



Dead Man Talking

Alden S. Blodget

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This collection of short talks speaks to high school and college students, their parents and teachers about success, school, college, friendship, boredom, bigotry, cheating, bulimia, effort, excellence, living a meaningful life, and many more ideas. In each of these talks, the goal is to say something that might penetrate the usual haze of boredom that hangs over school assemblies. The adults expect optimistic clichés about hard work and success. The kids expect tedium; some of them hope to doze, some to weep with giddy suppressed laughter exchanging whispered witticisms with their friends. Everyone prays for brevity. As a result, the talks are always pushing the envelope, trying to grab the students' attention by addressing issues that are real for them, many of which are also difficult or depressing, and yet finding some sort of path back to an optimism suitable to the occasion. To get their attention, the speeches often reveal personal adolescent mistakes and are funny, revealing the speaker to be human, instead of a distant, holier-than-thou preacher. The ideas in these talks remain relevant and important for students and parents to consider. Issues of identity, morality, relationships, choices and what young people will make of the huge investment of time and money they and their parents make in schools need conscious, thoughtful consideration now. Otherwise, the result is likely to be regret. Each talk lasted only about 15 minutes, so each is short and can act as a point of departure for solo reflection or conversation. And, although they are organized chronologically, they can be read in any order.

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