

*Editors' note: The Quarterly editors asked Tina Humphrey to write a few words about the process of writing and publishing a book. Below is her response.*

## **On the Experience of Writing *In the First Few Years***

BY TINA HUMPHREY

I began my book as a single reflection on my very first year as a teacher. I was so overwhelmed and overjoyed and confused and elated by everything that went on in that first year that I had to get my thoughts down on paper in order to come to understand them and my new career. When I was finished, I reluctantly shared my writing with some colleagues at school who praised it and encouraged me to send it off to the International Reading Association's periodical, *Reading Today*. I did, and they published it within a month. I couldn't believe it! A year later the editor of *Reading Today* asked me to reflect on my second year, so I did, and it was published, too. The same thing happened after

my third year, and the response was so comforting that I thought perhaps I was on to something.

That summer I participated in the Denver Writing Project Summer Institute where I was able to write more specific essays about my life as a new teacher, and with the encouragement of my writing project colleagues, I eventually sent these off to the book editor of the International Reading Association. They accepted these too, and so my book came to be.

Since then, I've had the opportunity to speak with many new teachers, and what I've discovered is what I've known all along . . . we all just want to feel like we're not alone in all of this. We want to be reassured that what we're doing is okay and that it will get easier . . . someday. And it's all worth it when we see that difference in the

life of one student. As I move along in my fifth year of teaching, although things are definitely easier, they're certainly not *easy*—but that's the beauty of this job. I hope that new teachers will find comfort in my stories. I hope that veteran teachers will, too . . . and that these masters will also remember what that brand-new teacher next door is going through. I also hope that parents and students will read my words and realize what their teachers go through on a daily basis, and why we still love teaching so much.

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