

# Mary McCarthy

## Quotes

*People, Real, Literature, Men, Character, Self, Believe, Hero, Lying, Venice,  
Europe, Children, Past, Thinking, Political, Eye, Sex, Life, Space, Cities*

We all live in suspense, from day to day, from hour to hour; in other words, we are the hero of our own story.

~Mary McCarthy

Modern neurosis began with the discoveries of Copernicus. Science made men feel small by showing him that the earth was not the center of the universe.

~Mary McCarthy

Every age has a keyhole to which its eye is pasted.

~Mary McCarthy

Understanding is often a prelude to forgiveness, but they are not the same, and we often forgive what we cannot understand (seeing nothing else to do) and understand what we cannot pardon.

~Mary McCarthy

Every word she writes is a lie, including "and" and "the."

~Mary McCarthy

Bureaucracy, the rule of no one, has become the modern form of despotism.

~Mary McCarthy

If someone tells you he is going to make a 'realistic decision', you immediately understand that he has resolved to do something bad.

~Mary McCarthy

For self-realization, a rebel demands a strong authority, a worthy opponent, God to his Lucifer.

~Mary McCarthy

We are the hero of our own story.

~Mary McCarthy

Liberty, as it is conceived by current opinion, has nothing inherent about it; it is a sort of gift or trust bestowed on the individual by the state pending good behavior.

~Mary McCarthy

most people did not care to be taught what they did not already know; it made them feel ignorant.

~Mary McCarthy

The relation between life and literature - a final antimony - is one of mutual plagiarism.

~Mary McCarthy

In violence, we forget who we are

~Mary McCarthy

You know what my favourite quotation is?.. It's from Chaucer... Criseyde says it, "I am myne owene woman, wel at ese."

~Mary McCarthy

From what I have seen, I am driven to the conclusion that religion is only good for good people.

~Mary McCarthy

Illiteracy at the poverty level (mainly a matter of bad grammar) does not alarm me nearly as much as the illiteracy of the well-to-do.

~Mary McCarthy

The suspense in a novel is not only in the reader, but in the novelist himself, who is intensely curious too about what will happen to the hero.

~Mary McCarthy

An unrectified case of injustice has a terrible way of lingering,

restlessly, in the social atmosphere like an unfinished question.

~Mary McCarthy

You mustn't force sex to do the work of love or love to do the work of sex.

~Mary McCarthy

Feminism is ridiculous. Feminists are silly idealists who want to be on top. There is no real equality in sexual relationships - someone always wins.

~Mary McCarthy

America is indeed a revelation, though not quite the one that was planned. Given a clean slate, man, it was hoped, would write the future. Instead, he has written his past.

~Mary McCarthy

Calling someone a monster does not make him more guilty; it makes him less so by classing him with beasts and devils.

~Mary McCarthy

What I really do is take real plums and put them in an imaginary cake.

~Mary McCarthy

Labor is work that leaves no trace behind it when it is finished.

~Mary McCarthy

Life for the European is a career; for the American it is a hazard.

~Mary McCarthy

The theater is the only branch of art much cared for by people of wealth; like canasta, it does away with the brother of talk after dinner.

~Mary McCarthy

There are no new truths, but only truths that have not been recognized by those who have perceived them without noticing.

~Mary McCarthy

Is it really so difficult to tell a good action from a bad one? I think one usually knows right away or a moment afterward, in a horrid flash of regret.

~Mary McCarthy

When an American heiress wants to buy a man, she at once crosses the Atlantic. The only really materialistic people I have ever met have been Europeans.

~Mary McCarthy

The immense popularity of American movies abroad demonstrates that Europe is the unfinished negative of which America is the proof

~Mary McCarthy

A good deal of education consists of unlearning-the breaking of bad habits as with a tennis serve.

~Mary McCarthy

For me, in fact, the mark of the historic is the nonchalance with which it picks up an individual and deposits him in a trend, like a house playfully moved by a tornado.

~Mary McCarthy

In science, all facts, no matter how trivial or banal, enjoy democratic equality.

~Mary McCarthy

The famous Florentine elegance, which attracts tourists to the shops on Via Tornabuoni and Via della Vigna Nuova, is characterized by austerity of line, simplicity, economy of effect.

~Mary McCarthy

Venice is the worlds unconscious: a misers glittering hoard, guarded by a Beast whose eyes are made of white agate, and by a saint who is really a prince who has just slain a dragon.

~Mary McCarthy

In politics, it seems, retreat is honorable if dictated by military considerations and shameful if even suggested for ethical reasons.

~Mary McCarthy

Being abroad makes you conscious of the whole imitative side of human behavior. The ape in man.

~Mary McCarthy

Once the state is looked upon as the source of rights, rather than their bound protector, freedom becomes conditional on the pleasure of the state.

~Mary McCarthy

Our language, once homely and colloquial, seeks to aggrandize our meanest activities with polysyllabic terms or it retreats from frankness into a stammering verbosity.

~Mary McCarthy

My occupational hazard is that I can't help plagiarizing from real life.

~Mary McCarthy

If you want to be your own master ... always be surprised by evil; never anticipate it.

~Mary McCarthy

Laughter is the great antidote for self-pity, maybe a specific for the malady, yet probably it does tend to dry one's feelings out a little, as if

by exposing them to a vigorous wind.

~Mary McCarthy

It [Socialism] was a kind of political hockey played by big, gaunt, dyspeptic girls in pants.

~Mary McCarthy

it's easier to forgive your enemies than to forgive your friends.

~Mary McCarthy

Scratch a socialist and you find a snob.

~Mary McCarthy

Driving a car, you are in danger of killing; walking or standing, of being killed.

~Mary McCarthy

I was going to get myself recognized at any price. If I could not win fame by goodness, I was ready to do it by badness.

~Mary McCarthy

... in America ... children are instructed in the virtues of the system they live under, as though history had achieved a happy ending in American civics.

~Mary McCarthy

...the tourist Venice is Venice.

~Mary McCarthy

As soon as you become a writer, you lose contact with ordinary experience or tend to. ... the worst fate of a writer is to become a writer.

~Mary McCarthy

Sex annihilates identity, and the space given to sex in contemporary novels is an avowal of the absence of character.

~Mary McCarthy

Morality did not keep well; it required stable conditions; it was costly; it was subject to variations, and the market for it was uncertain.

~Mary McCarthy

For both writer and reader, the novel is a lonely, physically inactive affair. Only the imagination races.

~Mary McCarthy

I'm afraid I'm not sufficiently inhibited about the things that other women are inhibited about for me. They feel that you've given away trade secrets.

~Mary McCarthy

If one means by style the voice, the irreducible and always recognizable and alive thing, then of course style is really everything.

~Mary McCarthy

You can date the evolving life of a mind, like the age of a tree, by the rings of friendship formed by the expanding central trunk.

~Mary McCarthy

A novelist is an elephant, but an elephant who must pretend to forget.

~Mary McCarthy

Europeans used to say Americans were puritanical. Then they discovered that we were not puritans. So now they say that we are obsessed with sex.

~Mary McCarthy

The consumer today is the victim of the manufacturer who launches on



him a regiment of products for which he must make room in his soul.

~Mary McCarthy

What I really do is take real plums and put them in an imaginary cake. If you're interested in the cake, you get rather annoyed with people saying what species the real plum was.

~Mary McCarthy

Any sizeable Portuguese town looks like a superstitious bride's finery - something old, something new, something borrowed, and something blue.

~Mary McCarthy

Whenever in history, equality appeared on the agenda, it was exported somewhere else, like an undesirable.

~Mary McCarthy

The desire to believe the best of people is a prerequisite for intercourse with strangers; suspicion is reserved for friends.

~Mary McCarthy

We are a nation of 20 million bathrooms, with a humanist in every tub.

~Mary McCarthy

The strongest argument for the un-materialistic character of American life is that we tolerate conditions that are, from a materialistic point of view, intolerable.

~Mary McCarthy

The fact is that gardening, more than most of our other activities except sometimes love-making, confronts us with the inexplicable.

~Mary McCarthy

On the wall of our life together hung a gun waiting to be fired in the final

act.

~Mary McCarthy

Maybe any action becomes cowardly once you stop to reason about it.

~Mary McCarthy

I suppose everyone continues to be interested in the quest for the self, but what you feel when you're older, I think, is that - how to express this - you really must make the self.

~Mary McCarthy

Be truthful... and pay attention. I would also recommend the avoidance of credit cards.

~Mary McCarthy

I am for the ones who represent sense, and so was Jane Austen.

~Mary McCarthy

Old money is fully as moronic as new money but it has inherited an appearance of cultivation.

~Mary McCarthy

All dramatic realism is somewhat sadistic; an audience is persuaded to watch something that makes it uncomfortable and from which no relief is offered - no laughter, no tears, no purgation.

~Mary McCarthy

Life is a system of recurrent pairs, the poison and the antidote being eternally packaged together by some considerate heavenly druggist.

~Mary McCarthy

The only form of action open to a child is to break something or strike someone, its mother or another child; it cannot cause things to happen in the world.

~Mary McCarthy

People with bad consciences always fear the judgment of children.

~Mary McCarthy

To be disesteemed by people you don't have much respect for is not the worst fate.

~Mary McCarthy

With extramarital courtship, the deception was prolonged where it had been ephemeral, necessary where it had been frivolous, conspiratorial where it had been lonely.

~Mary McCarthy

... the average Catholic perceives no connection between religion and morality, unless it is a question of someone else's morality.

~Mary McCarthy

Proscription, martial law, the billeting of the rude troops, the tax collector, the unjust judge, anything at all, is sweeter than responsibility.

~Mary McCarthy

It really takes a hero to live any kind of spiritual life without religious belief.

~Mary McCarthy

The rationalist mind has always had its doubts about Venice. The watery city receives a dry inspection, as though it were a myth for the credulous- poets and honeymooners.

~Mary McCarthy

The present can try to bury the past, an operation that is most atrocious when it is most successful.

~Mary McCarthy

The passion for fact in a raw state is a peculiarity of the novelist.

~Mary McCarthy

love of truth, ordinary common truth recognizable to everyone, is the ruling passion of the novel.

~Mary McCarthy

Making love, we are all more alike than we are when we are talking or acting.

~Mary McCarthy

What's the use of falling in love if you both remain inertly as you were?

~Mary McCarthy

Anybody who has ever tried to rectify an injustice or set a record straight comes to feel that he is going mad.

~Mary McCarthy

The happy ending is our national belief.

~Mary McCarthy

In morals as in politics anarchy is not for the weak.

~Mary McCarthy

Venice, as a city, was a foundling, floating upon the waters like Moses in his basket among the bulrushes.

~Mary McCarthy

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