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I’ve never really understood why more Oscar winners don’t thank their teachers.

Yes, family and agents and your “team” are a given, as are the countless producers you’re legally obligated to thank. Then there’s the dietician, the spin instructor, the Reiki master, and gurus of dubious origin. But what about the teachers who helped you get to where you are now?

I was lucky enough to have a lot of great teachers, but one in particular shaped the person I am today: Lin Robbins. She was my 8th-grade reading teacher. And while she was incredibly loud at times, and had those massive, red [Sally Jessy Raphael](https://www.today.com/popculture/talk-show-legend-sally-jessy-raphael-reveals-story-behind-her-t108109) glasses, I can still hear her laugh.

Miss Robbins’ enthusiasm was infectious. From the first day of class, she was always smiling and had boundless energy. She was no taskmaster, and there was no tough love, just excitement about what she could teach us. But it never felt like she was teaching, it was as if she wanted to share this really cool thing with you; it was effortless.

So, stop me if you think that you’ve heard this one before, but Miss Robbins gave me a copy of *The Catcher In The Rye*. I don’t know why she did this—it wasn’t an assignment. She just gave me a copy of the book and said, “I think you'll really like this."

Now, I’m hardly the only person who's had an encounter with *Catcher*, and J.D. Salinger love is about as commonplace as your coworker’s obsession with the *Fifty Shades* series. But every 13 year old has to start somewhere, and there was something I immediately connected with in Holden Caulfield, something that resonated and made me feel a little less alone.

This connection inspired me to start writing, and I haven’t stopped since. After I moved on to high school, I would still drop by and share my work with Miss Robbins. A lot of it was terrible short stories about dog detectives (don’t ask). Some of it was lousy poetry (definitely don’t ask). But she read it all, and she told me the two most valuable words you can tell anyone at that age:

**Keep. Writing.**

**Discover What Makes Them Tick**

I couldn’t tell you what Miss Robbins saw in me—why I was given extra attention and care. But in hindsight, I know it’s impossible that I was the only one. She had a library at the back of her classroom with an open policy around borrowing books. She wasn’t shy about sharing her passion for literature.

If you stopped by Miss Robbins’ classroom, chances were good that some other student seeking wisdom and encouragement was there, too. She seemed to have an innate ability to find out what kind of push you needed to make you feel something.

I imagine that’s the hardest thing for a teacher to figure out—how to really reach and develop each student. Miss Robbins instinctively knew how to hone in on what a student was most excited about and cultivate that. That’s no easy task when you're staring down a classroom of 30 middle schoolers, but she took the time to invest in every one of us.

When you share your own passion, and engage your class, ultimately that’s contagious and inspiring. No matter what we were reading, Miss Robbins could find an emotional hook—something personal and relatable—that made you want to dig in. If a teacher can motivate a student to tear through a book in a single day, then they’re doing something right.

**Don't Forget to Say Thank You**

Years later, I found Miss Robbins on Facebook. I had tried a few times before, but it never once occurred to me to search for Lin instead of Linda. When I finally found her page, there were no updates or posts, just a whole slew of messages on her page: “I miss you; I can’t believe that you're gone.”

She had passed away two years before.

I haven’t sold a screenplay or a pilot, and I don’t know that I ever will. Work and family and life often get in the way. I doubt very much that I’ll ever attend the Academy Awards, and that’s OK. I’m an editor and a freelance writer, and I’m fortunate enough that I get paid to put words down on paper.

But, I know that I have to keep writing. And I also know who I’m thanking on any podium I get my hands on. Miss Robbins. I’m grateful that she saw whatever it is she saw in me, and that she gave me the nudge I needed to become a writer.

I never got a chance to thank her. So, don’t miss out on thanking your teacher-hero. They’re the ones who make us who we are.