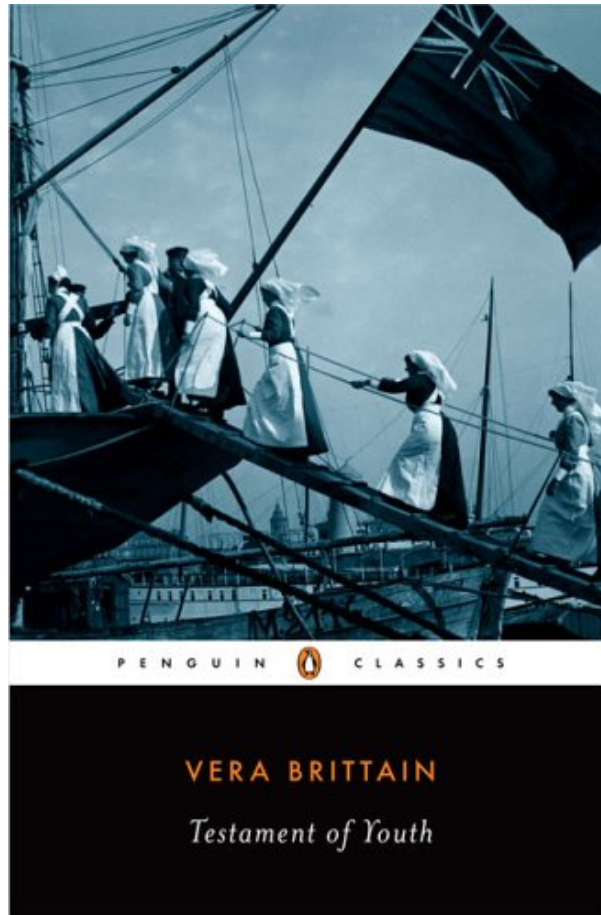
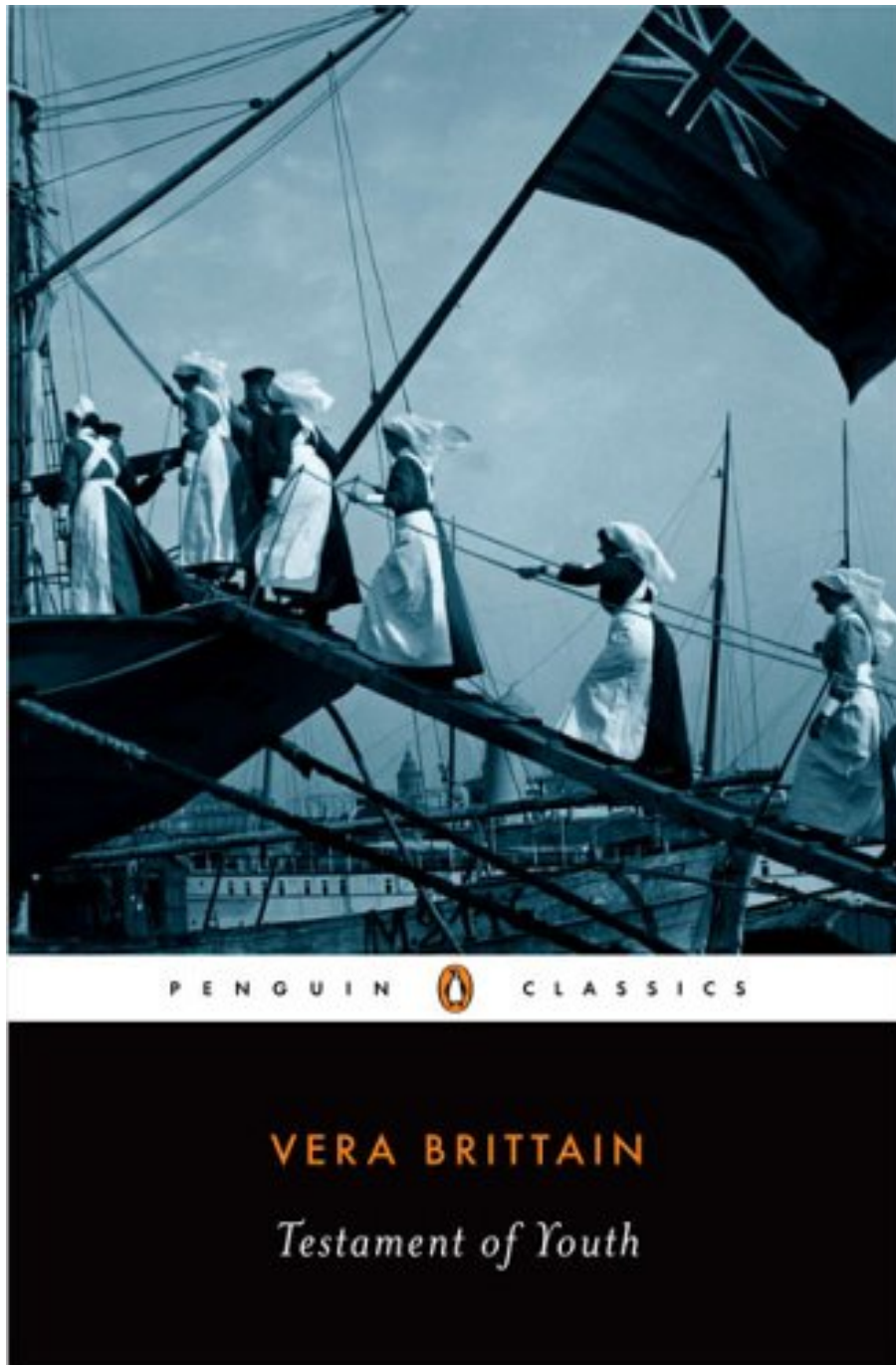


TESTAMENT OF YOUTH (PENGUIN CLASSICS) BY VERA BRITTAIN



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Amazon.com Review

When war broke out in August 1914, 21-year-old Vera Brittain was planning on enrolling at Somerville College, Oxford. Her father told her she wouldn't be able to go: "In a few months' time we should probably all find ourselves in the Workhouse!" he opined. Brittain had hoped to escape the Northern provinces, but the war seemingly dashed her plans. "It is not, perhaps, so very surprising that the War at first seemed to me an infuriating personal interruption rather than a world-wide catastrophe."

Her father eventually relented, however, and she was allowed to attend. By the end of her first year, she had fallen in love with a young soldier and resolved to become active in the war effort by volunteering as a nurse--turning her back on what she called her "provincial young-ladyhood." Brittain suffered through 12-hour days by reminding herself that nothing she endured was worse than what her fiancé, Roland, experienced in the trenches. Roland was expected home on leave for Christmas 1915; on December 26, Brittain received news that he had been killed at the front. Ten months later Brittain herself was sent to Malta and then to France to serve in the hospitals nearer the front, where she witnessed firsthand the horrors of battle. When peace finally came, Brittain had also lost her brother Edward and two close friends. As she walked the streets of London on November 11, 1918--Armistice Day--she felt alone in the crowds:

For the first time I realised, with all that full realisation meant, how completely everything that had hitherto made up my life had vanished with Edward and Roland, with Victor and Geoffrey. The War was over; a new age was beginning; but the dead were dead and would never return.

First published in 1933, Testament of Youth established Brittain as one of the best-loved authors of her time. Her crisp, clear prose and searing honesty make this unsentimental memoir of a generation scarred by war a classic. --Sunny Delaney

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About the Author

Vera Brittain (1893–1970) served as a nurse in the British armed forces in World War I and afterward

devoted herself to the causes of peace and feminism. She wrote twenty-nine books, of which Testament of Youth is the best-known.

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TESTAMENT OF YOUTH (PENGUIN CLASSICS) BY VERA BRITTAIN PDF

Now a major motion picture starring Alicia Vikander and Kit Harington

Much of what we know and feel about the First World War we owe to Vera Brittain's elegiac yet unsparing book, which set a standard for memoirists from Martha Gellhorn to Lillian Hellman. Abandoning her studies at Oxford in 1915 to enlist as a nurse in the armed services, Brittain served in London, in Malta, and on the Western Front. By war's end she had lost virtually everyone she loved. *Testament of Youth* is both a record of what she lived through and an elegy for a vanished generation. Hailed by the *Times Literary Supplement* as a book that helped "both form and define the mood of its time," it speaks to any generation that has been irrevocably changed by war.

This edition features a new introduction by Brittain's biographer examining her struggles to write about her experiences and the book's reception in England and America.

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- Sales Rank: #18082 in Books
- Brand: Brittain, Vera/ Bostridge, Mark (INT)
- Published on: 2005-05-31
- Released on: 2005-05-31
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.70" h x 1.10" w x 5.00" l, 1.05 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 688 pages

Amazon.com Review

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Mark Bostridge is a biographer and literary critic who lives in London.

Most helpful customer reviews

141 of 146 people found the following review helpful.
evocative autobiography of one woman's experiences in WWI

By A Customer

I first read this book when I was not much younger than Vera Brittain was when she "viewed the outbreak of the First World War as an interruption of her plans", and I was immediately touched by her experiences. I have read (and re-read & re-read) this book many times. While I am not of the same social class that she was, I can relate to her desire to make something of her life, first through a university education (then restricted to many women) and later through finding meaningful work. (This is something that we all seek.) She fell happily in love, only to lose first her fiancé, then her two male friends, and finally her beloved only brother in the carnage of the First World War. Her experiences as a V.A.D. (Voluntary Aide Detachment) nurse in the war--from describing what the wards were like, to the frenzy she faced during a "push", to watching the Americans arrive in 1917, to her life on the hospital ship "Britannic", that's right, the sister ship to "Titanic"--both went down, are unforgettable. When she writes, she does not spare herself, nor seek to make herself look good--and she takes an unflinching look at her own difficulties (a word which does not even begin to describe it!!) adjusting to a post-war world which did not want the survivors. She tells of the difficulties she had fitting in (again, but this time older & wiser) at Oxford, of her mental near-breakdown, and of the bright light that was Winifred Holtby. I cannot recommend this book enough. It should be required reading in colleges and universities, and not just for history, English, and women's studies majors. Perhaps those who do not understand what all the fuss over "women's lib." is all about should make this required reading as well (both male and female). She is the first feminist role model for me, and inspired me to learn as much as I could about current events AND history (so much so that I majored in history in college, with a concentration in modern Europe). This book is well worth your time and effort, and will probably send you to the nearest library or bookstore to hunt for more books on this era. It is also rare because most of the

books written about the First World War are written by men (Sassoon, Graves, etc.), so this is unique in that it tells of the impact of the war from a woman's perspective. History tends to forget that women as well as men have experienced war. Brittain writes both from the view of those back home in Britain (when she is on leave) and from the view of someone at the front, cleaning up the wreckage (as a volunteer nurse). If you are wondering what happens to her, she wrote a "sequel" of sorts titled "Testament of Experience", which chronicles the years 1933-1950. "Testament of Youth" is a wonderful book, one which you will read again and again, and all the more moving because it is a true story.

55 of 56 people found the following review helpful.

world events intersect with personal destiny

By R. J. Marsella

Never have I read a better account of current events interrupting the normal rituals of young adulthood and changing the destiny of a group of individuals so dramatically. This book so captures the dreams and longings of people coming of age and finding themselves in terms of careers and loves and then having the rug pulled from under them that it could stand as a testimony for all generations shattered by war. In sometimes heartbreaking and often very poetic language the writer takes you along on a journey of discovery under horrific conditions and the reader is made to understand the remarkable transformations that these young people go through. The fact that the book was written by a young woman and is one of the few war memoirs that reflect a feminine sensibility and perspective serves to make this a unique book in the literature of either World War. Required reading for anyone interested in 20th century history.

51 of 54 people found the following review helpful.

A wonderfully moving personal account life during WW1

By A Customer

This book by Vera Brittain is one of the most moving that I have read. Written as an account of the experiences of young men and women at the onset and during the First World War, it gives a particular insight which is different from, but equally absorbing as, those accounts, so often understated, of soldiers who fought in the trenches during the conflict. To be more accurate, while she recounts the feelings and experiences of the men who were closest to her, hers is the only woman's viewpoint which is given in any depth - and, indeed, it is her personal account, given in such depth that it draws in and involves the reader in a way unlike any simple factual account of events. While it recounts in some detail her own work as a nurse in the war theatres, it is a story with as much muted romanticism as those of the Brontes or Jane Austen, and belies to a degree the orthodoxy of Vera Brittain's feminism. This is a book to be recommended without hesitation, for anyone interested in the period, but also as a timeless account of human endeavour, endurance and love.

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