

# John Irving Quotes

*Writing, People, Thinking, Book, Believe, Memories, Men, Stories, Character,  
Kids, Children, Hands, Mean, Giving, Doe, Real, Abortion, Wrestling, Owen  
Meany, Father*

Goodnight you princes of Maine, you kings of New England.

~John Irving

If you are lucky enough to find a way of life you love, you have to find the courage to live it.

~John Irving

Never confuse faith, or belief " of any kind " with something even remotely intellectual.

~John Irving

Keep passing the open windows.

~John Irving

Half my life is an act of revision.

~John Irving

I have pretty thick skin, and I think if you're going to be in this business, if you're going to be an actor or a writer, you better have a thick skin.

~John Irving

You only grow by coming to the end of something and by beginning something else.

~John Irving

It is hard work and great art to make life not so serious.

~John Irving

If you don't feel that you are possibly on the edge of humiliating yourself, of losing control of the whole thing, then probably what you are doing isn't very vital.

~John Irving

. . . There are moments when time does stop. We must be alert enough

to notice such moments . . .

~John Irving

If you presume to love something, you must love the process of it much more than you love the finished product.

~John Irving

And when you love a book, commit one glorious sentence of it-perhaps your favorite sentence-to memory. That way you won't forget the language of the story that moved you to tears.

~John Irving

Lilly was not crazy. She left a serious suicide note. 'Sorry,' said the note. 'Just not big enough.'

~John Irving

The building of the architecture of a novel - the craft of it - is something I never tire of.

~John Irving

Being afraid you'll look like a coward is the worst reason for doing anything.

~John Irving

We invent what we love and what we fear.

~John Irving

The only way you get Americans to notice anything is to tax them or draft them or kill them.

~John Irving

But who can distinguish between falling in love and imagining falling in love? Even genuinely falling in love is an act of the imagination.

~John Irving

Imagining something is better than remembering something.

~John Irving

Writing a novel is actually searching for victims. As I write I keep looking for casualties. The stories uncover the casualties.

~John Irving

Children are most impressed with the importance of a moment when they witness a parent breaking the parents' own rule.

~John Irving

My life is a reading list.

~John Irving

Sigmund Freud was a novelist with a scientific background. He just didn't know he was a novelist. All those damn psychiatrists after him, they didn't know he was a novelist either.

~John Irving

The way you define yourself as a writer is that you write every time you have a free minute. If you didn't behave that way you would never do anything.

~John Irving

All men are liars, said Roberta Muldoon, who knew this was true because she had once been a man.

~John Irving

It is your responsibility to find fault with me, it is mine to hear you out. But don't expect me to change.

~John Irving

Good habits are worth being fanatical about.

~John Irving

The more clearly one sees this world; the more one is obliged to pretend it does not exist.

~John Irving

You've got to get obsessed and stay obsessed.

~John Irving

Kids are beautiful, man. And they know much more than grownups think they know. Kids are just perfect people until grownups get their hands on them.

~John Irving

More than a half, maybe as much as two-thirds of my life as a writer is rewriting. I wouldn't say I have a talent that's special. It strikes me that I have an unusual kind of stamina.

~John Irving

What is hardest to accept about the passage of time is that the people who once mattered the most to us wind up in parentheses.

~John Irving

We are formed by what we desire

~John Irving

There are always suicides among people who are unable to say what they mean.

~John Irving

Our memory is a monster; you forget it - it does not.

~John Irving

They were involved in that awkward procedure of getting to unknow each other.

~John Irving

If we live long enough, we become caricatures of ourselves.

~John Irving

Everybody dies â€¦ The thing is, to have a life before we die.

~John Irving

You know, everybody dies. My parents died. Your father died. Everybody dies. I'm going to die too. So will you. The thing is, to have a life before we die. It can be a real adventure having a life

~John Irving

In the world according to Garp, we are all terminal cases

~John Irving

My dear boy, please don't put a label on meâ€”don't make me a category before you get to know me!

~John Irving

A writer's job is to imagine everything so personally that the fiction is as vivid as memories.

~John Irving

If you can't love crudeness, how can you truly love mankind?

~John Irving

You live your life at the time you live it -- you don't have much of an overview when what's happening to you is still happening.

~John Irving

Life is serious but art is fun!

~John Irving

â€¦there was no more safety to be found in love than there was to be found in a virus.

~John Irving

but writers, Garp knew, were just observers - good and ruthless imitators of human behavior.

~John Irving

Safer than we are.â€• I told Franny. â€œSafer than love.â€• â€œlet me tell ya kid,â€• Franny said to me, squeezing my hand. â€œEverything's safer than love.

~John Irving

but good friends are nothing to each other if they are not supportive.

~John Irving

Religious freedom should work two ways: we should be free to practice the religion of our choice, but we must also be free from having someone else's religion practiced on us.

~John Irving

With every book, you go back to school. You become a student. You become an investigative reporter. You spend a little time learning what it's like to live in someone else's shoes.

~John Irving

Like many successful people he made good use of disappointments - responding to them with energy, with near-frenzied activity, rather than needing to recover from them.

~John Irving

He was too young to know that, in any novel with a reasonable amount of forethought, there were no coincidences.

~John Irving

You're nice,' Cushie told him, squeezing his hand. 'And you're my

oldest friend.' But they both must have known that you can know someone all your life and never quite be friends.

~John Irving

In this world,â€• Franny once observed, â€œjust as you're trying to think of yourself as memorable, there is always someone who forgets that that they have met you.

~John Irving

You can learn a lot from your lovers, but-for the most part-you get to keep your friends longer, and you learn more from them.

~John Irving

You think you have a memory; but it has you!

~John Irving

And I find - I'm 63, and my capacity to be by myself and just spend time by myself hasn't diminished any. That's the necessary part of being a writer, you better like being alone.

~John Irving

This is a writer's lesson: To learn that the sounds that we imagine can be the clearest, loudest sounds of all.

~John Irving

How we love to love things for other people; how we love to have other people love things through our eyes.

~John Irving

It doesn't really matter who said it - it's so obviously true. Before you can write anything, you have to notice something.

~John Irving

No one could have fathomed what a life he'd led, for it was chiefly a life



lived in his mind.

~John Irving

I don't want you to describe to me "not ever" what you were doing to that poor boy to make him sound like that; but if you ever do it again, please cover his mouth with your hand.

~John Irving

A novel is a piece of architecture. It's not random wallowings or confessional diaries. It's a building-it has to have walls and floors and the bathrooms have to work.

~John Irving

The lie, of course, is more interesting.

~John Irving

And never forget, there is memory.

~John Irving

No adult in my family would ever tell me anything about who my father was. I knew from an older cousin - only four years older than I am - everything, or what little I could discover about him.

~John Irving

Watch out for people who call themselves religious; make sure you know what they mean - make sure they know what they mean!

~John Irving

Sometimes that's a year, sometimes it's 18 months, where all I'm doing is taking notes. I'm reconstructing the story from the back to the front so that I know where the front is.

~John Irving

When Jack Burns needed to hold his mother's hand, his fingers could

see in the dark.

~John Irving

We will often do anything to pretend that nothing is on our minds.

~John Irving

Being reviewed is being condescended to by your inferiors.

~John Irving

Maybe television causes cancer, Garp thinks; but his real irritation is a writer's irritation: he knows that wherever the TV glows, there sits someone who isn't reading.

~John Irving

We often need to lose sight of our priorities in order to see them.

~John Irving

I take people very seriously. People are all I take seriously, in fact. Therefore, I have nothing but sympathy for how people behave - and nothing but laughter to console them with.

~John Irving

I have a friend who says that reviewers are the tickbirds of the literary rhinoceros-but he is being kind. Tickbirds perform a valuable service to the rhino and the rhino hardly notices the birds.

~John Irving

The arrangements that couples make in order to maintain civility in the midst of their journey to divorce are often most elaborate when the professed top priority is to protect a child.

~John Irving

It was a sound like someone trying not to make a sound.

~John Irving

My old coach used to say that if you were in it for the match, if you were in it for the trophies, you were in it for the wrong reasons.

~John Irving

To each other, we were as normal and nice as the smell of bread. We were just a family. In a family even exaggerations make perfect sense.

~John Irving

Garp drank the beer and wondered if everything was an anticlimax.

~John Irving

Be serious. Life hurts. Reflect what hurts. I don't mean that you can't also be funny, or have fun, but at the end of the day, stories are about what you lose.

~John Irving

He also knew that rivals are best unmanned by being ignored.

~John Irving

When you legislate personal belief, you're in violation of freedom of religion.

~John Irving

Because abortions are illegal, women who need and want them have no choice in the matter, and you-because you know how to perform them-have no choice, either

~John Irving

I suppose I'm proudest of my novels for what's imagined in them. I think the world of my imagination is a richer and more interesting place than my personal biography.

~John Irving

Thus we try to keep our heroes alive; hence we remember them.

~John Irving

It's because even a good man can't always be right, that we need ... rules.

~John Irving

A truly happy woman drives some men and almost every other woman absolutely crazy

~John Irving

It's not right to hurt or deceive someone who's already been hurt and deceived.

~John Irving

Sell my old clothes - I'm off to heaven

~John Irving

He was one of those people things came easily to, but he did little to demonstrate that he deserved to be gifted.

~John Irving

I begin with an interest in a relationship, a situation, a character.

~John Irving

People are either attracted to the unseemly or disapproving of it, or both; yet we try to sound superior to the unseemly by pretending to be amused by it or indifferent to it.

~John Irving

The unspoken factor is love. The reason I can work so hard at my writing is that it's not work for me.

~John Irving

In a school community, someone who reads a book for some secretive

purpose, other than discussing it, is strange. What was she reading for?

~John Irving

A personal injustice is stronger motivation than any instinct for philanthropy.

~John Irving

Half my life is an act of revision; more than half the act is performed with small changes.

~John Irving

Life is an X-rated soap opera.

~John Irving

I'm not afraid, but I'm very nervous.

~John Irving

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