

John W. Gardner

Quotes

*Men, Education, People, Creativity, Two, Leadership, Excellence, Moving,
Leader, Believe, Style, Teaching, Greatness, Community, Failure, Life,
Responsibility, Pay, Inspirational, School*

Excellence is doing ordinary things extraordinarily well.

~John W. Gardner

Life is the art of drawing without an eraser.

~John W. Gardner

Political extremism involves two prime ingredients: an excessively simple diagnosis of the world's ills, and a conviction that there are identifiable villains back of it all.

~John W. Gardner

The ultimate goal of the educational system is to shift to the individual the burden of pursuing his education.

~John W. Gardner

Men of integrity, by their very existence, rekindle the belief that as a people we can live above the level of moral squalor. We need that belief; a cynical community is a corrupt community.

~John W. Gardner

Much education today is monumentally ineffective. All too often we are giving young people cut flowers when we should be teaching them to grow their own plants.

~John W. Gardner

True happiness involves the full use of one's power and talents.

~John W. Gardner

Some people strengthen the society just by being the kind of people they are.

~John W. Gardner

History never looks like history when you are living through it. It always looks confusing and messy, and it always feels uncomfortable.

~John W. Gardner

The cynic says, "One man can't do anything". I say, "Only one man can do anything."

~John W. Gardner

If you have some respect for people as they are, you can be more effective in helping them to become better than they are.

~John W. Gardner

Creativity requires the freedom to consider unthinkable alternatives, to doubt the worth of cherished practices.

~John W. Gardner

Life is an endless process of self-discovery.

~John W. Gardner

One of the reasons people stop learning is that they become less and less willing to risk failure.

~John W. Gardner

America's greatness has been the greatness of a free people who shared certain moral commitments. Freedom without moral commitment is aimless and promptly self-destructive.

~John W. Gardner

All of us celebrate our values in our behavior.

~John W. Gardner

We pay a heavy price for our fear of failure.

~John W. Gardner

Our problem is not to find better values but to be faithful to those we profess.

~John W. Gardner

Excellence implies striving for the highest standards in every phase of life.

~John W. Gardner

Whoever I am, or whatever I am doing, some kind of excellence is within my reach.

~John W. Gardner

It is not easy to be crafty and winsome at the same time, and few accomplish it after the age of six.

~John W. Gardner

When one may pay out over two million dollars to presidential and Congressional campaigns, the U.S. government is virtually up for sale.

~John W. Gardner

Leaders develop their styles as they interact with their constituencies. They move toward the style that seems most effective in dealing with the mixture of elements that make up their constituencies.

~John W. Gardner

All excellence involves discipline and tenacity of purpose.

~John W. Gardner

A prime function of a leader is to keep hope alive.

~John W. Gardner

The man who once cursed his fate, now curses himself - and pays his psychoanalyst.

~John W. Gardner

All laws are an attempt to domesticate the natural ferocity of the

species.

~John W. Gardner

The hallmark of our age is the tension between aspirations and sluggish institutions.

~John W. Gardner

Some people have greatness thrust upon them. Very few have excellence thrust upon them.

~John W. Gardner

The creative individual has the capacity to free himself from the web of social pressures in which the rest of us are caught. He is capable of questioning the assumptions that the rest of us accept.

~John W. Gardner

Nothing can be more readily disproved than the old saw, "You can't keep a good man down." Most human societies have been beautifully organized to keep good men down.

~John W. Gardner

For every talent that poverty has stimulated it has blighted a hundred.

~John W. Gardner

I am entirely certain that twenty years from now we will look back at education as it is practiced in most schools today and wonder that we could have tolerated anything so primitive.

~John W. Gardner

We get richer and richer in filthier and filthier communities until we reach a final state of affluent misery - crocus on a garbage heap.

~John W. Gardner

An excellent plumber is infinitely more admirable than an incompetent

philosopher.

~John W. Gardner

Storybook happiness involves every form of pleasant thumb-twiddling; true happiness involves the full use of one's powers and talents.

~John W. Gardner

It is hard to feel individually responsible with respect to the invisible processes of a huge and distant government.

~John W. Gardner

The world loves talent but pays off on character.

~John W. Gardner

When hiring key employees, there are only two qualities to look for: judgement and taste. Almost everything else can be bought by the yard.

~John W. Gardner

The individual who has become a stranger to himself has lost the capacity for genuine self-renewal.

~John W. Gardner

If the modern leader doesn't know the facts, he is in grave trouble, but rarely do the facts provide unqualified guidance.

~John W. Gardner

There is no learning without some difficulty and fumbling. If you want to keep on learning, you must keep on risking failure-all your life.

~John W. Gardner

To sensible men, every day is a day of reckoning.

~John W. Gardner

The creative individual is particularly gifted in seeing the gap between what is and what could be.

~John W. Gardner

The play of conflicting interests in a framework of shared purposes is the drama of a free society. It is a robust exercise, and often a noisy one. It is not for the faint-hearted, or the tidy-minded.

~John W. Gardner

The [nonprofit] sector enhances our creativity, enlivens our communities, nurtures individual responsibility, stirs life at the grassroots, and reminds us that we were born free.

~John W. Gardner

We cannot have islands of excellence in a sea of slovenly indifference to standards.

~John W. Gardner

In the United States, to an unprecedented degree, the individual's social role has come to be determined not by who he is but by what he can accomplish.

~John W. Gardner

Renewal is not just innovation and change. It is also the process of bringing the results of change into line with our purposes.

~John W. Gardner

The first and last task of a leader is to keep hope alive.

~John W. Gardner

The best kept secret in America today is that people would rather work hard for something they believe in than live a life of aimless diversion.

~John W. Gardner

Perhaps the most striking feature of the [nonprofit] sector is its relative freedom from constraints and its resulting pluralism.

~John W. Gardner

One man interacting creatively with others can move the world.

~John W. Gardner

Mastery is not something that strikes in an instant, like a thunderbolt, but a gathering power that moves steadily through time, like weather.

~John W. Gardner

If our society continues at its present rate to become less livable as it becomes more affluent, we promise all to end up in sumptuous misery.

~John W. Gardner

Paralysis of leadership is due in part to the unseen grip of the special interests.

~John W. Gardner

It is one of the ironies of history that reformers so often misjudge the consequences of their reforms.

~John W. Gardner

We have to face the fact that most men and women out there are more stale than they know, more bored than they care to admit.

~John W. Gardner

One generalization that is supported both by research and experience is that effective two-way communication is essential to proper functioning of the leader-follower relationship.

~John W. Gardner

In the artist's recreation of the world we are enabled to see the world.

~John W. Gardner

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