



# The Oxford Dictionary of American Legal Quotations

*Fred R. Shapiro*

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"The words which are criticized as dirty [in James Joyce's *Ulysses*] are old Saxon words known to almost all men, and, I venture, to many women, and are such words as would be naturally and habitually used, I believe, by the types of folk whose life, physical and mental, Joyce is seeking to describe. In respect of the recurrent emergence of the theme of sex in the minds of his characters, it must always be remembered that his locale was Celtic and his season spring."--John M. Woolsey, United States v. One Book Called "*Ulysses*"

The practice of law rests heavily on the incisive, pithy, and occasionally witty language of the best technical writing, and law-related themes are often found at the core of works of literature, politics, and other fields. Previous compilations of legal quotations have been limited, with significant gaps; many quoting rarely from American sources. For example, Supreme Court Associate Justice Potter Stewart's famous quip about pornography ("I know it when I see it") appears in no other work. *The Oxford Dictionary of American Legal Quotations* is the most scholarly and most complete legal quotation reference ever published. It includes a comprehensive collection of the most famous passages of American judges and legal commentators. This work also contains the wittiest sayings from literature, humor, motion pictures, and even song lyrics relating to American law. Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., Clarence Darrow, and Abraham Lincoln share the pages with Mark Twain, Will Rogers, Kurt Vonnegut, Woody Allen, and Bob Dylan.

Over 3,000 entries are presented in a subject arrangement. An author index and an extensive "key-word" index further facilitate location of desired quotes. Each quote has been verified from the original sources, with the precise citations needed for legal reference.

For example:

"Scarcely any political question arises in the United States which is not resolved, sooner or later, into a judicial question."--Alexis de Tocqueville

"The illegal we do immediately. The unconstitutional takes a bit longer."--Henry Kissinger

"No patent medicine was ever put to wider and more varied use than the Fourteenth Amendment."--William O. Douglas

"If there is any principle of the Constitution that more imperatively calls for attachment than any other, it is the principle of free thought--not free thought for those who agree with us, but freedom for the thought we hate."--Oliver Wendell Holmes

"I think that we should be men first, and subjects afterwards. It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right."--Henry David Thoreau

"No principle of general law is more universally acknowledged, than the perfect equality of nations. Russia and Geneva have equal rights. It results from this equality, that no one can rightfully impose a rule on another....As no nation can prescribe a rule for others, none can make a law of nations."--John Marshall

This work fills a need for lawyers and law students requiring material for their legal writing or interested in the rich cultural and historical dimensions of their profession, as well as anyone interested in the legal system so pervasive in modern life or in the vital legacy of the American constitution.

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