



## The Oxford Dictionary of Thematic Quotations

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From Voltaire's perceptive comment that "common sense is not so common" to Neil Armstrong's epoch-making "One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind," here are more than 7,000 quotations gathered under 600 themes, ranging from Heaven, Happiness, Love, and Marriage to Death, Taxes, Hell, and Cats.

Susan Ratcliffe has collected wise and witty remarks on virtually any topic you can imagine, from timeless themes such as Chance and Courage to more recent subjects such as Genetic Engineering, Rock and Pop Music, and The Internet. Readers will find memorable lines on Baseball and Beethoven, on Cars and Cosmetics, on Parents and Punishment, and on Weddings and Warfare. There are many quotes from traditional sources, from The Bible to Horace to Shakespeare, but most of the quotes come from 20th-century sources, giving the collection a modern feel. The quoted include world leaders (from FDR to Bill Clinton), writers (Mark Twain, Gore Vidal), humorists (Garrison Keillor, Woody Allen), celebrities, sports stars, philosophers, and religious figures. There are many separate but related themes--for example, Journalism, News, Newspapers, and Press Photographers--and many helpful cross-references lead the reader to similar topics, so that Warfare links to The Army, Weapons, and individual wars such as the Gulf War or World War II. The book concludes with a useful author index, providing quick information on what each author has said about certain topics.

An indispensable reference for writers and speakers, *The Oxford Dictionary of Thematic Quotations* is also gold mine of delightful discoveries for browsers who enjoy wise sayings, elegant turns of phrase, or wicked repartee.

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### Editorial Review

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Want to learn what American rapper Ice-T said about racism, Italian conductor Arturo Toscanini about smoking, and American actress Mae West and English novelist Henry Fielding about gossip? Looking for some pithy quotes on leadership or libraries? Consult these new thematic quotations dictionaries. *The Oxford Dictionary of Thematic Quotations* offers more than 7,000, and *The Times Book of Quotations* contains more than 17,000 quotations.

Of the two, the Oxford title is easier to use. Quotations are arranged under more than 600 themes, from *Ability* to *Youth*, and then alphabetically by author. Each quotation within a thematic grouping is assigned a number. An alphabetical listing of themes appears in the front, and an author index in the back. Listed under each person in the index are a brief biographical description and keywords identifying his or her quotes, along with a reference (theme and number) to each quotation's location. Within the dictionary, cross-references help tie together related themes. These are often both synonyms and antonyms, providing for interesting contrast; for instance, from *Lies* there are *see also* references to *Deception*, *Propaganda*, and *Truth*. Each entry for a quotation identifies the author or speaker; gives vital statistics such as profession, nationality, and birth and death dates; and notes the year and original source of the quote. Context is also sometimes provided.

Like *Oxford*, *Times* arranges quotations under more than 600 themes and then alphabetically by author. For each author there is a brief description (although this is missing from the first quote in the book, Gwendolyn Brooks on *Abortion*) and birth and death dates. For each quote the date of the original source is noted, and occasionally the context is explained. Quotations are not numbered. *See also* references, not as copious as *Oxford*'s, are indicated by arrows. There is an alphabetical list of themes at the beginning of the volume, and an author index in the back. The index provides only author names with a sometimes very long string of page numbers, for example, nearly 70 page references for Ralph Waldo Emerson. This index is not as helpful as *Oxford*'s, which identifies each author's quotes by keywords and themes.

Though there is some overlap between the two volumes, differences are considerable. Under the theme *Love*, *Oxford* has 58 quotations, while *Times* has more than 200. Only a handful of the quotes are the same (including one from Cher: "If grass can grow through cement, love can find you at every time in your life"). As might be expected with its greater numbers, *Times* also has a greater variety of authors, with quotes on love from Boethius, Marc Chagall, John Donne, Kahlil Gibran, Matt Groening, Franz Kafka, and Lily Tomlin, to name just a few. In *Oxford* a few of the themes are proper names: Ronald Reagan (one of the few Americans) along with Winston Churchill, James Joyce, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and Margaret Thatcher, among others. *Times* includes more non-English-language sources and often gives non-English quotes in their original languages as well as in translation. Both dictionaries are quite British, with a wide assortment of British Isles personages and some British themes (the British sense of *football*, for example).

Their thematic approach makes these collections comparable to *Random House Webster's Quotational* (1999), which offers more than 20,000 quotations and draws on many more U.S. sources. None of the volumes has a keyword index, making it difficult to find specific quotations. Both *The Oxford Dictionary of Thematic Quotations* and *The Times Book of Quotations* are recommended as supplemental purchases for libraries with large quotation collections. *Mary Ellen Quinn*  
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## About the Author

**Susan Ratcliffe** is an Associate Editor on Quotation Dictionaries for Oxford University Press.

## Users Review

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