



# Shakespeare Saved My Life

By Laura Bates

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Shakespeare Saved My Life By Laura Bates

## A female professor, a super maximum security prisoner, and how Shakespeare saved them both

Shakespeare professor and prison volunteer **Laura Bates** thought she had seen it all. That is, until she decided to teach Shakespeare in a place the bard had never been before - supermax solitary confinement.

In this unwelcoming place, surrounded by inmates known as the worst of the worst, is **Larry Newton**. A convicted murderer with several escape attempts under his belt and a brilliantly agile mind on his shoulders, Larry was trying to break out of prison at the same time Laura was fighting to get her program started behind bars.

**A testament to the power of literature**, *Shakespeare Saved My Life* is a remarkable memoir. Fans of *Orange is the New Black* (Piper Kerman), *A Place to Stand* (Jimmy Baca) and *I Couldn't Help Myself* (Wally Lamb) will be inspired by the story of the most unlikely friendship, one bonded by Shakespeare and lasting years—a friendship that would, in the end, save more than one life.

## What readers are saying about Shakespeare Saved My Life

"I was **tremendously moved** by both the potential impact of Shakespeare and learning on human beings and the story of this one man."

"This is one of the most **extraordinary** books I've ever read."

"I have never read a book that **touched** me as much as this memoir."

"It is a challenging and **remarkable** story."

"I loved this book so much. **It changed my life.**"

## What reviewers are saying about Shakespeare Saved My Life

"You don't have to be a William Shakespeare fan, a prisoner, or a prison reformer to appreciate this uplifting book. "Shakespeare Saved My Life" also reveals many important truths ... about the meaning of empathy in our dealings with others"-Finger Lake Times

"Shakespeare Saved My Life touches on the search for meaning in life, the struggles that complicate the path to triumph and the salvation that can be found in literature's great works ... **An inspiring account.**"-Shelf Awareness

"Opening the mind's prison proves enormously gratifying, not to mention effective ... **brave, groundbreaking work**"?Publishers Weekly

"**An eye-opening study** reiterating the perennial power of books, self-discipline, and the Bard of Avon."-Kirkus

"**A powerful testament** to how Shakespeare continues to speak to contemporary readers in all sorts of circumstances."-Booklist

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### **Shakespeare Saved My Life By Laura Bates Bibliography**

- Sales Rank: #39578 in Books
- Published on: 2013-04-02
- Released on: 2013-04-02
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.90" h x 1.00" w x 5.20" l, .70 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 291 pages

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## Editorial Review

From [Booklist](#)

From breaking out to breaking through, that's what reading Shakespeare did for Indiana federal prison inmate Larry Newton, who was locked in solitary confinement for more than 10 years. His story is recounted by English professor Bates, who taught the "Shakespeare in Shackles" class that gave Newton, convicted of murder as a teenager, his new lease on life. Bates describes the program, but the core of the text is given over to Newton as he poses challenging questions from Shakespeare's works about such topics as honor, revenge, and conscience, forcing prisoners to consider their own actions in a new light. Macbeth and Hamlet are the primary targets of examination, but the inmates take fresh approaches to several plays. The short chapters are like Bates' glimpses into the cells through cuff boxes. It's clear she is impressed with Larry, and while his work is remarkable, it's also repetitive. But the journey he makes and the impact it has on Bates herself combine to form a powerful testament to how Shakespeare continues to speak to contemporary readers in all sorts of circumstances. --Bridget Thoreson

Review

"Wonderful... well written, easy to follow, and hard to put down. My hope is that this book will make people understand that education can change lives." - *Sue Jones, Auntie's Bookstore, Spokane, WA*

"This is an amazing story, beautifully told...I'm still reeling from the power of the ending." - *Anne McMahon, Boswell Book Company, Milwaukee WI*

"A transformative journey for students and teacher alike. ... An eye-opening study reiterating the perennial power of books, self-discipline and the Bard of Avon." - *Kirkus*

"*Shakespeare Saved My Life* touches on the search for meaning in life, the struggles that complicate the path to triumph and the salvation that can be found in literature's great works ... An inspiring account."  
" - *Shelf Awareness*

"Readers will find much to be inspired by and optimistic about in Bates's book" - *PopMatters*

"You don't have to be a William Shakespeare fan, a prisoner, or a prison reformer to appreciate this uplifting book. "*Shakespeare Saved My Life*" also reveals many important truths ... about the meaning of empathy in our dealings with others" - *Finger Lakes Times*

About the Author

Laura Bates is an English professor at Indiana State University, where she has taught courses on Shakespeare for the past 15 years to students on campus and in prison. Her work has been featured in national media, including MSNBC's Lock Up. Laura lives in Indiana.

Actress and director Cassandra Campbell has narrated nearly two hundred audiobooks and has received multiple Audie Awards and more than twenty AudioFile Earphones Awards, including for *Orange Is the New Black* by Piper Kerman.

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**Ashley Wright:**

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