

GUIDE TO READING EXTRACTS FROM MORE AND ERASMUS

Two sites introduced below contain extracts from the writings of Erasmus and More which will help you.

A rather adulatory biography of [More](#) nevertheless contains many useful quotations (they are printed in red) from his letters which provide excellent insight into his character and interests. Another site, organised by the [Center for Thomas More Studies](#) also contains useful introductory material and some extracts from More's own writings. What do More's own words tell you about:

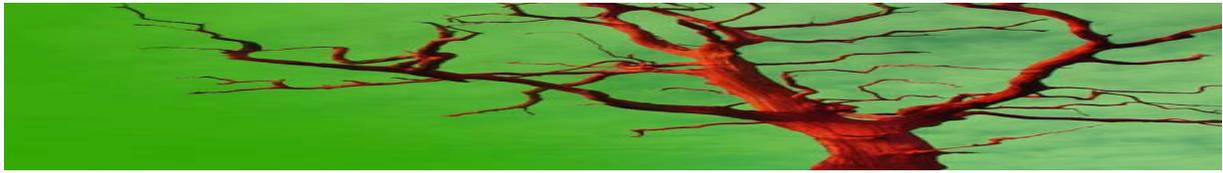
- his view of human beings
- his attitude to law and government
- his ideas about education
- his relationship with his family
- approach to conscience and integrity

Erasmus's most famous satire and criticism of his era '[In Praise of Folly](#)' is available in full online. Notice its Latin title and its date of composition. Read the first 10 or 11 sentences which are a witty dedication of the book to Erasmus' friend Thomas More. The following short questions might help you get a feel for the writing:

- Where is Erasmus travelling to and what means of transport is he using?
- What two things is he thinking about especially as he goes along?
- What comment does he make on his friendship with More?
- Who does he say gave him the idea for the title of his book?
- Look at the Latin title of the book—do you get the pun on More's name?
- Why does Erasmus think that More will approve of what he is going to write?
- Even without looking it up, who or what do you think 'Democritus' might be? (In fact, he was known as 'the laughing philosopher'—would this have contributed to Erasmus's use of his name in relation to More?)
- Robert Bolt wrote a play about Thomas More called 'A Man for all Seasons' (later made into a film). Can you spot the inspiration for this title in Erasmus's compliment to his friend?

What do you think is Erasmus's main aim in writing this dedication?

Next scroll down two thirds of the document to the heading '*Oration: Lights Of The World: The Lights of the World Reduced to a Mere Wallet*' which is a critique of the way of life of many of the clergy at that time.



Guide to Reading Extracts from More and Erasmus (Cont.)

What are the main criticisms Erasmus makes of

- bishops
- cardinals
- the Pope
- priests?

Can you guess that Erasmus himself had been ordained?

Having looked carefully at the actual words of More and Erasmus and read something of their lives, you now should be in a position to frame some interesting and incisive questions which will enable them to convey their convictions, passions and opinions.

Catherine Place