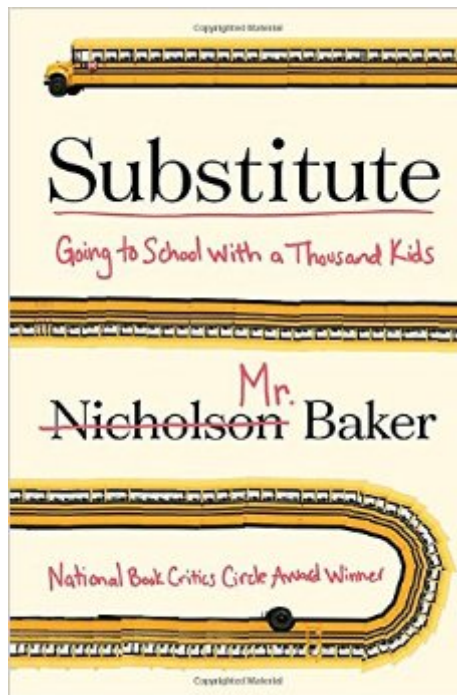


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# Substitute: Going To School With A Thousand Kids



## Synopsis

"May be the most revealing depiction of the American contemporary classroom that we have to date." —Garret Keizer, *The New York Times Book Review* — Bestselling author Nicholson Baker, in pursuit of the realities of American public education, signed up as a substitute teacher in a Maine public school district. In 2014, after a brief orientation course and a few fingerprinting sessions, Nicholson Baker became an on-call substitute teacher in a Maine public school district. He awoke to the dispatcher's five-forty a.m. phone call and headed to one of several nearby schools; when he got there, he did his best to follow lesson plans and help his students get something done. What emerges from Baker's experience is a complex, often touching deconstruction of public schooling in America: children swamped with overdue assignments, overwhelmed by the marvels and distractions of social media and educational technology, and staff who weary themselves trying to teach in step with an often outmoded or overly ambitious standard curriculum. — In Baker's hands, the inner life of the classroom is examined anew — mundane work-sheets, recess time-outs, surprise nosebleeds, rebellions, griefs, jealousies, minor triumphs, kindergarten show-and-tell, daily lessons on everything from geology to metal tech to the Holocaust — as he and his pupils struggle to find ways to get through the day. Baker is one of the most inventive and remarkable writers of our time, and *Substitute*, filled with humor, honesty, and empathy, may be his most impressive work of nonfiction yet.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Substitute: Going to School With a Thousand Kids by Nicholson Baker is an overly long-winded account of his 28 days as a substitute teacher in Maine. It was so-so for me but recommended for anyone wondering and needing a complete description of what a typical classroom day might resemble for a substitute teacher. In 2014 Mr. Baker took a brief night class, got fingerprinted, and was then eligible to earn \$70 a day as an on-call substitute teacher in a Maine public school district. Once he was called in to a school he arrived and did his best to follow the lesson plans/sub plans left by the teacher. Be forewarned that this truly is a moment to moment, day by day account of Mr. Baker's days as a substitute teacher, in grades K-high school, a roving sub, and also several times as an "ed tech" in special education (which is called by other names in other states, but usually a paraprofessional). I guess I need to disclose that I have been a licensed teacher (many years ago) and a paraprofessional in sped (more recently) in the public schools. I too struggled to get fingerprinted (apparently my fingerprints are also hard to take). There are several differences that any reader of this account needs to take note of before making assumptions that Mr. Baker's experiences are all applicable across the USA. Subs are required to have a college degree and the teacher preparation program in my state; paraprofessionals need to have the equivalent of an associate's degree or take a test. There are some high points and more low points in this overly long and detailed account. For anyone who has ever worked in the public schools you will recognize his struggles and accomplishments, as well as the various personalities he encountered.

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