

Michael Ondaatje

Quotes

*Writing, Book, Country, Heart, Hands, Men, Mean, Believe, Stories, Wall, Falling
In Love, Fall, Character, Morning, War, Interesting, Sadness, Night, People,
World*

That's Anil's path. She grows up in Sri Lanka, goes and gets educated abroad, and through fate or chance gets brought back by the Human Rights Commission to investigate war crimes.

~Michael Ondaatje

She had always wanted words, she loved them; grew up on them. Words gave her clarity, brought reason, shape.

~Michael Ondaatje

Everyone has to scratch on walls somewhere or they go crazy

~Michael Ondaatje

The first sentence of every novel should be: Trust me, this will take time but there is order here, very faint, very human.

~Michael Ondaatje

We are expanded by tears, we are told, not reduced by them.

~Michael Ondaatje

We all have an old knot in the heart we wish to untie.

~Michael Ondaatje

The joyful will stoop with sorrow, and when you have gone to the earth I will let my hair grow long for your sake, I will wander through the wilderness in the skin of a lion

~Michael Ondaatje

There is the hidden presence of others in us, even those we have known briefly. We contain them for the rest of our lives, at every border that we cross.

~Michael Ondaatje

For the first forty days a child is given dreams of previous lives. Journeys, winding paths, a hundred small lessons and then the past is

erased.

~Michael Ondaatje

A man in a desert can hold absence in his cupped hands, knowing it is something that feeds him more than water.

~Michael Ondaatje

Death means you are in the third person.

~Michael Ondaatje

As a writer, one is busy with archaeology.

~Michael Ondaatje

The trouble with all of us is we are where we shouldn't be.

~Michael Ondaatje

In the desert you celebrate nothing but water.

~Michael Ondaatje

How does this happen? To fall in love and be disassembled.

~Michael Ondaatje

He has been disassembled by her. And if she has brought him to this, what has he brought her to?

~Michael Ondaatje

I think precision in writing goes hand in hand with not trying to say everything. You try and say two-thirds, so the reader will involve himself or herself.

~Michael Ondaatje

... the desert, where there is the communal book of moonlight. We were among the rumour of wells. In the palace of winds.

~Michael Ondaatje

I don't see novels ending with any real sense of closure.

~Michael Ondaatje

...sometimes we enter art to hide within it. It is where we can go to save ourselves, where a third-person voice protects us.

~Michael Ondaatje

I'm a Canadian citizen. But I always want to feel at home in Sri Lanka. I'm a member of both countries.

~Michael Ondaatje

All I ever wanted was a world without maps.

~Michael Ondaatje

One of the things that happens in novels it's almost like a continual debate with yourself. That's why you're writing the book. It's why you create characters: so you can argue with yourself.

~Michael Ondaatje

Love is so small it can tear itself through the eye of a needle

~Michael Ondaatje

The last three books are much more a case of a moment of history, what happened almost by accident or coincidence, like being in the same elevator or lifeboat.

~Michael Ondaatje

The rulers of the country generally believed that betting eliminates strikes. Men had to work in order to gamble.

~Michael Ondaatje

It's why you create characters: so you can argue with yourself.

~Michael Ondaatje

Do you understand the sadness of geography?

~Michael Ondaatje

There's a lot of thievery involved in writing. You're breaking into other people's spaces and other people's stories.

~Michael Ondaatje

There's always been anger in the making of music or literature or dance.

~Michael Ondaatje

...the heart is an organ of fire.

~Michael Ondaatje

I don't have a plan for a story when I sit down to write. I would get quite bored carrying it out.

~Michael Ondaatje

Here. Where I am anonymous and alone in a white room with no history and no parading. So I can make something unknown in the shape of this room. Where I am King of Corners.

~Michael Ondaatje

He will hear the rain before he feels it, a clicking on the dry grass, on the olive leaves.

~Michael Ondaatje

There's more danger in the violence you don't face.

~Michael Ondaatje

Once I've discovered the story, I might restructure it, maybe move things around, set up a clue that something is going to happen later, but that happens much later in an editorial capacity.

~Michael Ondaatje

Love is the use one makes of another.

~Michael Ondaatje

A writer uses a pen instead of a scalpel or blow torch.

~Michael Ondaatje

It's a discovery of a story when I write a book, a case of inching ahead on each page and discovering what's beyond in the darkness, beyond where you're writing.

~Michael Ondaatje

I want to die on your chest but not yet she wrote sometime in the 13th century of our love

~Michael Ondaatje

Every night I cut out my heart. But in the morning it was full again

~Michael Ondaatje

That's one of the great sadnesses of any life - knowing what you know now and then remembering what you did not know then.

~Michael Ondaatje

You don't want to write your own opinion, you don't want to just represent yourself, but represent yourself through someone else.

~Michael Ondaatje

I am someone who has a cold heart. If I am beside a great grief I throw barriers up so the loss cannot go too deep or too far. There is a wall instantly in place, and it will not fall.

~Michael Ondaatje

All I desired was to walk upon such an earth that had no maps.

~Michael Ondaatje

It doubles your perception, to write from the point of view of someone you're not.

~Michael Ondaatje

You want to suggest something new, but at the same time, resolve the drama of the action in the novel.

~Michael Ondaatje

Nowadays he doesn't think of his wife, though he knows he can turn around and evoke every move of her, describe any aspect of her, the weigh of her wrist on his heart during the night.

~Michael Ondaatje

Over the years, confusing fragments, lost corners of stories, have a clearer meaning when seen in a new light, a different place.

~Michael Ondaatje

When I write my novels I don't really have a huge plan beforehand; I don't have the whole plot and architecture, so the story is sort of discovered as I write it.

~Michael Ondaatje

A novel is a mirror walking down a road

~Michael Ondaatje

From this point on, she whispered, we will either find or lose our souls.

~Michael Ondaatje

Sadness is very close to hate.

~Michael Ondaatje

In Sri Lanka a well-told lie is worth a thousand facts.

~Michael Ondaatje

Jung was absolutely right about one thing. We are occupied by gods. The mistake is to identify with the god occupying you.

~Michael Ondaatje

What night gave Rafael was a formlessness in which everything had a purpose. As if darkness had a hidden musical language.

~Michael Ondaatje

A blind lover, don't know what I love till I write it out

~Michael Ondaatje

In the book the relationship with Katharine and Almasi is sort of only in the patient's mind.

~Michael Ondaatje

Kirpal's left hand swoops down and catches the dropped fork an inch from the floor and gently passes it into the fingers of his daughter, a wrinkle at the edge of his eyes behind his spectacles.

~Michael Ondaatje

Water is the exile, carried back in cans and flasks, the ghost between your hands and your mouth.

~Michael Ondaatje

I am not in love with him, I am in love with ghosts. So is he, he's in love with ghosts.

~Michael Ondaatje

Politically I don't believe anymore that we can only have one voice to a story, it's like having one radio station to represent a country.

~Michael Ondaatje

The one of the great sadnesses of any life is knowing what you know now and then remembering what you did not know then.

~Michael Ondaatje

When I read biographies, I skip the first thirty pages about the childhood because it doesn't seem interesting to me.

~Michael Ondaatje

If you look at Japanese film, it is made up of collage or bricolage, it is made up of lists, and suddenly when you stand back from the lists you begin to see the pattern of a life.

~Michael Ondaatje

People don't write about kids; you have to give them a lot of freedom, and that causes anarchy and that causes farce.

~Michael Ondaatje

If she were a writer she would collect her pencils and notebooks and favourite cat and write in bed. Strangers and lovers would never get past the locked door.

~Michael Ondaatje

all this Beethoven and rain

~Michael Ondaatje

Githa Hariharan's fiction is wonderful-full of subtleties and humor and tenderness.

~Michael Ondaatje

What began it all was the bright bone of a dream I could hardly hold onto.

~Michael Ondaatje

But we were interested in how our lives could mean something to the past. We sailed into the past.

~Michael Ondaatje

In the desert the most loved waters, like a lover's name, are carried blue in your hands, enter your throat. One swallows absence.

~Michael Ondaatje

This last night we tear into each other, as if to wound, as if to find the key to everything before morning.

~Michael Ondaatje

This was the time in her life that she fell upon books as the only door out of her cell. They became half her world.

~Michael Ondaatje

Her hand touched me at the wrist. "If I gave you my life, you would drop it. Wouldn't you?" I didn't say anything.

~Michael Ondaatje

He came to this country like a torch on fire and he swallowed air as he walked forward and he gave out light

~Michael Ondaatje

So we came to understand that small and important thing, that our lives could be large with interesting strangers who would pass us without any personal involvement.

~Michael Ondaatje

I see myself as someone who's been saved by writing. God knows what I would have been, become or how I would have ended up without it.

~Michael Ondaatje

I've always loved history and history is collage, it is a juxtaposition of the good and the bad and the strange, and how you place those sentences together changes the whole mood of a history.

~Michael Ondaatje

I tend not to know what the plot is or the story is or even the theme. Those things come later, for me.

~Michael Ondaatje

So many nurses had turned into emotionally disturbed handmaidens of the war, in their yellow-and-crimson uniforms with bone buttons.

~Michael Ondaatje

I have to teach myself not to read too much into everything. It comes from too long having to read into hardly anything at all.

~Michael Ondaatje

Truth, at the wrong time, can be dangerous.

~Michael Ondaatje

The past is still, for us, a place that is not safely settled.

~Michael Ondaatje

Right now, I have no idea what I will write or if I will write again.

~Michael Ondaatje

Research can be a big clunker. It's difficult to know how you can make the historical light.

~Michael Ondaatje

To write about someone like myself would be very limiting.

~Michael Ondaatje

Most of the time in our world, truth is just opinion.

~Michael Ondaatje

Meanwhile with the help of an anecdote I fell in love. Words caravaggio. They have a power.

~Michael Ondaatje

He was a man who wrote, who interpreted the world. Wisdom grew out of being handed just the smallest sliver of emotion. A glance could lead to paragraphs of theory.

~Michael Ondaatje

I see the poem or the novel ending with an open door.

~Michael Ondaatje

For echo is the soul of the voice exciting itself in hollow places.

~Michael Ondaatje

Come. We must go deeper with no justice and no jokes.

~Michael Ondaatje

You're getting everyone's point of view at the same time, which for me, is the perfect state for a novel: a cubist state, the cubist novel.

~Michael Ondaatje

I'll be looking at the moon, but I'll be seeing you.

~Michael Ondaatje

I promised to tell you how one falls in love.

~Michael Ondaatje

Fathers die. You keep on loving them in any way you can. You can't hide him away in your heart.

~Michael Ondaatje

Some events take a lifetime to reveal their damage and influence.

~Michael Ondaatje

He knows that the only way he can accept losing her is if he can continue to hold her or be held by her. If they can somehow nurse each other out of this. Not with a wall.

~Michael Ondaatje

It's an odd state to be in, blowing the whistle on your home country.

~Michael Ondaatje

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