

Randall Jarrell

Quotes

*Writing, Men, Art, World, Thinking, People, Book, Looks, Poet, Way, Wish,
Heart, Real, Children, Voice, Philosophical, Long, Air, Trying, Gertrude*

A poet is a man who manages, in a lifetime of standing out in thunderstorms, to be struck by lightning five or six times.

~Randall Jarrell

One of the most obvious facts about grownups to a child is that they have forgotten what it is like to be a child.

~Randall Jarrell

The ways we miss our lives are life.

~Randall Jarrell

The people who live in a golden age usually go around complaining how yellow everything looks.

~Randall Jarrell

It is always hard for poets to believe that one says their poems are bad not because one is a fiend but because their poems are bad.

~Randall Jarrell

Read at whim! Read at whim!

~Randall Jarrell

It is better to entertain an idea than to take home to live with you for the rest of your life.

~Randall Jarrell

We can't tell our life from our wish

~Randall Jarrell

Pain comes from the darkness. And we call it wisdom. It is pain.

~Randall Jarrell

Except from the Americansâ€™but every pearl has its oyster.

~Randall Jarrell

The safest way to avoid the world is through art; and the safest way to be linked to the world is through art.

~Randall Jarrell

If you've been put in your place long enough you begin to act like the place.

~Randall Jarrell

Art matters not merely because it is the most magnificent ornament and the most nearly unfailing occupation of our lives, but because it is life itself.

~Randall Jarrell

Christina Stead has a Chinese say, "Our old age is perhaps life's decision about us" or, worse, the decision we have made about ourselves without ever realizing we were making it.

~Randall Jarrell

I think that one possible definition of our modern culture is that it is one in which nine-tenths of our intellectuals can't read any poetry.

~Randall Jarrell

To Americans, English manners are far more frightening than none at all.

~Randall Jarrell

How can we expect novelists to be moral, when their trade forces them to treat every end they meet as no more than an imperfect means to a novel?

~Randall Jarrell

The climate of our culture is changing. Under these new rains, new suns, small things grow great, and what was great grows small; whole species disappear and are replaced.

~Randall Jarrell

The dark, uneasy world of family life - where the greatest can fail and the humblest succeed.

~Randall Jarrell

when General Eisenhower defined an intellectual as "a man who takes more words than is necessary to tell more than he knows", he was speaking not as a Republican but as an American.

~Randall Jarrell

Reality is what we want it to be or what we do not want it to be, but it is not our wanting or our not wanting that makes it so.

~Randall Jarrell

If you never look just wrong to your contemporaries you will never look just right to posterity - every writer has to try to be, to some extent, sometimes, a law unto himself.

~Randall Jarrell

If wishes were stories, beggars would read.

~Randall Jarrell

I simply don't want the poems mixed up with my life or opinions or picture or any other regrettable concomitants. I look like a bear and live in a cave; but you should worry.

~Randall Jarrell

Most works of art are, necessarily, bad...; one suffers through the many for the few.

~Randall Jarrell

Many poets write as if they had been decerebrated, and not simply lobotomized, as a cure for their melancholia.

~Randall Jarrell

there is in this world no line so bad that someone won't someday copy it.

~Randall Jarrell

our quarrels with the world are like our quarrels with God: no matter how right we are, we are wrong.

~Randall Jarrell

whether they write poems or don't write poems, poets are best.

~Randall Jarrell

More and more people think of the critic as an indispensable middle man between writer and reader, and would no more read a book alone, if they could help it, than have a baby alone.

~Randall Jarrell

Most people don't listen to classical music at all, but to rock-and-roll or hillbilly songs or some album named Music To Listen To Music By.

~Randall Jarrell

Art is long, and critics are the insects of a day.

~Randall Jarrell

Say what you like, but such things do happen - not often, but they do happen.

~Randall Jarrell

People had always seemed to Gertrude rather like the beasts in Animal Farm : all equally detestable, but some more equally detestable than others.

~Randall Jarrell

When you call people we you find it easy to be unfair to them, since you yourself are included in the condemnation.

~Randall Jarrell

A poem is, so to speak, a way of making you forget how you wrote it.

~Randall Jarrell

The real war poets are always war poets, peace or any time.

~Randall Jarrell

I decided that Europeans and Americans are like men and women: they understand each other worse, and it matters less, than either of them suppose.

~Randall Jarrell

A person is a process, one that leads to death.

~Randall Jarrell

Human life without some form of poetry is not human life but animal existence.

~Randall Jarrell

The novel is a prose narrative of some length that has something wrong with it.

~Randall Jarrell

We are all so to speak intellectuals about something.

~Randall Jarrell

One Whitman is miracle enough, and when he comes again it will be the end of the world.

~Randall Jarrell

The usual bad poem in somebody's Collected Works is a learned,

mannered, valued habit, a habit a little more careful than, and little emptier than, brushing one's teeth.

~Randall Jarrell

If we were in the habit of reading poets their obscurity would not matter; and, once we are out of the habit, their clarity does not help.

~Randall Jarrell

When you're young you try to be methodical and philosophical, but reality keeps breaking in.

~Randall Jarrell

We always tend to distrust geniuses about genius, as if what they say didn't arouse much empathy in us, or as if we were waiting till some more reliable source of information came along...

~Randall Jarrell

The usual criticism of a novel about an artist is that, no matter how real he is as a man, he is not real to us as an artist, since we have to take on trust the works of art he produces.

~Randall Jarrell

A correct answer is like an affectionate kiss, Goethe said; a correct answer, Gertrude would have said, is like a slap in the face.

~Randall Jarrell

Habits are happiness of a sort...

~Randall Jarrell

We died like aunts of pets or foreigners.

~Randall Jarrell

The best of causes ruins as quickly as the worst; and the road to Limbo is paved with writers who have done everything I am being

sympathetic, not satiric for the very best reasons.

~Randall Jarrell

If we meet an honest and intelligent politician, a dozen, a hundred, we say they aren't like politicians at all, and our category of politicians stays unchanged; we know what politicians are like.

~Randall Jarrell

Is an institution always a man's shadow shortened in the sun, the lowest common denominator of everybody in it?

~Randall Jarrell

Doesn't the world need the painter's praise anymore?

~Randall Jarrell

Age could not wither nor custom stale her infinite monotony: in fact, neither Age nor Custom could do anything (as they said, their voices rising) with the American novelist Gertrude Johnson.

~Randall Jarrell

One of the most puzzling things about a novel is that "the way it really was" half the time is, and half the time isn't, the way it ought to be in the novel.

~Randall Jarrell

Carl Becker has defined a professor as a man who thinks otherwise; a scholar is a man who otherwise thinks.

~Randall Jarrell

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