

Book Review: Mark Edmundson, *Why Teach? In Defense of a Real Education*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2013. ISBN: 978-1620401071 (Hardcover). 222 Pages. \$24.00.

Reviewed by Rachel Sherman¹

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Why Teach? In Defense of a Real Education is a collection of essays published by Mark Edmundson, University Professor from the University of Virginia, that offers reasoning and resolution of the influence our consumer-driven society is having on education. The book is organized into three sections: “The Shift,” “Fellow Students,” and “Fellow Teachers.” Each portion contains works that are woven together to support the theory that both teachers and students need to understand and respect themselves and the differences in each other enough to then reach the uncomfortable places where true learning unfolds.

Over the course of 16 essays, Edmundson tackles the belief that “the major enemy of education in America now is American education, university education in particular” (p. xi) and that “if you want to get a real education in America, you’re going to have to fight” (p. 52). Two notions that, according to Edmundson, educators and administrators would lead you to believe are independent of each other, when in fact they are most closely intertwined. *Why Teach?* provides a refreshing reminder that many teachers do not enter the field for the earning power, but for the influence. That they once possessed a love of thinking and learning and wished to share that with future generations. Edmundson effectively argues that today’s product-based education system forgoes the genuine experience and the curiosity that generates true learning in favor of producing career-ready facsimiles of successful wage-earners. He challenges students and teachers alike to get back to the basics of education by encouraging and practicing independent thought.

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