

Seamus Heaney

Quotes

*Writing, Self, Art, Ifs, Way, People, Mean, World, Home, Teaching, Years,
Believe, Political, Giving, Mind, Thinking, Sweet, Fall, Reader, Two*

Hope is not optimism, which expects things to turn out well, but something rooted in the conviction that there is good worth working for.

~Seamus Heaney

Believe that a further shore is reachable from here.

~Seamus Heaney

Even if the hopes you started out with are dashed, hope has to be maintained.

~Seamus Heaney

Anyone with gumption and a sharp mind will take the measure of two things: what's said and what's done.

~Seamus Heaney

I can't think of a case where poems changed the world, but what they do is they change people's understanding of what's going on in the world.

~Seamus Heaney

If you have the words, there's always a chance that you'll find the way.

~Seamus Heaney

History says, Don't hope
On this side of the grave,
But then, once in a
lifetime
The longed-for tidal wave
Of justice can rise up,
And hope and
history rhyme

~Seamus Heaney

Poetry is always slightly mysterious, and you wonder what is your relationship to it.

~Seamus Heaney

I have begun to think of life as a series of ripples widening out from an original center.

~Seamus Heaney

All I know is a door into the dark

~Seamus Heaney

Don't be surprised if I demur, for, be advised my passport's green.

~Seamus Heaney

I drink to keep body and soul apart.

~Seamus Heaney

The end of art is peace.

~Seamus Heaney

At home in Ireland, there's a habit of avoidance, an ironical attitude towards the authority figure.

~Seamus Heaney

The way we are living, timorous or bold, will have been our life.

~Seamus Heaney

Even if the last move did not succeed, the inner command says move again.

~Seamus Heaney

Two buckets were easier carried than one. / I grew up in between.

~Seamus Heaney

I might enjoy being an albatross, being able to glide for days and daydream for hundreds of miles along the thermals. And then being able to hang like an affliction round some people's necks.

~Seamus Heaney

Walk on air against your better judgement.

~Seamus Heaney

Memory has always been fundamental for me. In fact, remembering what I had forgotten is the way most of the poems get started.

~Seamus Heaney

The gift of writing is to be self-forgetful... to get a surge of inner life or inner supply or unexpected sense of empowerment, to be afloat, to be out of yourself.

~Seamus Heaney

Suspect too much sweet talk but never close your mind.

~Seamus Heaney

Hope for a great sea-change timid to rebuke and too petty to forgive.

~Seamus Heaney

The aim of poetry and the poet is finally to be of service, to ply the effort of the individual into the larger work of the community as a whole.

~Seamus Heaney

I've always associated the moment of writing with a moment of lift, of joy, of unexpected reward.

~Seamus Heaney

My point is there's a hidden Scotland in anyone who speaks the Northern Ireland speech. It's a terrific complicating factor, not just in Northern Ireland, but Ireland generally.

~Seamus Heaney

I rhymeâ€¦ to see myself, to set the darkness echoing.

~Seamus Heaney

The next move is always the test.

~Seamus Heaney

Desmond O'Grady is one of the senior figures in Irish Literary life, exemplary in the way he has committed himself over the decades to the vocation of poetry and has lived selflessly for the art

~Seamus Heaney

In fact, in lyric poetry, truthfulness becomes recognizable as a ring of truth within the medium itself.

~Seamus Heaney

If self is a location, so is love: Bearings taken, markings, cardinal points, Options, obstinacies, dug heels, and distance, Here and there and now and then, a stance.

~Seamus Heaney

Without needing to be theoretically instructed, consciousness quickly realizes that it is the site of variously contending discourses.

~Seamus Heaney

A writer is not different from a reader, in that the common ragbag of orthodoxies and assumptions is what a poet has to work with as well.

~Seamus Heaney

Behaviour that's admired is the path to power among people everywhere.

~Seamus Heaney

I don't miss teaching. I'm learning to take my time for myself.

~Seamus Heaney

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests; snug as a gun.
~from the poem "Digging"

~Seamus Heaney

The thing about writing is that if you have the impulse, you will find the time.

~Seamus Heaney

Wherever that man went, he went gratefully.

~Seamus Heaney

You had to come back to learn how to lose yourself, to be pilot and stray-witch, Hansel and Gretel in one.

~Seamus Heaney

When I was teaching, I gave a lot of my mind and anxiety to it. There was always something clenched and anxious in me until the classes were over.

~Seamus Heaney

As writers and readers, as sinners and citizens, our realism and our aesthetic sense make us wary of crediting the positive note.

~Seamus Heaney

I credit poetry for making this space-walk possible.

~Seamus Heaney

Poetry is language in orbit.

~Seamus Heaney

A public expectation, it has to be said, not of poetry as such but of political positions variously approvable by mutually disapproving groups.

~Seamus Heaney

The completely solitary self: that's where poetry comes from, and it gets isolated by crisis, and those crises are often very intimate also.

~Seamus Heaney

Then as the years went on and my listening became more deliberate, I would climb up on an arm of our big sofa to get my ear closer to the wireless speaker.

~Seamus Heaney

Poetry cannot afford to lose its fundamentally self-delighting inventiveness, its joy in being a process of language as well as a representation of things in the world.

~Seamus Heaney

Whether it be a matter of personal relations within a marriage or political initiatives within a peace process, there is no sure-fire do-it-yourself kit.

~Seamus Heaney

The fact of the matter is that the most unexpected and miraculous thing in my life was the arrival in it of poetry itself - as a vocation and an elevation almost.

~Seamus Heaney

I always believed that whatever had to be written would somehow get itself written.

~Seamus Heaney

Sink every impulse like a bolt. Secure The bastion of sensation. Do not waver Into language. Do not waver in it.

~Seamus Heaney

The dotted line my father's ashplant made On Sandymount Strand Is something else the tide won't wash away.

~Seamus Heaney

I have always thought of poems as stepping stones in one's own sense of oneself.

~Seamus Heaney

Strange, it is a huge nothing that we fear.

~Seamus Heaney

So hope for a great sea-change on the far side of revenge. Believe that further shore is reachable from here. Believe in miracles and cures and healing wells.

~Seamus Heaney

But even so, none of the news of these world-spasms entered me as terror.

~Seamus Heaney

Write whatever you like!

~Seamus Heaney

The gift of writing is to be self-forgetful...

~Seamus Heaney

If self is a location, so is love.

~Seamus Heaney

There is risk and truth to yourselves and the world before you.

~Seamus Heaney

Im a firm believer in learning by heart.

~Seamus Heaney

If poetry and the arts do anything, they can fortify your inner life, your inwardness.

~Seamus Heaney

The bogholes might be Atlantic seepage. The wet centre is bottomless.

~Seamus Heaney

I am not a playwright. A playwright would take "Antigone" and hit it a few clouts and knock it out of shape and restructure it. My versioning was strictly verbal.

~Seamus Heaney

I shall gain glory or die.

~Seamus Heaney

Part of my gradual education of myself has been to think that there is a deep relationship between the nature of the creature and the worth of the art.

~Seamus Heaney

My body was braille for the creeping influences.

~Seamus Heaney

I've nothing against the Queen personally: I had lunch at the Palace once upon a time.

~Seamus Heaney

Irish readers, British readers, American readers: is it odd that I haven't a clue about how differently they react? Or better say, I cannot find the words to describe my hunch about them.

~Seamus Heaney

Loyalism, or Unionism, or Protestantism, or whatever you want to call it, in Northern Ireland - it operates not as a class system, but a caste system.

~Seamus Heaney

I suppose I did feel a certain public pressure always.

~Seamus Heaney

Smile As you find a rhythm Working you, slow mile by mile, Into your proper haunt.

~Seamus Heaney

Nowadays, what an award gives is a sense of solidarity with the poetry guild, as it were: sustenance coming from the assent of your peers on the judging panel.

~Seamus Heaney

I suppose I'm saying that defiance is actually part of the lyric job

~Seamus Heaney

Best to say that once a poem is finished I trust it to make its way, and I trust readers will find their way to it and through it, if the thing has got itself rightly expressed.

~Seamus Heaney

My teaching was animated by what I was reading and being excited by as a poet.

~Seamus Heaney

Anything Can Happen, on the other hand, is not only about the atrociousness of the September 11 attack, it is also a premonition of the deadly retaliation that was bound to come.

~Seamus Heaney

Harvard meant a lot in my writing life from the beginning, even though I didnt actually do much composition on the spot.

~Seamus Heaney

The appointment [in Harvard] gave me economic safety, writerly support, and intellectual self-respect plus eight months to myself every year.

~Seamus Heaney

In off the moors, down through the mist beams, god-cursed Grendel came greedily loping.

~Seamus Heaney

Once I was on the job, once I had got started, I felt safe enough, but the anticipation made me tense.

~Seamus Heaney

Allow ourselves to do as Ram Dass said in his delicious phrase "Be Here Now." If you are here now you cannot fall into falsely constructed gender projections.

~Seamus Heaney

The Ireland I now inhabit is one that these Irish contemporaries have helped to imagine.

~Seamus Heaney

There is not built-in meaning to anything, we are free to add any meaning we choose to give it.

~Seamus Heaney

God is a foreman with certain definite views Who orders life in shifts of work and leisure.

~Seamus Heaney

The most exhilarating for the writer and the reader, are gift-things-poems which arrive on their own energy, poems that in William Shakespeare's term "slip" from you.

~Seamus Heaney

Harvard created wonderful conditions for me as a writer but the writing was done, almost entirely, when I got home.

~Seamus Heaney

It is difficult at times to repress the thought that history is about as instructive as an abattoir.

~Seamus Heaney

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