

# James Dickey

## Quotes

*Writing, Want, Sometimes, Lightning, Thinking, Life, Feelings, Kind, Flying,  
Body, Poetry, Modern, Frost, Mean, Occupation, Editors, Fifty, Nerves,  
Mixtures, Hunches*

What you have to realize when you write poetry, or if you love poetry, is that poetry is just naturally the greatest god damn thing that ever was in the whole universe

~James Dickey

A poet is someone who stands outside in the rain hoping to be struck by lightning.

~James Dickey

I want you to hear a new version of Dueling Banjos. Anyone else is welcome.

~James Dickey

Flight is the only truly new sensation than men have achieved in modern history.

~James Dickey

The true feeling of sex is that of a deep intimacy, but above all of a deep complicity.

~James Dickey

There are so many selves in everybody, and just to explore and exploit one is wrong, dead wrong, for the creative person.

~James Dickey

I once had the nerve to ask Picasso the question, 'What is art?' He answered, 'Art is a lie which makes us see the truth.'

~James Dickey

I want a fever, in poetry: a fever, and tranquillity.

~James Dickey

I don't believe that a reviewer or a critic can really criticize well unless he can praise well.

~James Dickey

To be precise and reckless: that is the consummation devoutly to be wished.

~James Dickey

Poetry makes possible the deepest kind of personal possession of the world.

~James Dickey

Find out what you do best, and then don't do it.

~James Dickey

So much destruction in modern war takes place miles and miles away from the source of the destruction, the human being who has caused it.

~James Dickey

To have guilt you've got to earn guilt, but sometimes when you earn it, you don't feel the guilt you ought to have. And that's what The Firebombing is about.

~James Dickey

The women of the South have brought into American literature a unique mixture of domesticity and grotesquerie.

~James Dickey

There ain't nothin' to dyin', really. You just get tired. You kind of drift away.

~James Dickey

I feel very happy to see the sun come up every day. I feel happy to be around. ... I like to take this day- any day-and go to town with it.

~James Dickey

Detachment produces a peculiar state of mind. Maybe that's the worst sentence of all, to be deprived of feeling what a human being ought to be entitled to feel.

~James Dickey

What I want is to be willing to fail rather than stagnate.

~James Dickey

To say that its wrong to feel this way is not the point; you do feel it. All you see is a flash of fire and, depending on your altitude, you don't even see that sometimes.

~James Dickey

William Packard surely must be one of the great editors of our time.

~James Dickey

The New York Quarterly is an amazing, intelligent, crazy, creative, strange, and indispensable magazine.

~James Dickey

If it were thought that anything I wrote was influenced by Robert Frost, I would take that particular piece of mine, shred it, and flush it down the toilet, hoping not to clog the pipes.

~James Dickey

If you write well, you don't have to dress funny.

~James Dickey

He can't imagine the result of the mission because he never saw it.

~James Dickey

You are bound, my hunch is, to make it just fine.

~James Dickey

I need about one hundred fifty drafts of a poem to get it right, and fifty more to make it sound spontaneous.

~James Dickey

Poetry is a hazardous occupation, very hazardous. There may be bad things in there inside you that maybe you can't handle.

~James Dickey

The body is the one thing you can't fake; it's just got to be there.

~James Dickey

Yet technique matters, even so. God uses it, for a buffalo is not a leopard.

~James Dickey

Those that are hunted  
Know this as their life,  
Their reward: to walk  
Under such trees in full knowledge  
Of what is in glory above them,  
And to feel  
no fear.

~James Dickey

I do think the author ought to be able to give a good reason for the way things are in his poem. Not a bad question to ask oneself.

~James Dickey

A poet trains himself to stand out in a storm and be struck by lightning. If he is lucky enough to be struck six times, he becomes immortal. Randall Jarrell said it and he's right.

~James Dickey

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