

David McCullough

Quotes

*Writing, Book, Thinking, People, Men, Past, Country, Art, Reading, War,
Character, History, Who We Are, Teacher, School, Mean, Children, Self, Real,
Leader*

To me history ought to be a source of pleasure. It isn't just part of our civic responsibility. To me it's an enlargement of the experience of being alive, just the way literature or art or music is.

~David McCullough

Climb the mountain so you can see the world, not so the world can see you.

~David McCullough

Never assume that people in positions of responsibility are behaving responsibly.

~David McCullough

Real success is finding your lifework in the work that you love.

~David McCullough

And read! read all the time! read as a matter of principle, as a matter of self-respect. Read as a nourishing staple of life.

~David McCullough

History is a guide to navigation in perilous times. History is who we are and why we are the way we are.

~David McCullough

Books can change your life. Some of the most influential people in our lives are characters we meet in books.

~David McCullough

My wife, the star I steer by.

~David McCullough

I work very hard on the writing, writing and rewriting and trying to weed out the lumber.

~David McCullough

I'm drawn particularly to stories that evolve out of the character of the protagonist.

~David McCullough

Courage is contagious. If a leader shows courage, others get the idea.

~David McCullough

A nation that forgets its past can function no better than an individual with amnesia.

~David McCullough

Every book is a new journey. I never felt I was an expert on a subject as I embarked on a project.

~David McCullough

Spotting talent is one of the essential elements of great leadership.

~David McCullough

I just thank my father and mother, my lucky stars, that I had the advantage of an education in the humanities.

~David McCullough

Nothing ever invented provides such sustenance, such infinite reward for time spent, as a good book.

~David McCullough

Writing is thinking. To write well is to think clearly. That's why it's so hard.

~David McCullough

There's an awful temptation to just keep on researching. There comes a point where you just have to stop, and start writing.

~David McCullough

The fulfilling life, the distinctive life, the relevant life, is an achievement... To do whatever you do for no reason other than you love it and believe in its importance.

~David McCullough

When a friend of Abigail and John Adams was killed at Bunker Hill, Abigail's response was to write a letter to her husband and include these words, "My bursting heart must find vent at my pen.

~David McCullough

If everyone is special, then no one is. If everyone gets a trophy, trophies become meaningless.

~David McCullough

Washington was a man of exceptional, almost excessive self-command, rarely permitting himself any show of discouragement or despair.

~David McCullough

Our obligations to our country never cease but with our lives. - John Adams

~David McCullough

My shorthand answer is that I try to write the kind of book that I would like to read. If I can make it clear and interesting and compelling to me, then I hope maybe it will be for the reader.

~David McCullough

If you get down about the state of American culture, just remember there are still more public libraries in this country than there are McDonalds.

~David McCullough

I'm very aware how many distractions the reader has in life today, how

many good reasons there are to put the book down.

~David McCullough

I had been writing for about twelve years. I knew pretty well how you could find things out, but I had never been trained in an academic way how to go about the research.

~David McCullough

No harm's done to history by making it something someone would want to read.

~David McCullough

History isn't just what happened, but what happened to whom and why and what would have been different if the cast of characters had been different.

~David McCullough

The preparations were elaborate and mammoth in scale, and Washington threw himself into the effort, demanding that not an hour be lost.

~David McCullough

To this noble end the delegates had pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor.

~David McCullough

We must not think of learning as only what happens in schools. It is an extended part of life. The most readily available resource for all of life is our public library system.

~David McCullough

The first of all qualities of a general is courage.

~David McCullough

People are so helpful. People will stop what they're doing to show you something, to walk with you through a section of the town, or explain how a suspension bridge really works.

~David McCullough

It was a day and age that saw no reason why one could not learn whatever was required - learn vitally anything - by the close study of books.

~David McCullough

The past after all is only another name for someone else's present.

~David McCullough

Read. Read. Read. Read. Read great books. Read poetry, history, biography. Read the novels that have stood the test of time. And read closely.

~David McCullough

May none but honest and wise men ever rule under this roof.

~David McCullough

To shut yourself from history is to shut yourself off from say music or painting or the theatre, literature for the rest of your life. It would be to cheat yourself of the pleasures of life.

~David McCullough

The great thing about the arts is that you can only learn to do it by doing it.

~David McCullough

Real success is finding your life work in the work that you love. That's it. Don't worry about making a living, don't worry about popularity or fame. Make what you do ... count more than what you own.

~David McCullough

How can we know who we are and where we are going if we don't know anything about where we have come from and what we have been through, the courage shown, the costs paid, to be where we are?

~David McCullough

They must be cool but determined...he threatened instant death to any man who showed cowardice.

~David McCullough

In fact, it was the largest expeditionary force of the 18th century. The largest, most powerful force ever set forth from Britain or any nation.

~David McCullough

Curiosity is what separates us from the cabbages. It's accelerative. The more we know, the more we want to know.

~David McCullough

I feel that history is in many ways the most important of all subjects because it is about everything and because it's about who we are and how we came to be the way we are.

~David McCullough

The truth isn't just the facts. You can have all the facts imaginable and miss the truth, just as you can have facts missing or some wrong, and reach the larger truth.

~David McCullough

Freedom is found through the portals of our nation's libraries.

~David McCullough

America faces an enemy who believes in enforced ignorance. And all that we stand for is the open mind, the generous spirit, the ideal of tolerance, freedom, education, opportunity.

~David McCullough

I often think of that when I hear people say that they haven't time to read.

~David McCullough

Nothing ever invented can you a bigger life than a book.

~David McCullough

Read somewhat in the English poets every day. You will find them elegant, entertaining and constructive companions through your whole life.

~David McCullough

There's no such thing as a foreseeable future.

~David McCullough

There are no people on earth in whom a spirit of enthusiastic zeal is so readily kindled, and burns so remarkably, as Americans

~David McCullough

When I'm reading for my own pleasure, I read things other than history or archival material. I read a lot of fiction. I'm very fond of mysteries.

~David McCullough

It would be the most crucial day of the entire war.

~David McCullough

...Had proven himself a leader of remarkable ability, a man not only of enterprising ideas, but with the staying power to carry them out.

~David McCullough

The title always comes last. What I really work hard on is the beginning. Where do you begin? In what tone do you begin? I almost have to have a scene in my mind.

~David McCullough

The more we see the founders as humans the more we can understand them.

~David McCullough

To write is to think, and to write well is to think well.

~David McCullough

I love Dickens. I love the way he sets a scene.

~David McCullough

I feel that as much as I enjoy loafing, there is something higher for which to live.

~David McCullough

I lament the want of a liberal education. I feel the mist of ignorance to surround me - Nathanael Greene

~David McCullough

Napoleon could never imagine that some people loved their country as much as he loved his own.

~David McCullough

My love is to tell a story but I like stories that evolve from character, from the nature of the individuals involved.

~David McCullough

Washington had performed his role to perfection. It was no enough that a leader look the part; by Washington's rules, he must know how to act it with self-command and precision.

~David McCullough

Just imagine if in his inaugural address John F. Kennedy had said, 'Ask not what your country can, you know, do for you, but what you can, like, do for your country actually.'

~David McCullough

You've got to marinate your head, in that time and culture. You've got to become them." (Speaking about researching, and reading, and immersing yourself in History)

~David McCullough

Home is really where education does begin.

~David McCullough

The source of our suffering has been our timidity. We have been afraid to think....Let us dare to read, think, speak, write.

~David McCullough

Nobody ever lived in the past.

~David McCullough

However little television you watch, watch less.

~David McCullough

I love all sides of the work but that doesn't mean it isn't hard.

~David McCullough

It was an utterly phenomenal achievement.

~David McCullough

You can't love what you don't know much about. You can't convince, stimulate, hold the attention, teach, if you don't know what you're talking about.

~David McCullough

I would pay to do what I do if I had to.

~David McCullough

You have overburdened your argument with ostentatious erudition.

~David McCullough

Only those who [do] nothing [make] no mistakes.

~David McCullough

The pull, the attraction of history, is in our human nature. What makes us tick? Why do we do what we do? How much is luck the deciding factor?

~David McCullough

First of all, you can make the argument that there's no such thing as the past. Nobody lived in the past.

~David McCullough

You have to have wisdom and knowledge as well as virtue to preserve your rights and liberties.

~David McCullough

I think that we need history as much as we need bread or water or love.

~David McCullough

You can't be a full participant in our democracy if you don't know our history.

~David McCullough

Morality only is eternal. All the rest is balloon and bubble from the cradle to the grave.

~David McCullough

He had kept his head, kept his health and his strength, bearing up under a weight of work and worry that only a few could have carried.

~David McCullough

In time I began to understand that it's when you start writing that you really find out what you don't know and need to know.

~David McCullough

Each generation, we peel back biases that have blinded those before us. The more we know about the past enables us to ask richer and more provocative questions about who we are today.

~David McCullough

A leader must look and act the part.

~David McCullough

I love to go to the places where things happen. I like to walk the walk and see how the light falls and what winter feels like.

~David McCullough

There is only one person who can measure your success. That person is you.

~David McCullough

The most interesting people are never perfect.

~David McCullough

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