

John Barth

Quotes

Men, Art, Writing, World, Simple, Self, Hero, Mean, Secret, Stories, Knowing, History, Ifs, Scene, Stones, Monsoons, Knaves, Opinion, Generations, May

Everyone is necessarily the hero of his own life story.

~John Barth

Like an ox-cart driver in monsoon season or the skipper of a grounded ship, one must sometimes go forward by going back.

~John Barth

In art as in lovemaking, heartfelt ineptitude has its appeal and so does heartless skill, but what you want is passionate virtuosity.

~John Barth

More history is made by secret handshakes than by battles, bills and proclamations.

~John Barth

The story of your life is not your life; it's your story.

~John Barth

Is man a savage at heart, skinned o'er with fragile Manners? Or is savagery but a faint taint in the natural man's gentility, which erupts now and again like pimples on an angel's arse?

~John Barth

Those rituals of getting ready to write produce a kind of trance state.

~John Barth

Every artist joins a conversation that's been going on for generations, even millennia, before he or she joins the scene.

~John Barth

History - an account, mostly false, of events, mostly unimportant

~John Barth

Nothing is loathsomer than the self-loathing of a self one loathes.

~John Barth

Nothing is intrinsically valuable; the value of everything is attributed to it, assigned to it from outside the thing itself, by people.

~John Barth

Finally you begin to make your mistakes on the highest level-let's say the upper slopes of slippery Parnassus-and it's at that point you need coaching.

~John Barth

You don't reach Serendib by plotting a course for it. You have to set out in good faith for elsewhere and lose your bearings... serendipitously.

~John Barth

not every boy thrown to the wolves becomes a hero.

~John Barth

All men are loyal, but their objects of allegiance are at best approximate.

~John Barth

The first obligation of the writer is to be interesting. To be interesting; not to change the world.

~John Barth

I admire writers who can make complicated things simple, but my own talent has been to make simple things complicated.

~John Barth

Though life's tuition is always ruinous, inexorably we learn.

~John Barth

Self knowledge is always bad news.

~John Barth

Choosing is existence. To the extent that you don't choose, you don't exist.

~John Barth

A curious thing about written literature: It is about four thousand years old, but we have no way of knowing whether four thousand years constitutes senility or the maiden blush of youth.

~John Barth

Tis e'er the lot of the innocent in the world, to fly to the wolf for succor from the lion.

~John Barth

It is often pleasant to stone a martyr, no matter how much we may admire him.

~John Barth

Tis e'er the wont of simple folk to prize the deed and o'erlook the motive, and of learned folk to discount the deed and lay open the soul of the doer.

~John Barth

I don't see how anybody starts a novel without knowing how it's going to end. I usually make detailed outlines: how many chapters it will be and so forth.

~John Barth

Yet everyone begins in the same place; how is it that most go along without difficulty but a few lose their way?

~John Barth

If you are a novelist of a certain type of temperament, then what you

really want to do is re-invent the world. God wasn't too bad a novelist except he was a Realist.

~John Barth

It's easier and sociabler to talk technique than it is to make art.

~John Barth

Nobody knew how to be what they were right.

~John Barth

The Bible is not man's word about God, but God's word about man.

~John Barth

The transaction will enable us to become a single source of integrated products and services that building owners want in order to optimize comfort and energy efficiency

~John Barth

The horror of our history has purged me of opinions.

~John Barth

If you would learn a thing, straightway declare yourself a professor of it!

~John Barth

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