

# Penelope Lively Quotes

*Writing, Past, People, Fiction, Thinking, Way, Children, Memories, Book,  
Science, Reading, History, Years, Giving, Choices, Grief, War, Mind, Eye, Want*

I've always been fascinated by the operation of memory - the way in which it is not linear but fragmented, and its ambivalence.

~Penelope Lively

We make choices but are constantly foiled by happenstance.

~Penelope Lively

I'm not a historian but I can get interested - obsessively interested - with any aspect of the past, whether it's palaeontology or archaeology or the very recent past.

~Penelope Lively

It seems to me that anyone whose library consists of a Kindle lying on a table is some sort of bloodless nerd.

~Penelope Lively

The present hardly exists, after all-it becomes the past even as it happens. A tricky medium, time - and central to the concerns of fiction.

~Penelope Lively

We all need a past - that's where our sense of identity comes from.

~Penelope Lively

We all act as hinges-fortuitous links between other people.

~Penelope Lively

I can remember the lush spring excitement of language in childhood. Sitting in church, rolling it around my mouth like marbles--tabernacle and pharisee and parable, tresspass and Babylon and covenant.

~Penelope Lively

The consideration of change over the century is about loss, though I think that social change is gain rather than loss.

~Penelope Lively

Getting to know someone else involves curiosity about where they have come from, who they are.

~Penelope Lively

The Photograph is concerned with the power that the past has to interfere with the present: the time bomb in the cupboard.

~Penelope Lively

It seems to me that everything that happens to us is a disconcerting mix of choice and contingency.

~Penelope Lively

Unless I am a part of everything I am nothing.

~Penelope Lively

I'm intrigued by the way in which physical appearance can often direct a person's life; things happen differently for a beautiful woman than for a plain one.

~Penelope Lively

In old age, you realise that while you're divided from your youth by decades, you can close your eyes and summon it at will. As a writer it puts one at a distinct advantage.

~Penelope Lively

I'm now an agnostic but I grew up on the King James version, which I'm eternally grateful for.

~Penelope Lively

Language tethers us to the world; without it we spin like atoms.

~Penelope Lively

Equally, we require a collective past - hence the endless reinterpretations of history, frequently to suit the perceptions of the

present.

~Penelope Lively

There's a preoccupation with memory and the operation of memory and a rather rapacious interest in history.

~Penelope Lively

I do like to embed a fictional character firmly in an occupation.

~Penelope Lively

I believe that the experience of childhood is irretrievable. All that remains, for any of us, is a headful of brilliant frozen moments, already dangerously distorted by the wisdoms of maturity.

~Penelope Lively

You learn a lot, writing fiction.

~Penelope Lively

All history, of course, is the history of wars.

~Penelope Lively

I'm writing another novel and I know what I'm going to do after, which may be something more like this again, maybe some strange mixture of fiction and non-fiction.

~Penelope Lively

Giving presents is one of the most possessive things we do, did you realize that? It's the way we keep a hold on other people. Plant ourselves in their lives.

~Penelope Lively

Every novel generates its own climate, when you get going.

~Penelope Lively

The past is our ultimate privacy; we pile it up, year by year, decade by decade, it stows itself away, with its perverse random recall system.

~Penelope Lively

There's a fearful term that's in fashion at the moment - closure. People apparently believe it is desirable and attainable.

~Penelope Lively

the days of our lives vanish utterly, more insubstantial than if they had been invented. Fiction can seem more enduring than reality.

~Penelope Lively

The pleasure of writing fiction is that you are always spotting some new approach, an alternative way of telling a story and manipulating characters; the novel is such a wonderfully flexible form.

~Penelope Lively

Wars are fought by children. Conceived by their mad demonic elders, and fought by boys.

~Penelope Lively

Grief-stricken. Stricken is right; it is as though you had been felled. Knocked to the ground; pitched out of life and into something else.

~Penelope Lively

Mythology is much better stuff than history. It has form; logic; a message.

~Penelope Lively

People die, but money never does.

~Penelope Lively

I didn't write anything until I was well over 30.

~Penelope Lively

I have had to empty two family homes during the last few years - first, the house that had been my grandmothers since 1923, and then my own country home, which we had lived in for over twenty years.

~Penelope Lively

I didn't want it to be a book that made pronouncements.

~Penelope Lively

If we had not met, that day, I think I would have imagined you somehow.

~Penelope Lively

I am addicted to arrivals, to those innocent dawn moments from which history accelerates.

~Penelope Lively

Born in Jerusalem, Wadie Said went from being a dragoman to a salesman in the United States and thence to a hugely successful businessman in Egypt.

~Penelope Lively

I rather like getting away from fiction.

~Penelope Lively

History unravels; circumstances, following their natural inclination, prefer to remain ravelled.

~Penelope Lively

I didn't think I had anything particular to say, but I thought I might have something to say to children.

~Penelope Lively

If people don't read, that's their choice; a lifelong book habit may itself be some sort of affliction.

~Penelope Lively

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