

# Joseph Brodsky

## Quotes

*Writing, Reading, Men, Literature, Thinking, Art, People, Book, Language,  
Believe, Russia, Race, Way, Infinity, Self, Poetry, Evil, Want, Body, Perspective*

What I like about cities is that everything is king size, the beauty and the ugliness.

~Joseph Brodsky

Twentieth-century Russian literature has produced nothing special except perhaps one novel and two stories by Andrei Platonov, who ended his days sweeping streets.

~Joseph Brodsky

How delightful to find a friend in everyone.

~Joseph Brodsky

There are worse crimes than burning books. One of them is not reading them.

~Joseph Brodsky

For darkness restores what light cannot repair.

~Joseph Brodsky

I sit in the dark. And it would be hard to figure out which is worse; the dark inside, or the darkness out.

~Joseph Brodsky

Geography blended with time equals destiny.

~Joseph Brodsky

Lifeâ€™the way it really isâ€™is a battle not between good and bad, but between bad and worse

~Joseph Brodsky

Poetry is what is gained in translation.

~Joseph Brodsky

The moment that you place blame somewhere, you undermine your

resolve to change anything.

~Joseph Brodsky

For a writer only one form of patriotism exists: his attitude toward language.

~Joseph Brodsky

Cherish your human connections: your relationships with friends and family. Even your super weirdo creep cousin.

~Joseph Brodsky

The eye identifies itself not with the body it belongs to but with the object of its attention.

~Joseph Brodsky

When I'm not writing or reading, I'm thinking about both.

~Joseph Brodsky

After having exhausted all the arguments on behalf of evil, one utters the creed's dictums with nostalgia rather than with fervor.

~Joseph Brodsky

Perhaps the best proof of the Almighty's existence is that we never know when we are to die.

~Joseph Brodsky

Racism? But isn't it only a form of misanthropy?

~Joseph Brodsky

If I can get somewhere, I'm all right. If not, I'm miserable.

~Joseph Brodsky

In the end, like the Almighty Himself, we make everything in our image, for want of a more reliable model; our artifacts tell more about

ourselves than our confessions.

~Joseph Brodsky

On the whole, love comes with the speed of light; separation, with that of sound.

~Joseph Brodsky

As long as the state permits itself to interfere in the affairs of literature, literature has the right to interfere with the affairs of state.

~Joseph Brodsky

Every life has a file, if you will.

~Joseph Brodsky

Man is what he reads.

~Joseph Brodsky

When the eye fails to find beauty-alias solace-it commands the body to create it, or, failing that, adjusts itself to perceive virtue in ugliness.

~Joseph Brodsky

After all, it is hard to master both life and work equally well. So if you are bound to fake one of them, it had better be life.

~Joseph Brodsky

Bad literature is a form of treason.

~Joseph Brodsky

Persecution mania is still around. In your writing, in your exchanges with people, meeting people who are in Russian affairs, Russian literature, etcetera.

~Joseph Brodsky

Snobbery? But it's only a form of despair.

~Joseph Brodsky

For boredom speaks the language of time, and it is to teach you the most valuable lesson of your life - the lesson of your utter insignificance.

~Joseph Brodsky

No matter under what circumstances you leave it, home does not cease to be home. No matter how you lived there - well or poorly.

~Joseph Brodsky

This is the generation whose first cry of life was the Hungarian uprising.

~Joseph Brodsky

The poetic notion of infinity is far greater than that which is sponsored by any creed.

~Joseph Brodsky

A language is a more ancient and inevitable thing than any state.

~Joseph Brodsky

The real history of consciousness starts with one's first lie.

~Joseph Brodsky

I always adhered to the idea that God is time, or at least that His spirit is.

~Joseph Brodsky

For the poet the credo or doctrine is not the point of arrival but is, on the contrary, the point of departure for the metaphysical journey.

~Joseph Brodsky

Every individual ought to know at least one poet from cover to cover: if

not as a guide through the world, then as a yardstick for the language.

~Joseph Brodsky

In the West you have every opportunity for civilization to triumph.

~Joseph Brodsky

Every writing career starts as a personal quest for sainthood, for self-betterment. Sooner or later, and as a rule quite soon, a man discovers that his pen accomplishes a lot more than his soul.

~Joseph Brodsky

The fact that we are living does not mean we are not sick.

~Joseph Brodsky

Creativity is an unending exercise in uncertainty.

~Joseph Brodsky

Russian talk of political evil is as natural as eating.

~Joseph Brodsky

I got caught up in the proletariat the way Marx describes it.

~Joseph Brodsky

If one's fated to be born in Caesar's Empire, let him live aloof, provincial, by the seashore.

~Joseph Brodsky

The government, the state, they're just objects of jokes rather than serious consideration. I can't possibly take them seriously.

~Joseph Brodsky

In general, with things unpleasant, the rule is: The sooner you hit bottom, the faster you surface.

~Joseph Brodsky

What should I say about life? That it's long and abhors transparency.

~Joseph Brodsky

At certain periods of history it is only poetry that is capable of dealing with reality by condensing it into something graspable, something that otherwise wouldn't be retained by the mind.

~Joseph Brodsky

There's nothing as dear as the sight of ruins.

~Joseph Brodsky

I am losing my Soviet citizenship, I do not cease to be a Russian poet. I believe that I will return. Poets always return in flesh or on paper.

~Joseph Brodsky

I grew up in the sort of cultural milieu that always regarded conversations about the political discourse as tremendously low-brow.

~Joseph Brodsky

Out of Dostoevsky: Kafka. Out of Tolstoy: Margaret Mitchell. (in conversation, explaining his dislike for Tolstoy)

~Joseph Brodsky

If they had wanted to punish me, they should have kept me in a communal apartment. Then I would have become a wreck.

~Joseph Brodsky

I didn't want to be either the cre`me de la cre`me or a martyr. I'd rather be a novelty, especially in a democracy that doesn't understand the language I write in.

~Joseph Brodsky

The delirium and horror of the East. The dusty catastrophe of Asia. Green only on the banner of the Prophet. Nothing grows here except

mustaches.

~Joseph Brodsky

Tragedy, as you know, is always a fait accompli, whereas terror always has to do with anticipation, with man's recognition of his own negative potential--with his sense of what he is capable of.

~Joseph Brodsky

As to the state, from my point of view, the measure of a writer's patriotism is not oaths from a high platform, but how he writes in the language of the people among whom he lives .

~Joseph Brodsky

What's happening in Russia is devoid of autobiographical interest for me. Maybe it's egocentric. Whatever it is, feel free to use it.

~Joseph Brodsky

Robert Frost's triumph was not being at John Kennedy's inauguration ceremony, but the day when he put the last period on "West-Running Brook.

~Joseph Brodsky

I'm a bad Jew, a bad Russian, a bad everything.

~Joseph Brodsky

As failures go, attempting to recall the past is like trying to grasp the meaning of existence. Both make one feel like a baby clutching at a basketball: one's palms keep sliding off.

~Joseph Brodsky

I don't believe in that country any longer. I'm not interested. I'm writing in the language, and I like the language.

~Joseph Brodsky



I'm 100 percent Jewish by blood, but by education I'm nothing. By affiliation I'm nothing.

~Joseph Brodsky

I am quite prepared to die here [in NY]. It doesn't matter at all. I don't know better places, or perhaps if I do I am not prepared to make a move.

~Joseph Brodsky

In poetic thought, the role of the subconscious is played by euphony.

~Joseph Brodsky

I'm neither Catholic nor Protestant. Protestant sounds good but I don't think I am.

~Joseph Brodsky

My poems getting published in Russia doesn't make me feel in any fashion, to tell you the truth. I'm not trying to be coy, but it doesn't tickle my ego.

~Joseph Brodsky

All the literati keep at least one imaginary friend.

~Joseph Brodsky

I don't want to dive into that mud slide, which is what I consider the literary process.

~Joseph Brodsky

Perhaps art is simply an organism's reaction against its retentive limitations.

~Joseph Brodsky

Poetry is rather an approach to things, to life, than it is typographical production.

~Joseph Brodsky

The Constitution doesn't mention rain.

~Joseph Brodsky

An object, after all, is what makes infinity private.

~Joseph Brodsky

I'm not trying to be ridiculous or funny, but it was rather pleasant to find yourself in isolation, in solitary.

~Joseph Brodsky

...in the business of writing what one accumulates is not expertise but uncertainties. Which is but another name for craft.

~Joseph Brodsky

Poetry is not only the most concise way of conveying the human experience; it also offers the highest possible standards for any linguistic operation.

~Joseph Brodsky

Who included me among the ranks of the human race?

~Joseph Brodsky

I don't have principles. I have nerves.

~Joseph Brodsky

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