
Rebekah Nathan

My Freshman Year: What a Professor Learned by Becoming a Student



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Description

After more than fifteen years of teaching, Rebekah Nathan, a professor of anthropology at a large university, realized that she no longer understood the behavior and attitudes of her students. Fewer and fewer participated in class discussion, tackled the assigned reading, or came to discuss problems during office hours. Nathan decided to put her wealth of experience in overseas ethnographic fieldwork to use closer to home and applied to her own university. She took a sabbatical and enrolled as a freshman. She immersed herself in student life, moving into the dorms and taking on a full course load.

Insightful reviews

Aimee: An interesting topic--written in a pretty dry ethnography style. I guess that makes sense though since she is an anthropologist doing an ethnography of a culture. To me the problem is more in the marketing of this book. Somehow it gives the impression that it will be a fun read with some zany anecdotes and it's not that at all. Nonetheless I respect the book. At first I agreed with others who felt that most of her observations were obvious to anyone who has had any contact with college culture. And while it is surprising to me what things a professor couldn't surmise without gaining the experience, I think that many of her conclusions are important, particularly those that have to do with the future directions of higher education. She also affirmed my instincts about cheating--that it's not primarily caused by a decrease in moral or laziness, but a lack of incentive to do otherwise in a world that makes so many demands. Anyhow, I don't know that I recommend this as a recreational read, but I think that anyone involved in higher ed should read her research even if you think you already know what she has to say.

Joanna: An anthropological account of a professor at a state university who used her sabbatical year to go "undercover" as a student at her university: live in the dorms, take classes, and participate in student life, in order to study what the college experience is like. As a fairly recent college graduate I found it really fascinating, and I saw in her account things that were familiar to me about myself, and familiar frustrations I had as an undergraduate about my peers. She wraps the whole thing up with a brilliant discussion of where secondary education in the US is headed, pointing to the troubling, increasing de-emphasis on the liberal arts in favor of training students to be skilled employees in service of area corporations in order to bolster local & state economies. As a former university employee, the last chapter pinpointed for me the reason for my discomfort with some of the larger cultural trends in which the university at which I was worked was participating.

Veronica Nagorny: Seeing the freshman year of university through the eyes of a professor posing as a student was definitely an interesting perspective. Rebekah Nathan (a pen name) is a professor at AnyU and is baffled by many of the things her students do, like eating in class, not doing the assignments, and sleeping at their desks. She applies and enrolls at that same school and is eager to walk in her students' (now peers') shoes. She lives in the dorms, eats in their dining halls, and attends classes. This allows her (and consequently us) to learn what it is like to be a freshman through the eyes of someone who usually is on the opposite end of the

collegiate spectrum.

The book itself was very informative and the research project that was undertaken is definitely one that I had never heard of before. At times, the writing felt like it was droning on and on, and at parts it proved difficult to remain focused on the literature. It felt like a very long article, but was intriguing nonetheless.

I recommend this book to parents of future and current college students, as well as seniors in high school who will be entering the college scene soon. This will show them that professors are people too, and they'll feel prepared about going to school before they even set foot on campus.

Holly: Leaving apart the query of why it did not take place to a 50 12 months outdated anthropologist to hide her moral bases higher (what the heck was once she doing in her different box websites the place humans have been much less more likely to name her out on it?), this ebook is totally unrevealing in the event you spend any time with 18-25 yr olds. That age team could locate it attention-grabbing simply because it truly is approximately their new release and it's particularly non-judgmental, older folks that do not get childrens this day may perhaps locate it attention-grabbing in the event that they really care approximately such things. As a school professor i discovered not anything in it i could not have written simply from what I listen each day at work, as an anthropologist, i am disenchanted on the self-esteem of research and the tossed off consider of this. Even writing for a lay audience, there is a lot extra of curiosity that may be stated approximately adolescence tradition (and has been said, frequently by means of perceptive journalists). in case you are curious, this is often knocked off in an afternoon. if you'd like anything extra meaty (although dated now), try out Moffat's "Coming of Age in New Jersey," Holland and Eisenhart's "Educated in Romance," or Horowitz's "Campus Life." between extra present offerings, Seaman's "Binge" has extra substance and extra contentious claims to bite on.

Katherine: the 1st lesson of this ebook is that it's mis-publicized. it truly is promoted as a professor is going again to varsity and lives the lifetime of a freshman after which tells all. every thing is correct up till "tells all" that can extra appropriately be defined as "writes a pretty unsurprising anthropological box examine approximately it." The publication does have type of a fun, novel premise, so i actually had significant concerns with it. First, it is not rather well written - it does not relatively circulation logically, there are many, many dry spots, and a few of the phraseology and story-telling is simply awkwardly done. Second, and extra importantly, the conclusions simply are not that interesting, and since they are awarded with no a lot within the means of particular element or observation, they don't seem to be a lot enjoyable to read. possibly it is simply because i used to be in collage now not that very lengthy ago, yet such things as students are over-scheduled and bypass type to find time for different activities, or students dwell lives fascinated about individualism and fun, did not bounce off the page. It felt much like examining a tutorial article for sophistication - the sort the place you learn the summary and imagine "Right, obviously, who may do a examine on this" after which settle in for 50 pages of telling you whatever you already know. The something i'm going to say for the ebook is that the narrator is attractive and the tales she tells approximately her judgements to return to school, and her moral issues in making acquaintances one of the freshman after which writing approximately them, have been fascinating and good done. If the ebook had had extra

element like this, and not more got rid of observation, i might have cherished it much better.

Jonna Higgins-Freese: Underwhelming is the simplest notice for this book. i believe she used to be so considering being a student that she did not take complete benefit of her personal immersion (which, within the end, appeared fairly light) within the experience. (Compared to, say, deciding on Up, by way of Robin Nagle, an anthropology of the DSNY through an writer who was once additionally a student who labored as a sanitation worker.) Nathan did have a couple of attention-grabbing issues to assert in regards to the tradition and context of cheating/plagiarism in college, yet not anything as nuanced or attention-grabbing as My Word!, a booklet approximately plagiarism via a scholar/administrator. i assumed possibly the main fascinating and thought-provoking a part of the booklet was once her statement that faculty is a "rite of passage," which might be outlined cross-culturally as being marked through "severance from one's basic status, front right into a 'liminal' kingdom the place the traditional ideas of society are lifted, and eventually reintegration into society inside of a brand new status" (146). However, she does little or no with this remark by way of the very fascinating questions it increases for society and better schooling pros approximately what the ambitions of upper schooling can be (i.e., how this informs the "hidden curriculum") and the way we'd be extra obvious and sincere approximately that. She issues out that such liminal reviews will be profoundly artistic and transformative, aiding humans slip out of ordinary societal roles, to "catch glimpses of themselves while now not embedded in structure, unleashing uncanny new visions" (146). She issues out that society and its rites of passage shouldn't be replicas of every other, yet can be dialectally opposed, in inventive tension. To me, this placed a extra good body round the alcohol-soaked nature of a lot undergraduate life. She additionally made numerous attention-grabbing sociological observations. Public investment for schooling has been falling for years; college at public colleges has risen 26 percentage due to the fact that 1991 *after* inflation is taken into account. "At an identical time, scholars represent an more and more much less elite monetary segment of society" (150). She means that this explains students' expanding specialise in vocation and speedy acquisition of a well-paying job, in addition to the elevated time they spend operating in the course of college.

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