

Taste Berries for Teens: A Collection of Inspirational Short Stories and Encouragement on Life Love Friendship and Tough Issues

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Our world, culture and society present teenagers with difficult choices and complex decisions that can have an impact on them for a lifetime. In a book filled with personal anecdotes from teens of diverse backgrounds, *Taste Berries for Teens* pulls the reader into a compassionate look at issues facing teenagers. It offers an intimate view of teens grappling with friendship, pressure from school, finding meaningful work and making a difference in their own and others lives.

As described in the introduction, a taste berry is a fruit used by aboriginal peoples that makes the eating of sometimes distasteful but necessary foods tolerable. It convinces the mouth that even bitter things can be, if not enjoyed, appreciated. In a collaborative effort by mother and daughter, the authors have used this image to allow teens to see the ways they have been “taste berries” for others or have been influenced by “taste berries” in their own lives.

The book is organized into seven parts, each focused on a particular theme. Within the themes, which range from “Who I (Really) Am” to “Stress, Moods and Other Tough Stuff” and “The ‘Rules’ for being a Friend,” are opening lead-in stories, collected experiences from teenagers and anecdotes from the authors on their personal dealings with each particular issue. Both authors draw from their extensive backgrounds as educators, workshop leaders within schools and communities and as people working to metabolize their own not-so-distant experience as teenagers or, in the senior Youngs’ case, the mother of a teenager.

The challenge with *Taste Berries for Teens* will be breaking the barrier teens often have in allowing themselves to take in outside information, especially information deemed “good for them” by adults. Once in hand and open, the heart-felt writing will draw the reader into the well-told stories—a reading experience not unlike picking up *People* magazine in the doctor’s office, yet with far more substance and direction.

This book could be a good friend in times of dealing with the potent challenges that come often with growing up in a complicated world.

LYNN BRACH (March / April 1999)

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