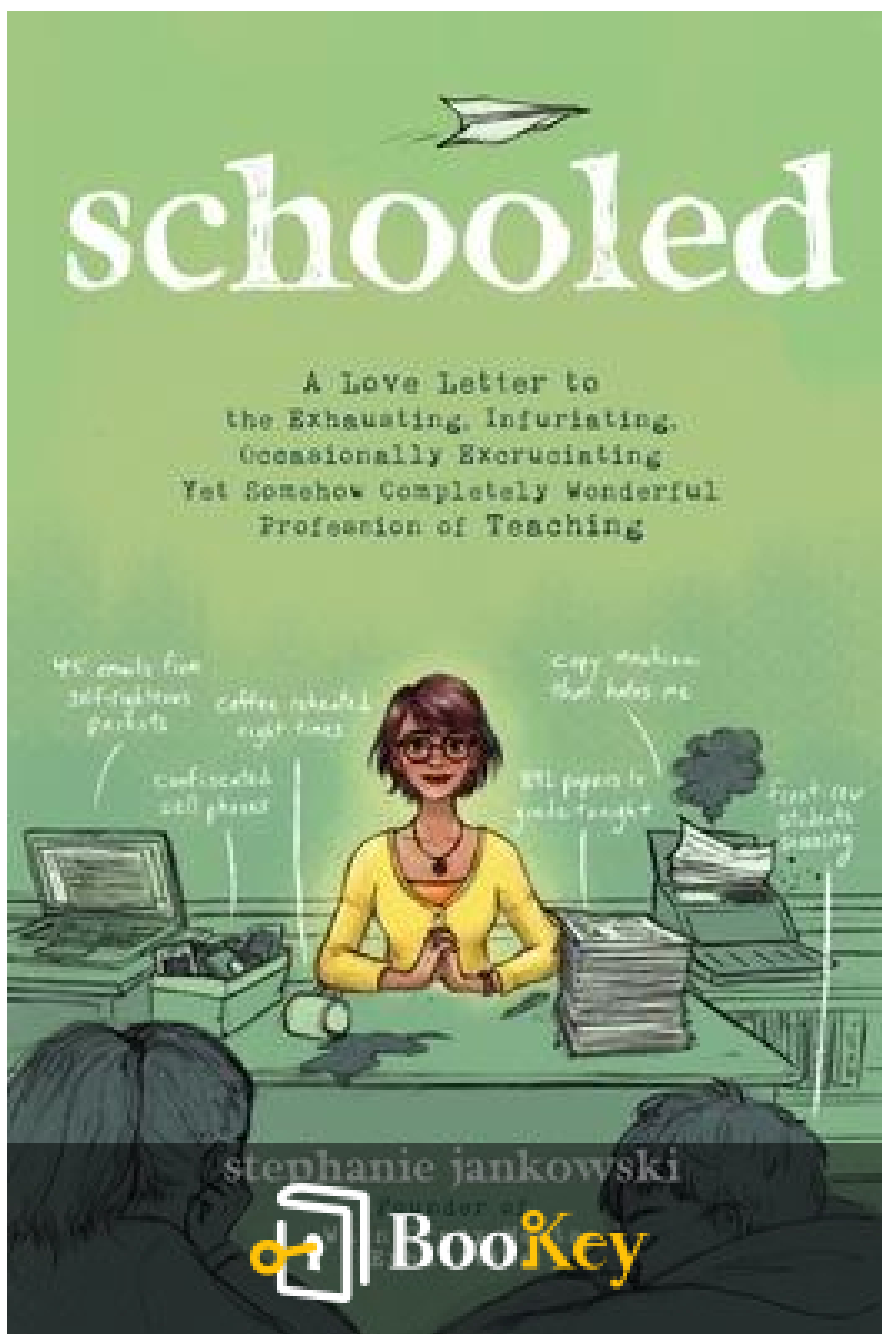


Schooled By Stephanie Jankowski PDF (Limited Copy)

Stephanie Jankowski



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Schooled By Stephanie Jankowski Summary

Navigating Education Through Passion and Resilience.

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About the book

In "Schooled," Stephanie Jankowski takes us on a poignant journey through the complexities of the education system, exposing its profound impact on both students and teachers alike. With an engaging narrative that weaves together humor and heartfelt stories, Jankowski explores the often-overlooked struggles within the classroom, challenging the traditional narratives of success and failure. This compelling memoir not only sheds light on the challenges faced by educators but also delves into the deeper connections formed in learning environments, prompting readers to reflect on the true essence of teaching and learning. Join her as she navigates the highs and lows of the profession, ultimately revealing a powerful message about resilience, passion, and the transformative power of education.

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About the author

Stephanie Jankowski is a passionate educator, writer, and advocate for student-centered teaching practices, known for her innovative approach to education and her lively storytelling that resonates with readers. Having spent over a decade in the classroom, she brings a wealth of firsthand experience and insights into the complexities of modern education, making her work relatable to teachers, parents, and students alike. Jankowski's writing often reflects her commitment to fostering an engaging and inclusive learning environment, highlighting the challenges and triumphs that come with the territory. With a keen eye for detail and a unique voice, she seeks to inspire others to embrace the unpredictability of the educational journey, as seen in her acclaimed book "Schooled."

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Chapter 1 Summary: When You're a 22-Year-Old Teacher and Your Students Are 18

Chapter Summary:

As a 22-year-old teacher, the protagonist navigates the challenging landscape of teaching high school students who are just a few years younger than herself. The chapter begins with a relatable scene of hall duty during which she confronts her colleague's misunderstanding — a frequent mix-up with the school nurse, Barbara, who repeatedly mistakes her for a student. This interaction sets the tone for the frustrations she faces daily, stemming primarily from her youth in a role that often demands authority and respect.

The narrative reveals the protagonist's struggle to establish her authority in a classroom full of students who view her as a peer rather than an authority figure. This dynamic is exemplified in a shocking encounter where a male student, demonstrating inappropriate behavior (air-humping), crosses lines of decency and respect in the classroom. Despite her efforts to maintain a professional environment, this incident brings forth a wave of humiliation and questioning of her authority, leaving her feeling powerless.

In the wake of the incident, she discusses the situation with the assistant principal, Mr. Pickmen, highlighting the importance of addressing

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behavioral issues with the right consequences. Mr. Pickmen offers a supportive yet demanding approach that holds the student accountable while empowering the protagonist to make decisions. Although she contemplates pressing charges, she ultimately decides against it, choosing instead an approach rooted in education rather than punishment. This experience shifts her perception of her own authority — rather than seeing her age as a hindrance, she recognizes that her youth allows her to forge meaningful connections with her students, relating to them as they navigate their own challenges.

Through this chapter, the protagonist learns that building relationships with her students and colleagues is essential for her growth as an educator. Her experiences, though frustrating, solidify her reputation as a fair yet firm teacher. This realization transforms her viewpoint: she embraces her youth as a distinct advantage that aids her in reaching and understanding her students, ultimately reinforcing the notion that learning from mistakes is crucial in both teaching and learning environments.

In conclusion, the chapter captures the highs and lows of a novice teacher's first year, emphasizing the lessons learned through trials of authority, respect, and the significance of empathy in education.



Chapter 2 Summary: A Teacher's Sixth Sense: I See Dead Dogs

In this chapter, the author, an English teacher, navigates the chaos of teaching Homer's **The Odyssey** to her sophomore class while dealing with an unexpected and morbid distraction: the sight of what appears to be a dead dog outside her classroom window. The teacher is dedicated to engaging her students, who naturally veer off topic with questions about the poem's more scandalous elements, such as Odysseus's interactions with goddesses and the infamous Sirens.

As the class discusses the themes of Greek hospitality, the teacher's attention is drawn to a peculiar lump partially obscured by melting snow, which she quickly identifies as a dead dog. A dog lover at heart, she experiences a wave of panic at the thought of the students discovering the grim reality outside. In a bid to maintain classroom focus, she discreetly signals her coteacher with "teacher eyes," communicating the impending crisis without alarming the students.

Her coteacher adeptly diverts the students' attention by drawing comparisons to pop culture, allowing the teacher to call the principal for help. To her surprise, the principal reacts calmly, instructing her to stay put while he dispatches the maintenance man to handle the situation. Despite her anxiety, she returns to the lesson, keeping the students unaware of the drama



unfolding outside.

The tension escalates when the maintenance man, not the stealthiest of individuals, clomps by carrying what seems to be the remains of a dead dog. The students, now distracted, witness him poking at the mysterious mass, heightening the absurdity of the situation. To the teacher's relief, what he ultimately produces is not a dog at all, but rather a mound of leaves – a comedic twist that alleviates her anxiety and allows her to regain control of the classroom.

After the mishap, the principal checks in on her, humorously reinforcing that the day's incident will become a schoolwide tale, while she reflects on her overly dramatic response. Her experience highlights the resilience found in both teaching and learning. Though distractions are inevitable, the lesson successfully resumes, mirroring Odysseus's journey as the students, much like the epic hero, persevere through challenges, ultimately completing their own educational odyssey.

In the end, the author offers a piece of wisdom for teachers: It's crucial to challenge and inspire students to cultivate a meaningful educational experience. Ultimately, despite the chaos, both the teacher and her students navigate through the turmoil, symbolizing the transformative nature of education amidst life's unpredictabilities.

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Chapter 3 Summary: Perspiration, Education, Transformation

In this chapter, the author reflects on their initial foray into teaching after graduating with a teaching degree. With a series of twenty-three interviews yielding no job offers, their confidence was dwindling until an unexpected opportunity arose: a five-week summer school program at a vocational building. While the job came easily, the conditions were far from ideal—no traditional classroom, oppressive heat, and a group of “at-risk” students from Hill High School who had behavioral issues attributed to their challenging backgrounds.

Recognizing that these students were often misunderstood, the author shifted their approach to teaching, moving beyond traditional lesson plans to connect with their students' lives. They engaged the students with relevant content, using music, newspapers, and personal essays to draw out their stories and create a learning environment built on mutual respect. Despite initial resistance, the author witnessed transformative progress as students found their voices and expressed their narratives through writing and rapping.

As the end of summer approached, the author encouraged students to participate in mock job interviews while pledging to apply for an English teaching position at Hill High School, interested in the opportunity they had



previously dismissed. During the interview, the author's newfound personal connection to teaching shone through, allowing them to engage genuinely and authentically with the interviewers. Shortly after, the author received the job offer, stemming from a heartfelt conversation during the interview about their teaching experiences and the students' impact on them.

In the concluding moments of summer school, a playful Hangman game on the chalkboard became a testament to the bond formed with the students. They cheered for the author, a stark contrast to their initial disinterest in school, affirming the powerful influence of the educational journey they shared. The author's reflections illustrate the profound realization that teaching is about much more than content delivery; it's about the personal connections formed with students that can ultimately shape an educator's identity. Through this experience, the author learned that true inspiration in education often arises from the struggles faced in the classroom, emphasizing the richness and complexity of teaching that transcends traditional narratives.

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Chapter 4: Education Is More Than a Single Story

In this chapter, the author—a white female educator—delves into the crucial and often uncomfortable topic of race in education, primarily targeting her fellow white teachers. Acknowledging that many educators in the United States are white, she emphasizes that open discussions about race, privilege, and social inequalities are essential for fostering a more inclusive educational environment. Through her own experiences, she highlights how her ignorance about institutional racism was molded by a sheltered upbringing marked by a lack of deep conversations regarding race.

The author recounts how a pivotal friendship with a classmate named April, one of the few nonwhite students in her predominately white school, opened her eyes to the “whitewashed” nature of the curriculum—where only a limited representation of nonwhite contributions was presented, often framed through a lens of victimization. This experience serves as a catalyst for her advocacy for inclusivity in educational materials, as she believes that a diverse curriculum can significantly enhance students' connection to their learning experiences.

Once she began teaching at Hill High School, a Title I institution serving many racially diverse students, the author was struck by the disconnect between the curriculum and the backgrounds of her students. With the support of a progressive department chair, they revamped the curriculum to



include more diverse authors and cultural resources, aiming for a more complete representation of histories and experiences.

Throughout the chapter, the author outlines practical strategies for educators:

1. **Language Matters:** The use of terms like "at-risk" can unintentionally perpetuate negative stereotypes. She urges teachers to refer to students by their names instead of labels that imply inferiority.
2. **Build Genuine Relationships:** Authentic care and engagement with students are vital; they can quickly recognize insincerity.
3. **Fashion Misjudgments:** The author discusses preconceived notions about students' attire, exemplified by her misunderstanding of a student's fashion choices, reinforcing the notion that assumptions based on appearance are misleading.
4. **Expand the Narrative:** Educators should strive to integrate diverse cultures into their teaching materials, addressing social issues and including the contributions of various cultural figures beyond the typical historical narratives.
5. **Set High Expectations:** Disregarding students' backgrounds to lower



academic standards is detrimental; instead, educators should support and challenge students, providing them with the necessary tools to succeed.

6. Diversity Among Educators: The chapter advocates for increasing the representation of nonwhite teachers in schools, stressing the profound impact that relatable role models can have on students.

7. Cultural Awareness Training The author calls for more guidance on cultural competence in teacher training programs, urging educators to engage with their students' communities to better understand their backgrounds.

8. Family Engagement: Collaborating with students' families can enhance their educational experience, as familial support can significantly influence student success.

9. Recognizing Privilege: Understanding one's privilege is essential. The author encourages educators to acknowledge and reflect on their advantages to better understand the challenges their students face.

10. Provide Opportunities: Educational environments should offer students enriching experiences they might not otherwise encounter, helping them realize their potential.



11. **Empathy and Understanding:** Awareness of the daily realities of students of color is vital for effectively supporting their learning journeys.

12. **Interpreting Behavioral Cues:** The author reflects on how understanding underlying emotions can be key to connecting with students, as often their bravado masks fear or insecurity.

In conclusion, the author urges educators to embrace discomfort, prioritize genuine connections with their students, and advocate for their needs, all while maintaining a strong commitment to creating a more equitable educational landscape. By facing their biases and persevering through challenging conversations, teachers can contribute to meaningful change in the lives of their students.

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Chapter 5 Summary: That's Just My Gallbladder Exploding

Chapter Summary: That's Just My Gallbladder Exploding

In this chapter, the narrator, a dedicated teacher, humorously reflects on the challenges she faces in balancing her hydration needs with the demands of her teaching schedule. With three consecutive hours of teaching after morning coffee, the only time she manages to find relief is just before lunch. She's learned to carefully calibrate her water intake to avoid any unfortunate accidents in front of her students. Despite her best efforts, she finds herself grappling with debilitating pain during class, which she tries to mask in front of her oblivious teenagers.

As the pain worsens, she feels as though she's being attacked by an unseen force, yet she resists the urge to leave the classroom, not wanting to alarm her students. Instead, she settles into her chair, trying to breathe through the discomfort, when the dismissal bell finally rings. However, her students notice her distress, and their concern leads to a call for help. Referring to their school nurse, humorously dubbed "Nurse Ratched," the narrator recalls her less-than-stellar encounters with the nurse in the past.

When the nurse arrives, her frantic demeanor both frightens the students and



prompts them to clear a path, revealing the urgency of the narrator's condition. With guidance from her students, she is wheeled across the school, attracting the attention of inquisitive onlookers. Once in the nurse's office, panic ensues as the nurse takes her temperature and repeats the same questions multiple times. Realizing the gravity of the situation, the narrator opts to call her mother for a ride to the hospital.

The chapter captures the comical tension as her mother, more concerned about her own appearance than the crisis at hand, races to the school. After an embarrassing jaunt through the hallways in a wheelchair, the narrator arrives at the hospital to find that her gallbladder is diseased but hasn't burst. Though relieved it isn't an emergency, she's scheduled for surgery, particularly given potential future plans for pregnancy.

The humor continues as she feels better the following morning and chooses to return to work instead of using her sick days, surprising everyone with her rapid recovery. She presents her principal with a doctor's note that humorously grants her explicit permission to use the restroom at will, much to his amusement.

Teacher Tip

Amidst the chaos and humor, the narrator wisely advises that when dealing with other adults, particularly in a school setting, it's important not to stress over what you can't control, emphasizing the need for resilience in the face



of unreasonable situations.

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Chapter 6 Summary: Throw a Chair at Your Colleague! And Other Conflict-Resolution Don'ts

In a humorous yet poignant exploration of the challenges educators face, the chapter titled "Throw a Chair at Your Colleague! And Other Conflict-Resolution Don'ts" recounts the narrator's experience with a colleague who arrives at school intoxicated. This alarming situation underscores the high expectations and scrutiny teachers endure—they are held to stricter standards than their peers in other professions.

The narrative begins with the inexplicable sight of a fellow teacher appearing at school drunk, leaving students and staff in disbelief. Despite the seriousness of the situation, the intoxicated teacher returns the next day without acknowledging her misconduct, which frustrates the narrator, who feels compelled to cover for her. The author reflects on the stress of the teaching profession, humorously contemplating the unprofessional responses to conflicts that would arise in a heated teaching environment, especially in a particularly grueling year.

The chapter then presents a series of exaggerated, tongue-in-cheek "resolutions" to various common conflicts teachers face. These outlandish suggestions highlight the absurdity of the situations while also providing a comedic escape from real frustrations. For instance, when dealing with a lazy coteacher, the narrator provocatively suggests simply not showing up to



work for a week—an obviously impractical solution.

With tongue firmly planted in cheek, alternatives for conflict with a confrontational colleague include a physical lunge across a meeting room, while facing challenges like impossible parent requests or oversight by indifferent administrators lead to equally absurd responses, such as staging protests or making light of serious issues in an irreverent manner.

Through hyperbolic scenarios—like robbing a supply store dressed as a mascot or launching water balloons at persistently interruptive colleagues—the author sheds light on the dark humor that helps teachers cope with daily frustrations. By inviting readers to laugh at dark possibilities, the chapter effectively conveys the essential survival strategy of humor in the teaching profession, ultimately reminding us about the importance of finding joy in the face of adversity.

In a profession filled with high-stakes stressors, from administrative hurdles to student challenges, this chapter champions the cathartic power of laughter while shining a light on the realities of being an educator in a demanding system. By appropriately channeling those frustrations into humor, the narrator insists that a teacher must have an outlet—be it comic or otherwise—to survive the rigors of the job without succumbing to despair.



Chapter 7 Summary: Today's Kids

Summary of Chapters: Today's Kids and Teacher Truth

In the context of local governance in schools, community members typically engage in running for school board positions to positively impact education, usually serving selflessly. However, the narrative takes a darker turn as the author recounts personal experiences from 2003, illustrating the dangers of power-hungry individuals who mask their agendas under the guise of community safety and improvement. The author, who works in a high school, observes this firsthand when the school's nontraditional leadership—a white female principal and a black male assistant principal—becomes the target of a fear-based campaign led by a group of community members eager to impose their conservative values. These individuals, fueled by bigotry, threaten the status quo, creating a palpable tension that seeps into the school environment.

During a tense parent-teacher conference, the author encounters one of these board candidates, an imposing figure in a tracksuit, who expresses disdain for the administration instead of addressing his child's distress. His presence, along with other board members, creates an antagonistic atmosphere that ultimately leads to their election and an ominous agenda to oust the current principals.



On the night of the school board meeting intended to approve these changes, an unexpectedly large crowd, comprising supportive students donned in T-shirts and armed with thoughtful speeches, gathered to defend their principals. This movement revealed the students' activism, illustrating their passion for education and their ability to articulate their thoughts eloquently. Their courage and commitment moved the author to tears, showcasing an admirable sense of advocacy that is often overlooked in perceptions of today's youth.

Despite the students' heartfelt efforts, the board's decision had already been made, leading to the principal's reassignment and her assistant's eventual departure to a new district. This moment represents a profound disappointment juxtaposed with the uplifting realization of the students' capabilities and determination.

As the school community grapples with the fallout from this upheaval, the author reflects on the lessons learned from the students' activism. Their bravery in defending their school underscores the potential of today's youth, challenging negative stereotypes. The author vows to defend and champion the sincerity and passion of today's kids, recognizing that they possess an incredible strength that should be acknowledged.



The concluding segment, "Teacher Truth," and its preceding segments emphasize that teachers' experiences extend beyond simply teaching academic content. They also carry the emotional weight of their students' experiences and developments, including the painful farewells associated with losing beloved colleagues. This truth serves as a reminder of the profound connections formed within educational spaces and the lasting impact of teaching on both students and educators.

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Chapter 8: No Degree Prepares You for a Permanent Good-Bye

Chapter Summary: No Degree Prepares You for a Permanent Good-Bye

The journey of a first-year teacher is often filled with unforeseen realities that no formal education can adequately prepare one for. The author reflects on their initial year in the classroom, realizing that while they were trained to convey academic concepts effectively, they had not been equipped to handle the emotional complexities of teaching. An incident involving a student—a seventeen-year-old girl who tragically died in a car accident—serves as a pivotal moment in the author's career, shaking their focus on delivering lessons while fostering a genuine connection with their students.

In the wake of the student's death, the school community grapples with deep grief. The author feels conflicted, torn between the need to teach and the overwhelming sadness that envelops their students. With grief counselors being made available, the author wrestles with how to create a semblance of normalcy in the classroom. The principal's reminder that the needs of the students must take precedence helps the author recognize the importance of prioritizing student well-being even amid personal sorrow.

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The chapter emphasizes a crucial lesson learned through pain: the necessity of being present and nurturing relationships with students rather than racing toward academic milestones. The author acknowledges that their initial approach, driven by efficiency and goal-oriented planning, forced them to miss valuable moments of connection that contribute to the learning experience. It took this heart-wrenching loss to illuminate the importance of understanding the 'who' in teaching—an aspect of education that cannot be taught in the classroom but must be learned through experience.

Through these reflections, the author reveals a transformation in perspective; they began to appreciate the spontaneous and often unplanned interactions with students that enrich their teaching experience. The balance between achieving academic objectives and nurturing individual student growth becomes the new focus, fostering an environment where emotional connections thrive alongside learning.

Chapter Summary: The Day Will Come When You'll Want to Quit, but You Shouldn't. Probably.

In this chapter, the challenges of teaching are laid bare as the author contemplates the inevitable moments of doubt and frustration that come with

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the profession. Teaching, inherently challenging, is filled with obstacles that can make even the most dedicated educators question their resolve. The author reflects on their journey, recognizing that they have encountered situations that have tested their patience and commitment.

As the narrative unfolds, the author shares anecdotes highlighting the burnout and emotional toll experienced by teachers. Yet, rather than succumbing to despair, the author underscores the importance of perseverance in the face of adversity. They reflect on the various reasons one might consider quitting—from challenging student behaviors to overwhelming workloads—but emphasize that resilience is crucial.

The author introduces the idea that while moments of doubt might surface, they often serve as a catalyst for growth and reflection. It is within these struggles that teachers can find their strengths and discover innovative strategies to engage their students. The narrative encourages a sense of community among educators, reminding them that they are not alone in their struggles.

Ultimately, the chapter concludes with a message of hope and determination. The author encourages fellow educators to lean into their challenges and to remember the profound impact they have on their students' lives. By persevering through difficult times, teachers not only enrich the learning environment but also affirm their passion for education and the difference



they can make.

Together, these chapters illustrate the profound complexities of teaching, blending lessons of personal growth with the shared experiences of educators striving to make a lasting impact in their students' lives.

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Chapter 9 Summary: The Day Will Come When You'll Want to Quit, but You Shouldn't. Probably.

In this reflective chapter, the author candidly addresses the challenges and frustrations educators face in their profession. Drawing from personal experiences, she acknowledges that despite their deep commitment and passion for teaching, many educators feel weighed down by external pressures such as standardized testing, lack of support, and bureaucratic hurdles that can stifle their creativity and motivation.

The chapter begins with the author's lighthearted musings on her personal shortcomings, setting the stage for the central theme: the desire for improvement and fulfillment in both personal and professional lives. She empathizes with fellow educators, recognizing that the emotional toll of teaching can lead to burnout and a desire to quit when aspirations feel unattainable. This sense of hopelessness is further exacerbated by the relentless scrutiny and negative portrayal of the education system in the media.

However, amidst this disillusionment, the author encourages teachers to reclaim their passion for teaching by reconnecting with their purpose. She emphasizes that the transformative power of education lies within each teacher's capacity to inspire and connect with their students. This is highlighted through her own experience as an adviser to a student-led step



team, which not only improved students' engagement in the classroom but also fostered meaningful relationships. By stepping outside her comfort zone and investing time in her students' extracurricular interests, she built rapport and trust, leading to improvements in academic performance and personal growth among her students.

The author provides practical steps for teachers to create stronger connections with their students, underscoring that small gestures can make a significant difference. Simple actions such as greeting students at the door, dedicating brief moments to discuss personal topics, and celebrating individual achievements can greatly impact student morale. She advocates for fostering a positive classroom environment through kindness, humor, and respectful communication, especially with students who may exhibit challenging behavior due to their personal struggles.

Moreover, she stresses the importance of teacher collaboration and mutual support among colleagues, encouraging educators to uplift one another in their shared mission. By focusing on the positive aspects of teaching and finding joy in small victories, educators can mitigate feelings of burnout and disengagement, ensuring that they remain passionate about their roles.

In conclusion, the chapter serves as a motivational call to educators to persist in their efforts to make a difference. It highlights the intrinsic rewards of teaching and encourages teachers to nurture their connections with students



and colleagues, ultimately fostering a more supportive and enriching educational environment.

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Chapter 10 Summary: Why Do I Kind of Hate This Job?

Chapter Summary: "Why Do I Kind of Hate This Job?"

The author begins by reflecting on her initial choice to pursue a journalism degree, believing it would allow her to interact closely with people.

Disillusioned after one semester, she recognized the disconnect between her extroverted nature and the isolating realities of journalism. Eventually, she decided to heed her mother's advice and switched to an education major, instantly feeling at home among students who are navigating their growth into adulthood. Teaching became a source of passion and purpose for her, as it offered a chance to make a meaningful impact on the future.

However, the author grapples with the frustrations inherent to teaching, particularly stemming from the very students she wanted to work with. She humorously details her struggles with different types of students—from the apathetic “indifferent brains” who exhibit jaded cynicism to the disruptive "Destroyers" who create chaos in the classroom. A vivid anecdote about a classroom fight resulting in shattered windows illustrates the unpredictable nature of teaching and the constant challenges teachers face.

The author expresses dismay over the challenging behaviors associated with student apathy, particularly during the end of the school year—a

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phenomenon she humorously terms “ASS” (Annual Student Shutdown). This phase leads to chaotic behavior, prompting feelings of desperation among teachers as they seek to maintain structure and engagement.

Integrating poignant reflections, the author highlights the struggles some students face outside of school—issues like homelessness, family instability, and mental health challenges that inevitably impact their classroom experiences. A specific incident involving a student reacting violently to Edgar Allan Poe's work underscores the deep emotional burdens carried by many students. These stories provoke feelings of helplessness for the author, as educators are often unable to intervene effectively in areas outside their control.

The narrative shifts to the author's interactions with fellow educators, revealing the unexpected frustrations that can arise among peers. An encounter with a resistant colleague showcases the challenges of innovative teaching amidst complacency. The author also discusses the often-complex relationships with school administrators, illustrating the tension between the officials who inspire positive change and those who hinder progress due to complacency or micromanagement.

Yet, despite these challenges, the author emphasizes that the unpredictability and diversity of daily interactions with students and faculty can enhance the teaching experience. While some days may feel unbearably difficult, there is



hope in the promise of tomorrow. The author encourages fellow educators to embrace each day as a new opportunity, reminding them that the rewards of teaching—like witnessing a student’s breakthrough or earning a diploma—make the struggle worthwhile.

In conclusion, while the author candidly acknowledges the frustrations of teaching, she also reflects on the resilience needed to persist. The journey requires navigating through disappointments and celebrating small victories, as each day brings the potential for renewal and reaffirmation of one’s commitment to the teaching vocation.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: The importance of resilience in the face of challenges

Critical Interpretation: Just like the author realizes that each day in teaching presents new struggles and opportunities, you too can find inspiration in embracing resilience in your life. When faced with difficulties, remember that every setback is a chance for growth and renewal. Just as the teacher persists through chaotic classrooms, you can navigate the ups and downs of your circumstances, finding strength in small victories along the way. Each obstacle you overcome may lead to new opportunities and a deeper understanding of your purpose, reminding you that perseverance is the key to fulfilling your aspirations.

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Chapter 11 Summary: Meeting the Tree

In this chapter, the author delves into the complex dynamics of parent-teacher conferences, using the metaphor of trees to symbolize different types of parents and their influence on their children—students in the classroom. The discussion begins with the understanding that teachers often see firsthand how parenting styles shape the behaviors and attitudes of their students.

The chapter categorizes parents into three archetypes based on their responses during conferences: the Weeping Willow, the Burning Bush, and the Poison Oak.

1. The Weeping Willow: This type of parent is in denial about their child's behavior and often expresses shock when informed of academic or disciplinary issues. For instance, Carlos, a student who is disruptive but not malicious, becomes the centerpiece of a meeting with his mother, who expresses anger toward her son for his behavior but ultimately fails to enact meaningful change. Her defensive posture reveals that she is more concerned with appearances than actual parenting—a classic example of how the Weeping Willow's denial leads to no real accountability for the child.

2. The Burning Bush: These parents are confrontational and defensive,



believing their child can do no wrong. They refuse to accept any criticism of their child's actions, as demonstrated with the case of Julie, who consistently fails to submit assignments on time. Instead of acknowledging her responsibilities, her parents blame the teacher's expectations and demand special treatment, ultimately rejecting any constructive feedback in favor of their narrative. This type of dynamic can lead to a cycle of underachievement for the student, rarely encouraging the necessary growth or accountability.

3. The Poison Oak: Unlike the previous two types, the Poison Oak parent approaches the situation more subtly, often refusing to engage directly with the teacher while carefully gathering perceived grievances from their child. An encounter with the parents of a student named Pat demonstrates this approach, where the father brings a notebook of complaints instead of fostering open dialogue. Their insistence on blaming the teacher for the student's failures points to an inability to recognize the student's lack of effort as the real issue.

Despite these challenging interactions, the author emphasizes that not all trees are negative. There exist many supportive parents who actively engage in their child's education. These proactive and understanding parents cultivate a positive relationship with teachers and foster a collaborative environment that benefits the students. Their children often display a solid work ethic and contribute positively in class, highlighting the critical role



that healthy parental support plays in education.

In summary, the author skillfully analyzes the varied parent behaviors that teachers encounter, shedding light on how these dynamics affect student experiences and outcomes. The chapter serves as a reminder for educators to not overlook the many positive influences among the parents they work with, urging them to focus on the strengths and encouraging relationships that make teaching rewarding amidst the trials of parent interactions.

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Chapter 12: Zip It, Lock It, Put It in Your Pocket: What Teachers Say vs. What We Mean

In the chapter titled "Zip It, Lock It, Put It in Your Pocket: What Teachers Say vs. What We Mean," the author shares an insightful commentary on the duality of a teacher's public persona versus their private thoughts. The inspiration for the chapter comes from a memorable phrase shared by the author's son, which serves as a humorous reminder to maintain silence in challenging situations.

The chapter illustrates the intricate balancing act teachers perform throughout their careers, where they must adhere to an unspoken code of professional decorum. There are frequent moments when teachers are tempted to express their true feelings, ranging from exasperation to disbelief, regarding various scenarios that arise both in the classroom and beyond. For instance, when parents who have been unresponsive throughout the year suddenly demand immediate action regarding their child's assignments, teachers think, "Now you care?!" but must respond with a polite, "I appreciate your concern."

Various examples highlight this disconnect between thought and spoken word, showcasing the mental gymnastics teachers undertake. A teacher might feel incredulous when a student asks for extra credit after neglecting their responsibilities, yet they respond positively, showing support for



student motivation. Similarly, when faced with unexpected administrative requests or parents engaging in awkward conversations about their children in social settings, teachers must maintain professionalism while silently grappling with their frustrations.

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Chapter 13 Summary: Secret Shortcuts and Level-Up Partners for Teachers

In "Secret Shortcuts and Level-Up Partners for Teachers," the author emphasizes the indispensable role of various colleagues in a school setting. Drawing on personal experience as a parent and educator, the author humorously highlights the challenges of teaching young students, such as managing a classroom of kindergartners. This necessity breeds creativity and resourcefulness among teachers, who often seek out shortcuts and innovative methods to optimize their limited time each day.

The chapter introduces a colorful cast of characters—each exemplifying a unique trait or skill that supports the educational environment. First is the **Ingenuity Genius**, often from maintenance, who possesses the innovative problem-solving skills akin to a modern-day MacGyver. Following that is **Red**, named after a character from *The Shawshank Redemption*, revered for his knack for acquiring resources, from classroom supplies to lesson plans, while being subtly but appreciatively rewarded by grateful coworkers.

Then there's the **Local Historian**, usually a long-tenured secretary, who serves as the memory of the school, recalling past events and familial connections that help bridge communication gaps. The **Building Tech Guru** provides much-needed technical assistance, often becoming the go-to person

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for troubleshooting, while the **Pseudo-Parent**, typically the department chair, offers emotional support and sage advice to stressed colleagues.

The **Mouthpiece**, a representative of staff interests, fearlessly advocates for teachers' rights, while the **Work Spouse** offers emotional camaraderie, creating a shoulder to lean on during tough days or sharing laughter over inside jokes. The **Fixer** is the maintenance staff member who addresses urgent repairs and issues with efficiency and expertise, complementing the roles of the **Baker**, who nurtures the morale of the team with baked goods.

The **Principal's Pet** emerges as the diligent note-taker during meetings, ensuring that no important announcements are missed, and the **Across-the-Hall Friend** stands ready to assist with logistical needs, such as supervising students during bathroom breaks. Finally, the **Sixth Sense**, often embodied by bus drivers or librarians, provides invaluable insights into student behavior outside the classroom, enhancing teachers' awareness.

These individuals are the backbone of school life, offering support in numerous ways that outshine mere teaching hacks found online. By highlighting this network of support, the author encourages educators to recognize and appreciate the invaluable contributions of their colleagues, suggesting that by asking the Principal's Pet, one can uncover who fills these essential roles.



In the next chapter, titled “The Month of May Can Go Straight to Hell,” the author sets the stage for the trials and tribulations that come with the end of the school year. It hints at the chaos and pressures that educators often face during this demanding month, suggesting a forthcoming exploration of the challenges that arise as the school year winds down.

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Chapter 14 Summary: The Month of May Can Go Straight to Hell

In "The Month of May Can Go Straight to Hell," the author outlines the extreme challenges faced by teachers during the month of May, humorously portraying it as a chaotic time unlike any other in the academic calendar. This chapter serves as a cathartic venting session about the overwhelming grind that marks this critical period for educators, juxtaposed against the idyllic appearance of spring.

As the school year progresses, it begins with September's fresh promise, where students return excitedly, and teachers are rejuvenated after summer. October brings a brief calm, punctuated only by Halloween's sugar-fueled chaos. November offers a welcome respite with parent-teacher conferences and Thanksgiving, while December is filled with holiday spirit and the anticipation of a long break. January brings a fresh resolve, yet the months of February and March—combined into the wearisome "Farch"—drag on with no significant holidays to lift spirits.

April marks a return to routine disrupted only by testing and the cherished spring break. But then arrives May, heralded by the false promise of its beautiful weather. Externally serene with bright skies and blooming flowers, internally, the school environment is anything but peaceful. May encroaches upon classroom dynamics with an avalanche of activities: from field trips



and final exams to senior events and awards ceremonies, making it nearly impossible for teachers to deliver consistent lessons.

The author paints a vivid picture of classrooms turned into sweltering chaos, where physical discomfort intensifies the stress of an already jam-packed schedule. Allergies exacerbate the issues, creating an unbearable atmosphere as educators and students alike struggle to stay focused. This is compounded by the return of students who have vanished since the first semester, now scrambling for extra credit when they haven't completed their regular assignments.

Additionally, the mounting pressure influences even the normally diligent administrators and fellow educators, who start to lower academic standards under the weight of May's frantic demands. Teachers who are also parents face compounded burdens, juggling school obligations with their children's end-of-year activities.

As May wears on, anxiety and exhaustion take hold, leading teachers to recognize that achieving a balance is nearly impossible. Embracing the chaos becomes imperative, as they learn to survive the month on quick meals, a begrudging acceptance of a chaotic life, and the understanding that they must be zombies in both classrooms and homes until summer breaks the cycle.



The chapter ends on a supportive note, reminding educators of their impactful role throughout the school year, encouraging them to step back on weekends, take care of themselves, and acknowledge their extraordinary contributions even as they navigate the tempest that May brings. Overall, this section humorously encapsulates the trials and tribulations of teaching during a month that feels like an endurance test, emphasizing the need for resilience, patience, and self-compassion among educators.

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Chapter 15 Summary: Things Every Teacher Needs

Chapter Summary: Things Every Teacher Needs

In this chapter, the author reflects on the stark contrast between how public education is prioritized compared to professional sports. She imagines a world where schools have the same resources and community support as sports teams, highlighting how much more teachers could achieve if they had access to essential tools and facilities. Inspired by figures like LeBron James, who invests in education, she humorously requests financial backing for her outlandish ideas to improve the teaching profession.

Among her whimsical suggestions is a call for an **increased salary** for teachers, drawing a parallel between teaching and babysitting to argue that teachers' compensation should reflect the responsibilities they carry. She also proposes an **in-school pharmacy**, stocked with health supplies, so educators can combat the germs that often run rampant in classrooms.

Additionally, the author suggests that teachers could benefit from **personal assistants** to alleviate the burdens of daily administrative tasks, enabling them to focus more on teaching. She expresses her frustration at the lack of teacher involvement in **policy-making**, emphasizing that educators should have a voice in national educational initiatives.



With mental well-being in mind, she advocates for the presence of **resident therapists** to help teachers cope with stress, offering services ranging from massages to professional development focused on self-care. The chapter also includes a lighthearted wish for schools to accommodate **therapy dogs**, which are shown to lower stress levels and enhance literacy learning among students.

Despite the largely fantastical nature of her proposals, the author offers practical tips for teachers to care for themselves, such as leaving work on time, engaging in social activities, and learning to say no to avoid burnout. She reinforces the importance of prioritizing mental health and personal well-being, reiterating that teachers play a crucial role in shaping the future and deserve recognition and support.

The chapter closes with a reminder of the value educators bring to society, encouraging them to take small steps to enhance their daily lives, and a humorous yet poignant suggestion to find laughter amidst the challenges.

Chapter Summary: Laugh so you don't cry. Or at least laugh after you cry.
The Time I Said the C-Word at a School Assembly (and Wasn't Fired!)

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In this humorous recounting, the author shares a memorable incident during a school assembly where she accidentally used a curse word, unintentionally shocking both students and faculty. The story illustrates the high-pressure environment teachers often navigate and the inherent risks of humorous slip-ups in professional settings.

Amidst the chaos following her verbal blunder, the author reflects on the thin line teachers tread between maintaining authority and being relatable to students. The chapter captures laughter as a coping mechanism, serving as both a relief from daily stresses and a reminder that mistakes can provide valuable learning experiences.

Through her anecdote, the author conveys the significance of humor in teaching, illustrating how even inconvenient moments can unite a school community through shared laughter. Ultimately, it celebrates the resilience of educators and the importance of self-forgiveness in a profession filled with challenges.

Chapter Title	Summary
Things Every Teacher Needs	This chapter discusses the need for better resources and support for teachers, comparing education to professional sports. The author humorously suggests increased salaries, in-school pharmacies, personal assistants, and resident therapists for teachers. She emphasizes the importance of teacher involvement in policy-making and advocates for mental well-being through self-care practices. The

Chapter Title	Summary
	chapter concludes by highlighting teachers' crucial role in society and encourages them to prioritize their mental health.
Laugh so you don't cry. Or at least laugh after you cry. The Time I Said the C-Word at a School Assembly (and Wasn't Fired!)	<p>This humorous recounting details an incident where the author accidentally used a curse word during a school assembly. It illustrates the pressures teachers face and the challenges of maintaining authority while being relatable. The story shows the importance of humor as a coping mechanism and how shared laughter can strengthen school communities. The chapter celebrates the resilience of educators and emphasizes the value of self-forgiveness amid professional challenges.</p>

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Chapter 16: The Time I Said the C-Word at a School Assembly (and Wasn't Fired!)

In the chapter "The Time I Said the C-Word at a School Assembly (and Wasn't Fired!)," the author reflects on the highs and lows of her teaching experience, illustrating the emotional investment she has in her students. This commitment mirrors the responsibilities of parenthood, highlighting the dual role of an educator as both a teacher and a role model. She emphasizes the importance of setting a positive example, particularly as one of the younger faculty members, aware that her choices influence her students, especially young girls.

The narrative takes a humorous turn during a pivotal school assembly organized to honor students for both academic and personal achievements. The author is overwhelmed with pride as she prepares to introduce a group of exemplary students who typically don't receive much recognition. However, the moment turns disastrous when she accidentally slips up and uses the word "cuntless" instead of "countless" while extolling their virtues. The auditorium falls silent, punctuated only by gasps and muffled giggles as she grapples with the mortification of her blunder.

Despite her profound embarrassment, the author pushes through the remainder of her speech, all while desperately trying to salvage her dignity. The reactions of her colleagues range from shock to amusement,



highlighting her unintentional faux pas' absurdity. Back in her classroom, the email exchanges from colleagues are a mix of sympathy and light-hearted jests that underscore the community's supportive spirit.

Despite her initial fears of ruining the students' moment and her own

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Chapter 17 Summary: Teamwork, Honest Dialogue and Pizza: A Recipe for Improving Your School

In the opening chapter titled "Teamwork, Honest Dialogue and Pizza: A Recipe for Improving Your School," the author recounts their unique first day as a new hire at Hill High School, a school characterized by its challenging environment. Instead of a typical orientation, the new teachers were taken on a tour of the surrounding neighborhoods, which were marked by poverty and decay. The principal emphasized the importance of understanding the students' home lives, highlighting the struggles they faced daily, from violence to food insecurity. This context paints a vivid picture of the obstacles that would impede students' focus on education.

The author develops an understanding that many students viewed school simply as a source of nutrition and social interaction, rather than a venue for learning. Despite the grim setting, the author had formed a connection with some students during summer school, although challenges like frequent fights and a culture of apathy presented ongoing hurdles to educational success. Notably, male fights were common but often did not escalate to involve female teachers, while girl fights were more unpredictable and dangerous.

Realizing that conventional educational methods were inadequate for such a diverse student body, the staff sought a innovative approach to foster



collaboration and engagement among their students. They initiated a unique outreach program involving unconventional student leaders, including those with troubled backgrounds. With the incentive of pizza, these students participated in candid discussions about their experiences, ultimately feeling valued for their potential. This newfound recognition shifted their attitudes, leading to a cultural transformation encapsulated in the school's initiative, Hill PRIDE (Personal Responsibility in Daily Efforts).

The campaign resonated well with students, contributing to increased engagement, reduced fighting, and even inspiring a student to create a rap about the importance of standardized testing. The positive environment fostered a sense of alliance within the school, which was further supported by the administration's commitment to collaborative planning time. Teachers across departments made significant strides in curriculum development and student assessment, utilizing a unified writing strategy called 4-Square.

As these changes took hold, data-driven assessments revealed substantial improvements in student performance, particularly for those with special educational needs. To address inclusive teaching, the author's collaboration with a skilled special education teacher became instrumental. By working together, they implemented co-teaching strategies that engaged multiple learning styles, cultivating a productive classroom environment that benefitted all students.



Ultimately, the combined efforts of the staff, the community, and the students transformed Hill High into a thriving educational environment, achieving impressive milestones in writing and graduation rates. The results served to challenge the skepticism surrounding the institution's capabilities, proving that a supportive, cooperative atmosphere could lead to meaningful educational outcomes. The chapter encapsulates a narrative of resilience, innovation, and collective success against the odds in the realm of education.

Through this experience, it becomes clear that teachers often wrestle with numerous concerns, most notably the well-being of their students, the pressure of testing, and the chaos of each new school year, shaping their deep commitment to fostering a nurturing academic environment while facing systemic difficulties. The ongoing struggle for effective educational practices continues, with aspirations for every new school year.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: The importance of understanding students' home lives to foster engagement and success in education.

Critical Interpretation: Imagine walking into a classroom where the struggles of your students are not just acknowledged, but understood deeply. This chapter emphasizes that by recognizing the realities—like poverty, violence, and food insecurity—that impact their lives, you can transform your approach to teaching. It's a call to not just view education as a duty, but as an opportunity to connect on a human level. When you empathize with their situations, you create a nurturing environment where students feel seen and valued. This kind of connection can inspire you to cultivate a classroom atmosphere that prioritizes support and collaboration, leading not only to academic success but also to the personal growth of each student. Engaging with their stories can ignite their passion for learning, inviting them to see school as a safe haven, rather than just a place of obligation.



Chapter 18 Summary: Pumping in the Teachers' Lounge

In "Pumping in the Teachers' Lounge," Stephanie shares her journey as she navigates the often-complicated intersection of motherhood and career. Announcing her pregnancy at a new school in 2009 brought a mix of excitement and challenges. As she prepared to implement a new Advanced Placement curriculum while expecting her first child, the response from her colleagues varied. While female coworkers celebrated her news passionately, her principal's focus on her professional obligations left her feeling unsupported—"You're going to finish that AP curriculum, right?"—a sentiment that encapsulated societal pressures faced by working mothers.

Stephanie reflects on the broader struggles of teacher-moms who often find themselves under scrutiny when balancing their commitments to work and family. She highlights the particularly difficult experience of breastfeeding mothers who face logistical challenges in their workplaces—issues such as a lack of private spaces for pumping and the stigma of needing time off for family responsibilities. The narrative reveals a troubling double standard, where mothers are labeled as unreliable if they prioritize their families, while male colleagues enjoy more leniency in similar situations.

After a challenging emergency cesarean section, Stephanie embraces the early months of motherhood, receiving love and support from family, yet she soon begins to grapple with unexpected feelings of isolation and boredom.



Although she adores her newborn son, she feels a strong pull towards her teaching career, caught in a struggle between her roles as a mother and an educator. The pervasive "Mommy Guilt" complicates her desire to return to teaching, pushing her into a spiral of self-doubt.

In a moment of clarity, Stephanie seeks comfort through Google during a late-night pumping session. Discovering the possibility of teaching from home reignites her sense of empowerment and agency. The freedom to blend her passions of motherhood and teaching instills a newfound confidence, positioning her to challenge societal norms about working women. Even though she faces backlash, including being labeled a "feminist" in a derogatory way by some, Stephanie embraces the identity, realizing that pursuing her own fulfillment is vital for her and her family.

As she prepares to shift her teaching into a virtual space, Stephanie is enthusiastic about reclaiming her professional identity while still being present for her child. This chapter poignantly illustrates the struggle many women face in balancing familial duties and professional aspirations, showcasing courage, resilience, and the pursuit of a fulfilling life on one's own terms.

Through her story, Stephanie encourages readers to recognize the value of pursuing both personal and professional goals, ultimately reminding them that while teaching may not bring financial riches, the fulfillment it offers



can be life-changing.

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Chapter 19 Summary: Good-Bye Classroom, Hello Computer

Good-Bye Classroom, Hello Computer

The journey begins with the narrator expressing profound joy upon stepping into their first classroom, a space they labored in for years, teaching with passion and dedication. However, motherhood soon takes precedence in their life, exemplified by an early comedic moment where the narrator mistakenly calls their newborn son "Eli" instead of his actual name, "Brady." This humorous misstep highlights the overwhelming nature of new motherhood and the depth of the narrator's fierce love for their child.

After a brief stint as a stay-at-home mom, the need to return to work arises. A late-night inquiry about a cyberschool teaching position catalyzes the next phase of their career. During a pivotal interview with a supportive hiring representative named Janice, the narrator is moved by Janice's insistence that teaching and parenting can coexist without guilt. This interaction ignites a sense of empowerment, encouraging the narrator to negotiate their salary—a first in their career. The narrator prepares for the shift to remote teaching but knows a detailed evaluation of pros and cons is necessary to determine if this new path aligns with family goals.



Ultimately, the decision to accept the cyberschool job stands, trading the familiar brick-and-mortar classroom for a home office. Over the years, the narrator adapts remarkably, juggling motherhood and a career from home. The flexibility of remote teaching allows for a balance that enables them to attend to family needs while ensuring steady employment. As more time passes, the narrator appreciates the added benefits of virtual education, including being able to work while caring for sick children.

However, the transition isn't without its challenges. The narrator notes the bureaucratic hurdles typical of corporate-affiliated virtual education and the constraints placed on teaching methods due to predetermined curricula. The social isolation of remote work also comes to light, as the narrator fondly reminisces about the student interactions missed from face-to-face teaching. In response to feelings of seclusion, the narrator learns to step outside, emphasizing the importance of maintaining social connections.

Physical health becomes another concern; the sedentary nature of remote work leads to weight gain and a lack of exercise. The narrator humorously notes the necessity of finding a workout routine they despise but recognize as essential for maintaining energy and overall health.

Balancing work and family proves tricky initially, with the narrator admitting to blurring the boundaries between professional and personal time, often leading to late-night email checks. Gradually, they establish a



dedicated workspace and set boundaries around working hours, including taking proper breaks—transformative strategies for maintaining mental health.

The discussion of multitasking emerges, highlighting a contrast between corporate norms and personal values. The narrator embraces the ability to say "no," rejecting the assumption that flexibility in work translates to endless availability for external requests.

Now a seasoned virtual educator, the narrator reflects on their journey with gratitude. Though their path diverged from the traditional classroom, each decision has contributed to a fulfilling career and balanced family life. As their children grow, the narrator looks ahead to future opportunities, embodying an adaptable spirit in the evolving landscape of education.

Virtual Versions of Annoying Colleagues

(Details from the second chapter are not provided to summarize, but I can assist if text from that chapter is shared.)

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Chapter 20: Virtual Versions of Annoying Colleagues

In the evocative chapter titled "Virtual Versions of Annoying Colleagues," the author reflects on the initial challenges and familiarities faced in virtual education. The loss of traditional interactions, such as chatting in person with colleagues and sharing light-hearted moments, leaves a longing for connection. However, this void is soon filled by an all-too-familiar phenomenon: annoying coworkers manifesting in the digital world.

A pivotal moment occurs when the protagonist receives an email from Ann, a fellow teacher, who vehemently critiques their company's new initiative, inadvertently looping in their supervisor. This sparks a rapid-fire chain of email responses from other colleagues, such as Karen, Carl, and Tom, each adding their own grievances. As their lively virtual exchanges unfold, the protagonist comes to the realization that the quirks and habits of their colleagues from the traditional school setting remain unchanged, albeit in a digital format.

The chapter then dives into a humorous yet relatable exploration of various archetypal annoying colleagues, each characterized by distinct traits that remain consistent whether in person or online:

- **Brown-Nose Barb:** Always eager to please management, she can't be trusted with the fun side of work.



- **Busier-Than-You Brian** Known for inflating his workload to deter additional tasks.
- **Conflict Carla:** The perpetual critic, who challenges policies and decisions without a clear reason for her persistence.
- **Friday Frank:** The overzealous colleague who insists on holding meetings just before the weekend.
- **Negative Nancy:** Always pessimistic, her emails brim with subtle negativity.
- **Passive-Aggressive Paul:** Engages with a subtle bite, skillfully masking frustration with faux politeness.
- **Positive Patty:** Her relentless optimism can feel overwhelming, especially during tough days.
- **Reply-All Robert:** Perpetually flooding inboxes with unnecessary responses to mass emails.
- **Shorthand Shannon:** The colleague who communicates exclusively in abbreviations, challenging professionalism.
- **Team-Player Trevor:** Genuinely helpful and willing to assist others, making him a valuable colleague.
- **One-Up Wanda:** Constantly sharing her superior achievements, hinting at deeper insecurities.

The protagonist muses on the benefits of virtual interactions, notably the ability to roll your eyes or express frustration without being seen, and concludes that while annoying colleagues may have changed form, their



antics endure. The humor and relatability of these characterizations provide a lens through which to view the complexities of workplace relationships, emphasizing that while the medium of communication may evolve, the essence of human interaction remains the same.

The chapter encapsulates the essence of adapting to virtual environments while navigating familiar dynamics, echoing the age-old truth that no matter the setting, some colleagues will always find a way to annoy you.

Teacher Tip: The chapter reinforces the lesson to remain optimistic, prepare for challenges, and maintain the ability to adapt in any work environment.

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Chapter 21 Summary: Seventeen-Inch Plate

The chapters tell a compelling story about the intersection of sports, education, and the challenges of maintaining high standards in both realms. The narrator begins by sharing a rich familial background rooted in baseball, connecting her upbringing with a deep appreciation for the sport and its valuable life lessons. Influenced by her family's sports legacy, she develops an affection for her brother's handsome baseball coach, Zach, ultimately leading to their marriage and a shared life dedicated to teaching and coaching.

A central theme emerges from a powerful anecdote involving a renowned collegiate baseball coach, John Scolinos, who captivated an audience of 4,000 coaches with his thought-provoking question: “How wide is home plate?” Using the physical dimensions of home plate as a metaphor, Scolinos challenges coaches to reflect on their practices and accountability within the game. He likens the act of “widening home plate”—or lowering standards—to the current state of education. He emphasizes that making concessions for students who fail to meet expectations simply fosters complacency and undermines the quality of education.

Through a series of relatable examples from her own teaching experiences, the narrator illustrates how educators frequently face dilemmas when confronted with students who struggle academically or behaviorally. In one



instance, she recalls the implementation of a senior project that ended up compromising its own standards due to accommodating students' fears and excuses. While the intention was to help, the reality was a disservice to all involved, ultimately leading to wider dissatisfaction and a decline in educational rigor.

She reinforces the idea that true empathy requires holding students to high standards rather than constantly expanding the boundaries to suit them. In doing so, she underscores the importance of enabling students to rise to challenges rather than providing them with easy ways out, emphasizing that the benefits of this approach yield a more significant long-term impact on students' development.

The chapter closes with a pointed critique of modern student excuses for underperformance, illustrating how the narrative of “widening home plate” is all too prevalent in education today. By upholding the value of a full seventeen inches—both in sports and academics—the chapter advocates for a return to high expectations and accountability as essential components in fostering not just better students, but also responsible and capable future leaders.



Chapter 22 Summary: “The TV Hacked My Laptop” and More Ridiculous 21st-Century Student Excuses

Summary of “The TV Hacked My Laptop” and More Ridiculous 21st-Century Student Excuses

In this chapter, the author, a cyberschool teacher, humorously chronicles the absurd excuses students use to evade their academic responsibilities, intensified by the advent of digital learning. These modern excuses often exploit technology’s inherent complexities, reflecting a shift from traditional justifications like “the dog ate my homework” to more elaborate virtual tales.

The chapter opens with a comical exchange about a student whose mother believes that their smart TV has hacked her daughter's laptop, illustrating the extent of parental gullibility when it comes to technology. The teacher's attempts to clarify the situation highlight how some students manipulate their parents' lack of tech-savviness to avoid accountability.

As the narrative progresses, the author shares a series of increasingly ridiculous excuses, such as a student unable to do schoolwork because her mom’s Christmas tree occupies the only outlet, and another who cites menstrual cramps as a reason for a week-long absence from classes. These scenarios reveal a common theme: rather than confronting academic



challenges directly, students often divert attention away from their own responsibilities.

The teacher also faces challenges with involved parents, from those overwhelmed with personal complaints to others who overly defend their children, sometimes even taking on their academic work. In various exchanges, the author navigates these encounters while keeping a balance between professionalism and understanding, showcasing the complexities of communication between educators and families in a digital age.

Amidst the frustration, humorous exchanges with students, who sometimes forget to adopt a formal tone in emails, provide a light-hearted contrast to more serious matters. The teacher's responses reveal a willingness to connect with students on a personal level while maintaining authority.

Furthermore, the chapter brings attention to the ethics of digital education; it recounts a case of a student using inappropriate language during a virtual class, which required a parent to confront the reality of their child's behavior with the help of technology for accountability. The author reflects on the need for both students and parents to recognize the evolving landscape of education and the responsibility that comes with digital tools.

Ultimately, the chapter conveys that while excuses in education have evolved, the underlying human tendency to evade accountability remains



unchanged. Technology, often seen as a double-edged sword, offers both challenges and avenues for connection and learning. The author acknowledges that despite the rise of extravagant excuses, the moments of humor and connection between teacher and student are what truly enrich the educational experience.

The chapter concludes on a humorous note, suggesting that excuses will always be part of student life—whether through technology or traditional means—reminding readers that education is as much about learning as it is about navigating the human experience, and encouraging teachers to embrace both the chaos and the laughter that come with their role.

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Chapter 23 Summary: Baby-Naming Triggers, Classroom PTSD and Other Predicaments Only Teacher-Parents Will Understand

The chapter vividly explores the transformation of a new teacher into a "teacher-parent," highlighting the humorous yet intense experiences that one encounters while balancing the dual roles. It begins with the narrator reflecting on her early days in the classroom, where the shift from civilian to teacher became all-consuming. This metamorphosis was marked by her inability to turn off the authoritative voice that shone through in everyday situations, such as grocery shopping, where she found herself correcting children for running in the produce aisle.

As the narrator transitioned into parenthood, the challenge of naming her baby emerged, compounded by the memories associated with various names derived from her teaching experience. She and her husband, both educators, struggled to settle on a name that didn't evoke either fond or traumatic memories of students. Eventually, they chose the name Brady for their son, finding a compromise amidst their anxiety-ridden deliberations.

The narrative delves into her pursuit of raising Brady in an ideal environment conducive to learning. Believing that her effectiveness as an educator would reflect her parenting success, she pressed herself to mold Brady's early development, indulging in educational fads and



over-analyzing his preschool options. This culminated in her characteristic need to intervene excessively—referred to as "lawnmower parenting," where parents eliminate any obstacles their children might face, often to detrimental effect.

When kindergarten approached, her desire to ensure a seamless educational experience escalated, leading to her relentless vetting of teachers and playmates. She engaged in meticulous research to secure the most suitable teacher for Brady, all while grappling with the societal pressures of parenthood and the critical gaze of fellow educators.

Despite this fervor, the narrator reflects on how her intense involvement was more detrimental than helpful, especially as she learned to delegate and trust educators to guide her children. As Brady faced his first years of school with her anxiety-laden expectations, the narrator also contended with the balancing act of rearing her daughters, realizing that their need for attention allowed her to ease her grip on her son.

The chapter concludes with a sense of relief as the narrator finds herself settling into her dual roles without the intense scrutiny she once placed upon herself. By allowing her children the space to form their own identities—making friends and mistakes—she fosters a happier and more confident family dynamic. Recognizing her role in contributing positively, she embraces the joy of engaging in her children's education without



overscheduling their lives, learning that she doesn't have to be an expert in everything. With a humorous tone and relatable anecdotes, the chapter illuminates the struggles and growth of teacher-parents navigating the intertwining worlds of education and family life.

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Chapter 24: Stuff I Didn't Expect to Miss about Traditional Teaching

In this reflective chapter, the author explores the unexpected nostalgia and challenges that arise from transitioning from a traditional teaching environment to a work-from-home setup. Initially, the author recalls their experiences as a "traveling teacher," rotating between classrooms without a personal space, often leading to stressful, chaotic days. Despite the grievances of this role, including the peculiar behavior of a colleague who meticulously counted pencils, the author now recognizes an underlying affection for those quirky interactions and the humor they provided.

While the freedom of working from home is cherished, the author surprisingly finds themselves missing various aspects of in-person teaching. One significant loss is the direct, face-to-face communication that fosters genuine connections and emotional responses. They reminisce about the joy of witnessing a student's realization of a difficult concept or sharing unspoken camaraderie with colleagues, increasingly aware of the limitations of virtual interactions which often lack spontaneity and warmth.

The chapter delves into the blurred lines between work and personal life, as home responsibilities intertwine with professional duties. The author humorously recalls the disarray of multitasking during a crucial work-related call, emphasizing the challenge of maintaining privacy and focus in a home



environment. Despite these hurdles, a conscious effort is made to foster community through digital means, though nothing can truly replace the organic connections formed in a shared physical space.

Additionally, the author reflects on societal perceptions of remote work,

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Chapter 25 Summary: Teaching Empathy

In the essay "Teaching Empathy," the author reflects on a powerful experience attending a talk by Holocaust survivor Ms. Shulamit Bastacky. Shulamit's harrowing tale of survival, marked by her experience as one of the Holocaust's "Hidden Children," underscores the significance of empathy and understanding in a world often plagued by hate. Living in a basement as a child, she was saved by a nun at great personal risk, while her family suffered horrific persecution. Regardless of her past, Shulamit expresses gratitude and advocates for kindness, a stark contrast to contemporary acts of violence against marginalized communities, such as the tragic shooting at the Tree of Life synagogue in 2018.

The author emphasizes the critical role of educators in promoting empathy by sharing stories of discrimination and intolerance, using their platforms to raise awareness and inspire change. This is illustrated through a disturbing incident at a local school where a man publicly derides teachers for assigning a book addressing important social issues. The author recounts her own teaching challenges in a district where racial and sexual identities were ignored, highlighting how students internalized their surroundings, influenced by a community steeped in bigotry.

Recognizing this, the author initiated the R.I.G.H.T.S. Project (Recognizing Individuals of Global Humanity for a Tolerant Society) to help students

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understand human rights violations and encourage them to advocate for tolerance and respect. The project incorporated historical and contemporary examples of discrimination and involved community participation, allowing students to express their experiences and perspectives publicly. This project not only fostered empathy among students but also equipped them with the courage to confront intolerance directly.

To facilitate inclusivity in classrooms, the author suggests providing diverse reading materials across different educational levels, ensuring representation in literature, thus fostering a sense of belonging among students of varied backgrounds. The recommended book lists range from preschool-level stories promoting self-acceptance to young adult novels addressing complex themes of identity and activism for high school readers.

Additionally, the author introduces an impactful activity called the "Toothpaste Activity," aimed at middle school students. It serves as a metaphor for the permanence of words and the necessity of kindness in communication. It drives home the lesson that hurtful words, once expressed, cannot be retracted.

In closing, the author calls for a redefinition of inclusion in education, urging teachers to not only meet academic needs but to also celebrate diversity and advocate for every student's right to be represented. The goal is to use empathy as a guiding principle in education, shaping a safer, more



compassionate world.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: The power of empathy can change lives and communities.

Critical Interpretation: Imagine standing in a classroom where every voice is heard, where each story of struggle is met with understanding rather than judgment. By embracing the power of empathy as illustrated by Shulamit's experience, you are inspired to foster a culture of kindness in your own life. You realize that small acts of compassion can ignite profound change, not just in you, but in those around you. This chapter illustrates that when you choose to understand rather than ignore the pain of others, you become a catalyst for hope, forging connections that break down barriers of intolerance and hatred. You are reminded that by recognizing the humanity in each individual, you can contribute to building a world that values diversity and promotes acceptance, ultimately leading to a more compassionate society.

