

Julian Barnes

Quotes

*Book, Thinking, Memories, Writing, Grief, Art, Lying, People, Mean, Way, Self,
Looks, Doe, World, May, Reading, Long, Stories, Eye, Giving*

A pier is a disappointed bridge; yet stare at it for long enough and you can dream it to the other side of the Channel.

~Julian Barnes

Books say: She did this because. Life says: She did this. Books are where things are explained to you; life is where things aren't. I'm not surprised some people prefer books.

~Julian Barnes

The greatest patriotism is to tell your country when it is behaving dishonorably, foolishly, viciously.

~Julian Barnes

The writer must be universal in sympathy and an outcast by nature: only then can he see clearly.

~Julian Barnes

The land of embarrassment and breakfast.

~Julian Barnes

When you read a great book, you don't escape from life, you plunge deeper into it.

~Julian Barnes

History is that certainty produced at the point where the imperfections of memory meet the inadequacies of documentation.

~Julian Barnes

What is the easiest, the most comfortable thing for a writer to do? To congratulate the society in which he lives: to admire its biceps, applaud its progress, tease it endearingly about its follies.

~Julian Barnes

Mystification is simple; clarity is the hardest thing of all.

~Julian Barnes

The more you learn, the less you fear. "Learn" not in the sense of academic study, but in the practical understanding of life.

~Julian Barnes

Some of the freckles I once loved are now closer to liver spots. But it's still the eyes we look at, isn't it? That's where we found the other person, and find them still.

~Julian Barnes

Because love is the meeting point of truth and magic. Truth, as in photography; magic, as in ballooning.

~Julian Barnes

If these are indeed the spirits of Englishmen and Englishwomen who have passed over into the next world, surely they would know how to form a proper queue?

~Julian Barnes

Love is just a system for getting someone to call you darling after sex.

~Julian Barnes

Later on in life, you expect a bit of rest, don't you? You think you deserve it. I did, anyway. But then you begin to understand that the reward of merit is not life's business.

~Julian Barnes

I don't believe in God, but I miss him.

~Julian Barnes

..books look as if they contain knowledge, while e-readers look as if they contain information.

~Julian Barnes

Women scheme when they are weak, they lie out of fear. Men scheme when they are strong, they lie out of arrogance.

~Julian Barnes

Women were brought up to believe that men were the answer. They weren't. They weren't even one of the questions.

~Julian Barnes

You grew old first not in your own eyes, but in other people's eyes; then, slowly, you agreed with their opinion of you.

~Julian Barnes

Whisky, I find, helps clarity of thought. And reduces pain. It has the additional virtue of making you drunk or, if taken in sufficient quantity, very drunk.

~Julian Barnes

To be stupid, and selfish, and to have good health are the three requirements for happiness.

~Julian Barnes

Memories of childhood were the dreams that stayed with you after you woke.

~Julian Barnes

WHORES. Necessary in the nineteenth century for the contraction of syphilis, without which no one could claim genius.

~Julian Barnes

The spring of 1930 marks the end of a period of grave concern...American business is steadily coming back to a normal level of prosperity.

~Julian Barnes

In life, every ending is just the start of another story.

~Julian Barnes

Sometimes I think the purpose of life is to reconcile us to its eventual loss by wearing us down, by proving, however long it takes, that life isn't all it's cracked up to be.

~Julian Barnes

The best form of government is one that is dying, because that means it's giving way to something else.

~Julian Barnes

I had wanted life not to bother me too much, and had succeeded - and how pitiful that was.

~Julian Barnes

I have an instinct for survival, for self-preservation.

~Julian Barnes

What you end up remembering isn't always the same as what you have witnessed.

~Julian Barnes

Global warming is more of a blessing than a curse.

~Julian Barnes

As I've explained to my wife many times, you have to kill your wife or mistress to get on the front page of the papers.

~Julian Barnes

[Literature is] a process of producing grand, beautiful, well-ordered lies that tell more truth than any assemblage of facts.

~Julian Barnes

Pride makes us long for a solution to things - a solution, a purpose, a final cause; but the better telescopes become, the more stars appear.

~Julian Barnes

Time...give us enough time and our best-supported decisions will seem wobbly, our certainties whimsical.

~Julian Barnes

Irony - The modern mode: either the devil's mark or the snorkel of sanity.

~Julian Barnes

History is the lies of the victors.

~Julian Barnes

Books are where things are explained to you; life is where things aren't.

~Julian Barnes

The writer's life [is] full of frailty and defeat like any other life. What counts is the work. Yet the work can quite easily be buried, or half-buried, by the life.

~Julian Barnes

All bad things are exaggerated in the middle of the night. When you lie awake, you only think of bad things.

~Julian Barnes

Had my life increased, or merely added to itself? There had been addition and subtraction in my life, but how much multiplication?

~Julian Barnes

There is accumulation. There is responsibility. And beyond this there is great unrest.

~Julian Barnes

The best life for a writer is the life which helps him write the best books he can.

~Julian Barnes

This was another of our fears: that Life wouldn't turn out to be like Literature.

~Julian Barnes

Reading is a majority skill but a minority art. Yet nothing can replace the exact, complicated, subtle communion between absent author and entranced, present reader.

~Julian Barnes

The more you learn, the less you fear.

~Julian Barnes

Reading is a majority skill but a minority art.

~Julian Barnes

It strikes me that this may be one of the differences between youth and age: when we are young, we invent different futures for ourselves; when we are old, we invent different pasts for others.

~Julian Barnes

The companionship of dead writers is a wonderful form of live friendship.

~Julian Barnes

We live, we die, we are remembered, we are forgotten.

~Julian Barnes

This was long before the term 'single-parent family' came into use; back

then it was a 'broken home'.

~Julian Barnes

History isn't what happened, history is just what historians tell us.

~Julian Barnes

What is taken away is greater than the sum of what was there. This may not be mathematically possible; but it is emotionally possible.

~Julian Barnes

Nature is so exact, it hurts exactly as much as it is worth, so in a way one relishes the pain. If it didn't matter, it wouldn't matter.

~Julian Barnes

But life never lets you go, does it? You can't put down life the way you put down a book.

~Julian Barnes

Every love story is a potential grief story.

~Julian Barnes

Novels tell us the most truth about life: what it is, how we live it, what it might be for, how we enjoy and value it, and how we lose it.

~Julian Barnes

Well, to be honest I think I tell less truth when I write journalism than when I write fiction.

~Julian Barnes

When you are writing fiction your task is to reflect the fullest complications of the world

~Julian Barnes

You put together two things that have not been put together before.

And the world is changed.

~Julian Barnes

...God knows you can have complication and difficulty without any compensating depth or seriousness

~Julian Barnes

Start with the notion that yours is the sole responsibility unless there's powerful evidence to the contrary

~Julian Barnes

Was it the case that colours dimmed as the eye grew elderly? Or was it rather that in youth your excitement about the world transferred itself onto everything you saw and made it brighter?

~Julian Barnes

Most people, in my opinion, steal much of what they are. If they didn't what poor items they would be.

~Julian Barnes

Irony ... may be defined as what people miss.

~Julian Barnes

Why does the writing make us chase the writer? Why can't we leave well enough alone? Why aren't the books enough?

~Julian Barnes

Discovering, for example, that as witnesses to your life diminish, there is less corroboration, and therefore less certainty, as to what you are or have been. [p. 65]

~Julian Barnes

Memory is identity....You are what you have done; what you have done is in your memory; what you remember defines who you are; when you

forget your life you cease to be, even before your death.

~Julian Barnes

A couple's first task, it has always seemed to me, is to solve the problem of breakfast; if this can be worked out amicably, most other difficulties can too.

~Julian Barnes

Alice Munro can move characters through time in a way that no other writer can.

~Julian Barnes

This is what those who haven't crossed the tropic of grief often fail to understand: the fact that someone is dead may mean that they are not alive, but doesn't mean that they do not exist.

~Julian Barnes

In 1980, I published my first novel, in the usual swirl of unjustified hope and justified anxiety.

~Julian Barnes

There will always be non-readers, bad readers, lazy readers - there always were.

~Julian Barnes

Often the grind of book promotion wearies you of your own book - though at the same time this frees you from its clutches.

~Julian Barnes

I hate the way the English have of not being serious about being serious, I really hate it.

~Julian Barnes

I'm a novelist, so I can't write about ideas unless they're attached to

people.

~Julian Barnes

Perhaps love is essential because it's unnecessary.

~Julian Barnes

But then you begin to understand that the reward of merit is not life's business.

~Julian Barnes

There's nothing wrong with being a genius who can fascinate the young. Rather, there's something wrong with the young who can't be fascinated by a genius.

~Julian Barnes

If you're that clever you can argue yourself into anything.

~Julian Barnes

He didn't really like travel, of course. He liked the idea of travel, and the memory of travel, but not travel itself.

~Julian Barnes

Did you know that there is no exact rhyme in the Russian language for the word 'pravda'? Ponder and weigh this insufficiency in your mind. Doesn't that just echo down the canyons of your soul?

~Julian Barnes

Wisdom consists partly in not pretending anymore, in discarding artifice.

~Julian Barnes

And yet it takes only the smallest pleasure or pain to teach us time's malleability.

~Julian Barnes

Writers of either gender ought to be able to do the opposite sex-that's one basic test of competence, after all.

~Julian Barnes

People in love, it is well known, suffer extreme conceptual delusions, the most common of these being that other people find your condition as thrilling and eye-watering as you do yourselves.

~Julian Barnes

To look at ourselves from afar, to make the subjective suddenly objective: this gives us a psychic shock.

~Julian Barnes

In Britain I'm sometimes regarded as a suspiciously Europeanized writer, who has this rather dubious French influence.

~Julian Barnes

Iconic Paris tells us: here are our three-star attractions, go thou and marvel. And so we gaze obediently at what we are told to gaze at, without exactly asking why.

~Julian Barnes

One of the troubles is this: the heart isn't heart-shaped.

~Julian Barnes

And perhaps it was also the case that, for all a lifetime's internal struggling, you were finally no more than what others saw you as. That was your nature, whether you liked it or not.

~Julian Barnes

we must be precise with love, its language and its gestures. If it is to save us, we must look at it as clearly as we should learn to look at death

~Julian Barnes

You lose the world for a glance? Of course you do. That is what the world is for: to lose under the right circumstances.

~Julian Barnes

Yes, of course we were pretentious -- what else is youth for?

~Julian Barnes

May you be ordinary, as the poet once wished the new-born baby.

~Julian Barnes

I've always thought you are what you are and you shouldn't pretend to be anyone else. But Oliver used to correct me and explain that you are whoever it is you're pretending to be.

~Julian Barnes

Why should anything happen when everything has happened?

~Julian Barnes

If the writer were more like a reader, he'd be a reader, not a writer. It's as uncomplicated as that.

~Julian Barnes

Life isn't just addition and subtraction. There's also the accumulation, the multiplication, of loss, of failure.

~Julian Barnes

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