

John McGahern

Quotes

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My favorite optimist was an American who jumped off the Empire State Building, and as he passed the 42nd floor, the window washers heard him say, 'So Far, so good.'

~John McGahern

When I was in my 20s it did occur to me that there was something perverted about an attitude that thought that killing somebody was a minor offence compared to kissing somebody.

~John McGahern

We absolutely believed in Heaven and Hell, Purgatory, and even Limbo. I mean, they were actually closer to us than Australia or Canada, that they were real places.

~John McGahern

I belong to the middle class that grew up very influenced by the Catholic church. The people of the novel are from a more pagan and practical world in which the Christianity is just a veneer.

~John McGahern

The best of life is life lived quietly, where nothing happens but our calm journey through the day, where change is imperceptible and the precious life is everything.

~John McGahern

When you're in danger of losing a thing it becomes precious and when it's around us, it's in tedious abundance and we take it for granted as if we're going to live forever, which we're not.

~John McGahern

I read all the time. I was reading a book I admire very much by Alice McDermot called Charming Billy.

~John McGahern

The way I see it is that all the ol' guff about being Irish is a kind of nonsense. I mean, I couldn't be anything else no matter what I tried to be. I couldn't be Chinese or Japanese.

~John McGahern

Yes, though I have nothing but gratitude for my upbringing in the church.

~John McGahern

Ireland is a peculiar society in the sense that it was a nineteenth century society up to about 1970 and then it almost bypassed the twentieth century.

~John McGahern

I love the description of Gothic churches before the printed word, that they were the bibles of the poor.

~John McGahern

Yes, but also one of the problems for a novelist in Ireland is the fact that there are no formal manners. I mean some people have beautiful manners but there's no kind of agreed form of manners.

~John McGahern

I've never written anything that hasn't been in my mind for a long time - seven or eight years.

~John McGahern

I think that each of us inhabits a private world that others cannot see. The only difference between the writer and the reader is that the writer is able to dramatise that private world.

~John McGahern

I think technique can be taught but I think the only way to learn to write is to read, and I see writing and reading as completely related. One

almost couldn't exist without the other.

~John McGahern

I mean I think that's a fact and I think that we had a very peculiar type of Catholic Church here in that it was a fortress Church.

~John McGahern

My father was very outwardly religious.

~John McGahern

I think my mother was very spiritual.

~John McGahern

I suppose . . . in writing you can't have regrets. I mean, you just get it down the way it was . . . it's only wishful thinking that things could be other than they were.

~John McGahern

Anything that is given can be at once taken away. We have to learn never to expect anything, and when it comes it's no more than a gift on loan.

~John McGahern

Nothing ever holds together unless it is mixed with some of one's own blood

~John McGahern

I think fiction is a very serious thing, that while it is fiction, it is also a revelation of truth, or facts.

~John McGahern

As a writer, I write to see. If I knew how it would end, I wouldn't write. It's a process of discovery.

~John McGahern

The imagination demands that life be told slant because of its need of distance.

~John McGahern

Among its many other obligations, fiction always has to be believable. Life does not have to suffer such constraint, and much of what takes place is believable only because it happens.

~John McGahern

I used to take five or six books away and bring five or six books back. Nobody gave me direction or advice and I read much in the way that a boy might watch television.

~John McGahern

I'd much prefer to write more quickly.

~John McGahern

I feel I grew up in a different century than I live in. I think most of them are changes for the good.

~John McGahern

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