



# A Room for Learning: The Making of a School in Vermont

*Tal Birdsey*

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“Sometimes I have thought that this school is like the only place where the lilies are considered at all...” In this stirring account of a teacher and his fourteen students tucked away in the Green Mountains of Vermont, educator Tal Birdsey fervently documents the founding year of his small junior high school with wit and humility. Part memoir, part meditation on the power of art and poetry, and part criticism of standardized education, *A Room for Learning* evokes a spirit of change, in which students were allowed a hand in their own education. With no set curriculum, no prior history, and limited resources, the students delve deep into the poetry of Yeats and Bukowski, the music of Coltrane, the art of Caravaggio, and the emotional landscape of Elie Wiesel’s “Night”, with each student learning to offer his or her own personal insights. But they also take time out, to be outside amidst the pinecones and fresh air, to be the kids that they still sometimes are and to learn from one another. Isolated from mainstream culture and constantly on the brink of apathy, this diverse group of kids and a teacher created a literary community and celebrated learning and themselves. *A Room for Learning* is the poignant true story of how one small school demonstrated that a classroom can be a place of transformative power.

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