

WRITING, LIFE STORIES AND CREATIVITY IN LATER LIFE - QUOTATIONS

Why not start writing now for the joy of it?
~ Naomi Beth Wakan

You need only claim the events of your life to make yourself yours.
~ Florida Scott-Maxwell

God gave us memory that we might have roses in December.
~ James Barrie

Why didn't I ask my mother when I could?
~ Ellen S. Jaffe

Arts and aging is neither just about art, nor just about aging.
Rather, it is about creativity and positive engagement-
that is, creativity as both a goal
and a process for shaping the self and society.
~ Steven Dahlberg

Myths are stories of our search through the ages for truth, for meaning, for significance.
We all need to tell our story and to understand our story.
We all need to understand death and to cope with death,
and we all need help in our passages from birth to life and then to death.
We need for life
to signify, to touch the eternal, to understand the mysterious, to find out who we are.
~ Bill Moyers

Keeping a journal thins my skin.
I feel open to everything, aware,
charged by the acquisition of intensity.
~ Doris Grumbach

I began this journal ten months ago
as a way of getting back to my self,
of pulling out of last year's depression,
and now I am truly on a rising curve.
~ May Sarton

Writing has become a confirmation to me, of me, and by me.
Some people believe 'they think therefore they are.'
'I write, therefore I am.'
~ Richard Taylor

When a spouse dies, you retire,
 or your kids leave home,
 you interrupt your personal story.
 If you can figure out how this episode
 fits into the plot of your life,
 you'll be one step closer
 to seeing its purpose -- and yours.

~ Gregory A. Plotnikov

The best advice seems to be:
 move within all registers of time –
 present, past, and future –
 and from them draw rich resources for living.

~ Mary and Ken Gergen

Older people take time
 to contemplate their life journey,
 harvest the wisdom of their years,
 and transmit a legacy to future generations.

~ Rabbi Zalman Schacter-Shalomi

We Late Bloomers have a certain urgency
 when it comes to communication, I think,
 and perhaps a certain obligation
 to fully show ourselves
 (or at least our best profile)
 before it is too late.

~ Naomi Beth Wakan

The content may not differ from writers of spiritual autobiographies or memoirs,
 but the intent makes an ethical will unique.

"The generic purpose of the ethical will is to pass on wisdom and love to future generations."

Writing can include family history and cultural and spiritual values; blessings and expressions of love for, pride in, hopes and dreams for children and grandchildren; life-lessons and wisdom of life experience; requests for forgiveness for regretted actions; the rationale for philanthropic and personal financial decisions; stories about the meaningful "stuff" for heirs to receive; clarification about and personalization of advance health directives; and requests for ways to be remembered after death.

~ R. Taylor

Nothing is as effective in bearing witness,
 nothing is as immediate, as memoir.
 When, through the rare alchemy of experiences and artfulness,
 the personal becomes universal,
 there is nothing more powerful.
 And one never knows whose story will,
 through will or chance,
 give voice to a people or an age.

~ Dave Eggers

Ten years ago I wrote my autobiography, in two parts:
 A Fool in Paradise covered the first forty years of my life,
 and The Good Wine carried my story through the next forty years.
 These books were about what happened to me
 and about my response,
 what I chose to make happen,
 and how both shaped me.
 Since then people keep asking for my "secret."
 How am I so old and yet so well?
 So happy? So productive?
 There is no secret.
 I am glad to tell everyone about the choices
 I make in my life and their results,
 the elements and attitudes
 that have added up to my zest for life and my joy in it.
 Come spend a few weeks with me during the summer
 when I turned ninety-two
 and you will know the answer.
 ~ Doris McCarthy

Writing and rewriting are a constant search for what one is saying.
 ~ John Updike

We die. That may be the meaning of life.
 But we do language. That may be the measure of our lives.
 ~ Toni Morrison

Once life's story has been discovered,
 told and retold with everything in its proper place,
 there is then time to greet the true reasons for living.
 ~ Henri Nouwen

Sometimes
 everything has to be enscribed
 across the heavens
 So you can find
 the one line
 already written inside you.
 ~ David Whyte

Imagination grows by exercise and, contrary to modern belief,
 is more powerful in the mature than in the young.
 ~ W. Somerset Maugham

Life can only be understood backward,
 but it must be lived forward.
 ~ Soren Kierkegaard

It is looking at things for a long time
 that ripens you

and gives you a deeper understanding.
 ~ Vincent Van Gogh

Listen, Make a way for
 Yourself
 Inside yourself
 Stop looking
 In the other way of looking.
 ~ Rumi

We must embrace pain and burn it as fuel for our journey.
 ~ Kenji Miyazawa

The best way out is always through.
 ~ Robert Frost

We must be willing
 to get rid of the life
 we have planned
 so as to have
 the life
 that is waiting for us.
 ~ Joseph Campbell

We shall not cease from exploration
 And the end of all our exploring
 Will be to arrive where we started
 And know the place for the first time.
 ~ T S Elliot

It seems, as one becomes older,
 That the past has another pattern,
 and ceases to be a mere sequence--

...

We had the experience but missed the meaning,
 And approach to the meaning restores the experience.
 ~ T S Elliot

Experience is not what happens to a man.
 It is what a man does with what happens to him.
 ~ Aldous Huxley

If writing is thinking and discovering
 and selection and order and meaning,
 it is awe and reverence
 and mystery and magic.
 ~ Toni Morrison

My only weapon in this whole world now is words,
 and I've spent my life sharpening that sword

and I just hope that I can stab a few more things, slice a few more.
 It's an odd thing to realize that there is little time left.
 I feel extremely alive and alert and aware,
 and all my senses are going clickity-click,
 but I won't last much longer.

~ M. F. K. Fisher

My story is important not because it is mine, God knows,
 but because if I tell it anything like right,
 the chances are you will recognize that in many ways it is also yours.

~ Frederick Buechner

Everybody is a story.
 When I was a child,
 people sat around kitchen tables and told their stories.
 We don't do that so much anymore.
 Sitting around the table telling stories
 is not just a way of passing time.
 It is the way the wisdom gets passed along.
 The stuff that helps us
 to live a life worth remembering.
 Despite the awesome powers of technology
 many of us still do not live very well.
 We may need to listen to each other's stories once again.

~ Rachel Naomi Remen

I think the act of writing can change lives and save souls.
 I've seen it happen.

~ Elaine Farris Hughes

As I write I create myself again and again.

~ Joy Harjo

What is art: It is the response of man's creative soul to the call of the real.

~ Tagore

Two things make a story.
 The net and the air that falls through the net.

~ Pablo Neruda

The possible's slow fuse is lit by the imagination.

~ Emily Dickinson

For any writer who wants to keep a journal,
 be alive to everything,
 not just to what you're feeling,
 but also to your pets, to flowers, to what you're reading.

~ May Sarton

A lot of healing lies in the recovery

of a personal sense of meaning,
 that capacity which enables us to endure difficulties,
 to find and draw on unsuspected strength.
 In times of crisis, meaning is strength.
 But the deepest meaning is carried in the unconscious mind,
 whose language is the language of dreams, of symbols and archetypes.
 Poetry speaks this language,
 and helps us hear meaning in illness,
 in the events of our lives often for the first time.
 Finding such meaning feels like revelation, like grace.

Writing poetry together heals loneliness.
 What is true for someone on the deepest level
 is often true for us all.
 Reading a poem aloud and listening to the poems of others
 can heal the alienation which is so much a part of our world.
 These days, much in life is masked.
 Poetry wears no mask.
 In taking off masks we have word to be safe,
 to protect ourselves, to win approval,
 we become less vulnerable. Less alone.
 Our pain becomes just pain.
 It is no longer suffering.
 ~ Rachel Naomi Remen

We live in story like a fish lives in water.
 We swim through words and images siphoning story through our minds
 the way a fish siphons water through its gills.
 We cannot think without language,
 we cannot process experience without story.
 ~ Christina Baldwin

Life hangs on a narrative thread.
 This thread is a braid of stories that inform us about
 who we are,
 and where we come from,
 and where we might go.
 The thread is slender but strong:
 we trust it to hold us
 and allow us to swing over the edge of the known
 into the future we dream in words.
 ~ Christina Baldwin

Journal writing is the ongoing creation of the story of a life,
 in the littlest and largest sense.
 ~ Christina Baldwin

Story makes community.
 Communities make story.
 ~ Christina Baldwin

The unexamined life is not worth living.
~ Socrates

Writing and reading decrease our sense of isolation.
They deepen and widen and expand our sense of life;
they feed the soul.
~ Anne Lamott

Journal -- the friend at the end of the pen
~ K Adams

My poems influence my life just as much as my life influences my poems.
I have to make time to write about what makes me smile,
even if it is as small and simple as pink jellybeans at Easter.
I've found that the more I write about what makes me happy
the happier I feel.
~ Wendy Nyemaster

Though life may be painful,
there is a joy and power in writing,
even when you're dealing with something
that is hard to live through day by day.
You're trying to understand what you're living through
by using the tools of words
and the beautiful inner structure of language.
~ Sandra McPherson

Take one blank sheet...take risks.
~ Ellen Jaffe

I wanted to choose words that even you would have to be changed by.
~ Adrienne Rich

The great value of art is that it can be medicine.
~ Ted Hughes

There are a thousand thoughts lying within a man
that he does not know until he takes up a pen to write.
~ William Makepeace Thackeray

As you begin to pay attention to your own stories
and what they say about you,
you will enter into the exciting process of becoming, as you should be,
the author of your own life,
the creator of your own possibilities.
~ Julia Cameron

The quest for a story is the quest for a life.
~ Jill Johnston

Art enables us to find ourselves
and lose ourselves at the same time.
~ Julia Cameron

First thoughts have tremendous energy.
It is the way the mind first flashes on something
~ Natalie Goldberg

Appreciating poetry is probably like appreciating anything else.
It means having the generosity to let a thing be what it is,
the patience to know it,
a sense of the mystery in all living things,
and a joy in new experience.
~ M. C. Richards

Poetry is the voice of the soul,
whispering, celebrating, singing even.
~ Carolyn Forché

I don't create poetry;
I create myself, for my poems are a way to me
~ Edith Sodergran

Anytime is a good time to write a poem.
~ Gertrude Stein

Take a pen in your uncertain fingers.
Trust, and be assured
That the whole world is a sky-blue butterfly
And words are nets to capture it.
~ Muhammad al-Ghuzzi

My ideas usually come not at my desk writing
but in the midst of living.
~ Anais Nin

We write to taste life twice,
in the moment,
and in retrospection.
~ Anais Nin

A poem begins in delight ...
and ends in a clarification of life ...
a momentary stay against confusion
~ Robert Frost

When you finally get it, there's no place for it but in a poem.
~ Wu Pen

I can shake off everything if I write.
 My sorrows disappear; my courage is reborn.
 ~ Anne Frank

Every poem is an episode to that great poem,
 which all poets, like the cooperating thoughts of one great mind,
 have build up since the beginning of the world.
 ~ Percy Bysshe Shelley

Imagination is more important than knowledge
 Knowledge is limited
 Imagination encircles the world.
 ~ Albert Einstein

Writing is my form of celebration and prayer,
 but it is also the way in which I inquire about the world.
 ~ Diane Ackerman

We are watered by the slightest daily practice
 that brings our creativity gently to bloom.
 ~ Julia Cameron

If we know just where we are going we can't go anywhere new.
 Mistakes not only set the stage for a mindful approach to the work at hand
 but also reveal our individuality.
 ~ Ellen J. Langer

To be mindfully engaged is the most natural, creative state we can be in.
 ~ Ellen J. Langer

Paint for fun.
 Paint for a richer life.
 ~ Ellen J. Langer

I believe we learn by practice.
 Whether it means to learn to dance by practicing dancing
 or to learn to live by practicing living,
 the principles are the same.
 In each it is the performance of a dedicated precise set of acts,
 physical or intellectual, from which comes
 shape of achievement, a sense of one's being, a satisfaction of spirit.
 ~ Martha Graham

The thing is to become a master
 and in your old age to acquire the courage
 to do what children did when they knew nothing.
 ~ Henry Miller

A good memoir requires two elements - one of art, the other of craft.
 The first element is integrity of intention.

Memoir is the best search mechanism that writers are given.
 Memoir is how we try to make sense of who we are,
 who we once were, and what values and heritage shaped us.
 If a writer seriously embarks on that quest,
 readers will be nourished by the journey,
 bringing along many associations with quests of their own.

The other element is carpentry. Good memoirs are a careful act of construction.
 ~ William Zinsser

Poets claim that we recapture for a moment
 the self that we were long ago
 when we enter some house or garden
 in which we used to live in our youth.
 But these are the most hazardous pilgrimages,
 which end as often in disappointment as in success.
 It is in ourselves that we should rather seek
 to find those fixed places, contemporaneous with different years .
 ~ Marcel Proust, In Search of Lost Time

Writing can be
 as simple as seeing
 as basic as being
 as natural as breathing
 as feeling as eating and
 as vital as seeking.
 ~ Cindy Lubar / Rico(2000)

Observe the wonders as they occur around you.
 Don't claim them.
 Feel the artistry moving through,
 and be silent.
 ~ Jelaluddin Rumi

Certain things I remember exactly as they were.
 They are merely discolored a bit by time, like coins in the pocket of a forgotten suit...
 The myriad past, it enters us and disappears.
 Except that within it, somewhere, like diamonds, exist the fragments that refuse to be consumed.
 Sifting through, if one dares, and collecting them, one discovers the true design.
 ~ James Salter

Every block of stone has a statue inside it and it is the task of the sculptor to discover it.
 ~ Michelangelo

The first thing that comes to mind when I think about the writing life. . . I just think of space.
 Time to daydream. Time to notice things.
 ~ Natalie Goldberg

The better you express the losses, the less you've lost.
 To hold back the losses,
 to capture the beauty that was,

is to turn loss
into something else:
“a triumph of imagination.”
~ Booth, 1992

Listen to your life.
See it for the fathomless mystery that it is.
In the boredom and pain of it, no less than in the excitement and the gladness
touch, taste, smell your way to the holy and hidden heart of it,
because, in the last analysis, all moments are key moments and life itself is grace.
~ Frederick Buechner

When individuals write their life stories, they dig deep into personal truths.
When we write memoir side-by-side,
we discover qualities we share
despite differences in faith and culture -- the truths of being human.
This connection between personal story and universal themes
is what gives writing its power.
~ Elizabeth Jarrett Andrew

Write about what truly matters to you –
not just things to catch the eye of the world
but things to touch the quick of the world
the way they touched you to the quick
which is why you are writing about them.
~ Frederick Buechner

What I did not realize is that in gathering and writing about these lessons,
they have become even more real and alive for me.
Gifts given away come back to greet us with their goodness.
~ Joyce Rupp

Creativity is more mystery than mastery.
Creativity, like human life itself, begins in darkness and must be given time to incubate.
~ Julia Cameron

The work of writing can be for me, or very close to, the simple job of being:
by creative reflection and awareness to help life itself live in me.
~ Thomas Merton

We write memoir not to remember, not to clean, but to honor and let go.
Wave after wave splashes on the shore is all.
~ Natalie Goldberg

Writing is a process in which we discover what lives in us.
The writing itself reveals what is alive.
~ Henri Nouwen

Writing is a religious act:

it is an ordering, a reforming, a re-learning and re-loving of people and the world as they are and as they might be.

A shaping which does not pass away like a day of typing or a day of teaching.

The writing lasts: it goes about on its own in the world.

~ Sylvia Plath

Open the arms of your mind

This is your life, the book you are writing

~ Jane Reichhold

In every family, the greatest legacy is its history.

Even if every silver spoon, photograph and property deed has vanished,
the narratives remain.

~ Julie Wheelwright

The road is long and usually poorly lit.

Writing adds wattage.

~ Kendall Dudley

A mindful poet opens to the life of things.

~ Michael Sowder

Many artists speak of their work as a form of meditation. For some, the sheer rhythm of the daily routine brings them closer to the essence of their being. Writing all morning or practicing for the next musical performance requires mental and emotional toughness.

~ Robert Wuthnow

Artists reveal that any practice, whether spiritual or artistic, requires a balance of dedication and creativity. The secret is internalizing the rules so well that it becomes possible to move beyond them.

~ Robert Wuthnow

Imagination grows by exercise and,

contrary to modern belief,

is more powerful in the mature than in the young.

~ Somerset Maugham

Grandparents hold rich resources for recounting family history.

In sharing the stories of their pasts - with pictures, songs,

humorous tales, and stories both of heroism and loss –

will learn that they are part of a long tradition.

And they may come to realize that they will help to shape its future.

Telling the old time tales does more than just gratify grandma and amuse the kids;

it builds the future.

~ Bruce Feiler

To find your writer's voice is to find your spine;

It is to connect your breath of inspiration with the world's breath.

~ Natalie Goldberg

There are painters who transform the sun into a yellow spot,

but there are others who thanks to their art and intelligence,
transform a yellow spot into the sun.

~ Pablo Picasso

The job — as well as the plight, and the unexpected joy — of the artist
is to embrace uncertainty, to be sharpened and honed by it.

~ Dani Shapiro

Imagination is all that counts.

~ William Blake

You did then what you knew how to do
and when you knew better you did better.

~ Maya Angelou

Aging Well requires a good strong story.

~ William Randall

The Cézannes of the world bloom late not as a result of some defect in character,
or distraction, or lack of ambition,
but because the kind of creativity that proceeds through trial and error
necessarily takes a long time to come to fruition.

~ Malcolm Gladwell

Poetry is when an emotion has found its thought
and the thought has found words.

~ Robert Frost

I write entirely to find out what I'm thinking, what I'm looking at,
what I see and what it means.

~ Joan Didion

I just show up in front of the computer.
Show up, show up, show up, and after a while the muse shows up too.

~ Isabel Allende

Writing is always giving some sort of order to the chaos of life.
It organizes life and memory.

~ Isabel Allende

Telling a story to create an emotion, a tension, a rhythm — that is what matters to me.

~ Isabel Allende

You can't write regularly and well.
One should accept bad writing as a way of priming the pump,
a warm-up exercise that allows you to write well.

~ Jennifer Egan

Writing regularly fosters resilience —
a quality that enables people subjected to difficulties

to thrive despite them.
~ Louise DeSalvo

This ... is an invitation for you to use the simple act of writing as a way of reimagining who you are and remembering who you were. To use writing to discover and fulfill your deepest desire. To accept pain, fear, uncertainty, security, serenity and joyfulness. To claim your voice. To tell your story. And to share the gift of your work with others and, so, enrich and deepen your understanding of the human condition.
~ Louise DeSalvo

The power of creative expression to transform is rooted in our human need to be seen and heard. One of the most basic ways to exercise our creativity is to tell our stories.
~ P. Taylor & C. Murphy

The future belongs to those who give the next generation reason for hope.
~ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

Creativity is harnessing universality and making it flow through your eyes.
~ Peter Koestenbaum

In [my writing students] I am consciously creating a certain taste for what I believe constitutes skillful and effective writing. I want them to be both clear and wild in their work. The hammer descends on the nail. The nail is driven deep into the wood. And the wood sings.
~ Roger Rosenblatt

Writing is the cure for the disease of living.
~ Roger Rosenblatt

Creativity and the joy of creativity are reinforced by new ideas. We must always be open to each new day, to the future, to new opportunities. They're there, but we have to be ready to see them.
~ Maggie Kuhn

Writing is about soul-making for an individual writer, but I believe it can also be about making the soul of the world.
~ Sue Monk Kidd

Writing humbles us in a way that is vital for our character growth, by reminding us about the limits of the self and our appropriate place in the vast flow of life.
~ Homaira Kabir -

We should probably all pause to confront our past from time to time, because it changes its meaning as our circumstances alter.
~ Karen Armstrong

As we practice our daily arts, if only in the composing of a heart-felt letter, we are unearthing the eternal from within ordinary time, engaging in the special qualities, themes, and circumstances of the soul. Soul thrives as we jot down a thought in our diary or note a dream, and give body to a slight influx of eternity. Our notebooks then truly become our own private gospels and sutras, our holy

books, and our simple paintings truly serve as icons, every bit as significant in the work of our own soul as the wonderful icons of the Eastern churches are for their congregations.

~ Thomas Moore

I hope you will go out and let stories happen to you,
and that you will work them,
water them with your blood and tears and your laughter
till they bloom, till you yourself burst into bloom.

~ Clarissa Pinkola Estes

Write about what you *want* to know because it intrigues and baffles you.

~ Parker Palmer

Whether as a private act or a public act,
by writing we can howl, sing, or plainly
and humbly tell what is true.
When it becomes public,
our howl of outrage can waken the world to injustice.
Our singing writing can waken the world to beauty and to joy.

~ Pat Schneider

Creativity is piercing the mundane to find the marvelous.

~ Bill Moyers

Story-*catching* is the art of story **releasing** – putting good stories out in the world and holding them high, then tossing them onto the wind like releasing a falcon.

~ Christina Baldwin

What can I learn from your story that helps me see my own? When we imagine ourselves in each other's stories ... it's a treasure hunt.

~ Christina Baldwin

Human beings can survive and grow through anything as long as we can wrap a story around our experience that fosters resilience. ... This is mutual inspiration. We need to mirror one another's courage.

~ Christina Baldwin

Updated September, 2018