

# VAISHALI MAHILA MAHAVIDYALAYA HAJIPUR, VAISHALI

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

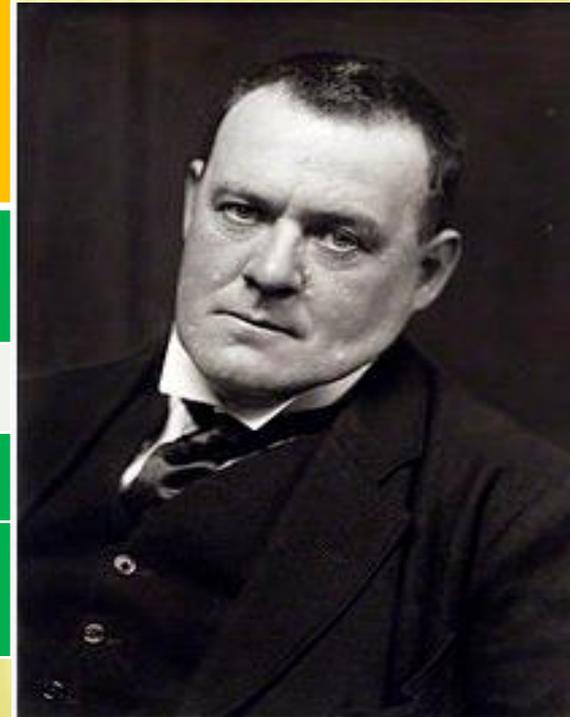
Takes you to-

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# IN PRAISE OF IGNORANCE

## Hillaire Belloc

Born	Joseph Hilaire Pierre René Belloc 27 July 1870 <a href="#">La Celle-Saint-Cloud, Seine-et-Oise, France</a>
Died	16 July 1953 (aged 82) <a href="#">Guildford, Surrey, United Kingdom</a>
Language	English
Citizenship	French and British
Occupation	Writer, Member of Parliament (1906–1910)



Literary  
movement

Catholic literary revival

NOTABLE  
WORKS

“The Four Men”

“The Path to Rome”

“Cautionary Tales”



# SUMMARY

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In *On Ignorance* by Hilaire Belloc we have the theme of ignorance, passion, deflection, shame, appearance, tomfoolery and after reading the essay it becomes clear to the reader that Belloc is exploring the theme of passion. Should an individual find themselves ignorant of facts among an audience of others Belloc believes passion is a sure solution to any embarrassment that may be felt. He considers it appropriate for the individual to quickly take exception to criticism and to do so with great bouts of passion. In doing so the reality is that the person is really deflecting their ignorance away from themselves. Allowing for themselves to have some breathing space and to lighten any burdensome load they might feel on discovery that they are ignorant of a topic. Another deflection tool used by Belloc is for a person to change the subject as quickly as possible in the hope that they may defuse the perceived aggression that is heading their way. When the reality is even Belloc agrees that at times everybody is ignorant of and about something. Another method of deflection is to joke about what has occurred. Hoping that one eventually exhausts their opponent while at the same time keeping the upper hand.

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Which may suggest that appearance is important when it comes to the matter of being ignorant. Nobody wishes to be made a fool of or scorned upon by a colleague. Particularly if their colleague is highlighting the individual's ignorance and how they should feel ashamed about being so ignorant. It would appear as though most people who attack another person for their lack of knowledge or ignorance with regard to a subject forget that they themselves may not necessarily be well informed on other topics. It is as though an individual who attacks another is thinking only of their own self-importance. Rather than explaining themselves to the person they choose to assassinate a person's character. The fact that one might feel ashamed by their lack of knowledge shows or highlights the importance of society's opinion with regard to matters. Sometimes ignorance can be blissful though unfortunately we do not live in a society in whereby the individual is allowed to be ignorant of the facts. They are judged socially by their peers for their lack of knowledge and understanding of a subject. Yet they may have no need to know about the subject. It may be an irrelevancy to their life.

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What is also interesting about the essay is that Belloc does not appear to believe that an individual has a right to be ignorant of the facts on certain topics. It is as though a man (or woman) needs to adapt themselves to the circumstances they find themselves in and revert to learning what others know. Rather than learning what he himself may wish to know. Without following the rule of others. There does not seem to be a path that is independent of others that an individual might follow. As to why this is, is difficult to say. Perhaps an individual is afraid in company to admit to not knowing what is what when it comes to a certain topic or issue. Most issues are irrelevant to a person's daily life and do not affect them. However as soon as they are discovered to be ignorant. Things change dramatically. A combination of both fear and embarrassment result in the individual changing his behaviour to suit his environment. Though it is understandable as nobody wishes to be made a fool of or to have their ignorance exposed publicly.

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In reality none of Belloc's 'solution's' are satisfactory and leave an individual rooted or tied down to convention. It would be better for an individual to be carefree and not feel pressurized by society's views on the importance of issues. Again if a man (or woman) can be independent of others they will live a far happier life. This does not mean that a person should isolate themselves from their peers but rather if they admit to not knowing about a topic and suggesting to their counterpart that they have no interest in knowing. It is left to the counterpart to decide upon whether he or she wishes to prolong a friendship. It would seem a pity for a person to be ostracized just because they haven't read the same books as another person. Some people are readers while others are doers and some may be quite prepared to comfortably sit on the fence. Nobody should be alienated because of their lack of knowledge in one topic. For they might very well be well versed in another. Something that Belloc believes an individual should use in their defence. When really there is no need for a person to defend their position.

**THANK YOU**  
**HOPE YOU**  
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