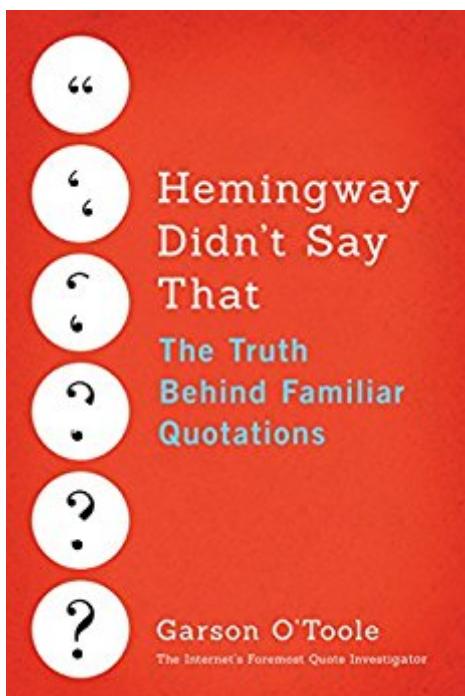


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# Hemingway Didn't Say That: The Truth Behind Familiar Quotations



## Synopsis

“Extensive and brilliant investigations”  
“a tour de force of detective work”  
Mr. O’Toole is a beacon of accuracy who should inspire all readers who prefer their facts real rather than phony.  
• “Wall Street Journal” Everywhere you look, you’ll find viral quotable wisdom attributed to icons ranging from Abraham Lincoln to Mark Twain, from Cicero to Woody Allen. But more often than not, these attributions are false. Garson O’Toole, the Internet’s foremost investigator into the dubious origins of our most repeated quotations, aphorisms, and everyday sayings, collects his efforts into a first-ever encyclopedia of corrective popular history. Containing an enormous amount of original research, this delightful compendium presents information previously unavailable to readers, writers, and scholars. It also serves as the first careful examination of what causes misquotations and how they spread across the globe. Using the massive expansion in online databases as well as old-fashioned gumshoe archival digging, O’Toole provides a fascinating study of our modern abilities to find and correct misinformation. As Carl Sagan did not say, “Somewhere, something incredible is waiting to be known.”

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I loved the idea of this book and jumped on it when it came up as a Kindle First choice of the month, but the execution... meh. Now, mind you, this is a topic that interests me. Heck, the only reason I don't have a tattoo right now is I finally settled on the exact one I wanted, a quote I'd seen attributed time and again to Robert Frost that would have been perfect. Except before getting it permanently imprinted upon myself, I wanted to verify the source... at which point I hit a stumbling block. I was unable to find any verifiable source, other than collections of internet quotes. I even turned to our local library's research librarians for help, and they came back with the same. Lots of people SAY he said it, but there's nothing anyone could find to verify that he did (or who else originally did, for that matter). And so, to this day, Heather remains untattooed. So, this is the kind of stuff I love, finding out the real truth behind the things we pass from person to person somehow trusting it because it comes up on a nice picture online, or is being shared by someone we respect. (I could do a whole segue into the whole "fake news" issue of the moment, but will spare you.) All of this to say... I went in primed. The opening of the book was actually a good overview of the different ways quotes can end up misattributed, and I expected more information on each in the coming chapters, and then we moved into the meat of the book itself and.... it was basically Steak 'Ums. This reads like (heck, it might even be, but I'm so worn out from slogging through the whole thing to want to do any research of my own right now) a series of blog posts. And not particularly engaging blog posts at that. Each section is a quote showing who it is most commonly attributed to, and then tracing its most likely actual origins. There were two problems for me: 1. the format got old fast, and there were a LOT of quotes. 2. The greater problem - the writing just wasn't engaging. It reminded me of reading a late elementary schooler's history paper. Date, event, name. Date, name, event. There wasn't context, there wasn't insight, there wasn't commentary. It was all well researched and sources were perfectly cited, but... \*yawn\* It just was not a writing style that worked in book length for me. I'd probably have enjoyed these from time to time as a single article or blog post, but to read them all back-to-back (er, back-to-front if we're going to be technical) just became tedious. Which really stinks, because I was so excited to have a non-fiction Kindle First choice at all, never mind one about a subject in which I was truly interested. Boo.

Rarely do I see a non-fiction book as a Kindle First selection, even more rarely is it one that actually

looks interesting to me. I usually go for the Mystery/Suspense/Thrillers but I switched it up this month. Everyone loves a good, thought-provoking quote, I'm sure I'm not the only one who has filled notebooks with some of their favorites. Between quotes and lyrics I must have filled up dozens of composition books in my youth. I found some cleaning recently and it's really revealing to go back and read what spoke to you in years past. This book delves into many well known quotes from the past and explores what they mean, how they've been misinterpreted or wrongly attributed and I learned a lot I never knew. Bonus points to the author for mentioning one of my favorite singers, POE, in the first few pages... completely irrelevant to this review but check her out too. Anyway, I recommend this as a Kindle First selection for sure and if you're reading this after it's no longer a free selection I would recommend clicking the cover above and reading the first few pages for free. That alone is enough to tell you whether you will find this book as interesting as I did.

It's a quirky read; the author goes into great depth on a small amount of sayings; it would have been a better read had he gone into less depth but covered many more sayings.

The obscure references got tedious quickly. I generally like learning obscure facts that I can use to irritate people, but this was like the author was doing that to me. Handy to settle arguments, not a book to sit down and just read.

I know this had great reviews but personally, I found it boring. I give the author credit for the massive amount of research he did on each saying but it seemed that none of the sayings could really be contributed to any one person as each person in history said the same thing in a different way - same as gossip. I've always wondered how any of us could ever really say anything original with only so many words in which to express ourselves. And the longer human beings are in existence the more likely we are to say something someone else said even if we never heard it before.

Anyone that is interested in language or psychology might enjoy this book. It really is a list of famous quotes we've been using wrong and have been used incorrectly for a long time. A quote's history is thoroughly researched and its true origins explained. The book also explains how quotes are mangled or misattributed by the human mind. It's interesting how well spoken, intelligent public figures have even screwed up quoting other famous people (They do it all the time. I'm not even talking about taking things out of context either). I plan on fact checking, and even writing down any

future quotes I may use. I don't want to be part of perpetuating misquotes!

It'll probably come as no surprise to most of the folks likely to read this book that most of the things we think somebody in particular said are either demonstrably attributed to someone else, or can't be attributed to anyone. Doubtless, given the current societal disregard for "evidence" (let alone "proof") many people who probably won't read this book would cite the fact that lots of people believe they said it is enough. Writers on words and language frequently engage their readers with a bit of style and attitude to spice up what could be a dreary litany of cites and lack of cites. That style is easily overdone, but the fact that most such writing is consumed in half-page or page-long chunks mitigates the potential pall. This book goes in the opposite direction - the scholarship is admirable, but it's rather dry, and some of the "quotes" tracked down are not only unfamiliar but the tiniest bit dull. It reads like a scholarly tome, so can't be recommended as entertainment. As scholarship it's superb, apparatus and all.

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