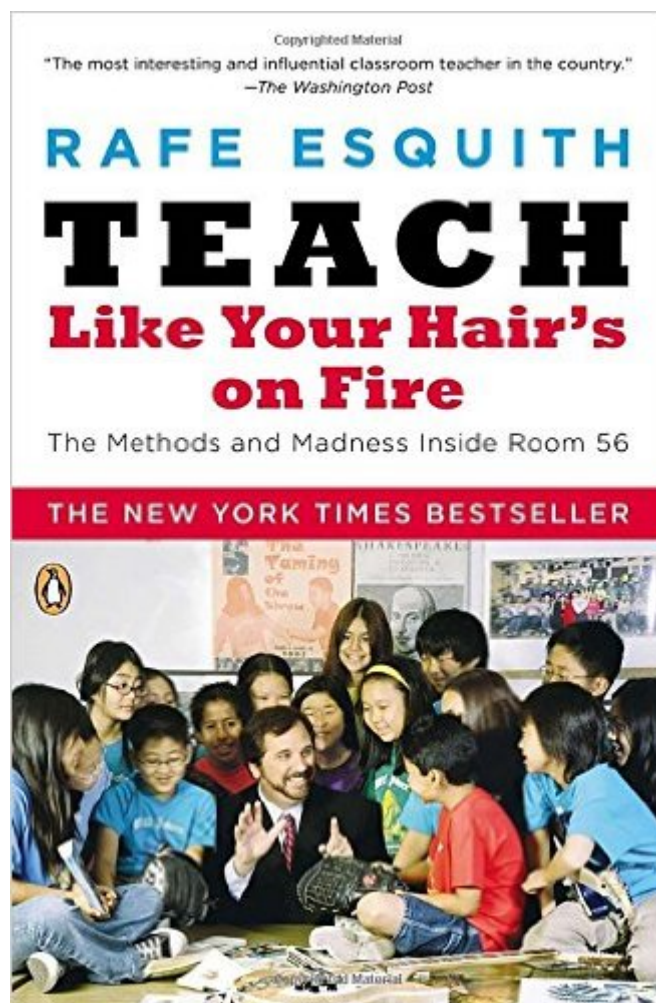


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# Teach Like Your Hair's On Fire: The Methods And Madness Inside Room 56



## 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

Rafe Esquith's latest book is aimed at teachers and parents, but the parent part is mostly lip service -- this is mainly a book for teachers. If you're interested in this "teacher of the year's" methods, this book may be worth a look. It is less so if you teach a particular subject, as the book is better suited to elementary teachers who are generalists and teach English, math, social studies, science, art, music, and gym (to name a few) because he devotes an entire chapter to each. High school and middle school teachers will find less of interest here. OK, so what is it you're looking for from a book like this? If you're more in it for Rafe's STORY and for what goes on in his classroom, have a ball. If you're more in it for selfish reasons -- that is, methods you might emulate yourself in the classroom,

proceed with care. There's no denying the book contains some useful advice and methods, but it also devotes much attention to matters beyond the realm and finances of most teachers -- full-play productions of Shakespeare, field trips that involve airplane flights (not buses) cross country, film festivals and book clubs held after school or at 6:30 in the morning. Clearly this is a devoted man and, by comparison, some teachers may feel depressed by all he pulls off (while still maintaining a life of his own). Highlights for me were the Six Levels (in which Rafe explains wrong reasons and right reasons that kids obey their teachers), the well-thought out attack on standardized testing (the bane of any school), and the overall iconoclastic tone. Also, a few of his ideas were illuminating. True, there were not a lot of practical ideas for the classroom, but there were some and some are bound to be of use for teacher/readers.

I read Rafe Esquith's *Teach Like Your Hair's on Fire* for an educational psychology class. I found his book to be very readable and full of practical information, but it is definitely for the most dedicated teachers. Esquith writes in a readable style that is entertaining and informative. The title itself shows this, but the point of the story about his hair being caught on fire is how he became so engrossed in helping a student with her science experiment that he didn't even realize what was happening to him. The student was also really impacted by his concern. Esquith uses many examples from his own students and experience throughout the book. An example of this would be when he describes his field trips to Washington D.C. He details, very specifically, what works for his class and why it is important not to overwhelm the kids with so many things to do. However, Esquith is a very exceptional teacher. He puts in over 12 hours a day, from the early morning to late at night, helping students who need additional help and providing before-school and after-school activities. It is evident that his extra time and effort is well-worth it, because he is helping under-privileged ESL students become world-renowned Hobart Shakespeareans. Many teachers will not have that time or level of dedication to commit to our careers, but I found some very practical suggestions which I could see incorporating into my classroom someday. First, I liked his theory of packing learning into every moment of every day. From the moment his students walk into the door in the morning they are learning and Esquith keeps up the momentum throughout the day. He packs as much in by incorporating material from different subjects into one activity, even in art and music.

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