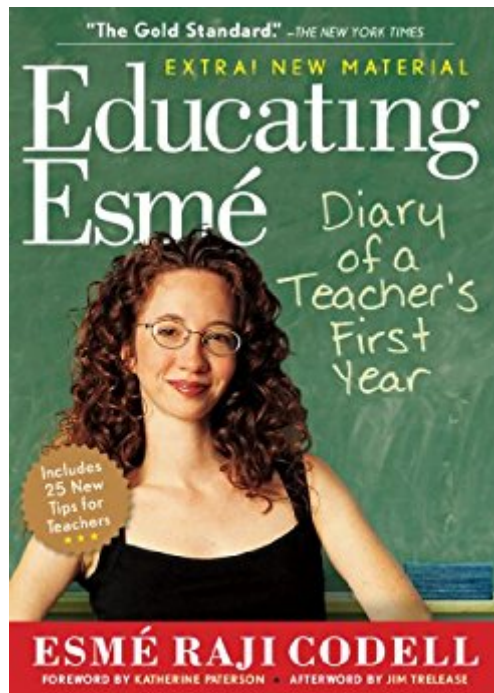


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# Educating Esmé: Diary Of A Teacher's First Year, Expanded Edition



## Synopsis

A must-read for parents, new teachers, and classroom veterans, *Educating Esmé* is the exuberant diary of Esmé Raji Codell's first year teaching in a Chicago public school. Fresh-mouthed and free-spirited, the irrepressible Madame Esmé "as she prefers to be called" does the cha-cha during multiplication tables, roller-skates down the hallways, and puts on rousing performances with at-risk students in the library. Her diary opens a window into a real-life classroom from a teacher's perspective. While battling bureaucrats, gang members, abusive parents, and her own insecurities, this gifted young woman reveals what it takes to be an exceptional teacher. Heroine to thousands of parents and educators, *Esmé* now shares more of her ingenious and yet down-to-earth approaches to the classroom in a supplementary guide to help new teachers hit the ground running. As relevant and iconoclastic as when it was first published, *Educating Esmé* is a classic, as is Madame Esmé herself.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I just finished reading this book, in one sitting. I was surprised to find the strong gut reactions that have prompted people to review it here. It is, after all, a diary, not a textbook on teaching methods

or a technical report on the state of public education. While I am sure it was edited before publication, it is still a diary, and sounds like it might be very much the way it was actually written at the time. A diary is not written while worrying about what other people will think of it. It is a space for your personal feelings and experiences. After all, if Esme Codell was trying to glorify herself as a teacher, why would she leave in passages describing those days when she just doesn't care, or hates the children she's teaching? This book is one person describing her experiences in her first year of teaching. Any new graduate, not just new teachers, leaving school with a degree in something they love, sure that they now have the knowledge and ability to change the world, will identify with Esme Codell. Whether or not you like her, or agree with her methods, that isn't the point of her writing. What she is sharing are her own personal feelings and experiences during her first year of teaching. How many other people out there would be willing to share their diaries, even edited, with others? Like her or not, you have to give her credit for what she did. After all, if we only read books written by people we like and whose ideas we agree with, it would be a pretty boring life! Note for librarians: the part where the author compares hookers to librarians is a blast, and it's meant as a compliment too!

Although teachers in suburban schools will find themselves longing for the freedom of speech that Madame Esme exercises when dealing with her superiors, they will at the same time find themselves vindicated by knowing that SOMEONE out there is telling administrators what for! As a first year teacher myself who felt as though I was drowning, this book gave me hope and laughter -- two necessary tools for surviving the first year in any school. I completely don't understand the reviewer who hated this book, claiming that not all teachers are "like that"; that "some of us have morals." This person must have read only a sentence or two in this book. Esme Codell has extremely lofty morals -- and all teachers should aspire to them. She has heart and creativity and strength. The only flaw to this book is that most first-year teachers are not as gifted and confident as Codell, so in that sense it may be difficult to relate to. However, it contains a wealth of fresh ideas, and like I said, those two magic ingredients of a teacher's survival -- hope and laughter.

I read this book all in one sitting because it was absolutely wonderful. I am one of those bright-eyed, cheery teachers-to-be who is certain she can change the world and I know I need a reality check every once in a while. Esme's spirit and uncensored voice are compelling. Her experiences will make you laugh and cry, and at times you might gasp in shock at the brutality in her truthfulness, but at no time do you lose touch with her sense of dedication. She responds to idiocracy and

teaches her children the only way she knows how--by doing what she KNOWS works and what is best for her students. After all, they learned their alphabet, their division, and to love reading. Shouldn't those be the measure of a great educator? I am a future teacher who has trouble standing up for myself. Esme does what she knows is right, never what she is told. This book showed me that I don't have to swallow the garbage that is shoveled at me. Thank you, Madam Esme, for teaching me confidence. PS: One negative reviewer who criticized just about everything in the book REALLY wanted to use the word "kowtowing" instead of that other misspelled one. Perhaps she could have used a few minutes in Madame Esme's class herself.

As a teacher who spent her first years teaching in inner city schools, I was curious and excited to read Educating Esme. I was disappointed that there was less introspection and too much self-promotion. I would be angry if I had been another teacher at this school because by "Madame" Esme's accounts, she is the only one who is working there. Her approach to teaching works for her, and I admire this and enjoyed reading about it. She is inventive and creative and helped her students a great deal. But, just because other teachers and administrators did not praise her every second and did not agree with all of her methodology, I felt she labeled them "bad," and this is not always the case. Looking in is always an enlightening experience. I enjoyed looking into Esme's classroom and came away with many great teaching ideas. Where this book falls short is looking at the long-term effects and their fundamental causes. Maybe I'm just a big picture type of person, but I thought Esme came across as very self-absorbed. A fast read, I think the title is misleading--Esme seems to believe that she has all of the education she needs.

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