

Jane Hirshfield

Quotes

*Writing, Thinking, Self, Heart, Doors, Tree, Moving, Eye, Art, Mind, Real, Long,
People, Dream, Looks, Grief, Doe, Firsts, Way, Hands*

You may do this, I tell you, it is permitted. Begin again the story of your life.

~Jane Hirshfield

The heat of autumn is different from the heat of summer. One ripens apples, the other turns them to cider.

~Jane Hirshfield

Zen pretty much comes down to three things -- everything changes; everything is connected; pay attention.

~Jane Hirshfield

How fragile we are, between the few good moments.

~Jane Hirshfield

Habit, laziness, and fear conspire to keep us comfortably within the familiar.

~Jane Hirshfield

How silently the heart pivots on its hinge.

~Jane Hirshfield

Existence itself is nothing if not an amazement. Good poems restore amazement.

~Jane Hirshfield

Something looks back from the trees, and knows me for who I am.

~Jane Hirshfield

In sorrow, pretend to be fearless. In happiness, tremble.

~Jane Hirshfield

You must try, the voice said, to become colder. I understood at once. It's like the bodies of gods: cast in bronze, braced in stone. Only

something heartless could bear the full weight.

~Jane Hirshfield

Passion does not make careful arguments: it declares itself, and that is enough.

~Jane Hirshfield

Poetry's work is not simply the recording of inner or outer perception; it makes by words and music new possibilities of perceiving

~Jane Hirshfield

The creative is always an act of recombination, with something added by new juxtaposition—[^]as making a spark requires two things struck together.

~Jane Hirshfield

In the dictionary of Cat, mercy is missing.

~Jane Hirshfield

Poems allow us not only to bear the tally and toll of our transience, but to perceive, within their continually surprising abundance, a path through the grief of that insult into joy.

~Jane Hirshfield

Houses are fundamental metaphors for self, world, permeability, transition, interiority, exteriority, multiplicity, and the power to move from one state of being to another.

~Jane Hirshfield

There is a door. It opens. Then it is closed. But a slip of light stays, like a scrap of unreadable paper left on the floor, or the one red leaf the snow releases in March

~Jane Hirshfield

Gestation requires protected space; ripening requires both permeability to the outer " and non-disturbance.

~Jane Hirshfield

How fine is the mesh of death. You can almost see through it.

~Jane Hirshfield

Metaphors get under your skin by ghosting right past the logical mind.

~Jane Hirshfield

A tree lives on its roots. If you change the root, you change the tree. Culture lives in human beings. If you change the human heart the culture will follow.

~Jane Hirshfield

Any woodthrush shows it - he sings, not to fill the world, but because he is filled.

~Jane Hirshfield

And when two people have loved each other see how it is like a scar between their bodies, stronger, darker, and proud; how the black cord makes of them a single fabric that nothing can tear or mend.

~Jane Hirshfield

One way poetry connects is across time. . . . Some echo of a writer's physical experience comes into us when we read her poem.

~Jane Hirshfield

The nourishment of Cezanne's awkward apples is in the tenderness and alertness they awaken inside us.

~Jane Hirshfield

There is no paradise, no place of true completion that does not include within its walls the unknown.

~Jane Hirshfield

Zen is less the study of doctrine than a set of tools for discovering what can be known when the world is looked at with open eyes.

~Jane Hirshfield

If truth is the lure, humans are fishes.

~Jane Hirshfield

In the dream life you don't deliberately set out to dream about a house night after night; the dream itself insists you look at whatever is trying to come into visibility.

~Jane Hirshfield

The untranslatable thought must be the most precise.

~Jane Hirshfield

There are openings in our lives of which we know nothing.

~Jane Hirshfield

In order to gain anything, you must first lose everything

~Jane Hirshfield

History, mythology, and folktales are filled with stories of people punished for saying the truth. Only the Fool, exempt from society's rules, is allowed to speak with complete freedom.

~Jane Hirshfield

Wrong solitude vinegars the soul, right solitude oils it.

~Jane Hirshfield

Every morning is new as the last one, uncreased as the not quite imaginable first.

~Jane Hirshfield

Poems . . . are perfume bottles momentarily unstopped - what they release is volatile and will vanish, and yet it can be released again.

~Jane Hirshfield

Your fate is to be yourself, both punishment and crime.

~Jane Hirshfield

Metaphors think with the imagination and the senses. The hot chili peppers in them explode in the mouth and the mind.

~Jane Hirshfield

One breath taken completely; one poem, fully written, fully read - in such a moment, anything can happen.

~Jane Hirshfield

Everything has two endings- a horse, a piece of string, a phone call. Before a life, air. And after. As silence is not silence, but a limit of hearing.

~Jane Hirshfield

I don't work on poems and essays at once. They walk on different legs, speak with different tongues, draw from different parts of the psyche. Their paces are also different.

~Jane Hirshfield

So few the grains of happiness measured against all the dark and still the scales balance.

~Jane Hirshfield

How sad they are, the promises we never return to. They stay in our mouths, roughen the tongue, lead lives of their own.

~Jane Hirshfield

A certain amount of housekeeping also goes on in my poems. I wash

doorknobs, do dishes, mop floors, patch carpets, cook.

~Jane Hirshfield

Near even a candle, the visible heat. So it is with a person in love.

~Jane Hirshfield

Self carries grief as a pack mule carries the side bags, being careful between the trees to leave extra room.

~Jane Hirshfield

Leave a door open long enough, a cat will enter. Leave food, it will stay.

~Jane Hirshfield

I'd say that the middle stanza is closer: that's the place where the poem ranges unexpectedly into a different realm.

~Jane Hirshfield

A person is full of sorrow the way a burlap sack is full of stones or sand.

~Jane Hirshfield

Poems are always interested in what Ivan Illich called 'shadow work,' not least because that is no small part of their own way of working.

~Jane Hirshfield

A studio, like a poem, is an intimacy and a freedom you can look out from, into each part of your life and a little beyond.

~Jane Hirshfield

Zen taught me how to pay attention, how to delve, how to question and enter, how to stay with -- or at least want to try to stay with -- whatever is going on.

~Jane Hirshfield

The same words come from each mouth differently.

~Jane Hirshfield

I will never become a horse trainer, a biologist, a person competent with a hammer. My loves were my loves.

~Jane Hirshfield

The moonlight builds its cold chapel again out of piecemeal darkness.

~Jane Hirshfield

I don't have a cell phone (though for years I've kept saying, "soon").

~Jane Hirshfield

I need more and more silence, it feels. Poems don't leap into my mind when I'm distracted, turned outward, with other people, listening to music.

~Jane Hirshfield

Within the silence, expansion, and sustained day by day concentration, I grow permeable.

~Jane Hirshfield

Poetry's task is to increase the available stock of reality, R P Blackmur said.

~Jane Hirshfield

Neither a person entirely broken nor one entirely whole can speak. In sorrow, pretend to be fearless. In happiness, tremble.

~Jane Hirshfield

Life is short. But desire, desire is long.

~Jane Hirshfield

Time-awareness does indeed watermark my books and my life.

~Jane Hirshfield

As this life is not a gate, but the horse plunging through it.

~Jane Hirshfield

An ordinary hole beside a path through the woods might begin to open to altered worlds.

~Jane Hirshfield

Time ... brings us everything we have and are, then comes with a back-loader and starts taking it all away.

~Jane Hirshfield

Poems' deep work is a matter of language, but also a matter of life. One part of that work is to draw into our awareness and into language itself the unobvious and the unexpected.

~Jane Hirshfield

A poem can use anything to talk about anything.

~Jane Hirshfield

So much of our lives depends on accidents of birth, time, and geography. This haunts me. In some lives, few "or"s are possible. The pain of that is behind the second stanza of this poem.

~Jane Hirshfield

The pressed oil of words can blaze up into music, into image, into the heart and mind's knowledge. The lit and shadowed places within us can be warmed.

~Jane Hirshfield

Words are not the end of thought, they are where it begins.

~Jane Hirshfield

as some strings, untouched, sound when no one is speaking. So it was when love slipped inside us.

~Jane Hirshfield

At some point I realized that you don't get a full human life if you try to cut off one end of it, that you need to agree to the entire experience, to the full spectrum of what happens.

~Jane Hirshfield

Some questions cannot be answered. They become familiar weights in the hand, round stones pulled from the pocket, unyielding and cool.

~Jane Hirshfield

Poetry's work is the clarification and magnification of being.

~Jane Hirshfield

What lives in words is what words were needed to learn.

~Jane Hirshfield

At some unnoticed moment, I began to understand that a life is written in indelible ink.

~Jane Hirshfield

This garden is no metaphor - more a task that swallows you into itself, earth using, as always, everything it can.

~Jane Hirshfield

Justice lacking passion fails, betrays.

~Jane Hirshfield

Between certainty and the real, an ancient enmity.

~Jane Hirshfield

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