

# John Updike

## Quotes

*Writing, Men, Art, People, Life, Golf, Book, Thinking, Self, Doe, Trying, World,  
Country, Literature, Children, New York, Education, Reality, Light, Mother*

Life is a nacho. It can be yummy-crunchy or squishy-yucky. It just depends on how long it takes for you to start eating it.

~John Updike

Rain is grace; rain is the sky descending to the earth; without rain, there would be no life.

~John Updike

Being naked approaches being revolutionary; going barefoot is mere populism.

~John Updike

You cannot help but learn more as take the world into your hands. Take it up reverently, for it is and old piece of clay, with millions of thumbprints on it.

~John Updike

A leader is one who, out of madness or goodness, volunteers to take upon himself the woe of the people. There are few men so foolish, hence the erratic quality of leadership in the world.

~John Updike

Most of American life consists of driving somewhere and then returning home, wondering why the hell you went.

~John Updike

The scissors cut the long-grown hair; The razor scrapes the remnant fuzz. Small-jawed, weak-chinned, big-eyed, I stare At the forgotten boy I was.

~John Updike

It is easy to love people in memory; the hard thing is to love them when they are there in front of you.

~John Updike

Inspiration arrives as a packet of material to be delivered.

~John Updike

So much love, too much love, it is our madness, it is rotting us out, exploding us like dandelion polls.

~John Updike

Writers may be disreputable, incorrigible, early to decay or late to bloom but they dare to go it alone.

~John Updike

Perfectionism is the enemy of creation, as extreme self- solitude is the enemy of well- being.

~John Updike

Existence itself does not feel horrible; it feels like an ecstasy, rather, which we have only to be still to experience.

~John Updike

Writing and rewriting are a constant search for what it is one is saying.

~John Updike

Dreams come true; without that possibility, nature would not incite us to have them.

~John Updike

I want to write books that unlock the traffic jam in everybody's head.

~John Updike

Sex is like money; only too much is enough.

~John Updike

Government [is] an illusion the governed should not encourage.

~John Updike

Celebrity is a mask that eats into the face.

~John Updike

Being able to write becomes a kind of shield, a way of hiding, a way of too instantly transforming pain into honey.

~John Updike

If you have the guts to be yourself, other people'll pay your price.

~John Updike

Every marriage tends to consist of an aristocrat and a peasant. Of a teacher and a learner.

~John Updike

Americans have been conditioned to respect newness, whatever it costs them.

~John Updike

The days are short, The sun a spark Hung thin between The dark and dark.

~John Updike

The true New Yorker secretly believes that people living anywhere else have to be, in some sense, kidding.

~John Updike

That a marriage ends is less than ideal; but all things end under heaven, and if temporality is held to be invalidating, then nothing real succeeds.

~John Updike

For male and female alike, the bodies of the other sex are messages signaling what we must do - they are glowing signifiers of our own necessities.

~John Updike

What art offers is space - a certain breathing room for the spirit.

~John Updike

Looking foolish does the spirit good. The need not to look foolish is one of youth's many burdens; as we get older we are exempted from more and more.

~John Updike

Any activity becomes creative when the doer cares about doing it right or better.

~John Updike

Chaos is God's body. Order is the Devil's chains.

~John Updike

We take our bearings, daily, from others. To be sane is, to a great extent, to be sociable.

~John Updike

A healthy male adult bore consumes each year one and a half times his own weight in other people's patience.

~John Updike

The essential self is innocent, and when it tastes its own innocence knows that it lives for ever.

~John Updike

Each morning my characters greet me with misty faces willing, though chilled, to muster for another day's progress through the dazzling quicksand the marsh of blank paper.

~John Updike

Vagueness and procrastination are ever a comfort to the frail in spirit.

~John Updike

Sex ages us. Priests are boyish, spinsters stay black-haired until after fifty. We others, the demon rots us out.

~John Updike

In a country this large and a language even larger ... there ought to be a living for somebody who cares and wants to entertain and instruct a reader.

~John Updike

The inner spaces that a good story lets us enter are the old apartments of religion.

~John Updike

What would men be without women? Scarce, sir, mighty scarce. Mark Twain Women are an alien race set down among us.

~John Updike

To be a human being is to be in a state of tension between your appetites and your dreams, and the social realities around you and your obligations to your fellow man.

~John Updike

It's great to have an enemy. Sharpens your senses.

~John Updike

In general, the churches, visited by me often on weekdays... bore for me the same relation to God that billboards did to Coca-Cola; they promoted thirst without quenching it.

~John Updike

Critics are like pigs at the pastry cart.

~John Updike

That's the trouble with caring about anybody, you begin to feel overprotective. Then you begin to feel crowded.

~John Updike

The world keeps ending but new people too dumb to know it keep showing up as if the fun's just started.

~John Updike

But it is just two lovers, holding hands and in a hurry to reach their car, their locked hands a starfish leaping through the dark.

~John Updike

Children are not a zoo of entertainingly exotic creatures, but an array of mirrors in which the human predicament leaps out at us.

~John Updike

We're past the age of heroes and hero kings. ... Most of our lives are basically mundane and dull, and it's up to the writer to find ways to make them interesting.

~John Updike

Without rain, there would be no life.

~John Updike

The Founding Fathers in their wisdom decided that children were an unnatural strain on parents. So they provided jails called schools, equipped with tortures called an education.

~John Updike

The essential support and encouragement comes from within, arising out of the mad notion that your society needs to know what only you can tell it.

~John Updike

The artist brings something into the world that didn't exist before, and he does it without destroying something else.

~John Updike

Each day, we wake slightly altered, and the person we were yesterday is dead. So why, one could say, be afraid of death, when death comes all the time?

~John Updike

Of plants tomatoes seemed the most human, eager and fragile and prone to rot.

~John Updike

People go around mourning the death of God; it's the death of sssin that bothers me. Without ssin, people aren't people any more, they're just ssoul-less sheep.

~John Updike

Life is a roller coaster, you have your ups and downs unless you fall off.

~John Updike

Pressed, I would define spirituality as the shadow of light humanity casts as it moves through the darkness of everything that can be explained.

~John Updike

Hoping to fashion a mirror, the lover doth polish the face of his beloved until he produces a skull.

~John Updike

School is where you go between when your parents can't take you and



industry can't take you.

~John Updike

All men are mortal, and therefore all men are losers; our profoundest loyalty goes out to the failed.

~John Updike

The first breath of adultery is the freest; after it, constraints aping marriage develop.

~John Updike

Truth should not be forced; it should simply manifest itself, like a woman who has in her privacy reflected and coolly decided to bestow herself upon a certain man.

~John Updike

Man is a means for turning things into spirit and turning spirit into things.

~John Updike

We are most alive when we're in love.

~John Updike

America is a vast conspiracy to make you happy.

~John Updike

Religion enables us to ignore nothingness and get on with the jobs of life.

~John Updike

Natural beauty is essentially temporary and sad, hence the impression of obscene mockery which artificial flowers give us.

~John Updike

A photograph offers us a glimpse into the abyss of time.

~John Updike

An affair wants to spill, to share its glory with the world. No act is so private it does not seek applause.

~John Updike

The golf swing is like a suitcase into which we are trying to pack one too many things.

~John Updike

The refusal to rest content, the willingness to risk excess on behalf of one's obsessions, is what distinguishes artists from entertainers, and what makes some artists adventurers on behalf of us all.

~John Updike

At last, small witches, goblins, hags, And pirates armed with paper bags  
Their costumes hinged on safety pins, Go haunt a night of pumpkin grins.

~John Updike

The scrape and snap of Keds on loose alley pebbles seems to catapult their voices high into the moist March air blue above the wires.

~John Updike

If you're telling me I'm not mature, that's one thing I don't cry over since as far as I can make out it's the same thing as being dead.

~John Updike

To be President of the United States, sir, is to act as advocate for a blind, venomous, and ungrateful client.

~John Updike

Customs and convictions change; respectable people are the last to

know, or to admit, the change, and the ones most offended by fresh reflections of the facts in the mirror of art.

~John Updike

When I write, I aim in my mind not toward New York but toward a vague spot a little to the east of Kansas.

~John Updike

Government is either organized benevolence or organized madness; its peculiar magnitude permits no shading.

~John Updike

Living is a compromise, between doing what you want and doing what other people want.

~John Updike

Do what the heart commands. The heart is our only guide.

~John Updike

I'm somewhat shy about the brutal facts of being a carnivore. I don't like meat to look like animals. I prefer it in the form of sausages, hamburger and meat loaf, far removed from the living thing.

~John Updike

My only duty was to describe reality as it had come to me-to give the mundane its beautiful due.

~John Updike

Faith is not so much a binary pole as a quantum state, which tends to indeterminacy when closely examined.

~John Updike

There is this quality, in things, of the right way seeming wrong at first.

~John Updike

I can't bear to finish things, beyond a certain point they get heavy. There's something so dead about a finished painting.

~John Updike

Golf appeals to the idiot in us and the child. Just how childlike golf players become is proven by their frequent inability to count past five.

~John Updike

Many men are more faithful to their golf partners than to their wives and have stuck with them longer.

~John Updike

Art is like baby shoes. When you coat them with gold, they can no longer be worn.

~John Updike

Is not the decisive difference between comedy and tragedy that tragedy denies us another chance?

~John Updike

Yes, there is a ton of information on the web, but much of it is egregiously inaccurate, unedited, unattributed and juvenile.

~John Updike

Hemingway describes literary New York as a bottle full of tapeworms trying to feed on each other.

~John Updike

The literary scene is a kind of Medusa's raft, small and sinking, and one's instinct when a newcomer tries to clamber aboard is to step on his fingers.

~John Updike

There are some women that don't do it for some men. That's why they

turn out so many models.

~John Updike

Sun and moon, sun and moon, time goes.

~John Updike

Movies took you right up to the edge but kept you safe.

~John Updike

Women are an alien race set down among us.

~John Updike

The heart prefers to move against the grain of circumstance; perversity is the souls very life.

~John Updike

I love my government not least for the extent to which it leaves me alone.

~John Updike

Writing criticism is to writing fiction and poetry as hugging the shore is to sailing in the open sea.

~John Updike

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