

# Robert Hass

## Quotes

*Thinking, People, Writing, Ideas, Book, School, Art, War, Years, Poet, Two, Government, Jobs, Mean, Country, Land, Long, Imagination, Running, Past*

It's hell writing and it's hell not writing. The only tolerable state is having just written.

~Robert Hass

Such tenderness, those afternoons and evenings, saying blackberry, blackberry, blackberry.

~Robert Hass

Longing, we say, because desire is full of endless distances.

~Robert Hass

Take the time to write. You can do your life's work in half an hour a day.

~Robert Hass

A word is elegy to what it signifies.

~Robert Hass

Poetry is a fireplace in summer or a fan in winter.

~Robert Hass

If you're imaginatively responsible to the place you live in, you understand the watershed.

~Robert Hass

The birds are silent in the woods. / Just wait: soon enough / You will be quiet too

~Robert Hass

Writing is an incessant process of discovery.

~Robert Hass

Imagination runs through the places where we live like water. We need both things—a living knowledge of the land and a live imagination of it

and our place in it- if we are going to preserve it.

~Robert Hass

Repetition makes us feel secure and variation makes us feel free.

~Robert Hass

One may prefer spring and summer to autumn and winter, but preference is hardly to the point. The earth turns, and we live in the grain of nature, turning with it.

~Robert Hass

In California in the early Spring, There are pale yellow mornings, when the mist burns slowly into day, The air stings like Autumn, clarifies like pain - Well, I have dreamed this coast myself.

~Robert Hass

The Earth forgives the previous year every year.

~Robert Hass

Sometimes from this hillside just after sunset The rim of the sky takes on a tinge Of the palest green, like the flesh of a cucumber When you peel it carefully.

~Robert Hass

Nostalgia locates desire in the past where it suffers no active conflict and can be yearned toward pleasantly.

~Robert Hass

A movement got started for common schools, and by the end of the 19th century, 91 percent of Americans could read and write.

~Robert Hass

The first book that really knocked me out was the 'Brothers Karamazov.' I read it when I was a senior in high school.

~Robert Hass

I thought it was irrelevant to talk about what a wonderful thing poetry was if you didn't teach people to read.

~Robert Hass

I think that what art can do is refresh our sense of justice, wake us up to what we've taken for granted in the political realm, as in the other realms.

~Robert Hass

[Osip] Mandelstam was killed by Stalinist forces.

~Robert Hass

I think that the job of poetry, its political job, is to refresh the idea of justice, which is going dead in us all the time.

~Robert Hass

If you ask me if I have this or that principle, tell me what its consequences are, and then I'll tell you whether I have that principle or not.

~Robert Hass

Where politics is concerned, I think poets have to be pragmatists, philosophical pragmatists.

~Robert Hass

Do poets have any insight into what's the right ratio? I doubt it, but I think that they can be awake to what the ends are.

~Robert Hass

Milton was the first person who really experimented with putting politics into sonnets.

~Robert Hass

Someone in Ireland asked me how many Republican poets there were in the U.S., and I thought maybe two. Maybe there are 10,000 poets, and maybe there are two Republicans among them.

~Robert Hass

Poetry is a man arguing with himself; rhetoric is a man arguing with others.

~Robert Hass

Our history doesn't look at our own violence, the violence in our own past, and we go out and repeat it someplace else.

~Robert Hass

We don't know our own story.

~Robert Hass

There are either poems about sex/love or God.

~Robert Hass

The professionalization of poetry, or the balkanization, has come out of the fact that when you apply to most creative writing programs, you have to choose your genre.

~Robert Hass

There's very little solid research on readership, yet people make pronouncements about it all the time.

~Robert Hass

One thing we do know is that mass literacy is a product of the 19th century, at least in English-speaking cultures - Ireland, England, Scotland, Canada, and the U. S.

~Robert Hass

I think it's true to say that in 1973 I could read every book of poems that

was published in a year, and I did.

~Robert Hass

If you read three books a day you couldn't read all the poetry that's being published.

~Robert Hass

The market doesn't make communities. Markets make networks of self-interested individuals, and they work as long as there's more than enough to go around.

~Robert Hass

I got interested in the question of literacy because writers are always moaning about why more people don't read books. They long for the good old days when people read serious novels.

~Robert Hass

When I came into the job, funding for the humanities at the federal level was being drastically cut. This was the high tide of the new Republican Congress.

~Robert Hass

The record of poetry in the 20th century isn't all that great anyway. Most of the poets who weren't fascists were Stalinists.

~Robert Hass

There's a good deal in Pound's and Eliot's poetry that stood up even though their politics were deplorable. Or Pound's very deplorable, Eliot's kind of deplorable.

~Robert Hass

I was aware that a quarter of the children in the country are born in poverty, and that the condition of public schools in California was disastrous.

~Robert Hass

Environmental regulation looked like it was going to be under serious attack, and they were giving all of those speeches about getting government off people's backs.

~Robert Hass

Sometimes you have to be less ashamed about writing a bad poem than you would be about being silent.

~Robert Hass

One way to escape the universe in which everything is a kind of media cartoon is to write about the part of your life that doesn't feel like a cartoon, and how the cartoon comes into it.

~Robert Hass

As an artist, you have the job of working out whatever is given you to work out.

~Robert Hass

At some level, you have to be able to say, "This is my task." It's in small, local ways that you keep yourself alive and refresh ideas that are always going into dead abstraction.

~Robert Hass

My suspicion is that once you have literacy in place, the readership has not changed very much.

~Robert Hass

All the new thinking is about loss. In this it resembles all the old thinking

~Robert Hass

Ko Un is a crucial poet for the twenty-first century, and this is an

enormously fresh and vivid translation.

~Robert Hass

Someone will always want to mobilize Death on a massive scale for economic Domination or revenge. And the task, taken As a task, appeals to the imagination. The military is an engineering profession.

~Robert Hass

I think that my responsibility to my art is to try to get it right or to push the boundaries of what I'm able to do in any way.

~Robert Hass

[Cesar] Vallejo was at least metaphorically killed by fascist forces, in the sense that he wore himself out raising funds for the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War and got sick and died.

~Robert Hass

Poetry, when it takes sides, when it proposes solutions, isn't any smarter than anybody else.

~Robert Hass

The problem with describing poets as legislators is that at that level of politics - politics as political invention - poets have no special skills and are not apt to.

~Robert Hass

I am talking about poetry. It's like that line from [John] Yeats: I go back to "where all the ladders start/ In the foul rag and bone shop of the heart."

~Robert Hass

When I was in college, I lost my scholarship one year. I had enough money for tuition, but not room and board. So I camped in the hills.

~Robert Hass



Golf is a worrier's game, inward, concentrated, a matter of inches, invented by the same people who gave us Presbyterianism.

~Robert Hass

It is good sometimes for poetry to disenchant us.

~Robert Hass

Justice is the well water of the city of Novgorod, black and sweet.

~Robert Hass

What we usually find is that when people think they have a new idea or approach something for the first time, it is actually a recurrence of a line of thinking explored in the past.

~Robert Hass

Haiku is an art that seems dedicated to making people pay attention to the preciousness and particularity of every moment of existence. I think that poetry can do that.

~Robert Hass

I suppose there's something to be said for the sheer reinforcement of our beliefs, but really I think poetry is more useful as disenchantment than enchantment.

~Robert Hass

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