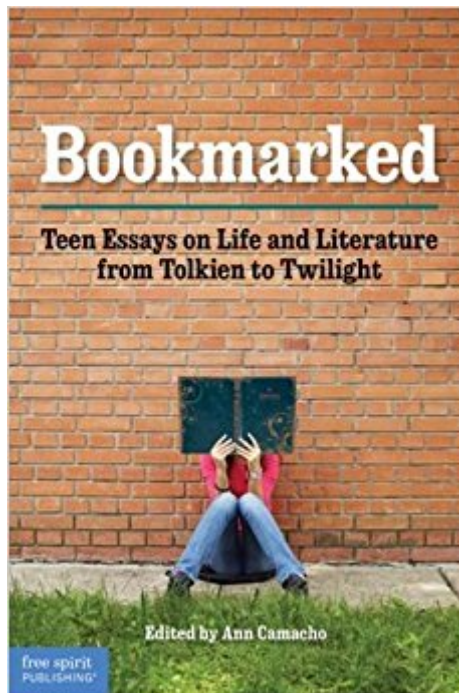




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# Bookmarked: Teen Essays On Life And Literature From Tolkien To Twilight



## Synopsis

In more than 50 essays, young people from a wide range of backgrounds reflect on how words from literature connect with and influence their lives, goals, and personal philosophies. The essays explore topics including suffering the death of a parent, facing a life-threatening illness, letting go of perfectionism, making friends, realizing goals, and grappling with questions of faith and sexuality. Books cited range from *The Grapes of Wrath* and *The Great Gatsby* to *Twilight* and *Lord of the Rings*. Each essay includes a brief biographical sketch letting the reader know where the essay writer is today. Teachers, guidance counselors, and parents working with teens on personal essays—including for college applications—will find that the book presents a varied, intriguing group of essays to use as samples, models, and inspiration. Teachers of literature, writing, and language arts classes can also use these essays as a way to help teens explore literature and their own responses to it through writing. Following each essay are questions to prompt conversation, writing, and deeper consideration of the issues raised. The back matter includes tips and ideas for teachers and teens on how to use the book, including ways to use it as a jumping-off point for creating personal essays.

## Book Information

Paperback: 224 pages

Publisher: Free Spirit Publishing (March 21, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1575423960

ISBN-13: 978-1575423968

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.6 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.9 out of 5 stars 11 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #534,052 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #55 in [Books > Teens >](#)

[Biographies > Literary](#) #120 in [Books > Teens > Education & Reference > Language Arts > Composition & Creative Writing](#)

## Customer Reviews

"[A]ppealing to teachers looking for an example of a student essay . . . Libraries looking to support reflective writing in the English curriculum may also find this book useful."—*School Library Journal*  
"Listen to young thinkers responding to literature from the past 500 years with verve and insight, and I can promise you that you will be inspired. What do you have in common with a

teenager whose life has been disrupted by parental drug use and poverty, or who worries about being muffled by wealth, or who has spent a life on the move between countries and cultures, or who has scarcely traveled? As it turns out, a lot. These insights about the ways literature works its magic on us go far beyond the writers' lives.

•Dr. April Lidinsky, associate professor of Women's and Gender Studies at Indiana University South Bend, and WVPE public radio essayist

"This powerful, moving collection offers a stunning reminder of how deeply young people are marked by books—how words can print themselves directly onto our hearts, as indelible as any tattoo. Bookmarked makes me think gratefully about the books that shaped me as a teen, and renews my sense of profound responsibility as a writer for people of all ages. Ann Camacho's dedication to her students and the written word will inspire teachers to add more literature to their curricula and teens to pick up more books—and, as a result, lives will be changed.

•Gayle Brandeis, author of *My Life with the Lincolns* and the Bellwether Prize-winning *The Book of Dead Birds*

"As a school board member, I often walk through a sea of young faces in high schools across our district, meeting students who seem to have life on a string. They are good students, making good grades, playing sports, and acting in school plays. Reading *Bookmarked*, I felt I was seeing these students for the first time. These essays opened my eyes to the issues, problems, successes, and aspirations of these young writers. Each essay is so different, yet they have one thing in common—the search for answers. The stories in this collection validate what any teenager might be feeling.

•Kathy Allavie, Riverside Unified School District

"As a teacher, it's difficult to teach students how to recognize an author's voice, let alone teach them how to develop their own. *Bookmarked* captures the essence of the young writer's voice. The student writing is insightful, sophisticated, and inspiring. Through their writing, we see how literary works are much more than stories; they are the bridges that help form connections to the world around us.

•Jonathan LeMaster, English teacher at El Cajon Valley High School, literacy consultant and cofounder of LiteracyTA.com

A high-school English teacher, Camacho has gathered more than four-dozen essays from young people—many of them college students or recent graduates—reflecting on their lives, their pasts, their future prospects, and their personal philosophies. Per the editor's request, each essay is rooted in a quotation from a book that has touched the writer's life in a powerful way. The results offer a remarkable array of life experiences, some dramatic—a boy comes out to an unforgiving parent; a girl reflects on the murder of her father—some more quietly reflective. The contributions are divided into five sections dealing, respectively, with beliefs

and ideals; family, friends, and love; hard times and hope; identity and self; and dreams and the future. Each section concludes with questions designed to spur reflection, discussion, and writing. The book itself concludes with a guide for educators on using the book with students. Though designed for classroom use, the book will also reward an audience of independent readers.

•Booklist

“The stories are so raw and honest you feel like you are sitting with these teens at a coffee shop, engrossed in their storytelling.

•Louise Sattler, school psychologist, contributor to Education.com

“Perfect for students about to journey into the college application world or, perhaps, someone who yearns for a philosophical or psychological journey.

•Anika T., age 17, for Fred: The Magazine for Young Mensans

Ann Camacho has been an English teacher for more than 20 years. She currently teaches American literature at North High School in Riverside, California. Her students (and the student body as a whole) are very diverse, and many are in the school’s International Baccalaureate program and/or AP classes. Ann also participates in the AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination) college preparation program for students (often, but not always, from low-income homes) who have college aspirations but are falling short of their potential or who don’t believe college is within reach. She lives in Riverside, California.

After reading the introduction of Bookmarked, I was hooked--captivated by the challenge issued to present and former high school students to share their stories of self-reflection and life-lessons learned. I plunged deep into Part I and immersed myself in the courage and boldness of each essay. I could not part with the book. I carried it faithfully with me to work and simply could not wait for my morning and afternoon breaks or my commute home to read the next essay. What I absolutely loved about Bookmarked was the opportunity it allowed for me to find solace and comfort in my own reflections. The "Questions for Reflection, Discussion, and Writing" sections succeed as an outlet for the reader to further connect, not only to the essays, but to their own triumphs and tribulations. I am an adult in my late thirties, but I must admit I carried Bookmarked with me for days after I finished reading the book. I shared the book and my feedback with those close to me: young and old. The essays sparked a dialogue between my teenage son and me--conversations I will forever cherish. Every high school student would greatly benefit from reading Bookmarked, especially eleventh and twelfth graders. Just knowing that they are not alone, that other students share the same fears, doubts, family issues, cultural norms, hopes, dreams, and aspirations, is sheer motivation to keep moving forward no matter what obstacles may come along. Bookmarked

has left an indelible mark on my soul. Well done to the editor and to the young people who shared a glimpse into their own lives so that our lives may be more enriched and empowered. Bookmarked continues to pay it forward, one student at a time! Keep reading and keep sharing. Mallonda Okonkwo

I have been teaching 8th grade for a while and I understand, perhaps better than people might think, that for even our brightest most mature students, 7th and 8th grade are transitional years. Good kids do crazy things and get suspended. Readers stop reading. And everyone else seems like Rose and Jack, holding on desperately to the Titanic railing as it gets sucked into the very cold Atlantic. It will get better, we try and tell parents. We have enough lifeboats; it's just getting the kids into them. "Bookmarked: Teen Essays on Life and Literature from Tolkien to Twilight" is a book that every middle school and high school teacher should buy. It's not available on Kindle, so I had to buy an actual book off of Amazon and even though it was paperback, I was struck by how heavy it was. I'm such a wimp now. Thank you Kindle. If I have any complaints about the book is that it focuses maybe too much on books from the high school canon so lots of quotes from "Hamlet" and "To Kill a Mockingbird" and "The Great Gatsby", and not that there's anything wrong with those, but I wish that more of the books that had moved these students were books they had discovered on their own. But there were those too. The project assigned to the students was to pick a quote from a book that had moved them and tie it into their own lives. What you get are 2-3 page mini memoirs motivated by these quotes. What I enjoyed most is that these students came from a wide variety of backgrounds and that each piece ended with where the student is today and each one of them had found success in some manner. "Bookmarked" shows students who suffered through the death of friends and parents, parent divorces, anorexia and just about every other thing you can think of that plagues kids today. It did not shy away from controversial issues, from religion to sexuality. Sometimes the memoir addressed both. Ann Camacho, the editor and teacher, says this about reading: "Books are blueprints for living and roadmaps for our lives." This is what we should be teaching our students. The stories are moving and so are the quotes: From Gandalf in "The Fellowship of the Ring:" "All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us." From Christopher Robin in "Winnie the Pooh:" "You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think." From Dumbledore to Harry Potter in "Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets:" "It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities." Reading--what a thing of beauty.

I pre-ordered this book as my granddaughters essay is in it. When I went to the book launch, I met the author and other teens that were featured in the book. I came away in awe of these young people and their teacher. You read about the "bad" teens, but rarely about the ones that excel in spite of horrendous barriers. These young men and women didn't get in trouble, they are attending college or some have gone to a few, and have several degrees. Excellent book and I'm proud of all the authors, Ms. Camacho, I salute you.

A great book for inspiration and perspective.

It was mandatory reading for 8 graders summer vacation. A series of essays from young writers with different backgrounds.

Will pass along, in our weekly snail mailed card of Reflections, excerpts of selected essays -- to our granddaughter.

This book gives insight on the authors and shows how we can learn how to write essays like this whether it be for a college application or a school or university essay. The guided questions and discussion make it great to use in class or independent study. I recommend this book to anyone.

Wonderful!

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