



What Teachers Make: In Praise of the Greatest Job in the World

Taylor Mali , Adam Verner (Narrator)

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Former middle-school teacher and teachers' advocate Taylor Mali struck a chord with his passionate response to a man at a dinner party who asked him what kind of salary teachers make—a poetic rant that has been seen and forwarded millions of times on Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter.

Based on the poem that inspired a movement, What Teachers Make is Mali's sharp, funny, reflective, critical call to arms about the joys of teaching and why teachers are so vital to America today. It's a book that will be treasured and shared by every teacher in America—and everyone who's ever loved or learned from one.

What Teachers Make: In Praise of the Greatest Job in the World Details

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Aaron says

Taylor Mali combines sobering truths with humorous anecdotes about the perils and joys of teaching. This little book sheds light on the field of teaching and its merits as well as its hardships but Taylor Mali reinforces the idea that teachers do make a difference - if you're the kind of person who wants to change a student's life or have had a teacher change your life, this book is worth reading.

Victoria Haf says

Es un libro corto e inspirador, no sé que tanta relación con la profesión de profesor tenga la gente pero yo me siento cercana, tuve muchos buenos maestros, mis papás son maestros, quien me lo prestó fue maestra de inglés un buen rato y yo misma lo fui por 6 meses cuando tenía 18 años jajaja
Es real, la educación es de lo más importante y es una lástima que no se valore como trabajo, el que escribió este libro es muy apasionado y tiene buenas historias que contar

Dray says

Taylor Mali is a warrior for teachers. I watch his "What Teachers Make" poem at least once a month for inspiration when I'm feeling defeated.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RxsOVK...>

This little book says so much of what teachers actually make. Some of the stories had me laughing out loud and some had me emotional. Although I've decided that teachers have a different sense of humor than everyone else. At my school, all someone has to do is mention "HoneyBun Boy" during lunch and the whole lounge is crying with laughter, even student teachers like myself who weren't even there for HoneyBun boy's antics. We just think kids are hilarious, okay??

But anyway, even if you don't find this book funny, I completely recommend it for any teacher who needs some encouragement...or any asshole who thinks teachers are lazy/greedy/unintelligent.

Tatiana says

What Teachers Make is similiar to many teacher memoirs, except that it isn't. Even though former classroom teacher and poet, author Taylor Mali, doesn't exactly ignore the problems with the educational system in America, he also doesn't dwell on issues not soon resolved. In both his poem, "What Teachers Make," and in this novel, he instead chooses to focus on the lost art of respecting teachers and the job they do every day.

I don't have my license yet (though I spend tons of time in classrooms), but I still identified with much of the

common sense Mali advocates using when teaching children. Not only are there good ideas for activities and projects packed into this pocket-sized volume, many of the incidents and memories are simply meant as examples of what students can do and who they can become when they are instructed by dedicated, creative, invested teachers.

Mali never got preachy, yet he has a way of making you want to jump up and do something. I am not surprised he has encouraged almost 1,000 people to become teachers. The way he describes both the challenges and rewards of the career is infectious. Not that I think reading one poem should be why you choose to do anything for the rest of your life. The people Mali touches, myself included, already have the teacher gene in their DNA; his words speak to that part of us and make us even more excited to teach others. Motivational speaking is certainly one of his strong suits, but the classroom has lost a great educator to the advocacy of teacher appreciation.

This is a memoir that I will be recommending to other pre-service and classroom teachers alike, as well as purchasing a copy of my own to reread after hard days in my ED classes. What's it all for? This. This is what I, as a teacher, will make...eventually.

Mickey says

I had not heard of Mali's poem "What Teachers Make" before I picked up this book. There's been a steady stream of books written by teachers about their profession. Some are how-to books (like *Teach Like Your Hair's on Fire: The Methods and Madness Inside Room 56*), some are humorous, anecdotal send-ups (like *32 Third Graders and One Class Bunny: Life Lessons from Teaching*), others show a more problematic reality of public schools (like *Educating ESME: Diary of a Teacher's First Year*). Some are bitter memoirs (like *The Water is Wide*).

Where does this book fit in? It's part spirited defense of teachers and teaching, part affectionate look at the absurdities and quirks of students. It's a reminder of the fun parts and amazing moments that come around every so often. This is a good pick-me-up book when you need to remember why we bother, oddly enough by a person who no longer teaches.

On the whole, I support the opening up of all views and areas of the teaching profession into the public arena, especially an honest and realistic portrayal of what teaching is like.

M says

Mali really excels at the short essay. Quips and anecdotes from his teaching days and other times with poems interspersed throughout. I don't know how many people need to be reminded that teaching is important, and yes there are awful teachers, but there are incredibly wonderful teachers. Mali delves into what teachers make besides money, why they do it, his most rewarding experiences, and the problems facing teachers these days. His analysis that anyone who thinks teachers are greedy and use the job to live high on the hog at the state's expense must not know (or ignore) the truth about teacher's salaries.

He also brought up a shockingly obvious point, that I'm mad I didn't realize it. Schools get money from property taxes, the districts with the wealthy properties have better funded schools, coming from a wealthy background increases chances of better education. So maybe, education funding shouldn't be tied to property taxes, it all feels like a scam now.

If you need something uplifting to read, if you want a great gift for a teacher that will (should) also make them inspired, get and read this book.

Ellie says

What Teachers Make: In Praise of the Greatest Job in the World by Taylor Mali is a very comforting book to read if you are a teacher (if you're not a teacher, you probably won't read it, which is a shame). In a series of vignettes, Mali depicts some of the challenges and rewards of teaching. Like parenthood, with even less narcissistic gratification, teaching is a career that no one would choose looking simply at a cost/benefits analysis. It is a vocation in which the many hours of drudgery are magically compensated for in a moment of revelation for a student or, sometimes, for a teacher. Teaching is filled with transformative experiences, sometimes hard-earned, often seemingly serendipitous, that make a teacher's life more gifted than any casual observer could ever imagine.

The book grew out of a poem Mali wrote in response to a snarky remark made to him at a dinner party (by a lawyer no less!). "What a teacher makes" turns a belittling comment on teacher salaries into a pun ("I make students work harder than they ever thought they could") and a miracle (in effect, I make human beings awoken to the world outside and within). After many readers of the poem wrote to him, telling of their decision (because of the poem) to become a teacher, Mali was inspired to use his poem to inspire 1,000 people to become teachers.

It would be wonderful if people who are not teacher would read this work. The book is short and highly accessible. The time invested in reading it might eliminate many of the nasty comments made publicly and privately about teachers which would, in turn, make our work that much easier to do.

Sherry says

I loved this book!

Taylor Mali wrote the poem What Teachers Make after a party where he was at where a lawyer was putting down teachers. He vented his frustrations and performed the poem at a poetry slam. From there it just spread. He started doing presentations and eventually wrote this book.

There are lots of parts of this book that I really liked. I really like his explanation for when a kid asks, "When are we ever going to need this in real life?" the answer is not what they expect: never. "These exact facts, figures, and problems? You'll probably never need them. The real lesson here is the diligence, cooperation, resilience, flexibility, critical thinking, and problem solving you are actively using today. You will use those skills every time life presents you with something difficult or unexpected: obstacles in your personal life, accidents and catastrophes, lost jobs and loved ones. Working through those challenges is what matters most. When I'm teaching kids to work harder than they ever thought they could?

That is what they will need every day of their lives."

I highly recommend. I borrow this book from the library, but I'm buying a copy to keep.

Laurie says

I feel like the people who will read this book are the people who already agree with everything in this book. It's the people who don't agree and who treat teachers like second-class citizens and worthless contributors to society who probably won't read this book, but those are the people who need to read this book. The author, Taylor Mali, was a teacher for nine years, and he writes a lot about his personal experiences in the classroom. This is a short book with even shorter chapters, so it's a quick read. It would make a nice gift for college graduates who plan on going into teaching and something they can look back on during the trying times they will eventually come upon in their teaching career so that they can remember why they went into teaching in the first place.

Claudia says

Whenever I feel especially frustrated and depressed about the state of education, I pull up Taylor Mali's youtube performance of this poem. I watch his fierceness and I feel better. So, I was thrilled to find this book, and wallowed in the deliciousness for a couple of days. I found lines and pages and poems that made me so grateful to have chosen this profession...or to have been chosen by this profession.

I have seen Mali perform this poem at the SOS Rally in DC...I told people who were all agog over Matt Damon, that the highlight for me was watching Mali and Jonathan Kozol exchange words in the hot summer sun...what a treat!!

This book begins with 'What Teachers Make,' and meanders through Mali's teaching experiences. He's taught so many subjects in so many settings, and now teaches creative writing in workshop settings. He knows kids. He loves them, and it shows.

"The most important thing a teacher can do is make students apply themselves."

"That's what teaching is: the art of explanation."

"What do [teachers] make? Teachers make use of their knowledge (when they are free to do so)."

And my favorite, a description of a revered teacher: "He didn't want to insult us by asking a question to which he already knew the answer."

Mali gets teaching and he gets teachers. We love stories of interactions...of learning...of epiphanies.

And we love Taylor Mali's stories. We are grateful for his support.

One of my colleagues saw my book on my desk and tried to swipe it before I'd finished. Now I can share it with her!

A Allen says

This book expands on a poem which I had not read before. As soon as I read the original poem, I could tell this book was not going to be what I expected. The instances described in the book were very specific, which some people obviously found relatable, but it seemed dated to me; For example, there are two chapters dedicated to how technology advancements changed Mali's grade books and how the children interacted with the classroom material. As a young professional in the field, the book was not relatable to my classroom experience. I wanted the book to be inspiring and include more general information about why teaching is "the greatest job in the world". Still, it was an interesting look at Mali's experiences and how things have changed over time.

K says

As a high school English teacher, I am always a fan of books that promote teaching and encourage us to take a fresh look at one of the most influential and important positions in America. I was thrilled after glancing at Taylor Mali's book, and while I was excited to read it at the beginning, by the end, I was fairly disappointed. Mali has a strong introduction, explaining how the poem which shares the same title as the book, came about, and how his career evolved as a result of this poem (he no longer is a classroom teacher, but instead, travels the world teaching poetry to students and teachers alike). Quickly, however, Mali begins focusing on short anecdotes intended to highlight the demands, intrinsic rewards and sheer joy of teaching, as seen through his own experience. I enjoyed this at first, but it soon began to feel very self-promoting and repetitive (Mali includes much of his own poetry and shares stories which are intended to highlight his academic genius).

Mali has great voice, but unfortunately, his time outside of the classroom shows. So much has changed since he was a teacher in the '90s that the book seems out of date and out of touch (Mali devotes a chapter to the genius behind creating a computer-based grade book - something that is fairly standard in most districts across the nation). Furthermore, with shifts toward common core, standardized testing, differentiated instruction, and sound grading practices, Mali's work seems a bit too idealistic to be a truly enjoyable read (for example, Mali goes into great detail about his favorite assignment - having students create a Roman-style shield that was impenetrable against a sword - and freely admits that the grade was based on artistic style and strength and had little to no curricular benefit - something which would not tie in nicely to a curriculum that is intended to blend fun and learning).

While I really wanted to like this book (and was thinking it would be a great gift to give to students who dream of being teachers), this book is out of touch with the reality of teaching today. Mali who hasn't been in a classroom since cell-phones invaded has a few really good suggestions and heartfelt stories, but this is not all that it could have been. From shelfishness.blog.com

Melissa says

I never spend a minute of any school day wondering why I do this work or whether it is worth it, but that doesn't mean it's easy. If you're a tired teacher, read Taylor Mali. He reminds us that we have the greatest job in the world! Unequivocally. After twenty-three years in the teaching profession, I still wake up and live my dream every day in my classroom. But just because I love it doesn't mean it isn't WORK, or that I don't get discouraged, or that grading is the most tedious and time-consuming part of my job.

How do we quantify what we do as teachers? What is the measure of our success? Mali succeeds in articulating that test scores, quiz grades, project rubrics are not the full—or even significant—measure of our success. Much of teaching is intangible; much of *real* education is unquantifiable. How do we measure a student's ability to persevere to learn? This is hard and holy work.

His passionate and inspiring response to "Be honest. What do you make?" resonates like a tuning fork with anyone who has ever tried to teach. With anecdotes and background information for why he included specific lines in his famous poem, Mali gives one of the most eloquent tributes ever written to teachers, recognizing the love, dedication, and commitment it takes to be a good teacher. Teaching is a vocation that keeps making more of the teacher.

"Here's a fact I never hear anyone on television talk about, all the teachers I have known need at least one hour outside the classroom for every hour they spend inside the classroom" (147) {and more}.

Ultimately and at the most basic level, "That's what teachers make: the promise to leave every student they teach better prepared for the future than they were when they entered the class at the beginning of the school year" (193).

Parker says

This book. This book is one I carry like a bible. This is the REASON I wanted to be a teacher, Taylor, an amazing poet, took the words from my heart and put them into a poem. A poem that became popular and a poem that is the core of my soul. I give this book as a gift to my child's teachers, to my teacher friends because some days are rough but we know what teachers make and its what makes us a teacher.

Morninglight Mama says

Eh. Sure, I'm a teacher, so I inherently agree with some, if not much, of what Mali says here. I just find him a bit too... full of himself in this book. His self-congratulatory tone seems to be the norm, and then it seems that he tries to shrug that off with a self-deprecating remark here and there. Meh.

Oh, and the whole "I don't let my students leave my room for a drink of water or to use the bathroom, because I know they're just trying to get out of work" attitude? Yeah, you lost my respect at that point. Would you ever tolerate being told that you could not leave a meeting if you had to take a pee? Not a chance.
