

Joyce Carol Oates Quotes

*Writing, Art, Thinking, People, Book, Reading, Self, Voice, Men, Children, Ideas,
Character, Stories, Past, Boxing, Personality, Memories, Believe, Eye, Might*

Memory blurs, that's the point. If memory didn't blur you wouldn't have the fool's courage to do things again, again, again, that tear you apart.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Reading is the sole means by which we slip, involuntarily, often helplessly, into another's skin, another's voice, another's soul.

~Joyce Carol Oates

I never change, I simply become more myself.

~Joyce Carol Oates

How lovely this world is, really: one simply has to look.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Our enemy is by tradition our savior, in preventing us from superficiality.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Read widely, and without apology. Read what you want to read, not what someone tells you you should read.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Night comes to the desert all at once, as if someone turned off the light.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Keep a light, hopeful heart. But \hat{A} -expect the worst.

~Joyce Carol Oates

See, people come into your life for a reason. They might not know it themselves, why. You might not know it. But there's a reason. There has to be

~Joyce Carol Oates

Be your own editor/critic. Sympathetic but merciless!

~Joyce Carol Oates

Novels begin, not on the page, but in meditation and day-dreaming - In thinking, not writing.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Running! If there's any activity happier, more exhilarating, more nourishing to the imagination, I can't think of what it might be.

~Joyce Carol Oates

I have forced myself to begin writing when I've been utterly exhausted, when I've felt my soul as thin as a playing card—and somehow the activity of writing changes everything.

~Joyce Carol Oates

We are linked by blood, and blood is memory without language.

~Joyce Carol Oates

A writer who has published as many books as I have has developed, of necessity, a hide like a rhino's, while inside there dwells a frail, hopeful butterfly of a spirit.

~Joyce Carol Oates

It's where we go, and what we do when we get there, that tells us who we really are.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Life and people are complex. A writer as an artist doesn't have the personality of a politician. We don't see the world that simply.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Getting the first draft finished is like pushing a peanut with your nose across a very dirty floor.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Ultimately, we measure ourselves against our own ideas of idealism and perfection, and we don't always come very close to them.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Look at the world and see what's there. It's very beautiful. It's a very exciting but in some ways treacherous world, and all this goes into the writing.

~Joyce Carol Oates

If you are a writer you locate yourself behind a wall of silence and no matter what you are doing, driving a car or walking or doing housework you can still be writing, because you have that space.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Self-criticism is an art not many are qualified to practice.

~Joyce Carol Oates

The mere passage of time makes us all exiles.

~Joyce Carol Oates

It is only through disruptions and confusion that we grow, jarred out of ourselves by the collision of someone else's private world with our own.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Fiction that adds up, that suggests a "logical consistency," or an explanation of some kind, is surely second-rate fiction; for the truth of life is its mystery.

~Joyce Carol Oates

I had forgotten that time wasn't fixed like concrete but in fact was fluid as sand, or water. I had forgotten that even misery can end.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Beauty is a question of optics. All sight is illusion.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Of our hurts we make monuments of survival. If we survive.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Homo sapiens is the species that invents symbols in which to invest passion and authority, then forgets that symbols are inventions.

~Joyce Carol Oates

In love there are two things - bodies and words.

~Joyce Carol Oates

I used to think getting old was about vanity but actually it's about losing people you love.

~Joyce Carol Oates

The heavenly light you admire is fossil-light, it's the unfathomably distant past you gaze into, stars long extinct

~Joyce Carol Oates

The worst thing: to give yourself away in exchange for not enough love.

~Joyce Carol Oates

I write so much because my cat sits on my lap. She purrs so I don't want to get up. She's so much more calming than my husband.

~Joyce Carol Oates

"Because there has been no one to stop me" has been one of the principles of my life.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Keeping busy" is the remedy for all the ills in America. It's also the means by which the creative impulse is destroyed.

~Joyce Carol Oates

The great menace to the life of an industry is industrial self-complacency.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Nothing is accidental in the universe - this is one of my Laws of Physics - except the entire universe itself, which is Pure Accident, pure divinity.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Boxing has become America's tragic theater.

~Joyce Carol Oates

All that matters in life is forging deep ties of love and family and friends. Writing and reading come later.

~Joyce Carol Oates

The third man in the ring makes boxing possible.

~Joyce Carol Oates

The quiet people just do their work.

~Joyce Carol Oates

I suggest to my students that they write under a pseudonym for a week. That allows young men to write as women, and women as men. It allows them a lot of freedom they don't have ordinarily.

~Joyce Carol Oates

The challenge is to resist circumstances. Any idiot can be happy in a happy place, but moral courage is required to be happy in a hellhole.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Detroit, my 'great' subject, made me the person I am, consequently the writer I am - for better or worse.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Loneliness is dangerous ... because if aloneness does not lead to God, it leads to the devil. It leads to the self.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Loneliness is like starvation: you don't realize how hungry you are until you begin to eat.

~Joyce Carol Oates

A mouth of no distinction but well practiced, before I entered my teens, in irony. For what is irony but the repository of hurt? And what is hurt but the repository of hope?

~Joyce Carol Oates

It's very hard to be an experimental woman writer. If I had been writing under a pseudonym, just initials, I might have a different reputation - but, then I couldn't be myself either.

~Joyce Carol Oates

The worst cynicism: a belief in luck.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Honorary degrees and lifetime achievement awards are very encouraging. I know that it might sound strange that a writer who has published many books still needs encouragement, but this is true.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Stories come to us as wraiths requiring precise embodiments.

~Joyce Carol Oates

A lot of widows feel that they have betrayed their spouse by continuing

to live. It's deranged thinking. I know that, but that doesn't stop you feeling it.

~Joyce Carol Oates

To be knocked out doesn't mean what it seems. A boxer does not have to get up.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Technique holds a reader from sentence to sentence, but only content will stay in his mind.

~Joyce Carol Oates

All actors are whores. They want only one thing: to seduce you.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Art is about freedom of expression, and should not be molded to fit any propaganda or lofty ideal.

~Joyce Carol Oates

The best revenge is living well without you.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Maybe, love is always forgiveness, to a degree.

~Joyce Carol Oates

The cleaning is something I use as a reward if I get some work done. I go into a very happy state of mind when I'm vacuuming.

~Joyce Carol Oates

We inhabit ourselves without valuing ourselves, unable to see that here, now, this very moment is sacred; but once it's gone - its value is incontestable.

~Joyce Carol Oates

My nature is orderly and observant and scrupulous and deeply introverted.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Boxing is a celebration of the lost religion of masculinity all the more trenchant for its being lost.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Sometimes I read reviews, and without exception I will read critical essays that are sent to me. The critical essays are interesting on their own terms.

~Joyce Carol Oates

I would suggest the widow do things the husband used to do, so he seems to be there with you. You will feel like just going to bed. It's so wonderful, going to bed.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Boxing is about being hit rather more than it is about hitting, just as it is about feeling pain, if not devastating psychological paralysis, more than it is about winning.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Your punishment if you're a woman. Not loved enough.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Great art is cathartic; it is always moral.

~Joyce Carol Oates

There is something thrilling in the mimesis of life's surprising unfolding.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Flying fosters fantasies of childhood, of omnipotence, rapid shifts of being, miraculous moments; it stirs our capacity for dreaming.

~Joyce Carol Oates

For obviously the advantage for most writers is that no one sees them. The writer is invisible, which confers power.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Without craft, art remains private. Without art, craft is merely hackwork.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Our house is made of glass... and our lives are made of glass; and there is nothing we can do to protect ourselves.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Death is just the last scene of the last act.

~Joyce Carol Oates

A good, sympathetic review is always a wonderful surprise.

~Joyce Carol Oates

A daydreamer is prepared for most things.

~Joyce Carol Oates

For memory is a moral action, a choice. You can choose to remember. You can choose not.

~Joyce Carol Oates

The relationship between parents and children, but especially between mothers and daughters, is tremendously powerful, scarcely to be comprehended in any rational way.

~Joyce Carol Oates

I learned you don't discover the evidence of any cause in its result.

~Joyce Carol Oates

If food is poetry, is not poetry also food?

~Joyce Carol Oates

I am the presence standing here at this juncture of Time & Space- who else?

~Joyce Carol Oates

Writing is a solitary occupation, and one of its hazards is loneliness. But an advantage of loneliness is privacy, autonomy and freedom.

~Joyce Carol Oates

I think all art comes out of conflict. When I write I am always looking for the dramatic kernel of an event, the junctures of people's lives when they go in one direction, not another.

~Joyce Carol Oates

I have beliefs, of course, like everyone-but I don't always believe in them.

~Joyce Carol Oates

I'm very American in the sense of being an explorer. America is filled with people who are interested in exploring landscapes, either external or internal. A westward nation of explorers.

~Joyce Carol Oates

One of the large consolations for experiencing anything unpleasant is the knowledge that one can communicate it.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Can compromise be an art? Yes--but a minor art.

~Joyce Carol Oates

As a farm girl, even when I was quite young, I had my 'farm chores' - but I had time also to be alone, to explore the fields, woods and creek

side. And to read.

~Joyce Carol Oates

The first sentence cant be written until the final sentence is written.

~Joyce Carol Oates

In no other sport is the connection between performer and observer so intimate, so frequently painful, so unresolved

~Joyce Carol Oates

You wake up one morning, those years are gone. There's a comfort in this fact perhaps. I want to think that there must be comfort in all facts we can't alter.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Only when men are connected to large, universal goals are they really happy-and one result of their happiness is a rush of creative activity.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Her wish to die was as pervasive as a dial tone: you lift the receiver, it's always there.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Literature, art, like civilization itself, are only accidents.

~Joyce Carol Oates

And I'm drawn to failure. I often write about it, and I'm sympathetic with it, I think, because I feel I'm contending with it constantly in my own life.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Of the widow's countless death-duties there is really just one that matters: on the first anniversary of her husband's death the widow should think I kept myself alive.

~Joyce Carol Oates

These are the moments for which we live.

~Joyce Carol Oates

The suicide does not play the game, does not observe the rules. He leaves the party too soon, and leaves the other guests painfully uncomfortable.

~Joyce Carol Oates

Near the point of impact, time accelerates to the speed of light.

~Joyce Carol Oates

I learned long ago that being Lewis Carroll was infinitely more exciting than being Alice.

~Joyce Carol Oates

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