

# Philip Larkin

## Quotes

*Thinking, Writing, People, Art, Mean, Love, Children, Ends, Ifs, Age, Years,  
Poetry, Death, Life Is, Feet, Work, Men, Should, Lying, Reading*

Deprivation is for me what daffodils were for Wordsworth.

~Philip Larkin

I have no enemies. But my friends don't like me.

~Philip Larkin

How little our careers express what lies in us, and yet how much time they take up. It's sad, really.

~Philip Larkin

I have a sense of melancholy isolation, life rapidly vanishing, all the usual things. It's very strange how often strong feelings don't seem to carry any message of action

~Philip Larkin

I feel the only thing you can do about life is to preserve it, by art if you're an artist, by children if you're not.

~Philip Larkin

As a child, I thought I hated everybody, but when I grew up I realized it was just children I didn't like.

~Philip Larkin

What will survive of us is love.

~Philip Larkin

Sexual intercourse began in 1963 ... / Between the end of the Chatterley ban/ and the Beatles first LP

~Philip Larkin

Things are tougher than we are, just As earth will always respond  
However we mess it about.

~Philip Larkin

Man hands on misery to man. It deepens like a coastal shelf. Get out as early as you can, and don't have any kids yourself.

~Philip Larkin

One of the quainter quirks of life is that we shall never know who dies on the same day as we do ourselves.

~Philip Larkin

It's easy to write when you've nothing to write about (That is, when you are young).

~Philip Larkin

Poetry should begin with emotion in the poet, and end with the same emotion in the reader. The poem is simply the instrument of transference.

~Philip Larkin

Selflessness is like waiting in a hospital In a badly-fitting suit on a cold wet morning. Selfishness is like listening to good jazz With drinks for further orders and a huge fire.

~Philip Larkin

When I get sent manuscripts from aspiring poets, I do one of two things: if there is no stamped self-addressed envelope, I throw it into the bin.-If there is, I write and tell them to f\*\*k off.

~Philip Larkin

A good poem about failure is a success.

~Philip Larkin

So many things I had thought forgotten Return to my mind with stranger pain: Like letters that arrive addressed to someone Who left the house so many years ago.

~Philip Larkin

I don't think I write well - just better than anyone else.

~Philip Larkin

Many modern novels have a beginning, a muddle and an end.

~Philip Larkin

Depression hangs over me as if I were Iceland.

~Philip Larkin

He married a woman to stop her getting away Now she's there all day.

~Philip Larkin

Death: the anaesthetic from which none come round.

~Philip Larkin

Life is first boredom, then fear.

~Philip Larkin

Saki says that youth is like hors d'oeuvres: you are so busy thinking of the next courses you don't notice it. When you've had them, you wish you'd had more hors d'oeuvres.

~Philip Larkin

This is the first thing I have understood: Time is the echo of an axe within a wood.

~Philip Larkin

If you tell a novelist, 'Life's not like that', he has to do something about it. The poet simply replies, 'No, but I am.'

~Philip Larkin

I wonder love can have already set In dreams, when we've not met  
More times than I can number on one hand.

~Philip Larkin

Life has a practice of living you, if you don't live it.

~Philip Larkin

I am always trying to 'preserve' things by getting other people to read what I have written, and feel what I felt.

~Philip Larkin

I can't understand these chaps who go round American universities explaining how they write poems: It's like going round explaining how you sleep with your wife.

~Philip Larkin

To write you must be warm, fed, loved and sober.

~Philip Larkin

I think writing about unhappiness is probably the source of my popularity, if I have any - after all, most people are unhappy, don't you think?

~Philip Larkin

Novels are about other people and poems are about yourself.

~Philip Larkin

I like spaghetti because you don't have to take your eyes off the book to pick about among it, it's all the same.

~Philip Larkin

What are days for? Days are where we live. They come, they wake us  
Time and time over. They are to be happy in: Where can we live but  
days?

~Philip Larkin

Home is so sad. It stays as it was left, / Shaped to the comfort of the  
last to go / As if to win them back

~Philip Larkin

Here is an unfenced existence

~Philip Larkin

Depression is to me as daffodils were to Wordsworth.

~Philip Larkin

My mother, who hates thunderstorms, Holds up each summer day and shakes It out suspiciously, lest swarms Of grape-dark clouds are lurking there.

~Philip Larkin

Dear, I can't write, it's all a fantasy: a kind of circling obsession.

~Philip Larkin

I didn't choose poetry: poetry chose me.

~Philip Larkin

We should be careful / Of each other, we should be kind / While there is still time.

~Philip Larkin

Something, like nothing, happens anywhere.

~Philip Larkin

I have wished you something None of the others would.

~Philip Larkin

Novels seem to me to be richer, broader, deeper, more enjoyable than poems.

~Philip Larkin

Give me a thrill, says the reader, Give me a kick; I don't care how you

succeed, or What subject you pick.

~Philip Larkin

I'd like to think...that people in pubs would talk about my poems

~Philip Larkin

There is bad in all good authors: what a pity the converse isn't true!

~Philip Larkin

But, o, photography! as no art is, Faithful and disappointing! That records Dull days as dull, and hold-it smiles as frauds, And will not censor blemishes, Like washing-lines, and Hall's-Distemper boards

~Philip Larkin

Sex means nothing--just the moment of ecstasy, that flares and dies in minutes.

~Philip Larkin

I think we got much better poetry when it was all regarded as sinful or subversive, and you had to hide it under the cushion when somebody came in.

~Philip Larkin

And the case of butterflies so rich it looks As if all summer settled there and died.

~Philip Larkin

You can't put off being young until you retire.

~Philip Larkin

The way the moon dashes through clouds that blow Loosely as cannon-smoke... Is a reminder of the strength and pain Of being young; that it can't come again, But is for others undiminished somewhere.

~Philip Larkin

Everyone should be forcibly transplanted to another continent from their family at the age of three.

~Philip Larkin

The only way to eliminate unemployment is to eliminate unemployment benefits.

~Philip Larkin

I think that at the bottom of all art lies the impulse to preserve.

~Philip Larkin

Since the majority of me Rejects the majority of you, Debating ends forthwith, and we Divide." Philip Larkin

~Philip Larkin

All the unhurried day / Your mind lay open like a drawer of knives.

~Philip Larkin

Uncontradicting solitude Supports me on its giant palm; And like a sea-anemone Or simple snail, there cautiously Unfolds, emerges, what I am.

~Philip Larkin

Only in books the flat and final happens, Only in dreams we meet and interlock.

~Philip Larkin

Death is no different whined at than withstood.

~Philip Larkin

The breath that sharpens life is life itself.

~Philip Larkin

In everyone there sleeps a sense of life lived according to love.



~Philip Larkin

But O, Photography! as no art is, Faithful and disappointing!

~Philip Larkin

The trees are coming into leaf Like something almost being said.

~Philip Larkin

You can look out of your life like a train & see what you're heading for, but you can't stop the train.

~Philip Larkin

Poetry is an affair of sanity, of seeing things as they are.

~Philip Larkin

Parting is a training streamer, Lingered like leaves in autumn.

~Philip Larkin

I listen to money singing, it's like looking down from long French windows at a provincial town. The slums, the canal, the churches ornate and mad in the evening sun. It is intensely sad.

~Philip Larkin

To start at a new place is always to feel incompetent & unwanted.

~Philip Larkin

A writer can have only one language, if language is going to mean anything to him.

~Philip Larkin

A writer once said to me, If you ever go to America, go either to the East Coast or the West Coast: The rest is a desert full of bigots. That's what I think I'd like . . . a version of pastoral.

~Philip Larkin

Courage is no good: It means not scaring others. Being brave Lets no one off the grave. Death is no different whined at than withstood.

~Philip Larkin

And immediately Rather than words comes the thought of high windows: The sun-comprehending glass, And beyond it, the deep blue air, that shows Nothing, and is nowhere, and is endless.

~Philip Larkin

To put one brick upon another, Add a third, and then a fourth, Leaves no time to wonder whether What you do has any worth.

~Philip Larkin

No one can tear your thread out of himself. No one can tie you down or set you free.

~Philip Larkin

Boys dream of native girls who bring breadfruit, Whatever they are.

~Philip Larkin

It is fatal to decide, intellectually, what good poetry is because you are then in honour bound to try to write it, instead of the poems that only you can write.

~Philip Larkin

I have started to say "A quarter of a century" Or "thirty years back" About my own life.

~Philip Larkin

On me your voice falls as they say love should, Like an enormous yes.

~Philip Larkin

Walk with the dead For fear of death.

~Philip Larkin

Here no elsewhere underwrites my existence.

~Philip Larkin

It becomes still more difficult to findâ€”Words at once true and kind,â€”Or not untrue and not unkind.

~Philip Larkin

A good meal can somewhat repair / The eatings of slight love

~Philip Larkin

The difficult part of love is being selfish enough.

~Philip Larkin

Joy is for the simple or the great to feel, Neither of which we are.

~Philip Larkin

Originality is being different from oneself, not others.

~Philip Larkin

Poetry is an affair of sanity, of seeing things as they are, to recreate the familiar, eternalizing the poet's own perception in unique and original verbal form.

~Philip Larkin

Life is first boredom, then fear. Whether or not we use it, it goes, And leaves what something hidden from us chose, And age, and then the only end of age.

~Philip Larkin

I am awakened each dawn increasingly to fear.

~Philip Larkin

The chromatic scale is what you use to give the effect of drinking a quinine martini and having an enema simultaneously.

~Philip Larkin

Life and literature is a question of what one thrills to, and further than that no man shall ever go without putting his foot in a turd.

~Philip Larkin

Clearly money has something to do with life.

~Philip Larkin

SEX is designed for people who like overcoming obstacles.

~Philip Larkin

Living in England has no such excuse: These are my customs and establishments.

~Philip Larkin

... everyone young going down the long slide To happiness, endlessly.

~Philip Larkin

In times when nothing stood but worsened, or grew strange, there was one constant good: she did not change.

~Philip Larkin

Many famous feet have trod Sublunary paths, and famous hands have weighed The strength they have against the strength they need; And famous lips interrogated God Concerning franchise in eternity.

~Philip Larkin

I never think of poetry or the poetry scene, only separate poems written by individuals.

~Philip Larkin

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