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Quotes about Autobiography

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Every autobiography is concerned with two characters, a Don Quixote, the Ego, and a Sancho Panza, the Self.

- Auden, W. H.

Anyone who attempts to relate his life loses himself in the immediate. One can only speak of another.

- Bastos, Augusto Roa

Reminiscences, even extensive ones, do not always amount to an autobiography. For autobiography has to do with time, with sequence and what makes up the continuous flow of life. Here, I am talking of a space, of moments and discontinuities. For even if months and years appear here, it is in the form they have in the moment of recollection. This strange form -- it may be called fleeting or eternal -- is in neither case the stuff that life is made of.

- Benjamin, Walter

Autobiography begins with a sense of being alone. It is an orphan form.

- Berger, John

A man's memory is bound to be a distortion of his past in accordance with his present

interests, and the most faithful autobiography is likely to mirror less what a man was than what he has become.

- Brodie, Fawn M.

Biographical data, even those recorded in the public registers, are the most private things one has, and to declare them openly is rather like facing a psychoanalyst.

- Calvino, Italo

When you write down your life, every page should contain something no one has ever heard about.

- Canetti, Elias

Such reproductions may not interest the reader; but after all, this is my autobiography, not his; he is under no obligation to read further in it; he was under none to begin. A modest or inhibited autobiography is written without entertainment to the writer and read with distrust by the reader.

- Cardus, Neville

There are people who can write their memoirs with a reasonable amount of honesty, and there are people who simply cannot take themselves seriously enough. I think I might be the first to admit that the sort of reticence which prevents a man from exploiting his own personality is really an inverted sort of egotism.

- Chandler, Raymond

An autobiography is an obituary in serial form with the last installment missing.

- Crisp, Quentin

We can only write well about our sins because it is too difficult to recall a virtuous act or even whether it was the result of good or evil motives.

- Dahlberg, Edward

Democratic societies are unfit for the publication of such thunderous revelations as I am in the habit of making.

- Dali, Salvador

My Turn is the distilled bathwater of Mrs. Reagan's life. It is for the most part sweetish, with a tart edge of rebuke, but disappointingly free of dirt or particulate matter of any kind.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

It is long ere we discover how rich we are. Our history, we are sure, is quite tame: we have nothing to write, nothing to infer. But our wiser years still run back to the despised recollections of childhood, and always we are fishing up some wonderful article out of that pond; until, by and by, we begin to suspect that the biography of the one foolish person we know is, in reality, nothing less than the miniature paraphrase of the hundred volumes of the Universal History.

- Emerson, Ralph Waldo

That which resembles most living one's life over again, seems to be to recall all the

circumstances of it; and, to render this remembrance more durable, to record them in writing.

- Franklin, Benjamin

Truth, naked, unblushing truth, the first virtue of all serious history, must be the sole recommendation of this personal narrative.

- Gibbon, Edward

I don't think anybody should write his autobiography until after he's dead.

- Goldwyn, Samuel

Autobiography is now as common as adultery and hardly less reprehensible.

- Grigg, John

The remarkable thing is that it is the crowded life that is most easily remembered. A life full of turns, achievements, disappointments, surprises, and crises is a life full of landmarks. The empty life has even its few details blurred, and cannot be remembered with certainty.

- Hoffer, Eric

The record of one's life must needs prove more interesting to him who writes it than to him who reads what has been written.

- Kenny, Sister Elizabeth

I am being frank about myself in this book. I tell of my first mistake on page 850.

- Kissinger, Henry

The trouble with writing a book about yourself is that you can't fool around. If you write about someone else, you can stretch the truth from here to Finland. If you write about yourself the slightest deviation makes you realize instantly that there may be honor among thieves, but you are just a dirty liar.

- Marx, Groucho

Autobiography is only to be trusted when it reveals something disgraceful. A man who gives a good account of himself is probably lying, since any life when viewed from the inside is simply a series of defeats.

- Orwell, George

All those writers who write about their childhood! Gentle God, if I wrote about mine you wouldn't sit in the same room with me.

- Parker, Dorothy

When you put down the good things you ought to have done, and leave out the bad ones you did do -- well, that's Memoirs.

- Rogers, Will

I write fiction and I'm told it's autobiography, I write autobiography and I'm told it's fiction, so since I'm so dim and they're so smart, let them decide what it is or it isn't.

- Roth, Philip

It isn't that you subordinate your ideas to the force of the facts in autobiography but that you construct a sequence of stories to bind up the facts with a persuasive hypothesis that unravels your history's meaning.

- Roth, Philip

Members rise from CMG (known sometimes in Whitehall as Call Me God) to KCMG (Kindly Call Me God) to GCMG (God Calls Me God).

- Sampson, Anthony

Autobiographies ought to begin with Chapter Two.

- Sedgwick, Ellery

What pursuit is more elegant than that of collecting the ignominies of our nature and transfixing them for show, each on the bright pin of a polished phrase?

- Smith, Logan Pearsall

Don't give your opinions about Art and the Purpose of Life. They are of little interest and, anyway, you can't express them. Don't analyze yourself. Give the relevant facts and let your readers make their own judgments. Stick to your story. It is not the most important subject in history but it is one about which you are uniquely qualified to speak.

- Waugh, Evelyn

I dislike modern memoirs. They are generally written by people who have either entirely lost their memories, or have never done anything worth remembering.

- Wilde, Oscar

Thus when I come to shape here at this table between my hands the story of my life and set it before you as a complete thing, I have to recall things gone far, gone deep, sunk into this life or that and become part of it; dreams, too, things surrounding me, and the inmates, those old half-articulate ghosts who keep up their hauntings by day and night... shadows of people one might have been; unborn selves.

- Woolf, Virginia



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