



Ms. Moffett's First Year: Becoming a Teacher in America

Abby Goodnough

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In summer of 2000, legal secretary Donna Moffett answered an ad for the New York City Teaching Fellows program, which sought to recruit "talented professionals" from other fields to teach in some of the city's worst schools. Seven weeks later she was in a first grade classroom in Flatbush, Brooklyn, nearly completely unprepared for what she was about to face.

New York Times education reporter Abby Goodnough followed Donna Moffett through her first year as a teacher, writing a frontpage, award-winning series that galvanized discussion nationwide. Now she has expanded that series into a book that, through the riveting story of Moffett's experiences, explores the gulf between the rhetoric of education reform and the realities of the public school classroom. *Ms. Moffett's First Year* is neither a Hollywood-friendly tale of 'one person making a difference,' nor a reductive indictment of the public education system. It is rather a provocative portrait of the inadequacy of good intentions, of the challenges of educating poor and immigrant populations, and of a well-meaning but underprepared woman becoming a teacher the hard way.

While the story takes place in New York, Ms. Moffett's first year is a metaphor for the experiences of teachers everywhere in America, one that illuminates the philosophical, economic, political, and ideological dilemmas that have come more and more to determine their experience —and their students' experiences — in the classroom.

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