



QUOTATIONS and POPULAR EXPRESSIONS
as LITERATURE

Introducing Students to Short Snippets of Wisdom

An Idea Book for Teachers

Ken Green

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INTRODUCTION

What are quotations ? proverbs ? idioms ? As a teacher who acquired this book, you know. Why should teenagers and young adults study quotations and “sayings” (*my short term for proverbs, phrases, expressions and idioms*) ? What if the study of literature by students incorporated study of quotations and sayings ? Wouldn’t this enhance the study of literature and make it more captivating -- and just as educational ? I believe that reading and considering the thousands quotations and sayings easily available constitutes an excellent study of literature and helps develop straight thinking in young people – and increased wisdom in older individuals.

It is a good thing for a man to read books of quotations. The quotations, when engraved upon the memory, give you good thoughts. They also make you anxious to read the authors and look for more.
Winston Churchill

I am a part of everything that I have read. *Theodore Roosevelt*

Quotations (quotes) and sayings are short sentences or phrases that have caught on and become famous. They state some sort of wisdom or lead the reader (or hearer) to some sort of epiphany. Often, what makes a quote thought provoking and memorable is that the quoter has stated a well-known truth or philosophical concept in a new way – perhaps humorously or in a way that makes it more insightful.

Think about why literature is taught in schools. For one thing, it is a traditional part of study in English classes. The education establishment does not tolerate change very well. But admittedly, it is useful to learn about well-known literary works. The students who actually soak in this teaching will learn what these are and can converse as an educated person when they are discussed. But, why require students to read lengthy novels, poetry – and Shakespeare ? In large part, the way “Literature” is approached is a turn-off for most students. Only a relative few put forth more effort than is required to merely pass the class. This reminds me of the Mark Twain quote defining a “classic”. He said: **A classic is a book which people praise and don’t read.**

Teaching quotes and sayings as part of a literature class offers the opportunity to employ the **KISS** principle – **Keep It Short & Simple**. (I might add: digestible.) A single interesting quote or saying might create a half-hour of interesting classroom discussion after which most students will walk away having learned something they will retain -- both academic and life-enhancing.

Where does a teacher (or anyone) find interesting quotes and sayings ? **ANSWER:** They are everywhere -- in the thousands. There are numerous books of quotes and idioms. Do a **GOOGLE** search and you will find more than you’ll ever be able to read. In this book, I have given you 100 that I believe will interest and enlighten secondary school students and university undergraduates. Some come from famous works of literature, including Shakespeare. Others are verbal quotes from famous persons. Some are my own. I follow each of these with some comment and context that should give you (the discussion leader) ammunition to trigger relevant and educational discussion. Beyond this starter supply you will have no trouble finding additional quotes and can expand on this approach forever. Perhaps you already have your own favorites.

In the two years I have been thinking about this book, I accumulated these quotes and sayings from memory as they came to mind and wrote them on note cards. I worried that I did not remember the correct wording and could give proper attribution. So, for each quote cited here, I worked hard to confirm both the exact original wording and quoter. Where I do not cite the source, I was unable to find the answer. In some cases, perhaps I just unconsciously created the quote myself.

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I hope you find this work of service to you and your students.

KEN GREEN

1. *Absence makes the heart grow fonder.*

Thomas Bayly, Isle of Beauty.

(If you thought this is by Shakespeare from Romeo and Juliet, you are wrong.)

Do you tend to miss someone when they are away for too long ?

Are you nicer to someone when they return than before they departed ?

Isn't your dog more excited to see you when you just return home than when you have been around a while ?

Can you recall examples from your personal life ?

Numerous jokes and plays on words have resulted from this famous quote. For example:

- *If absence makes the heart grow fonder, some people must really love church.*
- *Out of sight, out of mind.* ... is an humorous contrary quote with and opposite meaning. Aren't there some things and situations (even important ones) that you don't think about as much when they are out of view ?
- *Abstinence makes the heart grow fonder -- for someone else.* ... is a cute play on words.

Can anyone create funny any quotes similar to the one about "church" ?

2. *Familiarity breeds contempt.*

Old Proverb.

Doesn't this mean that if you are with someone too much, you tend to show dislikes toward the them or things you may not like about them – even though you like them very much overall ?

Do you have any examples from your personal life ?

Is this part of why friends drift apart, lovers break up or married couples get divorced ? Is this why a trial separation may help heal marriage problems ?

This quote is the opposite of Quote #1, isn't it ? Or is it, in some sense, the same ?

Have you heard these plays on words ? :

- *Familiarity breeds attempt.* Numerous comedians.
- *Familiarly breeds contempt, and children.* Mark Twain.

3. *Action speaks louder than words.*

Popular expression

Have you heard the expression, *He needs to walk his talk.*

Do you know of anyone that reminds you of this quote such as a braggart or loudmouth ?

You can be certain that others will judge you on your words vs your actions.

Will Rogers said: *People's minds are changed through observation and not through argument.*

Benjamin Franklin said: *Never mistake motion for action.*

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow said: *We judge ourselves by what we feel capable of doing, while others judge us by what we have done.*

Will this discussion remind you to be careful about what you claim to have done or promise to do ?

See also quote numbered 33.

4. *The best things in life are not things.*

Popular expression

Doesn't this mean that we shouldn't judge the quality of our lives largely by the things we possess ? By "things", I am referring to tangible objects.

Do you think that most people think this way, however ? From now on: When you listen to conversations, count how often to hear others talking about the "things" they have or want to obtain.

In an interview with a country singer that I saw somewhere, she said: "I'd rather have roses on my table than diamonds around my neck." (That was probably just image-enhancing gibberish from a wealthy individual, but a great thought nonetheless.)

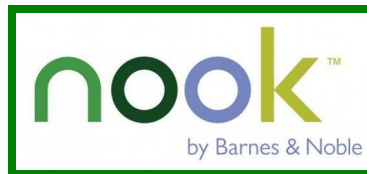
Have you ever heard or seen the standup comedy routine by George Carlin called "Stuff" ? It is hilarious. To see it, do this Google search: [GEORGE CARLIN STUFF YOUTUBE](#).

We have to have some stuff of course to live the modern life we deserve. But, how do we define how much emphasis on things is too much ?

Do you know anyone who clearly places the non-material aspects of his/her life ahead of his/her material aspects ? Do you consider them out of control or merely a part of the normal thought process either they or you live with from day to day ?

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