



# Letters from a Lost Generation

By BISHOP A

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This poignant work collects correspondence written from 1913 to 1918 between Vera Brittain and four young men -- her fiance Roland Leighton, her younger brother Edward and their two close friends, Victor Richardson and Geoffrey Thurlow -- who were all killed in action during World War I.

The correspondence presents a remarkable and profoundly moving portrait of five idealistic youths caught up in the cataclysm of war. Spanning the duration of the war, the letters vividly convey the uncertainty, confusion, and almost unbearable suspense of the tumultuous war years. They offer important historical insights by illuminating both male and female perspectives and allow the reader to witness and understand the Great War from a variety of viewpoints, including those of the soldier in the trenches, the volunteer nurse in military hospitals, and even the civilian population on the home front. As Brittain wrote to Roland Leighton in 1915, shortly after he arrived on the Western Front: "Nothing in the papers, not the most vivid and heartbreaking descriptions, have made me realize war like your letters."

Yet this collection is, above all, a dramatic account of idealism, disillusionment, and personal tragedy as revealed by the voices of four talented schoolboys who went almost immediately from public school in Britain to the battlefields of France, Belgium, and Italy. Linking each of their compelling stories is the passionate and eloquent voice of Vera Brittain, who gave up her own studies to enlist in the armed services as a nurse.

As World War I fades from living memory, these letters are a powerful and stirring testament to a generation forever shattered and haunted by grief, loss, and promise unfulfilled.

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## Letters from a Lost Generation By BISHOP A Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

### Amazon.com Review

The events set in motion by the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 changed many lives irrevocably. For Vera Brittain, an Oxford undergraduate who left her studies to volunteer as a nurse in military hospitals in England and France, the war was a shattering experience; she not only witnessed the horrors inflicted by combat through her work, but she lost the four men closest to her at that time--her fiancé, Roland Leighton, brother Edward, and two close friends, Geoffrey Thurlow and Victor Nicholson, who all died on the battlefield.

*Letters from a Lost Generation*, a collection of previously unpublished correspondence between Brittain and these young men--all public schoolboys at the start of the war--chronicles her relationship with them, and reveals "the old lie," the idealized glory of patriotic duty that was soon overtaken by the grim reality of the Flanders trenches. The letters are lively, dramatic, immediate and, despite the awfulness of war, curiously optimistic: "Somehow I feel the end is not destined to be here and now. We have not fulfilled ourselves--and someday we shall live our roseate poem through," wrote Vera in one of her last letters to Roland in December 1915, just days before he was killed by a sniper's bullet. Following his death, and later those of their mutual friends Victor and Geoffrey, Vera's letters take on a new, raw intensity as she concentrates all her emotions on her brother--a hero awarded the Military Cross--until his death on the Italian Front in June 1918. These letters formed the basis of Vera Brittain's remarkable autobiography, *Testament of Youth*, and vividly bring to life the voices of the lost generation whose words threaten to be lost forever as the First World War recedes even further from living memory. --Catherine Taylor, *Amazon.co.uk*

### From Library Journal

This book is a collection of letters written from 1913 to 1918 between Vera Brittain and her brother, her fiancé, and two other friends. Some of the letters were included in Vera Brittain's classic account of her wartime experience, *Testament of Youth* (Penguin, 1994, reprint), but most of them are now being published for the first time. The letters provide insight into the youth of the day and how their feelings and emotions developed during the war, turning from idealism to disillusionment to an acceptance of death. The collection is unique because these letters span the entire war, showing both male and female perspectives. By the end, you know the people, feel their tragedy, and see hope change to despair as loved ones are killed. Bishop is the editor of three volumes of Brittain's diaries, and Bostridge is the coauthor of *Vera Brittain: A Life* (LJ 4/1/96). The collection is easy to read, with notes to explain unfamiliar terms and historical events. Recommended for all libraries. Mary F. Salony, West Virginia Northern Community Coll. Lib., Wheeling Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

### From Kirkus Reviews

The moving correspondence of five young people whose idealism and dreams are reshaped and ultimately buried in the muddy trenches of WWI. The four friends of the title are poet and writer Vera Brittain's younger brother, Edward; her fiancé, Roland Leighton; and their schoolmates Victor Richardson and Geoffrey Thurlow. The four men knew each other during their public-school days and planned, along with Vera, to continue their studies at Oxford following the summer of 1914. Instead, the four sought commissions in the British army and, one by one, crossed the channel to the battlefields of France and Italy. All four were killed. Vera, who had also left Oxford to serve as a nurse's aide, kept up a steady correspondence with Leighton and her brother, and later with Richardson and Thurlow. Most of her letters were returned to her for safekeeping and she, of course, also kept theirs. Bishop (English/McMasters Univ., Canada), who has edited Brittain's diaries, and her biographer Bostridge have edited many of Vera's letters heavily because the gist of

them has already appeared frequently in her other writing. The correspondence begins almost immediately after Vera and Leighton, also a poet, are introduced by her brother. Their exchanges light-hearted, and at first possessed of a youthfully showy intellectual bent grow both in emotion and intimacy as the two fall in love. When Leighton heads for France, his letters return filled with war's beauty and its soullessness: "Modern warfare is merely a trade, and it is only a matter of taste whether one is a soldier or a greengrocer. . . ." Following Leighton's death, Vera writes more frequently to her brother and to the other two friends. Their responses are not as lyrical as Leighton's, but their deaths are in some ways more disturbing, because they do herald a lost generation. Britains of another time and place, here with their souls bared. -- Copyright ©1999, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Gregory Jones:**

The ability that you get from Letters from a Lost Generation is the more deep you rooting the information that hide inside words the more you get serious about reading it. It does not mean that this book is hard to comprehend but Letters from a Lost Generation giving you joy feeling of reading. The article writer conveys their point in selected way that can be understood by simply anyone who read the idea because the author of this guide is well-known enough. This kind of book also makes your vocabulary increase well. Therefore it is easy to understand then can go together with you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We suggest you for having this particular Letters from a Lost Generation instantly.

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#### **Erick Graf:**

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**Sandra Easley:**

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