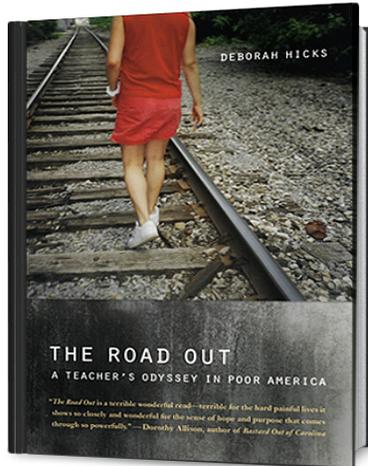


Text Review

Professional Development Text

THE ROAD OUT: A TEACHER'S ODYSSEY IN POOR AMERICA



DEBRA HICKS, 2013, BERKLEY, CA: UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS

Reviewed by Stephanie Grote-Garcia, Ph.D.

There were many events that received national attention this summer. Among them were the tornados that devastated Oklahoma and the unforeseen bombing at the Boston Marathon. These events rightfully captured our attention and motivated many Americans to join forces during these times of need. I mention these events, and the much-needed and widespread-attention they received, to lead you to an important question, one that I found myself asking frequently this summer — What relief or assistance is provided for our youngest victims? I am specifically speaking of our children growing up in poor America.

My summer of reflection was a direct result of Deborah Hicks' memoir, *The Road Out: A Teacher's Odyssey in Poor America*. In this publication, Hicks shares her journey as a reading teacher in a white Appalachian ghetto in Cincinnati. The story Hicks tells is a true testament to the power of literacy.

Hicks' account of her journey begins with an author's note, one in which she explains scenes from her own childhood

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in Appalachian North Carolina. The tone of the author's note is promptly established with the following statement,

My childhood was tainted not just by economic distress but by the things that often go with such distress. My parents could never escape the traumas of their dirt-poor childhoods, and I left through the only escape hatch available to a working-class girl: education (Hicks, 2013, p. xi-xii).

Hick's experience of growing up in the Appalachian area provides the framework for her memoir — a publication in which she tells the story of seven adolescent girls and the times they spent together in their classroom. The account of these memories is organized into the following three parts:

Part One: Childhood Ghosts

Part one of *The Road Out* introduces readers to the seven girls' childhood memories. These memories are metaphorically referred to as their childhood ghosts. This part of the publication also explores the girls' love of ghost stories.

Part Two: My Live as a Girl

Part two reconstructs the conversations that the girls shared during their reading groups. The conversations are highly influenced by the girls' experiences and by the lens for which the girls view the world.

Part Three: Leavings

Part three brings a sense of closure in the girls' stories. Do they leave Cincinnati? Do they walk away from the surrounding drug use, physical abuse, and emotional strain? I won't give away the ending, but I will share that part three lead me to reflect upon the following question: Can one teacher make a difference?

The Road Out: A Teacher's Odyssey in Poor America is an interesting and touching story. This memoir captures the power of literacy and has the potential to direct much-needed attention toward our children growing up in poor America.

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