

# Richard Russo

## Quotes

*Thinking, People, Writing, Book, World, Heart, Stories, Feelings, Simple, Men,  
Ifs, Trying, Self, America, Character, Views, Two, Different, Parent, Kids*

At the risk of appearing disingenuous, I don't really think of myself as 'writing humor.' I'm simply reporting on the world I observe, which is frequently hilarious.

~Richard Russo

And there comes a time in your life when you realize that if you don't take the opportunity to be happy, you may never get another chance again.

~Richard Russo

People sometimes get in the habit of being loyal to a mistake.

~Richard Russo

You use simple brushstrokes in a screenplay for things over which you would take much greater pains in a novel.

~Richard Russo

Have you ever noticed that when people use the expression 'I have to say', what follows usually needn't be said?

~Richard Russo

What if all everybody needed in the world was to be sure of one friend? What if you were the one, and you refused to say those simple words?

~Richard Russo

Worse, I have to admit to feeling the jealousy of one crab for another that has managed to climb out of the barrel.

~Richard Russo

My books are elegiac in the sense that they're odes to a nation that even I sometimes think may not exist anymore except in my memory and my imagination.

~Richard Russo

Bookstores, like libraries, are the physical manifestation of the wide world's longest, most thrilling conversation.

~Richard Russo

I was the one who did come through that door. You were the one she was waiting for.

~Richard Russo

Go to it. Be bold. Be true. Be kind. Rotate your tires. Don't drink so much. There aren't going to be enough liver transplants to go around.

~Richard Russo

They stayed, many of them, because staying was easier and less scary than leaving.

~Richard Russo

What I discovered I liked best about striking out on my bicycle was that the farther I got from home, the more interesting and unusual my thoughts became.

~Richard Russo

The world is divided between kids who grow up wanting to be their parents and those like us, who grow up wanting to be anything but. Neither group ever succeeds.

~Richard Russo

I have to have a character worth caring about. I tend not to start writing books about people I don't have a lot of sympathy for because I'm just going to be with them too long.

~Richard Russo

I just have this feeling that if it weren't for the Gloversville Free Library that I probably would not be a writer.

~Richard Russo

HBO is really famous for hiring good people and staying out of their way until they ask for help, or need it. And that reputation is earned.

~Richard Russo

Cary Grant never won an Oscar, primarily, I suspect, because he made everything look so effortless. Why reward someone for having fun, for being charming?

~Richard Russo

Even at its most perceptive, sociology deals in abstractions.

~Richard Russo

When you don't know what to do, try something; if that doesn't work, try something else.

~Richard Russo

People in small towns, much more than in cities, share a destiny.

~Richard Russo

You can't possibly judge your ability to control something until you've experienced the extremes of its capabilities. Do you understand?

~Richard Russo

It's no secret that in my books I'm trying to make the comic and the serious rub up against each other just as closely and uncomfortably as I can.

~Richard Russo

Stories worked much the same way . . . A false note at the beginning was much more costly than one nearer the end because early errors were part of the foundation.

~Richard Russo

Movies have to handle time very efficiently. They're about stringing

scenes together in the present. Novels aren't necessarily about that.

~Richard Russo

I don't think there's a shortage of material in the world. Or in my head. I just pray for continued good health, because I've got other stories to tell.

~Richard Russo

If you work at comedy too laboriously, you can kill what's funny in the joke.

~Richard Russo

Some authors have a very hard time understanding that in order to be faithful to the spirit of the book, it's almost always impossible to remain faithful to the text. You have to make changes.

~Richard Russo

You can be interested in a Jane Smiley novel whether or not anyone says a word. She enters into her characters thoughts with great understanding and depth.

~Richard Russo

I think the darker aspect of my fiction-or anybody's fiction-is by its very nature somehow easier to talk about.

~Richard Russo

I suppose all writers worry about the well running dry.

~Richard Russo

Was anything in the world truer than that intuitive leap of the heart?

~Richard Russo

...aware, as always, that the truth isn't much of substitute for a good answer.

~Richard Russo

Odd that the future should be so difficult to bring into focus when the past, uninvited, offered itself up so easily for inspection.

~Richard Russo

A lot of my characters in all of my books have a self-destructive urge. They'll do precisely the thing that they know is wrong, take a perverse delight in doing the wrong thing.

~Richard Russo

I looked back at some of my earlier published stories with genuine horror and remorse. I got thinking, How many extant copies might there be, who owns them, and do they keep their doors locked?

~Richard Russo

I've always known that there's more going on inside me than finds its way into the world, but this is probably true of everyone. Who doesn't regret that he isn't more fully understood?

~Richard Russo

Sleep is over-rated. Have you ever noticed how it's always recommended to people anybody with half a brain can see need to wake up?

~Richard Russo

Whatever you're working on, take small bites. The task will not be overwhelming if you can reduce it to its smallest component.

~Richard Russo

There are a great many sins in this world, none of them original.

~Richard Russo

I'll tell you one thing, though. It's a terrible thing to be a disappointment

to a good woman.

~Richard Russo

... Baggott enjoys living on the knife edge between hilarity and heartbreak and that makes her a writer after my own heart.

~Richard Russo

Where was the middle ground between a sense of adventure and just plain sense?

~Richard Russo

When authors who write literary fiction begin to write screenplays, everybody assumes that's the end. Here's another who's never going to write well again.

~Richard Russo

It's possible to overlook character flaws of in-laws for the simple reason that you feel neither responsible for them nor genetically implicated.

~Richard Russo

That afternoon I came to understand that one of the deepest purposes of intellectual sophistication is to provide distance between us and our most disturbing personal truths and gnawing fears.

~Richard Russo

One of the odd things about middle age, he concluded, was the strange decisions a man discovers he's made by not really making them, like allowing friends to drift away through simple neglect.

~Richard Russo

Structure is one of the things that I always hope will reveal itself to me.

~Richard Russo

To expect reason is where the fallacy lies.

~Richard Russo

I've never written nearly as much about place as people seem to think I do. I just write about class.

~Richard Russo

People who imagine themselves to be self-made seldom enjoy examining the process of manufacture in detail.

~Richard Russo

Steve Yarbrough's *Safe from the Neighbors* will take your breath away. Ambitious, funny, sad, smart, and beautifully crafted, it's everything a novel should be.

~Richard Russo

I can be glib and truthful all at once.

~Richard Russo

Why mince words? *Beautiful Ruins* is an absolute masterpiece.

~Richard Russo

People often ask me how I make things funny. I don't make things funny.

~Richard Russo

I read pretty voraciously. If it's good, I don't care what it is.

~Richard Russo

Who but an English professor would threaten to kill a duck a day and hold up a goose as an example?

~Richard Russo

Ultimately, your theme will find you. You don't have to go looking for it.

~Richard Russo



America has always been a nation of small places, and as we lose them, we're losing part of ourselves.

~Richard Russo

The other possibility was that there was no right thing to say, that the choice wasn't between right and wrong but between wrong, more wrong, and as wrong as you can get.

~Richard Russo

I'm not an easy man. I can be an entertaining one, though it's been my experience that most people don't want to be entertained. They want to be comforted.

~Richard Russo

Knowing and knowing what to do about it were two different things.

~Richard Russo

I think it would be harder for me not to write comedy because the comic view of things is the one that comes most naturally to me.

~Richard Russo

A short story is something that I think can be intuited and envisioned and held in your mind almost at once.

~Richard Russo

In the end it all came down to companionship, to friendship, to sacrifice, to compromise.

~Richard Russo

I don't think America has ever had a center the way London is the center of England or Dublin is the center of Ireland.

~Richard Russo

He looks like he could be taken in a fight. Not by me, but by somebody.

Not anyone in Humanities, probably.

~Richard Russo

Not everyone writes well from a child's point of view.

~Richard Russo

I get and read an enormous number of first novels.

~Richard Russo

When I look back over my novels what I find is that when I think I'm finished with a theme, I'm generally not. And usually themes will recur from novel to novel in odd, new guises.

~Richard Russo

If there's an enduring theme in my work, it's probably the effects of class on American life.

~Richard Russo

To weigh and evaluate a vast grid of information, much of it meaningless, and to arrive at sensible, if erroneous, conclusions, is a skill not to be sneezed at.

~Richard Russo

I'm delighted by how Nobody's Fool turned out. It was a rare movie.

~Richard Russo

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