

**Reminiscent Teacher Essay**  
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### **The Adventures at the One Room School**

The rugged looking country school sat quietly as the sky chased the early morning clouds away. Wind whistled through the tall grass on this hot August day; it even seemed to rattle. That's when the school door slammed behind me as the principal pushed me quickly into the one room school. This was the big interview day for my first teaching job. With my eyes, I explored the room, looked out the windows, and checked each corner. Then I began to walk around the room and finger the supplies.

The principal continued to stand by the door with a strange look of fear in his eyes as I probed him with questions about the job. He slowly walked further into the room to answer the questions I had asked. He tried to look calm but that's when I knew he was really thinking of the sound we hear and feared the most about being on an open prairie. Sounds of rattles warning us to stay away.

We approached the end of the interview; the principal gave me instructions to get out of the door quickly and race to the car. As he locked the school door, he knew we would be safer in the open. It would be easier to see a snake.

Later during the week, I received a call from the principal letting me know he was offering me a contract to teach in that school. Thinking back now, I should have taken the snake's rattling as a warning of what lay ahead for the next nine months.

The children were slowly walking up the dusty dirt path to school. "Good morning!" I excitedly told each one of them as they came to stand near the tall rusty flag pole which had endured the many, many years of South Dakota heat-bearing summers and cold-trodden winters. The snaps holding the flag on the pole rattled and creaked as I carefully started pulling the rope to raise the flag. One of the youngest boys quickly dropped his lunch bag and grabbed the rope with me. Together, we raised the flag and tied it securely.

As the students found their seats, I listened intently to the two youngest students tell me about the night before. The fourteen students in grades kindergarten through eighth grade quietly brought their eyes to the notes written on the blackboard. Small pieces of chalk lay in the tray below. Each student knew how to get started on the lessons. I had each class come for instruction to the rectangular table placed by the west window.

During the fifteen minute afternoon recess, the wind blew the tall overgrown grass around the playground as the students tried to find something to do in the hot August sun. All of a sudden, a loud shriek came from one of the older girls who had bent down on one knee near the grass. She froze with fear. The boys came running to see what was going on. The closer they got, they realized there was a snake underneath her leg. Breathlessly, I ran to the scream and saw the fear in the girl's eyes as she knelt afraid to move. Hearts

were pumping with so much adrenaline from every student, everything just stopped. Two of the older boys, using only eye contact with one another, quickly retrieved shovels from the school house to use as weapons. The other students stared in disbelief as I got nearer and nearer to the girl to reassure her that she was going to be alright.

Both boys with the shovels got closer to the snake; they were close enough to count the rattles on its tail. Once the boys made eye contact with the girl, she rolled away at the same time the shovels came down with a smash! Several times during the school year, the boys found themselves doing this job of defending their classmates against the snakes. Each time the boys became more brave.

A month later, we felt a snake skin after the classroom boys skinned a deadly rattlesnake. It was unbelievable because just minutes before touching the snake, this three foot snake had been lying by the cracking white painted propane tank with three girls perched on top. We watched in disbelief as they had come so close to being bitten by the snake. This was the second snake the boys killed that month. They now acted as if this was something they did everyday.

We were thankful for the cold winter and the hibernation of the snakes, but spring hatched new concerns.

Preparing the classroom for the day's lesson, I walked many times back and forth past the students' desks to my one-drawer, dark, wood-grained desk where each class would come to get their instructions for the day.

Finally, it was time for school to start and the students slowly made their way into the classroom on this warm spring morning. The students ambled to their own desks and put their lunch bags away. One of the youngest students was making her way to her desk when all of a sudden, sensing danger, one of the older girls shrieked and pointed to the leg of the younger girl's chair. "There's a snake on the leg of her chair!" We all quickly ran to look at where she was pointing. Sure enough, a baby rattlesnake had made its way into our classroom and was wrapped around the chair leg.

One of the boys got out a pair of pliers. He grabbed the rattler and took it outside. Everyone carefully looked throughout the school room for more. Finding none, we tried to get started with our day by saying the pledge but no one's eyes were on the flag. Later in the day, one of the students gave me a drawing of the baby rattler wrapped around the chair leg. The picture, to this day, is my reminder of my first year of teaching and how each day in education is an adventure.