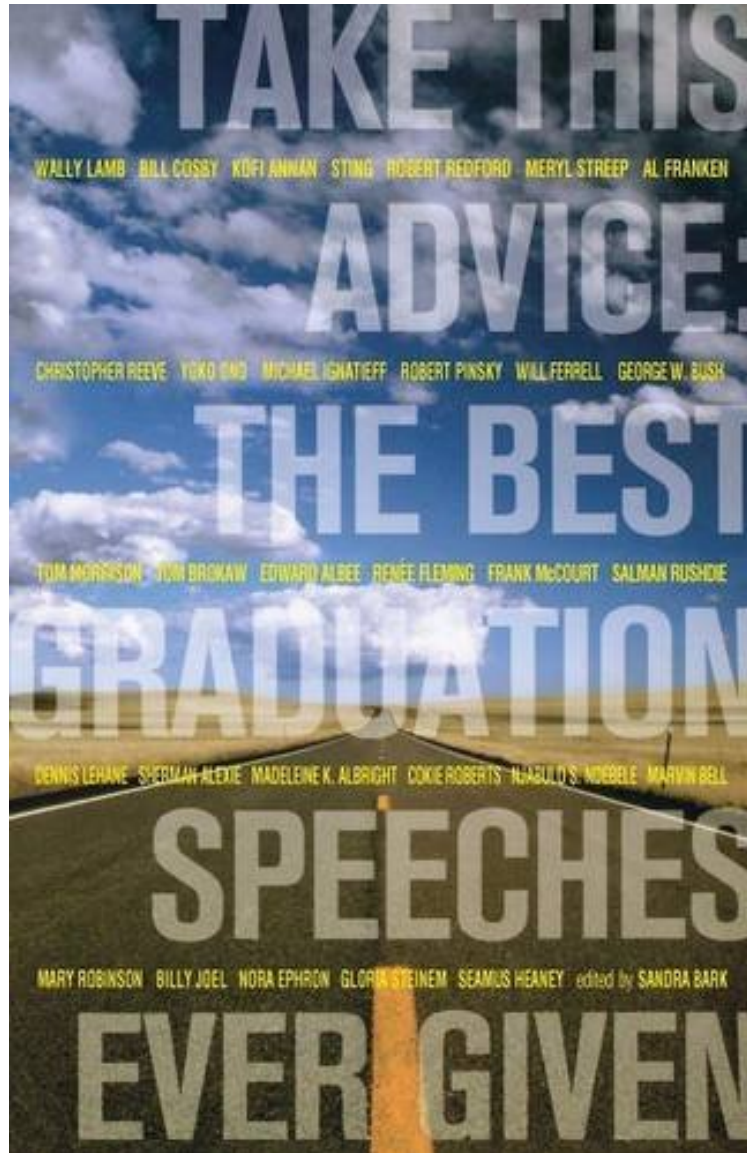


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## Take This Advice: The Best Graduation Speeches Ever Given

*From Sandra Bark*

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#325411 in Books Sandra Bark 2006-04-01 2006-04-01 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.25 x .60 x 5.50l, .49 #File Name: 1416915966240 pages Take This Advice The Best Graduation Speeches Ever Given | File size: 31.Mb

**From Sandra Bark : Take This Advice: The Best Graduation Speeches Ever Given** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Take This Advice: The Best Graduation Speeches Ever Given:

18 of 28 people found the following review helpful. The worst of this category of books By John H. Hwung This book

has even less good speeches than that of "Graduation Day" and "Hold Fast Your Dreams." Though the speakers are famous, that does not mean that what they say are good or inspiring. However, the speech by Seamus Heaney is pretty good. The best book so far on graduation speeches is "Graduation Moments."

"Be Free, And Dance Through Life." -- Yoko Ono "Make The World Before You A Better One By Going Into It With All Boldness." -- Seamus Heaney "Remember Always To Sit Up Straight." -- Madeleine K. Albright Take This Advice delivers thirty of the most powerful and inspiring commencement speeches given in the past ten years. With grace and humor, this generation's favorite artists and thinkers address graduates to celebrate an incredible achievement, and to let them know that life after school is not the end of the world -- in fact, it's the beginning. "This Is Your Time. Take It On." -- Tom Brokaw

From Publishers Weekly Among the speeches that Bark bills as "the most nakedly honest graduation speeches ever given" are many that start out rather shy and apologetic, like Salman Rushdie's address to Bard College's class of 1996, in which he observes: "You, unfortunately, have to make do with me." Rushdie's speech is a winner, but it's also an exception; most of the 36 entries in this volume are more trite and perfunctory than nakedly honest. Many of them adopt a graduation tone-humble, omniscient, vaguely condescending-likely to remind readers of their own somnolent ceremony. A few of Bark's speeches do break from this mold, however, and those are the strongest and most affecting in the collection. Wally Lamb takes readers back in time through his own experiences as a father and writer, and Frank McCourt mocks the tropes of other commencement speakers and describes his past as a teacher. Many of the strongest speeches double as mini autobiographies, like Bill Cosby's revelation of his loopy beginnings as a poor and overconfident comedian. One exception is Will Ferrel's comic speech within a speech, a parody of George W. Bush in which Ferrel-as-Bush drawls, "The chances of landing a decent job are about as good as finding weapons of mass destruction in the Iraqi desert. Slim and none. And Slim just left the building." A few chapters later, Bush's speech at his alma mater, Yale, is spiked with several jokes of its own. "It's great day for you," the president tells the graduates' parents, "it's a great day for your wallet." In the end, the book is saved by these few "honest" speakers, who seem to have known instinctively that, when called upon to give advice, the best thing to do is recount your own experience or crack a joke. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. About the Author Sandra Bark is the author of Cheap Easy: A Cookbook for Girls on the Go and editor of Beautiful as the Moon, Radiant as the Stars: Jewish Women in Yiddish Stories and Writers Workshop in a Box. She lives in Brooklyn. Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Al Franken Harvard University, Class Day, 2002I was all set to give a speech today entitled, "American Jihad." But after receiving several complaints, I've decided instead to give a less controversial speech entitled: "The Case for Profiling Young Arab Men." Before I go any further, I would like to thank the university and President Summers for conferring upon me an honorary degree, an honorary doctorate, in Afro-American Studies. And especially for offering me a chair as a professor in that department -- an offer I hereby most heartily accept. I don't know much about Afro-American Studies. But I can assure you that I can use the summer to get myself up to speed. But seriously, it is an honor to speak here today to you, the graduating Class of 2002, and to congratulate all of you -- for getting into Harvard in the first place. Because let's face it, once you get in here, as long as you don't kill someone or embezzle one hundred thousand dollars from your student organization, you're going to graduate. And to those of you who are graduating with honors: congratulations on doing some of the reading and on going to many of your classes, and getting notes from friends on the classes you didn't go to, and on handing in most of your papers on time. Way to go! Good work! To those of you who did not graduate with honors, "Wow! Whoa!" But then again, congratulations on your hockey season. As Jeremy [Bronson, who gave the Ivy Oration "Macroeconomic Theory in a Globally Integrated Economy"] said, most of you will be going out into the real world of law school, med school, or investment banking, and you will meet graduates from other colleges who had slightly better educations. Schools like Amherst, Haverford, Wesleyan, Ohio Wesleyan, and pretty much all the other Wesleyans. But you will all have your Harvard degree. And you should never let others forget it! There are ways to let people know you went to Harvard without just blurting out "I went to Harvard." First and foremost, remember -- you didn't go to school in Boston, you went to school in Cambridge. But if you really want to perfect the technique of slipping Harvard into a conversation, just consult your parents -- they've been working on this from the moment you got your acceptance letter. My daughter is a junior here. Let me show you how I do it. "Oh yeah, my daughter is twenty-one. She's a junior in college." (Please ask, please ask, please ask, please ask.) "Well, you know, it's great, because, you know, like, she's only really an hour from New York. And you know, we can take the shuttle up to visit her. We took the shuttle, actually, last week to Cambridge." So, I went here. Class of '73. Graduated cum laude. In general studies. Harvard was in many ways a different place in those days. It was much whiter, much more male, and much more preppy. I remember the first person I met when I arrived. I had flown in from Minneapolis, taken a taxi directly to the Yard, and -- lugging a duffel bag and an electric typewriter -- found my freshman hall, Mower. And in the entryway was a guy wearing khakis and a polo shirt. He extended his hand in a very friendly manner -- and this is an absolutely true story -- and he said, "William Sutherland Strong. I'm from northern New Jersey, but my family

moved from Massachusetts. "When?" I asked. "In the late eighteenth century." Bill Strong and I became very good friends. So, it was much preppier and much whiter. This disturbs some people. A while back Pat Buchanan said that Harvard should reserve 75 percent of its places for white Christians. As a Jew, I was offended, but looking around the Yard today at all the Asians, I kind of see what he's talking about. I mean they've got to stop admitting you people based on merit. I spent three great years at Dunster House. One of the big changes in Harvard life has been the randomization of the housing process. In my day each house had its own distinctive character. Dunster House was known as the music-drug-theatre house. Mather House was known as the drug-jock house. Adams was the artsy-drug house, Mather House, as I said, was the drug-jock house. Quincy was also just the drug house. As were Leverett, Kirkland, Winthrop, and Lowell. Eliot was considered the preppy-drug house, but was also sometimes just thought of as the drug house. There was no quad, as such, back then, but people used to sneak up there to do drugs. When I came to Harvard from Minnesota, I was a complete idiot. I remember freshman year thinking about becoming a visual studies major. And I needed to get into VES 40, which was the introductory course in visual studies, VES 40. And it was limited enrollment and you had to interview. And in the course catalogue it said VES 40, Carpenter Center, room whatever, Dr. J. (with a dot) Mendelsohn. So I go to the Carpenter Center and go to the room ready to impress Professor J. (dot) Mendelsohn, and the professor introduced herself to me. She says, "I'm Dr. Janet Mendelsohn." And I say, "Oh, I expected a man." So I didn't get into Visual Studies major and resigned myself to actually having to work for my degree. I remember being in your place twenty-nine years ago, although I have to tell you I almost didn't graduate. My senior year I took a course, Soc Sci 134, "The Social History of the United States," taught by one of the university's most illustrious professors, Daniel Bell, who had coined the phrase "post-industrial society" and been on the cover of Time magazine. The problem was the class was at nine in the morning and that semester I was in a play at Dunster House -- we really were the theater house -- and rehearsals tended to go very late. I did manage to go to all the lectures, which were in William James, but the building, at least at that time, was very overheated, and I would routinely fall asleep in Professor Bell's lecture. When the run of the play ended, we had a cast party which lasted through the entire night and I'm embarrassed to say I got a little drunk. And when 9 A.M. rolled around, having not slept, I for some reason thought it was a good idea to show up at Soc Sci 134 wearing a pajama top. I fell asleep and then at the end of the lecture, I stood up and I kind of passed out, falling into Dr. Bell's arms. It occurred to me soon after that I might be in danger of flunking Soc Sci 134. And I needed to pass it in order to graduate. So I went to my TF [teaching fellow] and asked him what I needed to pass. And he told me that Dr. Bell thought I was a drug addict. So he suggested I talk to Bell and ask him what I could do to make sure I passed the course. So I made an appointment with Dr. Bell for noon the next day. When I got to his office, he was meeting with a grad student, so his secretary asked me to go out into the lounge and wait for him, where I sat on the couch and immediately fell asleep. The next thing I saw was Dr. Bell leaning over me, saying, "Do you want to sleep or do you want to talk to me?" I said, "Talk with you!" So we met in his office and I explained to him about the play and the rehearsals going late and the building being overheated, and Dr. Bell told me he felt it was a student's responsibility to stay conscious during class. Then he told me that the final exam -- and the whole grade was based on the final exam, there were no papers, no quizzes, no tests, no midterms -- the final exam was based solely on the reading. If I did all the reading, I'd be fine. So, I thanked him and went back to my room and looked at the reading list for the first time, and it was the longest reading list I'd ever seen at Harvard. No one could possibly do all this reading. So I spent the entire reading period in Lamont reading the reading list. And actually, it was great. The entire social history of our country unfolded before me there in Lamont. It was inspiring really, and it made me wish I had stayed awake for the lectures. So, then on the way to the exam, it was in Sever, it occurred to me that maybe Bell was screwing with me. You know, why wouldn't he screw with a drug addict? I mean, what if the exam isn't on the reading? What if it's on the lectures? So I get into Sever and I get my blue book and I get the exam and I look at the first question, and it's directly from the reading. Second question, directly from the reading. They're all -- everything on this exam -- directly from the reading. So a few days later I go to the TF's office to pick up my exam, and he says, "Bell's pissed. You got the highest grade of anyone in the entire class." It's a lecture of about 120 people. Of course. I was the only one who did all the reading. So now Bell thinks that a drug addict got the highest grade in his class. So I'm laughing until I remember that I took the course pass-fail. To this day, I believe if I had gotten an A in Soc Sci 134 instead of a pass, my Stuart Smalley movie would have been a huge hit, and I'd be a big movie star today. I want to take this moment to congratulate today's Ivy Orators, Taii Bullock and Jeremy Bronson, on your very funny remarks. You're terrific. Where are you? Taii? [APPLAUSE] I was, ironically, the Ivy Orator twenty-nine years ago. And I'm afraid I used the "f" word quite a few times in my speech. It was 1973. And a couple weeks later I received a note through the class marshal's office from an outraged parent, saying, "We came to watch you graduate from college, not from kindergarten." I've always felt kinda bad about that, and I was hoping to be invited back so that I could apologize. Now, I know I wasn't the first choice to speak here this afternoon. I know this because the Crimson article announcing I'd be the Class Day speaker made a point of underscoring that fact many times. Allow me to quote from the front page of the Harvard Crimson of April 16: Author and comedian Al Franken '73 will offer words of wisdom to graduating seniors on Class Day, senior class marshals announced yesterday.... Last year rock superstar Bono spoke to an audience of about 30,000 -- and some students

hoped for a non-Harvard celebrity this year as well. "I'm disappoint...