



Things Don't Have To Be Complicated: Illustrated Six-Word Memoirs by Students Making Sense of the World (TED Books)

Larry Smith

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What would you say if you had just six words to define your life? That's the challenge Larry Smith presented to his online community, SMITH Magazine, in 2006. His quest was inspired by the legend that Ernest Hemingway was once challenged to write a novel in just six words. His heartbreaking result: "For sale: baby shoes, never worn." Giving the form a personal twist, Smith reimagined the six-word novel idea as the Six-Word Memoir, challenging contributors to create a half-dozen words of self-reflection. The constraint, it turned out, fueled rather than inhibited creativity: "Sometimes lonely in a crowded bed." "My life made my therapist laugh." "Wasn't born a redhead — fixed that." "I still make coffee for two." Inspired by Six Words' popularity in English classes and art classes alike, Smith recently called for submissions for illustrated Six-Word Memoirs, in which he asked students, whether in grade school or grad school, to create a piece of artwork that enhanced their memoirs. The voices in 'Things Don't Have to Be Complicated' are younger than those of previous memoirists, but no less profound: "Said he loved me, he lied." "Two girls, both of them me." "Big dreams, big heart, big mouth." "I'm a Muslim, not a terrorist." "Life is better with headphones on." This book contains dozens more. At its core, the Six-Word Memoir offers a simple way for anyone of any age to try to answer the question that defines us all: Who am I?

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