

Scott Momaday Quotes

“We are what we imagine. Our very existence consists in our imagination of ourselves.
Our best destiny is to imagine, at least, completely, who and what, and that we are.
The greatest tragedy that can befall us is to go unimagined.”

“As far as I am concerned, poetry is a statement concerning the human condition,
composed in verse.”

“To encounter the sacred is to be alive at the deepest center of human existence.
Sacred places are the truest definitions of the earth;
they stand for the earth immediately and forever;
they are its flags and shields.
If you would know the earth for what it really is, learn it through its sacred places. ...
You touch the pulse of the living planet;
you feel its breath upon you.
You become one with a spirit that pervades geologic time and space.”

“Once in his life a man ought to concentrate his mind upon the remembered earth, I believe.
He ought to give himself up to a particular landscape in his experience,
to look at it from as many angles as he can, to wonder about it, to dwell upon it.”

“There was only the dark infinity in which nothing was. And something happened.
At the distance of a star something happened, and everything began.
The word did not come into being, but it was.
It did not break upon the silence, but it was older than the silence and the silence was made of it.”

“Art is affirmation.”

“We perceive existence by means of words and names.
To this or that vague, potential thing I will give a name,
and it will exist thereafter, and its existence will be clearly perceived.
The name enables me to see it.
I can call it by its name, and I can see it for what it is.”

"He used both hands when he made the bear. Imagine a bear proceeding from the hands of god."

"To look upon that landscape in the early morning, with the sun at your back,
is to lose the sense of proportion."

"I sometimes think the contemporary white American is more culturally deprived than the Indian."

"I simply kept my goal in mind and persisted. Perseverance is a large part of writing."

"Anything is bearable if you can make a story out of it."

"A word has power in it of itself. It comes from nothing into sound and meaning;
it gives origin to all things."

"The highest human purpose is always to reinvent and celebrate the sacred."

"For the storyteller, for the arrowmaker,
language does indeed represent the only chance for survival."

"Indians are marvelous story tellers. In some ways,
that oral tradition is stronger than the written tradition."

"In the beginning was the word, and it was spoken."

"There is a great good in returning to a landscape that has had extraordinary meaning in one's life.
It happens that we return to such places in our minds irresistibly.
There are certain villages and towns, mountains and plains that,
having seen them walked in them lived in them even for a day, we keep forever in the mind's eye.
They become indispensable to our well-being; they define us, and we say,
I am who I am because I have been there, or there."

"The highest human purpose is always to reinvent and celebrate the sacred."

"Your imagination comes to life, and this, you think, is where creation was begun."

"I am interested in the way that we look at a given landscape and take possession of it in our blood and brain. None of us lives apart from the land entirely; such an isolation is unimaginable.

If we are to realize and maintain our humanity,
we must come to a moral comprehension of earth and air as it is perceived in the long turn of seasons
and of years."

"The first word gives origin to the second,
the first and second to the third,
and the third to the fourth,
and so on.

You cannot begin with the second word..."