

# John Fowles

## Quotes

*Men, Thinking, Writing, Art, Beautiful, Life, War, Hate, Mean, Self, People,  
Want, Love, Sex, Intelligent, Real, Passion, Past, Reality, Effort*

The most important questions in life can never be answered by anyone except oneself.

~John Fowles

The profoundest distances are never geographical.

~John Fowles

There are only two races on this planet - the intelligent and the stupid.

~John Fowles

There comes a time in each life like a point of fulcrum. At that time you must accept yourself. It is not any more what you will become. It is what you are and always will be.

~John Fowles

Time is not a road - it is a room.

~John Fowles

The pronoun is one of the most terrifying masks man has invented.

~John Fowles

There are many reasons why novelists write, but they all have one thing in common - a need to create an alternative world.

~John Fowles

In some mysterious way woods have never seemed to me to be static things. In physical terms, I move through them; yet in metaphysical ones, they seem to move through me.

~John Fowles

Alive. Alive in the way that death is alive.

~John Fowles

Men love war because it allows them to look serious. Because it is the

one thing that stops women laughing at them.

~John Fowles

I think we are just insects, we live a bit and then die and that's the lot. There's no mercy in things. There's not even a Great Beyond. There's nothing.

~John Fowles

In essence the Renaissance was simply the green end of one of civilization's hardest winters.

~John Fowles

I am infinitely strange to myself.

~John Fowles

Always we try to put the wild in a cage.

~John Fowles

We talked for hours. He talked and I listened. It was like wind and sunlight. It blew all the cobwebs away.

~John Fowles

I love making, I love doing. I love being to the full, I love everything which is not sitting and watching and copying and dead at heart.

~John Fowles

We all write poems; it is simply that poets are the ones who write in words.

~John Fowles

Baseball and cricket are beautiful and highly stylized medieval war substitutes, chess made flesh, a mixture of proud chivalry and base-in both senses-greed.

~John Fowles

We all want things we can't have. Being a decent human being is accepting that.

~John Fowles

My hatred of crowds, the obviousness of crowds, of anything en masse. Is this why I like little-known books? A general desire to escape the main world.

~John Fowles

Science disembodies; art embodies.

~John Fowles

Each age, each guilty age, builds high walls around its Versailles; and personally I hate those walls most when they are made by literature and art.

~John Fowles

Duty largely consists of pretending that the trivial is critical.

~John Fowles

Follow the accident, fear the fixed plan--that is the rule.

~John Fowles

That is the great distinction between the sexes. Men see objects, women see the relationships between objects.

~John Fowles

All pasts are like poems; one can derive a thousand things, but not live in them.

~John Fowles

I was too green to know that all cynicism masks a failure to cope - an impotence, in short; and that to despise all effort is the greatest effort of all.

~John Fowles

The supposed great misery of our century is the lack of time.

~John Fowles

You're not me. You can't feel like I feel." "I can feel." "No you can't. You just choose not to feel or something and everything's fine." "It's not fine. It's just not so bad.

~John Fowles

He was one of the most supremely stupid men I have ever met. He taught me a great deal.

~John Fowles

I don't think the English like me. I sold a colossal best seller in America, and they never really forgave me.

~John Fowles

Whole sight; or all the rest is desolation.

~John Fowles

...all cynicism masks a failure to cope.

~John Fowles

His statement to himself should have been, 'I possess this now, therefore I am happy', instead of what it so Victorianly was: "I cannot possess this for ever, and therefore am sad."

~John Fowles

To despise all effort is the greatest effort of all.

~John Fowles

Forgetting's not something you do, it happens to you. Only it didn't happen to me.

~John Fowles

To write poetry and to commit suicide, apparently so contradictory, had really been the same, attempts at escape.

~John Fowles

Our accepting what we are must always inhibit our being what we ought to be.

~John Fowles

Because a star explodes and a thousand worlds like ours die, we know this world is. That is the smile: that what might not be, is.

~John Fowles

It is only when our characters and events begin to disobey us that they begin to live.

~John Fowles

You wish to be liked. I wish simply to be. One day you will know what that means, perhaps. And you will smile. Not against me. But with me.

~John Fowles

I am talking about the general psychological health of the species, man. He needs the existence of mysteries. Not their solution.

~John Fowles

When you draw something it lives and when you photograph it it dies

~John Fowles

Adulthood is not an age, but a stage of knowledge of self.

~John Fowles

The word is the most imprecise of signs. Only a science-obsessed age could fail to comprehend that this is its great virtue, not its defect.

~John Fowles

You come to the United States not knowing what to expect. Then all your worst prejudices are confirmed.

~John Fowles

All novelists should live in two different worlds: a real one and an unreal one.

~John Fowles

Content is a word unknown to life; it is also a word unknown to man.

~John Fowles

That was the tragedy. Not that one man had the courage to be evil. But that millions had not the courage to be good.

~John Fowles

There is only one good definition of God: the freedom that allows other freedoms to exist.

~John Fowles

I read and I read; and I was like a medieval king, I had fallen in love with the picture long before I saw the reality.

~John Fowles

The ordinary man is the curse of civilization.

~John Fowles

If you forget everything else about me, please remember this. I walked down that street and I never looked back and I love you. I love you. I love you so much that I shall hate you for ever for today.

~John Fowles

An aphorism is a generalization, therefore not modern.

~John Fowles

The best wines take the longest to mature.

~John Fowles

The diary will really try and tell people who you are and what you were. The alternative is writing nothing, or creating a totally lifeless, as it is leafless, garden.

~John Fowles

Evolution did not intend trees to grow singly. Far more than ourselves they are social creatures, and no more natural as isolated specimens than man is as a marooned sailor or hermit.

~John Fowles

The great majority of modern third-person narration is "I" narration very thinly disguised.

~John Fowles

There is no plan. All is hazard. And the only thing that will preserve us is ourselves.

~John Fowles

Thomas Beecham was a pompous little band-master who stood against everything creative in the art of his time.

~John Fowles

Edith Sitwell's interest in art was largely confined to portraits of herself.

~John Fowles

The newspapers are full of what we would like to happen to us and what we hope will never happen to us.

~John Fowles



I knew words were like chains, they held me back . . . the act of description taints the description.

~John Fowles

I think it is interesting that we have come back to star- and space ships. Jet will do for a transport shorthand; yet when man really reaches, across the vast seas of space, he still reaches in ships.

~John Fowles

We can sometimes recognize the looks of a century ago on a modern face; but never those of a century to come.

~John Fowles

He's not human; he's an empty space disguised as a human.

~John Fowles

There are two kinds of hangover: in one you feel ill and incapable, in the other you feel ill and lucid.

~John Fowles

The craving to risk death is our last great perversion. We come from night, we go into night. Why live in night?

~John Fowles

You must make, always. You must act, if you believe something. Talking about acting is like boasting about pictures you're going to paint. The most terrible bad form.

~John Fowles

Ask me to marry you." "Will you marry me?" "No.

~John Fowles

He knew the world and its absurdities as only an intelligent Irishman can; which is to say that where his knowledge or memory failed him, his

imagination was always ready to fill the gap.

~John Fowles

No amount of reading and intelligent deduction could supplant the direct experience.

~John Fowles

It was too exactly as imagined to be true. But I felt as gladly and expectantly disorientated, as happily and alertly alone, as Alice in Wonderland.

~John Fowles

Piers is always going on about how he hated Stowe. As if that solves everything, as if to hate something means it can't have affected you.

~John Fowles

If a person is intelligent, then of course he is either an agnostic or an atheist. Just as he is a physical coward. They are automatic definitions of high intelligence.

~John Fowles

Just those three words, said and meant. I love you. They were quite hopeless. He said it as he might have said, I have cancer. His fairy story.

~John Fowles

One of the great fallacies of our time is that the Nazis rose to power because they imposed order on chaos. Precisely the opposite is true

~John Fowles

If anything might hurt her, silence would; and I wanted to hurt her.

~John Fowles

That's the trouble with provincial life. Everyone knows everyone and

there is no mystery. No romance.

~John Fowles

I mean I never feel I feel what I ought to feel.

~John Fowles

Wolves don't hunt singly, but always in pairs. The lone wolf was a myth.

~John Fowles

Greece is like a mirror. It makes you suffer. Then you learn.' To live alone?' To live. With what you are.

~John Fowles

If you want to be true to life, start lying about it

~John Fowles

Duty is but a pot. It holds whatever is put in it, from the greatest evil to the greatest good.

~John Fowles

Only fools think our attitude to our fellow men is a thing distinct from our attitude to 'lesser' life on this planet.

~John Fowles

Think. In a minute from now you could be saying, I risked death. I threw for life, and I won life. It is a very wonderful feeling. To have survived.

~John Fowles

I knew I would always want to go on living with myself, however hollow I became, however diseased.

~John Fowles

The dead live." "How do they live?" "By love.

~John Fowles

One degrades oneself sometimes in the effort not to be lonely.

~John Fowles

The price of tapping water into every house is that no one values water any more.

~John Fowles

How can one build a better self unless on the ruins of the old?

~John Fowles

Man is about to be deprived of a great pole - work routine. The nightmare of capitalist society is unemployment; the nightmare of cybernetic society will be employment.

~John Fowles

They're beautiful. But sad.' Everything's sad if you make it so, I said.

~John Fowles

Stained glass, engraved glass, frosted glass; give me plain glass.

~John Fowles

I do not plan my fiction any more than I normally plan woodland walks; I follow the path that seems most promising at any given point, not some itinerary decided before entry.

~John Fowles

It is not only species of animal that die out, but whole species of feeling. And if you are wise you will never pity the past for what it did not know, but pity yourself for what it did.

~John Fowles

Being an atheist is a matter not of moral choice, but of human

obligation.

~John Fowles

Most marriages recognize this paradox: Passion destroys passion; we want what puts an end to wanting what we want.

~John Fowles

And I just can't live in this present. I would go mad if I did.

~John Fowles

Between skin and skin, there is only light.

~John Fowles

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