx got a bum rap.

"Socialism" is not more an evil word than "Christianity."

About astrology and palmistry: They are good because they make people vivid and full of possibilities. They are communism at its best.

## ATHEISM

I am an atheist (or at best a Unitarian who winds up in church a lot).

How on earth can religious people believe in so much arbitrary, clearly invented balderdash?

Say what you will about the sweet miracle of unquestioning faith, I consider a capacity for it terrifying and absolutely vile.

I am of course a skeptic about the divinity of Christ and a scorner of the notion that there is a God who cares about how we are or what we do... Religious skeptics often become very bitter towards the end, as did Mark Twain.... I know why I will become bitter. I will finally realize that I have had it right all along: that I will not see God, that there is no heaven or Judgement Day.

That is my principal objection to life, I think: It's too easy, when alive, to make perfectly horrible mistakes.

If there is a God, he sure hates people.

## POSTMODERNISM

If people think nature is their friend, then they sure don't need an enemy.

I want to stay as close to the edge as I can without going over. Out on the edge you see all kinds of things you can't see from the center.

If you really want to hurt your parents, and you don't have the nerve to be gay, the least you can do is go into the arts.

God damn it, you've got to be kind.

You are what you pretend to be.

I know of very few people who are dreaming of a world for their grandchildren.

Everyone now knows how to find the meaning of life within himself.

How nice to feel nothing, and still get full credit for being alive.

If you die horribly on television, you will not have died in vain. You will have entertained us.

Everything about life is a joke.

## WOMEN

Being a Humanist means trying to behave decently without expectation of rewards or punishment.

My own feeling is that if adultery is wickedness then so is food. Both make me feel so much better afterward.

There's enough love in this world for everybody, if people will just look.

There aren't any [women in my books]. No real women, no love.

I've never been able to do a woman well in a book.

Everybody gets pissed off at his wife.

## WRITING

Just fuck it, it doesn't really matter what their names are.

Don't take it all so seriously.

When I write, I feel like an armless, legless man with a crayon in his mouth.

The function of the artist is to make people like life better than they did before.

What makes you think a writer isn't a drug salesman?

Novelists have, on the average, about the same IQs as the cosmetic consultant at Bloomingdale's.

So much of what happens in storytelling is mechanical, has to do with the technical problems of how to make a story work.

All the great story lines are great practical jokes that people fall for over and over again.

That's what my books are, now that I'm a grownup—mosaics of jokes.

I have been a soreheaded occupant of a file drawer labeled Science Fiction and I would like out, particularly since so many serious critics regularly mistake the drawer for a urinal.

## POPULARITY

Young people *do* seem to like me a lot.

They really do find me irrelevant on Cape Cod.

My relatives say that they are glad I'm rich, but that they simply cannot read me.

## PROPHECIES

True terror is to wake up one morning and discover that your high school class is running the country.

Thanks to television, we can hide a Great Depression.

## CONFESSIONS

You realize, of course, that everything I say is horseshit.

Thinking doesn't seem to help very much.

There's only one me, and I'm stuck with him.

Some of these quotations are excerpted from  
*The Paris Review Interviews I*  
"Kurt Vonnegut, *The Art of Fiction*" (1977)  
(Picador, 2006)

Some of these quotations are excerpted from  
"Interview with Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.," by John Casey and Joe David Bellamy  
*The New Fiction: Interviews with Innovative American Writers*  
(U Illinois, 1974)

