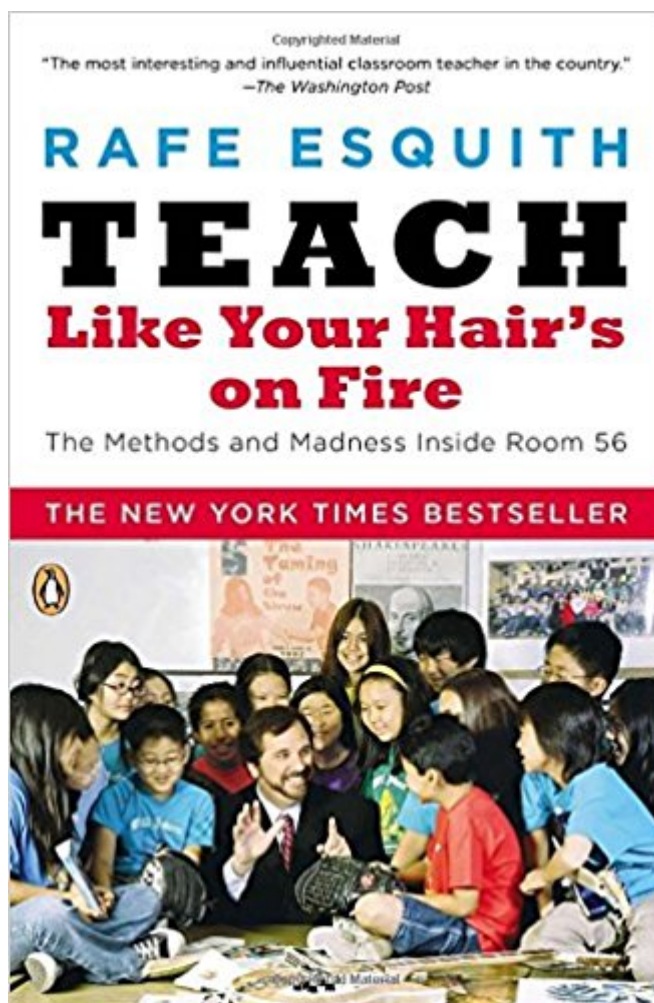


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# Teach Like Your Hair's On Fire: The Methods And Madness Inside Room 56



## Synopsis

Read Rafe Esquith's posts on the Penguin Blog. The New York Times bestseller that is revolutionizing the way Americans educate their kids-"Rafe Esquith is a genius and a saint" (The New York Times) Perhaps the most famous fifth-grade teacher in America, Rafe Esquith has won numerous awards and even honorary citizenship in the British Empire for his outstandingly successful methods. In his Los Angeles public school classroom, he helps impoverished immigrant children understand Shakespeare, play Vivaldi, and become happy, self-confident people. This bestseller gives any teacher or parent all the techniques, exercises, and innovations that have made its author an educational icon, from personal codes of behavior to tips on tackling literature and algebra. The result is a powerful book for anyone concerned about the future of our children.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Esquith might be the only public school teacher to be honored by both Oprah Winfrey and the Dalai Lama; he is the only school teacher ever to receive the president's National Medal of the Arts. For the past 25 years, Esquith has taught fifth graders at Hobart Elementary in central Los Angeles. Like most progressive educators, Esquith is outraged by the tyranny of testing, the scripting of teaching under "No Child Left Behind" and the overwhelming bureaucratization of the education industry. Still, he's done wonders with the basic curriculum—developing a hands-on arts program, a money-management curriculum and a sports-based statistics unit. Esquith and his Hobart Shakespeareans are world famous for the rock opera they create every

year. Throughout each school day, Esquith teaches life skills: how to think about problems, how to plan a strategy to solve them and, most important, how to work together and be nice to each other. While his goals are inspiring, he's also practical—most chapters include affordable, how-to directions for a variety of his most effective classroom activities; he's even got a few tips for revamping those inescapable "test prep" sessions. (Jan.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"Esquith is a modern-day Thoreau, preaching the value of good work, honest self-reflection, and the courage to go one's own way." -Newsday "Politicians, burbling over how to educate the underclass, would do well to stop by Rafe Esquith's fifth-grade class." -Time "The most interesting and influential classroom teacher in the country." -The Washington Post

Maybe because it is summer and we chose to be here. Maybe we just like one of our kind. I say that it is because he is special. Rafe Esquith was the keynote speaker today at the SSITE conference. After he spoke we gave him a standing ovation. He was inspiring. He IS inspiring. (Note: SSITE is Samford Summer Institute for Teaching Excellence. Samford is a Baptist college in Birmingham, Alabama. My principal, who once lived in Birmingham, where she was first an elementary, then secondary school principal, celebrated this summer her twentieth time to attend SSITE. She takes some of her teachers with her every summer for these fabulous speakers, break-out sessions with instructors who provide wonderful ideas --and this summer a thumb drive containing handouts of all the presenters, as well as latest research and studies in good teaching methods and information. I utterly dislike driving long distances (across two and one-half states), yet found the conference worth the drive. Wow, did I really say that? Another speaker whose presentation gave us clues to help students break the reading comprehension code was as worthy as Rafe's talk.) Just who is this Rafe Esquith? Author of "Teach Like Your Hair's on Fire," for one. It was a New York Times bestseller for awhile. Teacher of fifth grade students at Hobarth Elementary in a poverty-stricken area of Los Angeles. His students are immigrants or children of immigrants and largely Asian and Latino. Rafe's (he wants his students to call him Rafe) book is basically a manifesto in how to teach like your hair's on fire, i.e., turning kids on "to the wonder of learning, the power of the imagination, and the wealth of finding oneself" (taken from a quote on the back cover). He showed us a clip of one of his students reciting, no--reliving a letter by a soldier written just days before his death in the Civil War. It's a performance I'll never forget. Hobarth Shakespearians. That's just one of many

success stories initiated by this fine teacher. He teaches a Shakespeare play each year, then the students find songs to go with the action, learn everything and go on the road with their production. One song example is "Riders in the Storm" by the Doors to open the three witches' scene in Macbeth. It's perfect! The group with the boy reciting the war letter was invited to appear before the nine judges of the Supreme Court. Instead of the Shakespeare, he had his students perform historic documents. One thing Rafe makes clear in his book is that it took him 25 years to reach this level of excellence and describes some of his mistakes. But his successes--oh my! However, these successes come at the expense of having any life beyond the classroom and his family. A private investigator for Oprah followed him for several weeks to make sure this guy was legitimate before Oprah gave him one of her prestigious awards, only to discover that there was no dirt to dig up. I bought my copy of his book back home and had read half of it prior to the conference. Having read about many of his honed successes made his presentation richer for me. Just one of many inspirations is his Film Club. He has spent several year building a film library and provides a list of 25 classics he requires his students to check out, view, review during their year with him. These films are not Disney, but ones like *On the Waterfront* (Special Edition), *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Collector's Edition), and *Saving Private Ryan* (Special Limited Edition). You're right--no censorship here, just good quality films. He figures they watch slasher movies, so why not good films that happen to contain violence. Another unit that is particularly impressive is art history, as well as creating art. Another is keeping baseball statistics. Another is keeping their own account book. Why do they need one? One of his biggest lessons is about handling money, budgeting, living within it. So, how do they make money? Rafe charges rent for the seats in his class, sets up job descriptions and "hires" his students to fill them. Students always return or email to tell of their various successes they accredit to him. I could go on. Teachers, this is a book you need to read to inspire and motivate you. No, you probably cannot emulate him (and probably wouldn't want to if you want a life), but you can learn from him and use some or many of his ideas. Remember, one or two things per year to create successes. I waited in a long line to get Rafe's autograph. Actually, I just wanted to thank him for his inspiration. Paired with two of his ideas and several from other workshop presenters (school can be fun and joy can be part of learning), my library lessons should knock students socks off in the fall. I want to be more than a Book Goddess. I want to be like Rafe (or at least a modified version)!

I absolutely love this book! Arrived in record time, in good packaging & in great condition. This book is a must read if you are just starting out or even if you have been teaching for years. There are so

many ideas to use from this book in your own classroom, I have placed post it notes all throughout the book to reference it again when school starts!

In his book *Teach Like Your Hair's on Fire*, Rafe Esquith combines two traits that distinguish the best teachers- knowledge and enthusiasm. After reading a library edition twice, I was so pleased to include this book as part of my permanent collection. As a teacher myself, I have made re-reading this book my annual summer refresher.

This book is a fantastic read for any teacher who loves his job. I started the book one day and could not put it down. I had it finished by noon the next day. There are great lesson ideas that I converted to fit the subject I teach. There were also great quotes, ideas, and projects. The book also led me to visiting the web to search out the YouTube videos, and the website for the Hobart Shakespeareans. I too work long hours and now realize that I am not alone in my love of students - only mine is for 8th graders. Rafe is a great teacher, one I hope to be remembered as.

This book was not bad. It didn't wow me like I had hoped it would though. There was something a little too self-congratulatory about the narrator's voice that didn't really hook me like it should have.

In this book, the author describes the methodology of his teaching, which is based on trust and Kohlberg's theory of moral development. In addition to describing lessons, he details every minute of his day from 6:30 a.m. until 6 p.m. and how he spends his time with his students. This book is an easy read, but it's hard to believe most of what Rafe does with his students. I've never read about a teacher so dedicated and hardworking that he even spends his Saturdays with students. My favorite part of the book was where Rafe describes the money system he uses in class to teach kids about organization, planning and the value of ownership. The only thing I disliked about the book was Rafe's self-righteous tone throughout.

Very good book. A lot of good ideas and inspiration

A quick read that inspires teachers to do more, give more, be more. Certainly not all of us can teach like Rafe, but we can read this book and remind ourselves of what a difference a teacher makes, and ask ourselves if we are giving our students our best. I did find many of his projects simple not doable in my district, which left me feeling discouraged. But I reminded myself that the call is to do

the best with what I can where I am. That I can do.

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