

## 20 Wise and Witty J. K. Rowling Quotes



Jo Rowling has imparted comfort, strength, and inspiration to her global readership of children and adults through the voices of Albus Dumbledore, Remus Lupin, Molly Weasley, and various beloved *Harry Potter* characters, but the best-selling novelist has shared plenty of her own insights from outside the wizarding world as well. Gathered from various interviews and public appearances Rowling has made since *The Boy Who Lived* took the world by storm, these are some words of wisdom and experience that wizards and Muggles alike can take to heart.

### 1. On Taking Chances



“Some failure in life is inevitable. It is impossible to live without failing at something, unless you live so cautiously that you might as well not have lived at all—in which case, you fail by default.”

*From her 2008 Harvard Commencement Address, entitled “The Fringe Benefits of Failure, and the Importance of Imagination.”*

## **2. On Going from Rags to Riches**



“I think the single biggest thing that money gave me—and obviously I came from a place where I was a single mother and it really was hand to mouth at one point. It was literally as poor as you can get in Britain without being homeless at one point. If you’ve ever been there you will never, ever take for granted that you don’t need to worry. Never.”

*From a 2010 interview with Oprah Winfrey.*

### **3. On Body Positivity**



“Is 'fat' really the worst thing a human being can be? Is 'fat' worse than 'vindictive', 'jealous', 'shallow', 'vain', 'boring' or 'cruel'? Not to me.

"I've got two daughters who will have to make their way in this skinny-obsessed world, and it worries me, because I don't want them to be empty-headed, self-obsessed, emaciated clones; I'd rather they were independent, interesting, idealistic, kind, opinionated, original, funny—a thousand things, before 'thin.' And frankly, I'd rather they didn't give a gust of stinking chihuahua flatulence whether the woman standing next to them has fleshier knees than they do.”

*From a 2006 post on Rowling's website entitled “For Girls Only, Probably,” archived [here](#).*

#### **4. On the Pressure to Be Presentable**



“I would be a liar if I said I don’t care [about my appearance]; yes, I care. I found it very difficult, when I first became well known, to read criticism about how I look, how messy my hair was, and how generally unkempt I look. The nastiest thing ever written was written by a man, and I do remember that. I wasn’t looking for it either, it was just simply in the newspaper I was reading.

“You can choose, you can go one of two ways. You can be the person I probably admire more and say ‘well I don’t care and I’ll continue not to bother to brush my hair.’ Or you can be a weak-willed person like me and think ‘oh I’d better get my act together. And maybe my mother was right and I do need to put my hair back and tidy myself up a bit.’ So I did tidy myself up a bit. But I do often resent the amount of time that it takes to pull yourself together to go on TV, I really do. If I sound bitter, then that accurately reflects how I feel about the subject.”

*From a 2014 episode of *Woman’s Hour* on BBC Radio 4.*

## **5. On Worth**



“Whatever money you might have, self-worth really lies in finding out what you do best.”

*From a July 2005 interview on Mugglenet.com.*

## **6. On Morality**



"It is perfectly possible to live a very moral life without a belief in God, and I think it's perfectly possible to live a life peppered with ill-doing and believe in God."

*From a 2007 feature in Time magazine.*

## **7. On the Importance of Motherhood**



“Years ago someone wrote [about me]: ‘She characterizes Molly Weasley as a mother who is only at home looking after the children.’ I was deeply offended, because I until a year before that had also been such a mother who was at home all the time taking care of her child [...] What has lesser status and is more difficult than raising a child? And what is more important?”

*From a 2007 interview for Dutch newspaper .*

## **8. On Destiny (or Lack Thereof)**



“I believe in free will. Of those that, like us, are in a privileged situation at least. For you, for me: people who are living in western society, people who are not repressed, who are free. We can choose. The things go largely like you want them to go. You control your own life. Your own will is extremely powerful.”

## **9. On Inspiration**



“I’ve no idea where ideas come from and I hope I never find out; it would spoil the excitement for me if it turned out I just have a funny little wrinkle on the surface of my brain which makes me think about invisible train platforms.”

*From a 1999 online interview for Amazon.co.uk, entitled “Magic, Mystery, and Mayhem.”*

## **10. On Learning to Write**



"You have to resign yourself to wasting lots of trees before you write anything really good. That's just how it is. It's like learning an instrument. You've got to be prepared for hitting wrong notes occasionally, or quite a lot. That's just part of the learning process. And read a lot. Reading a lot really helps. Read anything you can get your hands on."

*From remarks at the 2000 Vancouver International Writers' Festival.*

## **11. On the Ever-Changing English Language**



“Part of what makes a language ‘alive’ is its constant evolution. I would hate to think Britain would ever emulate France, where they actually have a learned faculty whose job it is to attempt to prevent the incursion of foreign words into the language. I love editing *Harry* with Arthur Levine, my American editor—the differences between ‘British English’ (of which there must be at least 200 versions) and ‘American English’ (ditto!) are a source of constant interest and amusement to me.”

*From a 1999 Salon interview.*

## **12. On Fantasizing**



“I don't think there's any harm at all in allowing a kid to fantasize. In fact, I think to stop people from fantasizing is a very destructive thing indeed.”

*From a 2000 Canadian Broadcasting Company interview.*

### **13. On Writing for Children**



“Those who write for children, or at least those who write best for children, are not child-like or immature, but they do remember with sometimes painful intensity both what it was to be small and confused and how wonderful was that fierce joy in the moment that can become so elusive in later life. Any book that is written down to children or with one nervous sideways eye on the author’s fellow adults or in the belief that this is the kind of thing that ‘they like’ cannot work and will not last. Children are not ‘they.’ They are us. And this is why writing that succeeds with children often succeeds just as well with adults—not because the latter are infantile or regressive, but because the true dilemmas of childhood are the dilemmas of the whole of life: those of belonging and betrayal, the power of the group and the courage it takes to be an individual, of love and loss, and learning what it is to be a human being, let alone a good, brave, or honest one.”

*From her 2011 speech accepting the first ever Hans Christian Andersen Literature Award.*

#### **14. On Books for All Ages**



“If it's a good book, anyone will read it. I'm totally unashamed about still reading things I loved in my childhood.”

*From a 1999 Time article entitled “The Wizard of Hogwarts.”*

## **15. On the Similarities Between Making Books and Babies**



"Yes, there are parallels. The difference is that I just look at [my son] David and think that he's absolutely perfect, whereas you look at the finished book and you think, 'Oh, damn it, I should have changed that.' You're never happy. Whereas with a baby, you're happy. If you've got a perfect baby, you're just grateful."

*From a 2003 Newsweek article.*

## **16. On Poverty**



“I cannot criticize my parents for hoping that I would never experience poverty. They had been poor themselves, and I have since been poor, and I quite agree with them that it is not an ennobling experience. Poverty entails fear, and stress, and sometimes depression; it means a thousand petty humiliations and hardships. Climbing out of poverty by your own efforts, that is indeed something on which to pride yourself, but poverty itself is romanticized only by fools.”

*From her 2008 Harvard Commencement Address, entitled “The Fringe Benefits of Failure, and the Importance of Imagination.”*

## **17. On Scotland**



“It is one of the most hauntingly beautiful places in the world, the history is fascinating, the men are handsome and the whisky is delicious. But don't eat the macaroni pies.”

*From a 2006 interview for Girlguiding Scotland.*

## **18. On Last Words**



“I definitely know that—that love is the most powerful thing of all and I remember thinking that —God, I’m about to make myself cry but, I remember thinking that when 9/11 happened because those last phone calls were about—the last thing knowingly, that I’m going to say on this earth is 'I love you.' What’s more powerful than that? What’s more proof than that? Beyond fear, beyond death.”

*From a 2010 interview with Oprah Winfrey.*

## **19. On the Power of Imagination**



“Imagination is not only the uniquely human capacity to envision that which is not, and therefore the fount of all invention and innovation. In its arguably most transformative and revelatory capacity, it is the power that enables us to empathize with humans whose experiences we have never shared.

Unlike any other creature on this planet, humans can learn and understand, without having experienced. They can think themselves into other people’s places.

We do not need magic to change the world, we carry all the power we need inside ourselves already: we have the power to imagine better.”

*From her 2008 Harvard Commencement Address, entitled “The Fringe Benefits of Failure, and the Importance of Imagination.”*

## **20. On the Influence of Stories**



“The stories we love best do live in us forever.”

*From the 2011 London premiere of Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2.*

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