

Quotation Interpretation and Application

Writing Assignment for The Prince, by Niccolo Machiavelli; a 16th century book with very contemporary ideas regarding modern politics.

- The masterpiece has become famous for its insightful understanding of the nuances of political intrigue. Select **five (5) quotes** from The Prince (listed below) to examine more closely. Interpret the quotation, then offer a real-life example (may be historical or contemporary) to illustrate your understanding.

Quotations from The Prince:

1. “A prince should therefore have no other aim or thought, nor take up any other thing for his study but war and its organization and discipline, for that is the only art that is necessary to one who commands.”
2. “He who has not first laid his foundations may be able with great ability to lay them afterwards, but they will be laid with trouble to the architect and danger to the building.”
3. “Men judge generally more by the eye than by the hand, for everyone can see and few can feel. Everyone sees what you appear to be, few really know what you are.”
4. “Since love and fear can hardly exist together, if we must choose between them, it is far safer to be feared than loved.”
5. “And that prince who bases his power entirely... words, finding himself completely without other preparations, comes to ruin.”
6. “Men are less hesitant about harming someone who makes himself loved than one who makes himself feared because love is held together by a chain of obligation which, since men are wretched creatures, is broken on every occasion in which their own interests are concerned; but fear is sustained by dread of punishment which will never abandon you.”
7. “One should never allow chaos to develop in order to avoid going to war, because one does not avoid a war but instead puts it off to his disadvantage.”
8. “For a prince should have two fears: one, internal concerning his subjects; the other, external, concerning foreign powers. From the latter he can always defend himself by his good troops and friends; and he will always have good friends if he has good troops.”
9. “And here one must not believe that hatred is acquired just as much by means of good actions as by bad ones; and so, as I have said above, if a prince wishes to maintain the state, he is often obliged not to be good; because whenever that group which you believe you need to support you is corrupted, whether it be the common people, the soldiers, or the nobles, it is to your advantage to follow their inclinations in order to satisfy them; and then good actions are your enemy.”
10. “And it will always happen that he who is not your friend will request your neutrality and he who is your friend will ask you to declare yourself by taking up arms. And irresolute princes, in order to avoid present dangers, follow the neutral road most of the time, and most of the time they are ruined.”

8. "...His message came across clear and appealing...He described America as a country 'where no Catholic prelate would tell the President – should he be a Catholic – how to act and no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners for whom to vote. This is a country where religious liberty is so indivisible than an act against one Church is treated as an act against all.'"
9. "JFK would call 5 or 6...LBJ would take 19 names and call them all."
10. "The purpose of the war room was not just to respond to Republican attacks...It was to respond to them fast, even before they were broadcasted or published, when the lead of the story was still rolling around in the reporter's mind..."

Political Maxims

What've ya done for me lately?
 All politics is local
 It's better to receive than to give
 Leave no shot unanswered
 Politics = Power
 Retail politics

Don't Get Mad; Don't Get Even; Get Ahead
 Triangulation
 Keep your enemies in front of you
 Hang a Lantern on your problem
 Only talk when it improves the silence
 Dance with the one that brung ya

Part 3

In The Prince, Machiavelli argues that a successful ruler must know how to be good, but must also know "how not to be good." In Hardball, Chris Matthews examines modern day politicians who must deal with the pressures of the press, interest groups, and the two-party system. The two authors, while centuries apart, look at power and politics with the same watchful and knowledgeable eye.

- How much of The Prince is relevant to contemporary society in an age when monarchies no longer are the primary form of government?
- Discuss three political figures mentioned in Hardball who chose "not to be good," in the sense Machiavelli means. Find bios of these leaders and explain whether or not each is Machiavellian, using relevant, thoughtful examples. What are some of the issues he/she faced? How did he/she take on the issues? What were the results? Do you agree with the choices made? (Be certain to attach the bios with your comments, highlights, and notes.)
- Using the three politicians you selected above, decide whether or not Machiavelli would have crowned each of them with the title of "prince". Offer perspective from relevant parts of The Prince as your evidence.

PLEASE NOTE: Be sure to include a COVER PAGE with the following information: Name of course, Title of Assignment, Student name and date. The summer assignment is due first day of class, and there will be a test on the summer assignment during the first week of class.