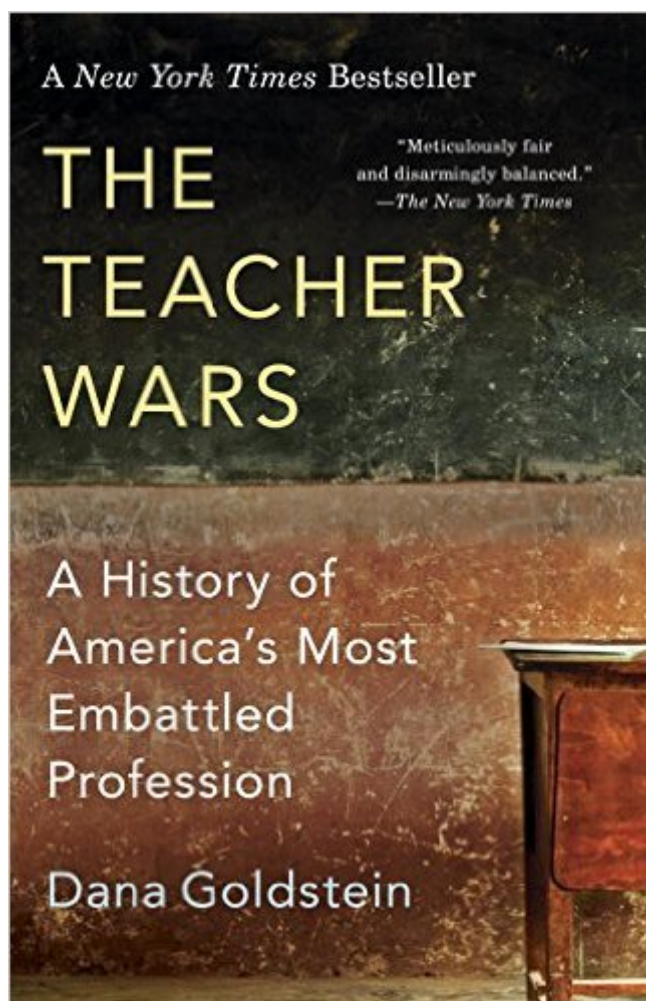


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The Teacher Wars: A History Of America's Most Embattled Profession



Synopsis

A New York Times Bestseller
In her groundbreaking history of 175 years of American education, Dana Goldstein finds answers in the past to the controversies that plague our public schools today. In *The Teacher Wars*, a rich, lively, and unprecedented history of public school teaching, Dana Goldstein reveals that teachers have been embattled for nearly two centuries. She uncovers the surprising roots of hot button issues, from teacher tenure to charter schools, and finds that recent popular ideas to improve schools— instituting merit pay, evaluating teachers by student test scores, ranking and firing veteran teachers, and recruiting “œelite” graduates to teach—are all approaches that have been tried in the past without producing widespread change. *The Teacher Wars* upends the conversation about American education by bringing the lessons of history to bear on the dilemmas we confront today. By asking “How did we get here?” Dana Goldstein brilliantly illuminates the path forward.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

You’ve heard it said, the end is in the beginning. Veteran education journalist Dana Goldstein, who comes from a long line of schoolteachers, wondered at recent vitriol directed against American public schools and their teachers. The condemnation has been consistently bipartisan, and has treated teachers’ pay and benefits—already substandard for educated professionals—as excessive, as impediments to improvement. So she went back to the beginning. Given today’s rhetorical bombast about academic decline, Goldstein’s first discovery may surprise you:

Americans have never agreed about public schoolteachers. Not their role, their curriculum, their job, nothing. Goldstein traces public schooling, as we know the concept, to the 1820s, a collaboration between proto-feminist Catharine Beecher and Massachusetts legislator Horace Mann. Bizarrely enough, in Goldstein's telling, public schools began as an apparent jobs program for unmarried women. Beecher and Mann founded America's first public school system for specifically moralistic purposes. Prior schools, funded by private tuition and taught by men, suffered questionable pedagogy; Goldstein reminds us of Washington Irving's dictatorial schoolmaster, Ichabod Crane. Women were preferable as schoolteachers, Beecher and Mann insisted, because women had upright ethics, gentle natures, and abstemious tastes. Also, not coincidentally, women worked cheaply. Americans, evidently, have always resented paying schoolteachers well. Throughout history, we've expected teachers to work miracles. Literally so: Goldstein quotes Education Secretary Arne Duncan saying: "An effective teacher? They walk on water." But we've always wanted them to accept starvation wages, driving ambitious, upwardly mobile applicants from the field.

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