

Philip Roth

Quotes

*Writing, Book, People, Thinking, Men, Years, World, Fiction, Literature, Believe,
Lying, Alive, Memories, Novelists, Reality, Art, Sex, Boys, Knows, Mind*

The road to hell is paved with works-in-progress.

~Philip Roth

I cannot and do not live in the world of discretion, not as a writer, anyway. I would prefer to, I assure you - it would make life easier. But discretion is, unfortunately, not for novelists.

~Philip Roth

He had learned the worst lesson that life can teach - that it makes no sense.

~Philip Roth

You can no more make someone tell the truth than you can force someone to love you.

~Philip Roth

Old age isn't a battle; old age is a massacre.

~Philip Roth

The horror of being caged has lost its thrill.

~Philip Roth

Everybody else is working to change, persuade, tempt and control them. The best readers come to fiction to be free of all that noise.

~Philip Roth

I have a slogan I use when I get anxious writing, which happens quite a bit: 'the ordeal is part of the commitment.' It's one of my mantras. It makes a lot of things doable.

~Philip Roth

When the whole world doesn't believe in God, it'll be a great place.

~Philip Roth

Because that is when you love somebody - when you see them being game in the face of the worst. Not courageous. Not heroic. Just game.

~Philip Roth

The danger with hatred is, once you start in on it, you get a hundred times more than you bargained for. Once you start, you can't stop.

~Philip Roth

It's best to give while your hand is still warm.

~Philip Roth

You tasted it. Isn't that enough? Of what do you ever get more than a taste? That's all we're given in life, that's all we're given of life. A taste. There is no more.

~Philip Roth

All that we don't know is astonishing. Even more astonishing is what passes for knowing.

~Philip Roth

Maybe the best thing would be to forget being right or wrong about people and just go along for the ride. But if you can do that -- well, lucky you.

~Philip Roth

It's amazing what lies people can sustain behind the mask of their real faces.

~Philip Roth

Is an intelligent human being likely to be much more than a large-scale manufacturer of misunderstanding?

~Philip Roth

Literature takes a habit of mind that has disappeared. It requires

silence, some form of isolation, and sustained concentration in the presence of an enigmatic thing.

~Philip Roth

When I was a child... I was watching a snowstorm, and hopefully asked, 'Momma, do we believe in winter?'

~Philip Roth

Nothing bad can happen to a writer. Everything is material.

~Philip Roth

Unless one is inordinately fond of subordination, one is always at war.

~Philip Roth

Satire is moral outrage transformed into comic art.

~Philip Roth

There are no uncontaminated angels

~Philip Roth

Stop worrying about growing old. And think about growing up.

~Philip Roth

The pleasure isn't in owning the person. The pleasure is this. Having another contender in the room with you.

~Philip Roth

Sheer Playfulness and Deadly Seriousness are my closest friends.

~Philip Roth

People are unjust to anger - it can be enlivening and a lot of fun.

~Philip Roth

You cannot observe people through an ideology. Your ideology

observes for you.

~Philip Roth

Seeing is believing and believing is knowing and knowing beats unknowing and the unknown.

~Philip Roth

Everyone becomes a part of history whether they like it or not and whether they know it or not.

~Philip Roth

Being in the dark from sentence to sentence is what convinces me to go on.

~Philip Roth

Memories of the past are not memories of facts but memories of your imaginings of the facts.

~Philip Roth

There's something every woman wants, and that's a man to blame.

~Philip Roth

Dreams? If only they had been! But I don't need dreams, Doctor, that's why I hardly have themâ€”because I have this life instead. With me it all happens in broad daylight!

~Philip Roth

A Jewish man with parents alive is a fifteen-year-old boy, and will remain a fifteen-year-old boy until they die!

~Philip Roth

You put too much stock in human intelligence, it doesn't annihilate human nature.

~Philip Roth

Don't judge it. Just write it. Don't judge it. It's not for you to judge it.

~Philip Roth

A life of writing books is a trying adventure in which you cannot find out where you are unless you lose your way.

~Philip Roth

Too late, but I understand. That we don't perish of understanding everything too late, that is a miracle. But we do perish of that -- of just that.

~Philip Roth

Life is just a short period of time in which you are alive.

~Philip Roth

There's no remaking reality... Just take it as it comes. Hold your ground and take it as it comes. There's no other way.

~Philip Roth

It's amazing how much punishment we can take.

~Philip Roth

How easy life is when it's easy, and how hard when it's hard.

~Philip Roth

A Jew without Jews, without Judaism, without Zionism, without Jewishness, without a temple or an army or even a pistol, a Jew clearly without a home, just the object itself, like a glass or an apple.

~Philip Roth

I know I'm not going to write as well as I used to. I no longer have the stamina to endure the frustration. Writing is frustration - it's daily frustration, not to mention humiliation.

~Philip Roth

Actually we did not have the feelings we said we had until we spoke them--at least I didn't; to phrase them was to invent them and own them.

~Philip Roth

This is what you know about someone you have to hate: he charges you with his crime and castigates himself in you.

~Philip Roth

You can't write good satirical fiction in America because reality will quickly outdo anything you might invent.

~Philip Roth

I was a biography in constant motion, memory to the marrow of my bones.

~Philip Roth

I often have to write a hundred pages or more before there's a paragraph that's alive.

~Philip Roth

I write fiction and I'm told it's autobiography, I write autobiography and I'm told it's fiction, so since I'm so dim and they're so smart, let them decide what it is or it isn't.

~Philip Roth

You be greater than your feelings. I don't demand this of you - life does. Otherwise you'll be washed away by feelings. You'll be washed out to sea and never seen again.

~Philip Roth

You have a conscience, and a conscience is a valuable attribute, but not if it begins to make you think you were to blame for what is far beyond the scope of your responsibility.

~Philip Roth

Just like those who are incurably ill, the aged know everything about their dying except exactly when.

~Philip Roth

Oh, to be a center fielder, a center fielder- and nothing more

~Philip Roth

Everything dictated silence and self-control but I couldn't restrain myself and spoke my mind.

~Philip Roth

We live in an age in which the imagination of the novelist is helpless against what he knows he is going to read in tomorrow's newspaper.

~Philip Roth

Fear tends to manifest itself much more quickly than greed, so volatile markets tend to be on the downside. In up markets, volatility tends to gradually decline.

~Philip Roth

I am marked like a road map from head to toe with my repressions. You can travel the length and breadth of my body over superhighways of shame and inhibition and fear.

~Philip Roth

How Far back must we go to discover the beginning of trouble?

~Philip Roth

Suicide is the role you write for yourself. You inhabit it and you enact it. All carefully staged -- where they will find you and how they will find you. But one performance only.

~Philip Roth

A Jewish man with his parents alive is half the time a helpless infant!

~Philip Roth

Doctor doctor, what do you say, lets put the id back in yid

~Philip Roth

I turn sentences around. That's my life. I write a sentence and then I turn it around. Then I look at it and turn it around again.

~Philip Roth

I am the Raskolnikov of jerking off - the sticky evidence is everywhere!

~Philip Roth

When he [Joe Lewis] was asked upon his retirement about his long career, Joe sweetly summed it up in just ten words. 'I did the best I could with what I had'.

~Philip Roth

The secret to living in the rush of the world with a minimum of pain is to get as many people as possible to string along with your delusions.

~Philip Roth

I came to New York and in only hours, New York did what it does to people: awakened the possibilities. Hope breaks out.

~Philip Roth

For a pure sense of being tumultuously alive, you can't beat the nasty side of existence.

~Philip Roth

I work most days and if you work most days and you get at least a page done a day, then at the end of the year you have 365. So the pages accumulate and then I publish the books.

~Philip Roth

The book really comes to life in the rewriting.

~Philip Roth

The ordeal is part of the commitment" Esquire Interview 10/10

~Philip Roth

Literature got me into this mess and literature is going to have to get me out of it.

~Philip Roth

If you read a novel in more than two weeks, you don't read the novel really.

~Philip Roth

One either imposes one's ideas or one is imposed on.

~Philip Roth

In my childhood I led the life of a sage, when I grew up I started climbing trees

~Philip Roth

Each book starts from ashes.

~Philip Roth

There were many hours when I never quite know how I'd gotten there or why I stayed.

~Philip Roth

I don't wish to be a slave any longer to the stringent exigencies of literature.

~Philip Roth

When you publish a book, it's the world's book. The world edits it.

~Philip Roth

The best readers come to fiction to be free of ... all that isn't fiction.

~Philip Roth

I think you're a wonder. You're beautiful. You're mature. You are, I admit, vastly more experienced than I am. That's what threw me. I was thrown. Forgive me.

~Philip Roth

Literature isn't a moral beauty contest. Its power arises from the authority and audacity with which the impersonation is pulled off; the belief it inspires is what counts.

~Philip Roth

The terror of the unforeseen is what the science of history hides, turning a disaster into an epic.

~Philip Roth

--nor had I understood til then how the shameless vanity of utter fools can so strongly determine the fate of others

~Philip Roth

I do not say correct or savory. I do not say seemly or even natural. I say serious. Sensationally serious. Unspeakably serious. Solemnly, recklessly, blissfully serious.

~Philip Roth

Nothing has a more sinister effect on art than the artist's desire to prove that he's good. The terrible temptation of idealism!

~Philip Roth

Nothing lasts and yet nothing passes either, and nothing passes just because nothing lasts.

~Philip Roth

I think I write or publish as much as I do because I can bear being without a book to work on.

~Philip Roth

I'm an Obama supporter. And if you're an Obama supporter that means you had a hard time during the Bush years.

~Philip Roth

To read a novel requires a certain kind of concentration, focus, devotion to the reading. If you read a novel in more than two weeks, you don't read the novel really.

~Philip Roth

I kept waiting for him to lay bare something more than this pointed unobjectionableness, but all that rose to the surface was more surface

~Philip Roth

The signore...wishes her to begin at the beginning.

~Philip Roth

For discipline is imposed not just on oneself but on those in one's orbit.

~Philip Roth

It's the little questions from women about tappets that finally push men over the edge.

~Philip Roth

And as he spoke, I was thinking, 'the kind of stories that people turn life into, the kind of lives people turn stories into.

~Philip Roth

The legend engraved on the face of the Jewish nickel- on the body of every Jewish child!- not IN GOD WE TRUST, but SOMEDAY YOU'LL BE A PARENT AND YOU'LL KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE.

~Philip Roth

Like all enjoyable things, you see, it has unenjoyable parts to it.

~Philip Roth

I wouldn't mind writing a long book which is going to occupy me for the rest of my life.

~Philip Roth

It's human to have a secret, but it's just as human to reveal it sooner or later.

~Philip Roth

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