

Quotes on Creativity, Writing & Inspiration



This is my essential reason for writing, not for fame, not to be celebrated after death, but to heighten and create life all around me... I also write because when I am writing I reach the high moment of fusion sought by the mystics, the poets, the lovers, a sense of communion with the universe.

—Anais Nin, from her Diary, 1939 - 1944

A writer needs three things, experience, observation, and imagination, any two of which, at times any one of which, can supply the lack of the others.

—William Faulkner

Listen to the past, future, and present right where you are. Listen with your whole body, not only with your ears, but with your hands, your face, and the back of your neck.

—Natalie Goldberg

Describe something just as it is. Do not worry if it is angular and clumsy or how it comes out. Just look at something and put down what you see. Remember William Blake who said: "Improvement makes straight, straight roads, but the crooked roads without improvement are roads of genius."

—Brenda Ueland

Think of yourself as an incandescent power, illumined, perhaps, and forever talked to by God and his messengers.

—Brenda Ueland

I believe we are in such a time when civilization has to be renewed by the discovery of new mysteries, by the undemocratic but sovereign power of the imagination, by the undemocratic power which makes poets the unacknowledged legislators of mankind, the power which makes all things new.

—Norman O. Brown



That's the way writing often starts, a disaster or a catastrophe of some sort, as happened to me.... And I think that's the basis for my continued interest in writing, because by writing I rescue myself under all sorts of conditions, whatever it may be that has upset me, then I can write and it relieves the feeling of distress.

—William Carlos Williams

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Things barely remembered are released by the act of writing.

—V.S. Naipaul, *A Way in the World*

Works of art are of an infinite solitude and no means of approach is so useless as criticism. Only Love can touch and hold them and be fair to them. Always trust yourself and your own feeling as opposed to argumentations, discussions or introductions of that sort. If it turns out that you are wrong, then the natural growth of your inner life will eventually guide you to other insights.

—Rainer Maria Rilke

I am the secretary, the author's are an eternity.

—William Blake

To let each impression and each embryo of a feeling come to completion, entirely in itself, in the dark, in the unsayable, the unconscious beyond the reach of one's own understanding, and with deep humility and patience, to wait for the hour when a new clarity is born. This alone is what it means to live as an artist in understanding as in creating.

—Rainer Maria Rilke

The more you wish to describe a Universal the more minutely and truthfully you must describe a Particular.

—Brenda Ueland

Our deepest desire is to share our riches, and this desire is rooted in the dynamics of the cosmos. What began as an outward expansion of the universe in the fireball ripens into your desire to flood all things with goodness. Whenever you are filled with a desire to fling your gifts into the world, you have become this cosmic dynamic of celebration, feeling its urgency to pour forth just as the stars felt the same urgency to pour themselves out.

—Thomas Berry



When the scientist listens, the artist imagines, the mathematician calculates or the poet waits for the muse to guide fancy into word pictures, each is praying for Divine Guidance. And each receives as much guidance as he or she is capable of perceiving.

—Ernest Holmes, *Science of Mind Church*

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There is a vitality, a life force, an energy, a quickening that is translated through you into action. And because there is only one you in all time, this expression is unique. And if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium... the world will not have it. It is not your business to determine how good it is, nor how valuable, nor how it compares with other expressions. It is your business to keep it yours clearly and directly, to keep the channel open.

—Martha Graham, from “Dance to the Piper.”

Thank goodness I was never sent to school. It would have rubbed off some of the originality.

—Beatrix Potter (1866-1943)

The aim of art is to represent not the outward appearance of things, but their inward significance.

—Aristotle

If eyes were made for seeing, then Beauty is its own excuse for being.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

*In a real sense all life is inter-related.
All persons are caught in an inescapable network of
mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny.
Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly.
I can never be what I ought to be
until you are what you ought to be,
and you can never be what you ought to be
until I am what I ought to be.
This is the inter-related structure of reality.*

—Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.



And the day came when the risk it took to remain tight inside the bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom.

—Anais Nin



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Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the things you did do. So throw off the bowline, sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sail, explore, dream, discover.

—Mark Twain

Give sorrow words. The grief that does not speak whispers the o'er fraught heart and bids it break.

—Shakespeare

Do you know a word that doesn't refer to something? Have you ever picked and held a rose, from R,O,S,E? You say the NAME. Now try to find the reality it names.

—Rumi

Oh, do something from your point of view; an ounce of example is worth a ton of generalities... do something with life. Any point of view is interesting that is a direct impression of life. You each have an impression colored by your individual conditions; make that into a picture, a picture framed by your own personal wisdom, your glimpse of the American world. The field is vast for freedom, for study, for observation, for satire, for truth.

—Henry James

For behind all seen things lies something vaster; everything is but a path, a portal, or a window opening on something more than itself.

—Antoine de Saint-Exupery

Until one is committed there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative and creation there is one face, one elementary truth the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment that one definitely commits oneself, then providence moves too. All sorts of things to help one that would never otherwise have occurred, a whole stream of events issue from the decision raising in one's favor all matter of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material, assistances no man could have dreamt would have come his way.



—By W.H. Murray who climbed in the Himalayas in the 1800's

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God respects me when I work, but loves me when I sing.

—Rabindranath Tagore

Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius and power and magic in it. Begin it now.

*Are you in earnest? Seize this very minute --
What you can do, or dream you can, begin it,
Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it.
Only engage, and then the mind grows heated --
Begin it, and the work will be completed!*



— Goethe, Faust, Part I

*It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare;
It is because we do not dare that they are difficult.*

— A Seneca Saying

I'll tell you how the sun rose, a ribbon at a time.

— Emily Dickinson

Imagination is the eye of the Soul.

— Joseph Joubert

Everything that lives is holy.

—William Blake

*Sitting quietly
doing nothing, spring comes
and green grass grows by itself*

—Japanese Zen Poem



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Story Water

*A story is like water
that you heat for your bath.*

*It takes messages between the fire
and your skin. It lets them meet,
and it cleans you!*

*Very few can sit down
in the middle of the fire itself
like a salamander or Abraham.
We need intermediaries.*

*A feeling of fullness comes,
but usually it takes some bread
to bring it.*

*Beauty surrounds us,
but usually we need to be walking
in a garden to know it.*

*The body itself is a screen
to shield and partially reveal
the light that's blazing
inside your presence.*

*Water, stories, the body,
all the things we do, are mediums
that hide and show what's hidden.*

*Study them,
and enjoy this being washed
with a secret we sometimes know,
and then not.*

—Rumi

Compiled by Elizabeth Welles

