

A. S. Byatt

Quotes

*Writing, Thinking, People, Book, Dark, Children, Mind, Self, World, Feelings,
Fire, Trying, Night, Men, Art, Looks, Needs, Doe, Nice, Solitude*

I acquired a hunger for fairy tales in the dark days of blackout and blitz in the second world war.

~A. S. Byatt

What literature can and should do is change the people who teach the people who don't read the books.

~A. S. Byatt

No mere human can stand in a fire and not be consumed.

~A. S. Byatt

Art does not exist for politics, or for instruction- it exists primarily for pleasure, or it is nothing.

~A. S. Byatt

Things are not what they seem.

~A. S. Byatt

I think the names of colors are at the edge, between where language fails and where it's at its most powerful.

~A. S. Byatt

I worry about anthropomorphism as a form of self-deception. (The Christian religion is an anthropomorphic account of the universe.)

~A. S. Byatt

Narration is as much a part of human nature as breath and the circulation of the blood.

~A. S. Byatt

I think vestigially there's a synesthete in me but not like a real one who immediately knows what colour Wednesday is.

~A. S. Byatt

He felt changed, but there was no one to tell.

~A. S. Byatt

Pain hardens, and great pain hardens greatly, whatever the comforters say, and suffering does not ennoble, though it may occasionally lend a certain rigid dignity of manner to the suffering frame.

~A. S. Byatt

I have a dreadful fear that the more you try to prevent revealing the self the more you do.

~A. S. Byatt

Human beings love stories because they safely show us beginnings, middles and ends.

~A. S. Byatt

I'm not very interested in myself. I do have a deep moral belief that you should always look out at other things and not be self-centred.

~A. S. Byatt

An odd phrase, "by heart," he would add, as though poems were stored in the bloodstream.

~A. S. Byatt

I am a creature of my pen. My pen is the best of me.

~A. S. Byatt

Lists are a form of power.

~A. S. Byatt

I don't think it is an easy thing to write and expect to be commercial, even if you are from Venus and a hermaphrodite.

~A. S. Byatt

It is good for a man to invite his ghosts into his warm interior, out of the wild night, into the firelight, out of the howling dark.

~A. S. Byatt

Never stop paying attention to things. Never make your mind up finally. Do not hold beliefs.

~A. S. Byatt

Vocabularies are crossing circles and loops. We are defined by the lines we choose to cross or to be confined by.

~A. S. Byatt

Ice burns, and it is hard to the warm-skinned to distinguish one sensation, fire, from the other, frost.

~A. S. Byatt

You know, it's a truism that writers for children must still be children themselves, deep down, must still feel childish feelings, and a child's surprise at the world.

~A. S. Byatt

Think of this - that the writer wrote alone, and the reader read alone, and they were alone with each other.

~A. S. Byatt

Biographies are no longer written to explain or explore the greatness of the great. They redress balances, explore secret weaknesses, demolish legends.

~A. S. Byatt

Only write to me, write to me, I love to see the hop and skip and sudden starts of your ink.

~A. S. Byatt

Young girls are sad. They like to be; it makes them feel strong.

~A. S. Byatt

I'm more interested in books than people, and I always expect everybody else to be, but they're not.

~A. S. Byatt

Louis de Bernieres is in the direct line that runs through Dickens and Evelyn Waugh. . .he has only to look into his world, one senses, for it to rush into reality, colours and touch and taste.

~A. S. Byatt

Creative Writing was not a form of psychotherapy, in ways both sublime and ridiculous, it clearly was, precisely that.

~A. S. Byatt

I don't understand why, in my work, writing is always so dangerous. It's very destructive. People who write books are destroyers.

~A. S. Byatt

I'd like to write the way Matisse paints.

~A. S. Byatt

I think there are a lot more important things than art in the world. But not to me.

~A. S. Byatt

Literary critics make natural detectives.

~A. S. Byatt

For my true thoughts have spent more time in your company than in anyone else's, these last two or three months, and where my thoughts are, there am I, in truth".

~A. S. Byatt

“My Solitude is my Treasure, the best thing I have.

~A. S. Byatt

I think the virtue I prize above all others is curiosity.

~A. S. Byatt

A surprising number of people - including many students of literature - will tell you they haven't really lived in a book since they were children.

~A. S. Byatt

In England, everyone believes if you think, then you don't feel. But all my novels are about joining together thinking and feeling.

~A. S. Byatt

The individual appears for an instant, joins the community of thought, modifies it and dies; but the species, that dies not, reaps the fruit of his ephemeral existence.

~A. S. Byatt

Mine the long night
The secret place
Where lovers meet
In long embrace
In purple dark
In silvered kiss
Forget the world
And grasp your bliss

~A. S. Byatt

I don't only write about English literature; I also write about chaos theory and... ants. I can understand ants.

~A. S. Byatt

Autobiographies tell more lies than all but the most self-indulgent fiction.

~A. S. Byatt

Good writing is always new.

~A. S. Byatt

You did not so much mind being -conventionally- betrayed, if you were not kept in the dark, which was humiliating, or defined only as a wife and dependent person, which was annihilating.

~A. S. Byatt

The reading eye must do the work to make them live, and so it did, again and again, never the same life twice, as the artist had intended.

~A. S. Byatt

There is a certain aesthetic pleasure in trying to imagine the unimaginable and failing, if you are a reader.

~A. S. Byatt

I do not want to be a relative and passive being, anywhere. I want to live and love and write.

~A. S. Byatt

I hated being a novelist when I was 20 - I had nothing to write about.

~A. S. Byatt

What I need to write well is a combination of heat, light and solitude.

~A. S. Byatt

I know that part of the reason I read Tolkien when I'm ill is that there is an almost total absence of sexuality in his world, which is restful.

~A. S. Byatt

Funny way to spend your life, though, studying another chap's versifying.

~A. S. Byatt

It's a terrible poison, writing.

~A. S. Byatt

I did a lot of my writing as though I was an academic, doing some piece of research as perfectly as possible.

~A. S. Byatt

Harm can come about without will or action. But will and action can avert harm.

~A. S. Byatt

Well, I would hardly say I do write as yet. But I write because I like words. I suppose if I liked stone I might carve. I like words. I like reading. I notice particular words. That sets me off.

~A. S. Byatt

I am not an academic who happens to have written a novel. I am a novelist who happens to be quite good academically.

~A. S. Byatt

I don't see much point in doing things for a pure joke. Every now and then you need a joke, but not so much as the people who spend all their lives constructing joke palaces think you do.

~A. S. Byatt

The more research you do, the more at ease you are in the world you're writing about. It doesn't encumber you, it makes you free.

~A. S. Byatt

History, writing, infect after a time a man's sense of himself.

~A. S. Byatt

You are safe with me." "I am not at all safe, with you. But I have no desire to be elsewhere.

~A. S. Byatt

...it is not possible to create the opposite of what one has always

known, simply because the opposite is believed to be desired. Human beings need what they already know, even horrors.

~A. S. Byatt

Independent women must expect more of themselves, since neither men nor other more conventionally domesticated women will hope for anything, or expect any result other than utter failure.

~A. S. Byatt

It's because I'm a feminist that I can't stand women limiting other women's imaginations. It really makes me angry.

~A. S. Byatt

I like feeling my way into different minds and experiences. It comes naturally and always has.

~A. S. Byatt

Outside our small safe place flies mystery.

~A. S. Byatt

Once you get older, people stop listening to what you say. It's very agreeable once you get used to it.

~A. S. Byatt

In our world of sleek flesh and collagen, botox and liposuction, what we most fear is the dissolution of the body-mind, the death of the brain.

~A. S. Byatt

When I was a child - in wartime, pre-television - books were my life.

~A. S. Byatt

That is human nature, that people come after you, willingly enough, provided only that you no longer love or want them.

~A. S. Byatt

Narrative is one of the best intoxicants or tranquilisers.

~A. S. Byatt

Books that change you, even later in life, give you a kind of electrical shock as the world takes a different shape.

~A. S. Byatt

Novels arise out of the shortcomings of History.

~A. S. Byatt

Where would we be without inhibitions? They're quite useful things when you look at some of the things humans do if they lose them.

~A. S. Byatt

You can understand a lot about yourself by working out which fairytale you use to present your world to yourself in.

~A. S. Byatt

One of the reasons I've gotten so attached to talking to scientists is that... they know there is a reality.

~A. S. Byatt

One does not remember the winners. One remains haunted by the losers.

~A. S. Byatt

I don't like gurus. I don't like people who ask you to follow or believe. I like people who ask you to think independently.

~A. S. Byatt

Everything is surprising, rightly seen.

~A. S. Byatt

I was no good at being a child.

~A. S. Byatt

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