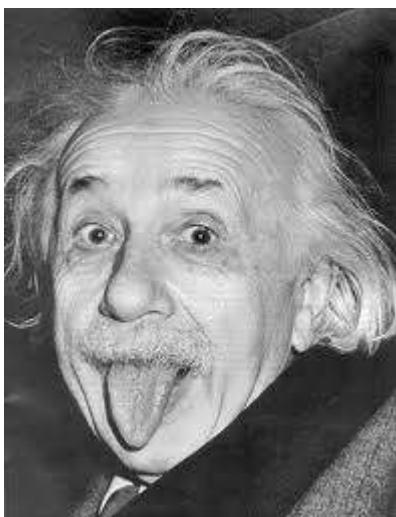


Published on *Psychology Today* (<http://www.psychologytoday.com>)

What Einstein, Twain, and Forty Eight Other Creative People Had to Say About Schooling

By Peter Gray

Created Jul 26 2011 - 3:37am



Throughout history, from Plato on, creative people have spoken out against the stultifying effects of compulsory education. Here are quotations from fifty such people, which I have culled partly from my own reading but mostly from various other websites.

Albert Einstein

- It is, in fact, nothing short of a miracle that the modern methods of education have not yet entirely strangled the holy curiosity of inquiry; for this delicate plant, aside from stimulation, stands mainly in need of freedom; without this it goes to wrack and ruin without fail. It is a very grave mistake to think that the enjoyment of seeing and searching can be promoted by means of coercion and a sense of duty.
- One had to cram all this stuff into one's mind, whether one liked it or not. This coercion had such a deterring effect that, after I had passed the final examination, I found the consideration of any scientific problems distasteful to me for an entire year.
- Whoever undertakes to set himself up as a judge of Truth and Knowledge is shipwrecked by the laughter of the Gods.

Plato

- Knowledge that is acquired under compulsion obtains no hold on the mind.

Chuang Tzu

- Reward and punishment is the lowest form of education.

Mark Twain

- I have never let my schooling interfere with my education.
- Soap and education are not as sudden as a massacre, but they are more deadly in the long run.
- Education consists mainly in what we have unlearned.
- In the first place God made idiots. This was for practice. Then he made school boards.

Oscar Wilde

- The whole theory of modern education is radically unsound. Fortunately in England, at any rate, education produces no effect whatsoever. If it did, it would prove a serious danger to the upper classes, and probably lead to acts of violence.
- Education is an admirable thing, but it is well to remember from time to time that nothing that is worth knowing can be taught.
- Everyone who is incapable of learning has taken to teaching.

Winston Churchill

- How I hated schools, and what a life of anxiety I lived there. I counted the hours to the end of every term, when I should return home.
- I always like to learn, but I don't always like to be taught.

Woody Allen

- I loathed every day and regret every moment I spent in a school.

Dolly Parton

- I hated school. Even to this day, when I see a school bus it's just depressing to me. The poor little kids.

George Bernard Shaw

- There is nothing on earth intended for innocent people so horrible as a school.
- What we call education and culture is for the most part nothing but the

substitution of reading for experience, of literature for life, of the obsolete fictitious for the contemporary real.

Finley Peter Dunne

- It don't make much difference what you study, so long as you don't like it.

Thomas Edison

- I remember that I was never able to get along at school. I was at the foot of the class.

Henry David Thoreau

- What does education often do? It makes a straight-cut ditch of a free, meandering brook.
- How could youths better learn to live than by at once trying the experiment of living?

Bertrand Russell

- Men are born ignorant, not stupid; they are made stupid by education.
- Education is one of the chief obstacles to intelligence and freedom of thought.

Benjamin Franklin

- He was so learned that he could name a horse in nine languages; so ignorant that he bought a cow to ride on.

H. L. Mencken

- The average schoolmaster is and always must be essentially an ass, for how can one imagine an intelligent man engaging in so puerile an avocation.

George Saville, Marquis of Halifax

- The vanity of teaching doth oft tempt a man to forget that he is a blockhead.

***Joseph Stalin* (Hmmm, a supporter of compulsory schooling.)**

- Education is a weapon, whose effect depends on who holds it in his hands and at whom it is aimed.

Norman Douglas

- Education is a state-controlled manufactory of echoes.

Paul Karl Feyerabend

- The best education consists in immunizing people against systematic attempts at education.

Theodore Roosevelt

- A man who has never gone to school may steal from a freight car; but if he has a university education, he may steal the whole railroad.

H. H. Munro

- But, good gracious, you've got to educate him first. You can't expect a boy to be vicious till he's been to a good school.

Robert Frost

- Education is hanging around until you've caught on.

Gilbert K. Chesterton

- Education is the period during which you are being instructed by somebody you do not know, about something you do not want to know.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

- I pay the schoolmaster, but it is the schoolboys who educate my son.

Alice James

- I wonder whether if I had an education I should have been more or less a fool than I am.

Helen Beatrix Potter

- Thank goodness I was never sent to school; it would have rubbed off some of the originality.

Margaret Mead

- My grandmother wanted me to have an education, so she kept me out of school.

William Hazlitt

- Anyone who has passed through the regular gradations of a classical education, and is not made a fool by it, may consider himself as having

had a very narrow escape.

Laurence J. Peter

- Education is a method whereby one acquires a higher grade of prejudices.

***Anne Sullivan* (I bow to her.)**

- I am beginning to suspect all elaborate and special systems of education. They seem to me to be built up on the supposition that every child is a kind of idiot who must be taught to think.

Alice Duer Miller

- It is among the commonplaces of education that we often first cut off the living root and then try to replace its natural functions by artificial means. Thus we suppress the child's curiosity and then when he lacks a natural interest in learning he is offered special coaching for his scholastic difficulties.

Florence King

- Showing up at school already able to read is like showing up at the undertaker's already embalmed: people start worrying about being put out of their jobs.

Emma Goldman

- Since every effort in our educational life seems to be directed toward making of the child a being foreign to itself, it must of necessity produce individuals foreign to one another, and in everlasting antagonism with each other.

Edward M. Forster

- Spoon feeding in the long run teaches us nothing but the shape of the spoon.

William John Bennett

- If [our schools] are still bad maybe we should declare educational bankruptcy, give the people their money and let them educate themselves and start their own schools.

John Updike

- School is where you go between when your parents can't take you, and industry can't take you.

Robert Buzzell

- The mark of a true MBA is that he is often wrong but seldom in doubt.

Robert M. Hutchins

- The three major administrative problems on a campus are sex for the students, athletics for the alumni, and parking for the faculty.
- The college graduate is presented with a sheepskin to cover his intellectual nakedness.

Elbert Hubbard

- You can lead a boy to college, but you cannot make him think.

Max Leon Forman

- Education seems to be in America the only commodity of which the customer tries to get as little as he can for his money.

Phillip K. Dick

- The trouble with being educated is that it takes a long time; it uses up the better part of your life and when you are finished what you know is that you would have benefited more by going into banking.

David P. Gardner

- Much that passes for education is not education at all but ritual. The fact is that we are being educated when we know it least.

Ivan Illich

- The public school has become the established church of secular society.
- Together we have come to realize that the right to learn is curtailed by the obligation to attend school.

Marshall McLuhan

- The school system ... is the homogenizing hopper into which we toss our integral tots for processing.

Michel De Montaigne

- We only labor to stuff the memory, and leave the conscience and the understanding unfurnished and void.

Peter Drucker

- When a subject becomes totally obsolete we make it a required course.

C. C. Colton

- Examinations are formidable even to the best prepared, for the greatest fool may ask more than the wisest man can answer.

Paul Simon

- When I think back on all the crap I learned in high school, it's a wonder I can think at all.

John Dewey

- It is our American habit, if we find the foundations of our educational structure unsatisfactory, to add another story or a wing.

Anonymous (My favorite of all historical figures.)

- If nobody dropped out of eighth grade, who would hire the college graduates?
- Public school is a place of detention for children placed in the care of teachers who are afraid of the principal, principals who are afraid of the school board, school boards who are afraid of the parents, parents who are afraid of the children, and children who are afraid of nobody.
- The creative person is usually rebellious. He or she is the survivor of a trauma called education.
- You can always tell a Harvard man, but you can't tell him much.

Friends, yes, I know, this is a biased sampling of quotations! I have deliberately selected quotations that complain about the compulsory, standard system of schooling. But, I challenge you. Develop a list this long of quotations *supporting* compulsory schooling and see if the authors you quote rank close to these authors in creativity.

I invite you to contribute your own favorite quotations, or your own thoughts and questions about the quotations presented here, in the discussion section below. As always, I prefer if you post your comments and questions here rather than send them to me by private email. By putting them here, you share with other readers, not just with me. I read all comments and try to respond to all serious questions. Of course, if you have something to say that applies only to you and me, then send me an email.

Source URL: <http://www.psychologytoday.com/node/70201>

Links:

[1] <http://www.psychologytoday.com/experts/peter-gray>

- [2] <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/freedom-learn>
- [3] <http://www.psychologytoday.com/taxonomy/term/1054>
- [4] <http://www.psychologytoday.com/taxonomy/term/93226>
- [5] <http://www.psychologytoday.com/taxonomy/term/1055>
- [6] <http://www.psychologytoday.com/taxonomy/term/159861>
- [7] <http://www.psychologytoday.com/taxonomy/term/1057>
- [8] <http://www.psychologytoday.com/taxonomy/term/1093>
- [9] <http://www.psychologytoday.com/taxonomy/term/5>
- [10] <http://www.psychologytoday.com/tags/acts-violence>
- [11] <http://www.psychologytoday.com/tags/albert-einstein>
- [12] <http://www.psychologytoday.com/tags/anxiety>
- [13] <http://www.psychologytoday.com/tags/coercion>
- [14] <http://www.psychologytoday.com/tags/compulsion>
- [15] <http://www.psychologytoday.com/tags/compulsory-education>
- [16] <http://www.psychologytoday.com/tags/education-quotations>
- [17] <http://www.psychologytoday.com/tags/educational-reform>
- [18] <http://www.psychologytoday.com/tags/famous-quotations>
- [19] <http://www.psychologytoday.com/tags/grave-mistake-0>
- [20] <http://www.psychologytoday.com/tags/laughter>
- [21] <http://www.psychologytoday.com/tags/modern-education>
- [22] <http://www.psychologytoday.com/tags/nothing-short-miracle-0>
- [23] <http://www.psychologytoday.com/tags/place-god>
- [24] <http://www.psychologytoday.com/tags/plato>
- [25] <http://www.psychologytoday.com/tags/rate-education>
- [26] <http://www.psychologytoday.com/tags/sense-duty>
- [27] <http://www.psychologytoday.com/tags/serious-danger>
- [28] <http://www.psychologytoday.com/tags/soap>
- [29] <http://www.psychologytoday.com/tags/tau>
- [30] <http://www.psychologytoday.com/tags/truth-and-knowledge-0>
- [31] <http://www.psychologytoday.com/tags/violence-education>