

## Quotes by Voltaire

Full name: François-Marie Arouet

Born: November 21, 1694, Paris, France

Died: May 30, 1778, Paris, France



*It's amazing how his thoughts and ideas have remained fresh and relevant from the French Enlightenment to today.*

---

“Judge a man by his questions rather than by his answers.”

“Love truth, but pardon error.”

“Despite the enormous quantity of books, how few people read! And if one reads profitably, one would realize how much stupid stuff the vulgar herd is content to swallow every day.”

“The most important decision you make is to be in a good mood.”

“The comfort of the rich depends upon an abundant supply of the poor.”

“If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him.”

“Every man is guilty of all the good he did not do.”

“Faith consists in believing what reason cannot.”

“Don't think money does everything or you are going to end up doing everything for money.”

“Every man is a creature of the age in which he lives and few are able to raise themselves above the ideas of the time.”

“It is love; love, the comfort of the human species, the preserver of the universe, the soul of all sentient beings, love, tender love.” – Candide

“Sensual pleasure passes and vanishes, but the friendship between us, the mutual confidence, the delight of the heart, the enchantment of the soul, these things do not perish and can never be destroyed.”

“Let us cultivate our garden.”

“We never live; we are always in the expectation of living.”

“No opinion is worth burning your neighbor for.”

“The longer we dwell on our misfortunes, the greater is their power to harm us.”

“Men will always be mad, and those who think they can cure them are the maddest of all.”

“The only way to comprehend what mathematicians mean by Infinity is to contemplate the extent of human stupidity.”

“The art of medicine consists of amusing the patient while nature cures the disease.”

“The more often a stupidity is repeated, the more it gets the appearance of wisdom.”

“The mirror is a worthless invention. The only way to truly see yourself is in the reflection of someone else’s eyes.”

“It is clear that the individual who persecutes a man, his brother, because he is not of the same opinion, is a monster.”

“One day everything will be well, that is our hope. Everything’s fine today, that is our illusion.”

“Man is free at the instant he wants to be.”

“Liberty of thought is the life of the soul.”

“Animals have these advantages over man: they never hear the clock strike, they die without any idea of death, they

have no theologians to instruct them, their last moments are not disturbed by unwelcome and unpleasant ceremonies, their funerals cost them nothing, and no one starts lawsuits over their wills.”

“It is with books as with men: a very small number play a great part.”

“Prejudices are what fools use for reason.”

“Life is a shipwreck, but we must not forget to sing in the lifeboats.”

“God is a comedian playing to an audience that is too afraid to laugh.”

“The secret of being a bore is to tell everything.”

“Fools have a habit of believing that everything written by a famous author is admirable. For my part I read only to please myself and like only what suits my taste.”

“It is better to risk saving a guilty person than to condemn an innocent one.”

“God is a circle whose center is everywhere and circumference nowhere.”

“What is history? The lie that everyone agrees on...”

“Appreciation is a wonderful thing. It makes what is excellent in others belong to us as well.”

“The human brain is a complex organ with the wonderful power of enabling man to find reasons for continuing to believe whatever it is that he wants to believe.”

“Cherish those who seek the truth but beware of those who find it.”

“It is not enough to conquer; one must learn to seduce.”

“Ice-cream is exquisite. What a pity it isn't illegal.”

“Think for yourself and let others enjoy the privilege of doing so too.”

“I have never made but one prayer to God, a very short one: Oh Lord, make my enemies ridiculous. And God granted it.”

“If this is the best of possible worlds, what then are the others?”

“History never repeats itself. Man always does.”

“The infinitely small have a pride infinitely great.”

“The pursuit of pleasure must be the goal of every rational person.”

“Perfect is the enemy of good.”

“Marriage is the only adventure open to the cowardly.”

“One merit of poetry few persons will deny: it says more and in fewer words than prose.”

“If you want good laws, burn those you have and make new ones.”

“A State can be no better than the citizens of which it is composed. Our labour now is not to mould States but make citizens.”

“May God defend me from my friends: I can defend myself from my enemies.”

“No snowflake in an avalanche ever feels responsible.”

“He must be very ignorant for he answers every question he is asked.”

“Our labour preserves us from three great evils — weariness, vice, and want.”

“Men are equal; it is not birth but virtue that makes the difference.”

“I would rather obey a fine lion, much stronger than myself, than two hundred rats of my own species.”

“Behind every successful man stands a surprised mother-in-law.”

“The happiest of all lives is a busy solitude.”

“Meditation is the dissolution of thoughts in Eternal awareness or Pure consciousness without objectification,

knowing without thinking, merging finitude in infinity.”

“Dare to think for yourself.”

“Optimism,” said Cacambo, “What is that?” “Alas!” replied Candide, “It is the obstinacy of maintaining that everything is best when it is worst.” – Candide

“We are rarely proud when we are alone.”

“To succeed in the world it is not enough to be stupid – one must also be polite.”

“Common sense is not so common.”

“It is an infantile superstition of the human spirit that virginity would be thought a virtue and not the barrier that separates ignorance from knowledge.”

“Injustice in the end produces independence.”

“To hold a pen is to be at war.”

“When he to whom one speaks does not understand, and he who speaks himself does not understand, that is metaphysics.”

“Of all religions, the Christian should of course inspire the most tolerance, but until now Christians have been the most intolerant of all men.”

“I should like to lie at your feet and die in your arms.”

“The heart has its own reasons that reason can’t understand.”

“Such then is the human condition, that to wish greatness for one’s country is to wish harm to one’s neighbors.”

“I have lived eighty years of life and know nothing for it, but to be resigned and tell myself that flies are born to be eaten by spiders and man to be devoured by sorrow.”

“It is as impossible to translate poetry as it is to translate music.”

“I am the best-natured creature in the world, and yet I have already killed three, and of these three two were priests.”

“I cannot imagine how the clockwork of the universe can exist without a clockmaker.”

“Perfection is attained by slow degrees; it requires the hand of time.”

“Wherever my travels may lead, paradise is where I am.”

“One great use of words is to hide our thoughts.”

“What can you say to a man who tells you he prefers obeying God rather than men, and that as a result he’s certain he’ll go to heaven if he cuts your throat?”

“If you have two religions in your land, the two will cut each other’s throats; but

if you have thirty religions, they will dwell in peace.”

“Madness is to think of too many things in succession too fast, or of one thing too exclusively.”

“It is hard to free fools from the chains they revere.”

“It is not inequality which is the real misfortune, it is dependence.”

“The discovery of what is true and the practice of that which is good are the two most important aims of philosophy.”

“Men argue. Nature acts.”

“In every province, the chief occupations, in order of importance, are lovemaking, malicious gossip, and talking nonsense.”

“Reading nurtures the soul, and an enlightened friend brings it solace.”

“The more a man knows, the less he talks.”

“Is politics nothing other than the art of deliberately lying?”

“Doctors put drugs of which they know little into bodies of which they know less for diseases of which they know nothing at all.”

“All men are born with a nose and ten fingers, but no one was born with a knowledge of God.”

“All the reasonings of men are not worth one sentiment of women.”

“All is for the best in the best of possible worlds.”

“We look to Scotland for all our ideas of civilization.”

“My soul is the mirror of the universe, and my body is its frame.” – *Micromégas*

“The interest I have to believe a thing is no proof that such a thing exists.”

“Uncertainty is an uncomfortable position. But certainty is an absurd one.”

“If we do not find anything very pleasant, at least we shall find something new.”

“Each player must accept the cards life deals him or her; but once they are in hand, he or she alone must decide how to play the cards in order to win the game.”

“Minds differ still more than faces.”

“Opinions have caused more ills than the plague or earthquakes on this little globe of ours.”

“When it is a question of money, everybody is of the same religion.”

“Our wretched species is so made that those who walk on the well-trodden path always throw stones at those who are showing a new road.”

“It is said that God is always on the side of the big battalions.”

“Our character is composed of our ideas and our feelings: and, since it has been proved that we give ourselves neither feelings nor ideas, our character does not depend on us. If it did depend on us, there is nobody who would not be perfect. If one does not reflect, one thinks oneself master of everything; but when one does reflect, one realizes that one is master of nothing.”

“It is not sufficient to see and to know the beauty of a work. We must feel and be affected by it.”

“A witty saying proves nothing.”

“The mouth obeys poorly when the heart murmurs.”

“Tears are the silent language of grief.”

“Theology is to religion what poisons are to food.”

“It is dangerous to be right in matters on which the established authorities are wrong.” – The Age of Louis XIV

“I have chosen to be happy because it is good for my health.”

“Life is thickly sown with thorns, and I know no other remedy than to pass quickly through them. The longer we dwell on our misfortunes, the greater is their power to harm us.”

“Four thousand volumes of metaphysics will not teach us what the soul is.”

“Being unable to make people more reasonable, I preferred to be happy away from them.”

“In general, the art of government consists in taking as much money as possible from one party of the citizens to give to the other.”

“Fools admire everything in an author of reputation.”

“Those who can make you believe absurdities, can make you commit atrocities.”

“No problem can stand the assault of sustained thinking.”

“If there’s life on other planets, then the earth is the Universe’s insane asylum.”

“I know many books which have bored their readers, but I know of none which has done real evil.”

“There is a wide difference between speaking to deceive, and being silent to be impenetrable.”

“Men use thought only as authority for their injustice, and employ speech only to conceal their thoughts.”

“I don’t know where I am going, but I am on my way.”

“The greatest consolation in life is to say what one thinks.”

“Now, now my good man, this is no time to be making enemies.”

“Let us read, and let us dance; these two amusements will never do any harm to the world.”

“Love is a canvas furnished by Nature and embroidered by imagination. “

“It is far better to be silent than merely to increase the quantity of bad books.”

“The more I read, the more I acquire, the more certain I am that I know nothing.”

“Beware of the words ‘internal security,’ for they are the eternal cry of the oppressor.”

“It is not more surprising to be born twice than once; everything in nature is resurrection.”

“We all look for happiness, but without knowing where to find it: like drunkards who look for their house, knowing dimly that they have one.”

“The instruction we find in books is like fire. We fetch it from our neighbors, kindle it at home, communicate it to others, and it becomes the property of all.”

“Religion began when the first scoundrel met the first fool.”

“One always begins with the simple, then comes the complex, and by superior enlightenment one often reverts in the end to the simple. Such is the course of human intelligence.”

“Discord is the great ill of mankind; and tolerance is the only remedy for it.”

“Whatever you do, crush the infamous thing, and love those who love you.”

“History is the study of the world’s crime.”

“There are truths which are not for all men, nor for all times.”

“I have wanted to kill myself a hundred times, but somehow I am still in love with life. This ridiculous weakness is perhaps one of our more stupid melancholy propensities, for is there anything more stupid than to be eager to go on carrying a burden which one would gladly throw away, to loathe one’s very being and yet to hold it fast, to fondle the snake that devours us until it has eaten our hearts away?” – *Candide*

“It requires twenty years for a man to rise from the vegetable state in which he is within his mother’s womb, and from the pure animal state which is the lot of his early childhood, to the state when the maturity of reason begins to appear. It has required thirty centuries to learn a little about his structure. It would need eternity to learn something about his soul. It takes an instant to kill him.”

“Doubt is an uncomfortable condition, but certainty is a ridiculous one.”

“All men are by nature free; you have therefore an undoubted liberty to depart whenever you please, but will have many and great difficulties to encounter in passing the frontiers.”

“It is forbidden to kill; therefore all murderers are punished unless they kill in large numbers and to the sound of trumpets.”

“To the living we owe respect, but to the dead we owe only the truth.”

“A man loved by a beautiful woman will always get out of trouble.”

“I hold firmly to my original views. After all I am a philosopher.”

“Secret griefs are more cruel than public calamities.”

“God gave us the gift of life; it is up to us to give ourselves the gift of living well.”

“If God created us in his own image, we have more than reciprocated.”

– Notebooks

“Originality is nothing by judicious imitation. The most original writers borrowed one from another.”

“What is tolerance? It is the consequence of humanity. We are all formed of frailty and error; let us pardon reciprocally each

other’s folly – that is the first law of nature.”

“I hate women because they always know where things are.”

“We’re neither pure, nor wise, nor good; we do the best we know.”

“Only your friends steal your books.”

– Voltaire