



The Freedom Writers Diary

The Freedom Writers with Erin Gruwell

Teacher's Guide

By Laurie Rozakis, Ph.D.



LIVING
LITERATURE
SERIES

A Perma-Bound Production

Note: This guide was prepared using the Broadway Books/Random House edition, ©1999. Other editions may differ.

Synopsis

Foreword—Zlata Filipovic

The Freedom Writers are introduced in a foreword by Zlata Filipovic, whose best-selling book *Zlata's Diary* (about her experiences in a child in Sarajevo during the war in Bosnia) was one of the inspirations for their own book.

Filipovic writes of visiting California as a guest of the students, discusses the events that led to her writing her own book, and ends with the hope that the Freedom Writers Diary will inspire readers to fight prejudice and injustice and to use their experiences to make the world a better place.

Freshman Year—Fall 1994

Entry 1—Ms. Gruwell

Twenty-three-year-old Erin Gruwell records her feelings about starting her career as a teacher of the “unreachable, at-risk” students in Wilson High School, located in Long Beach, California, dubbed the “gangsta-rap capital” by MTV. Erin recalls the pivotal moment early in the school year when she intercepted a note with an ugly racial caricature, and angrily declared that this was precisely the sort of thing that led to the Holocaust—only to be met by uncomprehending looks. This experienced prompted her to throw out her lessons to focus instead on tolerance. She recalls the trips and guest speakers she arranged for her students.

DIARY 1

This student feels that Erin is out of touch with the reality of her students’ lives and will quit her job within a month.

DIARY 2

This writer is uncomfortable because he is the only

white person in the class. Although he has a learning disability, he wants to transfer to the Distinguished Scholars class.

DIARY 3

This writer discusses gangs, racial violence, prejudice, and his probation officer.

DIARY 4

This writer talks about a violent fight.

DIARY 5

This student recalls buying a gun and bringing it to school in an effort to keep himself and his family safe. He also recalls a shoot-out soon after. He justifies his attitude based on his experiences with racial prejudice.

DIARY 6

This writer describes how his friend, an innocent bystander, was killed in a liquor store shoot-out, and how this experienced prompted the writer to start carrying a gun.

DIARY 7

This writer describes being in a gang.

DIARY 8

This writer describes enduring great degradation to pledge a sorority and be accepted by her peers.

DIARY 9

This student, a graffiti artist, describes the pleasure he gets from “tagging” around the neighborhood.

DIARY 10

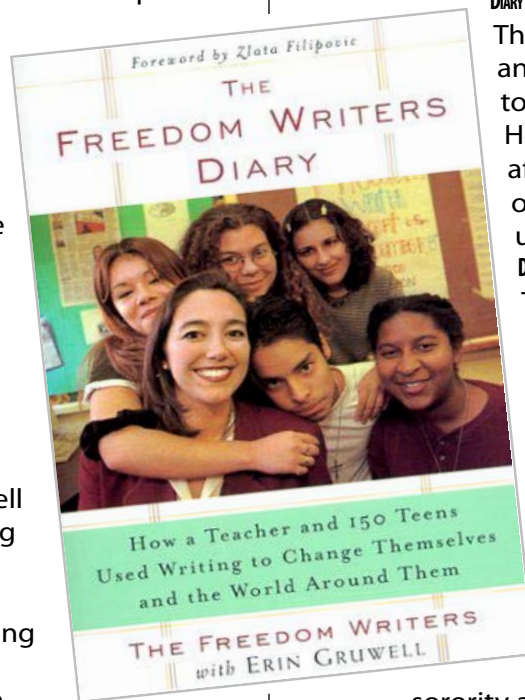
This student is delighted to be able to express his or her feelings in Erin’s class about Proposition 187 without being shouted down.

DIARY 11

This student, a dyslexic, describes his early experiences trying to learn to read.

DIARY 12

This student describes reading *Durango Street* and then segues into getting into a fight and being taken to juvenile hall. Like a character in the novel, this student has turned his life around.



DIARY 13

This entry describes making a movie based on *Durango Street*.

DIARY 14

This student tells of his enjoyment of the short story "The Last Spin," and how it relates to his life.

Freshman Year—Spring 1995

Entry 2—Ms. Gruwell

Erin explains her educational philosophy: effective teachers must build on what their students already know. She is backed by a self-made millionaire named John Tu. She vows to teach her students *Romeo and Juliet* in the original.

DIARY 15

The writer realizes that gangs are "stupid," paralleling what he learned from reading *Romeo and Juliet*.

DIARY 16

This writer parallels *Romeo and Juliet* to her experiences with her boyfriend, especially her parents' strong disapproval about the relationship.

DIARY 17

This entry describes how the students played the "Peanut Game." The writer, cruelly abused for being overweight, has realized from the game that we should judge people on their characters, not their appearance.

DIARY 18

This writer initially thought the game was stupid, but has come to realize its lesson about tolerance as well.

DIARY 19

This entry describes Timothy McVeigh's massacre in Oklahoma City.

DIARY 20

This writer describes the class field trip to the Museum of Tolerance. She parallels this to her own experiences in a refugee camp in Cambodia.

DIARY 21

This writer discusses the effect that Renee Firestone, a Holocaust survivor, had on her when she came to address the class.

DIARY 22

This writer is awed by having dinner at the Marriott with their panel of guest speakers. John Tu offers this writer a job, which he eagerly accepts. The writer yearns for a father.

DIARY 23

This writer describes cutting class to smoke, getting in trouble for it, and how Erin's faith in her turned her life around.

Sophomore Year—Fall 1995

Entry 3—Ms. Gruwell

Erin argues that all the teachers resent her, and parallels her situation to her students': they are both being stereotyped. Later, Erin realizes that she is stereotyping, as not everyone dislikes her. She lists the books she plans to teach for the year.

DIARY 24

This entry describes how the student became homeless after he and his family were evicted. He feels at home in Erin's classroom.

DIARY 25

This student has cystic fibrosis and needs surgery.

DIARY 26

This entry describes enacting *Twelve Angry Men* in the classroom.

DIARY 27

Here, the student describes the O.J. Simpson trial and Simpson's acquittal. The writer's brother, lacking an expensive team of attorneys (in the writer's words), is sentenced to fifteen years to life in prison.

DIARY 28

A Distinguished Scholar manages to get transferred into Erin's class because she believes it is more fun than her class.

DIARY 29

The class goes on a field trip to Medieval Times after studying the legend of Camelot. This writer, however, is not allowed to get on the bus because he is not dressed properly. He longs for the day when he will not be judged by his appearance.

DIARY 30

This girl experiences discrimination because of her poor eyesight, but Erin comes to her rescue.

DIARY 31

The writer explains how Erin gives her students new books to help the class achieve her theme of change. Inspired by the new books, the writer vows not to get pregnant or drop out of school.

DIARY 32

A Hispanic writer mourns the death of her friends and the fact that they did not have the opportunity to change their lives.

DIARY 33

The Hispanic writer gives testimony in court against a gang, believing now that she has the power to effect change.

DIARY 34

This student admits that she is an alcoholic, although no one knows.

DIARY 35

The writer tells her shame at being caught shoplifting.

DIARY 36

This writer finds herself in the pages of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, just as Erin had predicted.

DIARY 37

This writer relates to Anne and Zlata because she is being beaten by her father.

DIARY 38

This writer feels a kinship with Zlata.

DIARY 39

After reading an article about being molested, this writer recalls being molested by a friend of her father's when she was six years old.

DIARY 40

A new student joins the class and helps them find a way to fly Zlata to visit them.

Sophomore Year—Spring 1996**A Letter to Zlata**

Student Tommy Jefferson writes a letter to Zlata Filipovic, discussing the effects of violence.

Entry 4—Ms. Gruwell

Erin describes how her "toast to change" transformed her apathetic students into active participants. She explains how the students collected money to finance Zlata's trip to the United States.

DIARY 41

The writer describes social tolerance vis-à-vis Gerda Seifer's story of survival during the Holocaust.

DIARY 42

The writer explains that Miep Gies visited the class and became his hero.

DIARY 43

This writer responds to poem by one of Erin's friends. The writer concludes that Anne's message of tolerance must become the class's message.

DIARY 44

Zlata Filipovic is coming to visit the class!

DIARY 45

Zlata arrives and the class eats dinner with her at the Marriott.

DIARY 46

The writer parallels her friendship with Mary to the friendship between Zlata and Mirna. The writer is black and her friend is white, which upsets the writer's father very much.

DIARY 47

The writer is learning to be tolerant and proud of being a person rather than being a Latina.

DIARY 48

The writer parallels her escape from Peru to Zlata's experiences.

DIARY 49

The writer describes the day the class spent with Zlata and her family.

DIARY 50

This writer confesses to a cocaine addiction.

DIARY 51

The class stages "Basketball for Bosnia" to raise money for children in Bosnia.

ZLATA'S LETTER

Zlata writes a thank-you letter to the class.

DIARY 52

The writer discovers her mother is having an affair, which is tearing the family apart. Things are just as bad in English class: it appears that the class will not be allowed to stay together the following year.

DIARY 53

The writer is delighted to discover that the class is staying together. Miep Gies writes a thank-you note to the class, which is included in the book after this diary entry.

Junior Year—Fall 1996**Entry 5—Ms. Gruwell**

Erin traveled to Europe for two weeks over summer vacation. While there, she met with Miep Gies, spent time with Zlata, and gathered materials to share with her students.

DIARY 54

Joyce, fed up with being considered by the teacher of her honors English class to be the speaker for all black people, transfers to Erin's class.

DIARY 55

This writer discusses how her father killed his mother (the writer's grandmother) by setting her on fire.

DIARY 56

The writer describes a fight in school sparked by a racial slur. The writer is upset that he didn't try to stop the fight.

DIARY 57

The writer understands the meaning of "self-reliance," one of Erin's lessons, after Erin challenges him to take charge of his fate when he has been absent often as a result of his mother's lupus.

DIARY 58

The writer realizes he is depressed, making his diagnosis based on his mother's illness.

DIARY 59

After reading *The Catcher in the Rye*, the writer mimics Salinger's style in this entry.

DIARY 60

The writer describes his elation at being offered a job by John Tu. The job offer came after the student gave Mr. Tu a ride in his battered car.

DIARY 61

The writer, a female, discusses the sexual double-standard for girls and boys.

DIARY 62

After reading *The Color Purple*, this student recalls sexual abuse at the hands of her Uncle Joe.

DIARY 63

After reading *The Color Purple*, this writer describes her abusive relationship with her boyfriend.

DIARY 64

After reading *The Color Purple*, this student describes how her alcoholic stepfather beat up her mother.

DIARY 65

Erin has taken a part-time job teaching at National University and brings some of her high school students to class. This writer recalls how he shared his story about being homeless with Erin's college students. He also shares information about his father sexually abusing his daughter.

DIARY 66

The writer recalls how her brother, Kevin, died of a brain tumor.

Junior Year—Spring 1997

Entry 6—Ms. Gruwell

Erin decides that her students will compile their diary entries into a book.

DIARY 67

The writer realizes that people cannot hold back information.

DIARY 68

The student feels lucky to be able to transfer into Erin's class, but does not want to write, preferring to stay silent.

DIARY 69

The writer reflects on the many dead bodies he has seen.

DIARY 70

Erin has gotten computers for her class, donated by John Tu.

DIARY 71

A letter from Miep Gies is inspiration for a writing assignment.

DIARY 72

Editing a classmate's story, this writer discovers evidence of sexual abuse.

DIARY 73

Editing a classmate's story about undergoing an abortion, this male writer thinks about what it

must have been like for his girlfriend to get an abortion.

DIARY 74

The writer praises Rosa Parks's courage.

DIARY 75

After seeing a video on the Freedom Riders, Erin's students decide to call themselves the Freedom Writers.

DIARY 76

The class decides to approach Richard Riley, Secretary of Education, to hear their voice.

DIARY 77

The class holds a concert to raise money for their trip to Washington, D.C.

DIARY 78

The writer reads a poem at the Freedom Writers concert.

DIARY 79

The writer describes her passion for the class's project.

DIARY 80

The writer's father has forbidden her to go on any class field trips. Since he is not home, however, she is allowed to go to Washington, D.C.

DIARY 81

The writer recalls how his father died of AIDS.

DIARY 82

The class clasps hands at the Lincoln Memorial.

DIARY 83

The student and some friends make up a Freedom Writers logo and paste it over swastikas they see scribbled in D.C.

DIARY 84

At the Holocaust Museum, the writer recalls being beaten up because he is black. His attackers burned a cross on the lawn.

DIARY 85

The writer recalls the trip to the Holocaust Museum.

DIARY 86

At the Holocaust museum, the writer recalls the Nazis' experiments on twins.

DIARY 87

The writer meets the Secretary of Education.

DIARY 88

The writer reads the poem he or she wrote at the dinner for the Secretary of Education.

DIARY 89

The students give their book to the Secretary of Education, and this writer recalls a drive-by shooting resulting in his brother getting shot.

DIARY 90

The writer describes a candlelight vigil for those

lost to senseless violence.

DIARY 91

The writer describes her horrific life with her mother's drug-abusing boyfriend, and how Erin helped her regain her self-respect.

DIARY 92

This writer's parents greet him on his return from Washington, making him the center of attention.

DIARY 93

The student recounts the story of fellow student Jeremy Strombocker, who molested and killed a seven-year-old girl in a Nevada casino.

DIARY 94

This student wonders how Jeremy's friend David could walk away without stopping the abuse and murder.

DIARY 95

The Freedom Writers hold a peace rally, but the press ignores them.

DIARY 96

Erin encourages her students to join extracurricular activities.

DIARY 97

This student's mother ignores him, so the class becomes his family.

DIARY 98

This student's mother deserts the family, which falls apart.

Senior Year—Fall 1997

Entry 7—Ms. Gruwell

Erin creates a mentoring program between her students in high school and her graduate students at National University.

DIARY 99

This writer describes how she met a courageous woman named Cheryl Best, who was raped and disfigured by acid but overcame her tragic past.

DIARY 100

This student describes being evicted.

DIARY 101

This girl is the head of her household, her parents having left the country. She decides not to give up.

DIARY 102

This writer cannot apply to college as her fellow Freedom Writers are doing because she is an illegal alien from Mexico.

DIARY 103

This Latina girl rejects the expectation that she will get pregnant and leave school. Instead, she sets lofty goals.

DIARY 104

This Latino student describes giving an oral report on his career plans.

DIARY 105

This Mexican student with an illiterate father visits colleges with his class and decides to apply to a community college.

DIARY 106

Through the mentoring program, this student gets to explore a career in rocketry.

DIARY 107

Erin sets up a program to have the Freedom Writers mentor elementary school students.

DIARY 108

A story about the Freedom Writers appears in the *Los Angeles Times* and garners tremendous attention for the students.

DIARY 109

This writer gets a letter from a prisoner, which reminds her of her father, who was also jailed.

DIARY 110

This Latino boy wants to meet his father, who he has never met, but his father refuses.

DIARY 111

The girl who pledged the sorority during freshman year realizes that the abuse she suffered during hazing is still being inflicted on new pledges, but nonetheless she does not resign from the group.

DIARY 112

Teres's father is shot, suffering long-term damage.

DIARY 113

The writer's mother died of cancer eight days before Christmas and the writer misses her deeply.

Senior Year—Spring 1998

Entry 8—Ms. Gruwell

Erin explains that the class won the Spirit of Anne Frank Award from Scholastic, traveling to New York City to receive it.

DIARY 114

Guess sponsors 45 kids to go on the trip, sparking in this writer a discussion of his or her adolescent materialism.

DIARY 116

The writer praises Erin.

DIARY 115

This writer learns a lesson in tolerance when she rooms with students of other ethnicities during the trip to New York City.

DIARY 117

This writer reflects on the meaning of the award.

DIARY 118

This writer describes her abusive father.

DIARY 119

The writer meets his idol, writer Peter Maass.

DIARY 120

This student recounts meeting the woman who will become their agent, Carol.

DIARY 121

Their book is published.

DIARY 122

This writer realizes the importance of working as a team, on the basketball court and in the classroom.

DIARY 123

This student realizes that not everyone in class is contributing equally.

DIARY 124

This student is kicked off the basketball team.

DIARY 125

This student is chosen to represent the Freedom Writers and speak to Senator Barbara Boxer.

DIARY 126

This student has ADD.

DIARY 127

This student reveals that she is a lesbian.

DIARY 128

This student is chosen prom queen, to her delight. As she prepares for the night, she appreciates her mother's sacrifice in helping to bring the family from Nicaragua to America.

DIARY 129

The class gets a Micah Award from the Jewish community.

DIARY 130

This student has to decline college and a scholarship when his father gets ill. The student becomes the family's primary breadwinner.

DIARY 131

This student is named All-American, but he is even more thrilled to be off drugs.

DIARY 132

This student signs a letter of intent to play baseball.

DIARY 133

This girl is accepted to UCLA, but is disgusted when everyone assumes that she was the beneficiary of affirmative action.

DIARY 134

This student parallels his father deserting the family to his fear of leaving high school and the Freedom Writers.

DIARY 135

This girl is pregnant and decides to have the baby and keep it.

DIARY 136

This student hopes to become a pilot and escape the pressures of his life.

DIARY 137

This student is one of the top 35 students in the class to win a free computer from John Tu.

DIARY 138

This student's parents steal from her to fuel their drug habit.

DIARY 139

This student feels enormous pride at becoming the first person in the family to graduate from high school.

DIARY 140

This student recalls being in jail and rehab.

DIARY 141

This student, who has cystic fibrosis, recalls getting a double lung transplant to help extend his life.

DIARY 142

This student summarizes the events of the past four years.

Epilogue

Erin recounts how her students went off in the world. She followed, leaving her high school job to take a position training teachers at California State University.

Timeline of American Educational Reform

- 1635** The first Latin grammar school (Boston Grammar School) is established. As with all Latin Schools, it is designed for only sons of the upper classes who are destined for leadership positions in church, state, or the courts.
- 1636** The first "free school" in Virginia opens. Harvard College, the first higher education institution in the colonies, is established in Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- 1642** The Massachusetts Bay School Law is passed. It requires that parents make sure their children know the principles of religion and the major laws of the commonwealth.
- 1647** The first statewide system of public schools is born after Massachusetts passes a law requiring all towns with at least fifty families to establish a school.
- 1690** The first New England Primer is published.
- 1779** Thomas Jefferson proposes a two-track educational system, with different tracks

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>for "the laboring and the learned."</p> <p>1783-85 Noah Webster publishes <i>A Grammatical Institute of the English Language</i>--a spelling book, grammar book, and reader in one</p> <p>1791 Education becomes a function of the state rather than the federal government.</p> <p>1817 The Connecticut Asylum at Hartford for the Instruction of Deaf and Dumb Persons opens. It is the first permanent school for the deaf in the U.S.</p> <p>1821 The first public high school opens.</p> <p>1827 Massachusetts law requires towns of more than 500 families to have a public high school open to all students.</p> <p>1829 The New England Asylum for the Blind, now the Perkins School for the Blind, opens in Massachusetts, becoming the first school in the U.S. for children with visual disabilities.</p> <p>1837 Mount Holyoke Female Seminary, the first U.S. women's college, is opened.</p> <p>1839 The first state-funded school specifically for teacher education is founded in Lexington, Massachusetts.</p> <p>1841 Educator Dorothea Dix begins a series of investigations into the treatment of the mentally ill, sparking reforms and the establishment of a number of humane state hospitals, schools, and asylums for the mentally ill and disabled.</p> <p>1848 The Massachusetts School for Idiotic and Feeble-minded Youth, the first school of its kind in the U.S., is opened.</p> <p>1851 The New York State Asylum for Idiots opens.</p> <p>1862 The First Morrill Act, also known as the "Land Grant Act," donates federal lands to the northern states to fund colleges and universities teaching agriculture, engineering, military tactics, and home economics, as well as classical studies, with the aim of opening higher education to the working classes. Many prominent state colleges and universities, including the Big Ten, can trace their roots to this forward-thinking law.</p> <p>1875 The Civil Rights Act, banning segregation in all public accommodations, is passed, but is ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 1883.</p> | <p>1881 Booker T. Washington becomes the first principal of the newly opened normal school (or teacher's college) at Tuskegee, Alabama, now Tuskegee University.</p> <p>1916 Louis M. Terman and his team of Stanford University graduate students develop what becomes known as the Stanford-Binet Test, giving birth to the concept of intelligence quotient, or IQ.</p> <p>1922 The International Council for Exceptional Children is founded at Columbia University Teachers College.</p> <p>1926 The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) is first administered, based on aptitude tests developed by the U.S. Army.</p> <p>1963 Samuel A. Kirk introduces the term "learning disability" at a Chicago conference on children with perceptual disorders. The term sticks, and in 1964, the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities, now the Learning Disabilities Association of America, is formed. Today, more than one-half of all students in the U.S. who receive special education have been diagnosed as having learning disabilities.</p> <p>1964 The Civil Rights Act becomes law. It prohibits discrimination based on race, color, sex, religion, or national origin.</p> <p>1971 Federal court rules that students with mental retardation are entitled to a free public education.</p> <p>1972 <i>Mills v. the Board of Education of Washington, D.C.</i>, extends the educational entitlement to other students with disabilities, and requires the provision of "adequate alternative educational services suited to the child's needs, which may include special education."</p> <p>Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits discrimination based on sex in all aspects of education.</p> <p>1975 The Education of All Handicapped Children Act becomes federal law. It requires that a free, appropriate public education, suited to the student's individual needs, and offered in the least restrictive setting, be provided for all handicapped children.</p> <p>1990 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), renames and amends the</p> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

1975 law. The new law mandates transition services, and adds autism and traumatic brain injury to the eligibility list; its new name eliminates the term “handicapped” and its negative connotations.

2001 The No Child Left Behind Act becomes law.

2004 The Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act reauthorizes and modifies IDEA.

Author Sketch

California native Erin Gruwell, born in 1969, earned her B.A. from the University of California at Irvine and her M.A. in education from California State University at Long Beach.



In 1994, Gruwell began student teaching at Long Beach’s Woodrow Wilson High School, a school beset with gang violence, poverty, and apathy. A year later, she returned to the school as a full-time teacher, assigned to ninth-graders. Determined to make her lessons relevant, Gruwell took her students on field trips, sponsored guest speakers, and purchased the books she wanted her students to read. To fund her efforts, she worked extra jobs after school and on weekends. She also decided to have her students keep journals, sharing them without revealing the writers’ names. The journals served as a glue to bind the class together. Although her students were classified as “at risk,” all graduated from high school and many attended college as well.

Gruwell taught for only four years, leaving the high school to take a position as a Distinguished Teacher in Residence at California State University, Long Beach, where she teaches the methods she used at Woodrow Wilson High School. Shortly thereafter, she started the Freedom Writers Foundation to spread her message more widely.

In 2000, Gruwell ran for Congress in District 38, but was defeated. More recently, in 2008 she worked on behalf of Connie Heermann, a 27-year veteran English teacher in Indianapolis, Indiana, who gained national attention and support when the school board threatened to fire her, and ultimately

suspended her, for using *The Freedom Writers Diary* in class. The case became a cause célèbre for those who oppose censorship (Heermann also received support from, among others, author John Grisham). Gruwell’s foundation also conducts ongoing workshops to teach her methods and to incorporate her book into classrooms.

Selected Other Works by Erin Gruwell

Teach with Your Heart: Lessons I Learned from the Freedom Writers (2008)

Critic’s Corner

The Freedom Writers Diary, published in 1999, has sold a quarter of a million copies and continues to sell briskly; it also spawned a 2007 movie, *Freedom Writers*, starring Hilary Swank as Erin Gruwell. Proceeds from the book’s sale were donated to a scholarship fund for the Freedom Writers. Gruwell and her Freedom Writers have gained national attention, appearing on *Oprah*, *Primetime Live*, *Good Morning America*, and *The View*. Gruwell established The Freedom Writers Foundation, a nonprofit organization, to promote her teaching methods, and in 2008 she wrote a follow-up memoir, *Teach with Your Heart: Lessons I Learned from the Freedom Writers*.

In literary terms, *The Freedom Writers Diary* is effective for its polemic more than its style. Reviewing the book for the Library of Congress, the critic recommended the book for youth, education, and urban studies collections.

Bibliography

Online

The Freedom Writers Foundation, www.freedomwritersfoundation.org/

About Erin Gruwell, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erin_Gruwell

The True Story of the Freedom Writers, www.chasingthefrog.com/reelfaces/freedomwriters.php

About Erin Gruwell, myhero.com/myhero/hero.asp?hero=e_gruwell

About Erin Gruwell, iwhocant.typepad.com/i_who_cant_/2007/01/the_truth_about.html

About Erin Gruwell, www.imdb.com/character/ch0018312/
 Dorothea Lynde Dix,
<http://www.robinsonlibrary.com/social/pathology/biography/dix.htm>

General Objectives

1. To recognize the book's format
2. To identify the moment when Gruwell realizes that her prepared lessons won't work
3. To understand Gruwell's educational philosophy
4. To compare and contrast Gruwell's lessons to those of her colleagues
5. To evaluate the effectiveness of Gruwell's approach
6. To empathize with the challenges that Gruwell's students face
7. To grasp the book's purpose
8. To analyze Gruwell's character
9. To understand how this book fits with others of the genre
10. To evaluate the writing styles of the Freedom Writers

Specific Objectives

1. To understand that the book is a collection of personal journal entries written by "at risk" high school students
2. To appreciate the effect the racist caricature had on Gruwell's approach to her students
3. To understand that Gruwell is teaching tolerance in an attempt to combat racism
4. To recognize the personal sacrifice Gruwell makes to fund her classroom, including working two jobs to pay for books and field trips
5. To realize the overwhelming success of Gruwell's teaching methods
6. To comprehend why Gruwell's colleagues would resent her
7. To debate whether Gruwell's methods can be replicated successfully
8. To understand that Gruwell has compiled a polemic to bring about educational reform
9. To decide whether or not readers agree with Gruwell's approach and curriculum, which involves basing all readings on her students' own experiences
10. To recognize that the entries were heavily edited for style

Literary Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of the style of this book, present the following terms and applications to the book:

Author's purpose: the author's goal in writing a selection. Common purposes include to entertain, instruct, persuade, or describe. A selection may have more than one author's purpose, but one purpose is often the most important. Erin Gruwell's purpose in *The Freedom Writers Diary* is to persuade readers that her educational methods are superior to those being used by other teachers. She is trying to convince readers that schools need curricula based on material that appeals to students and teaches tolerance. Not everyone would agree, arguing that students need to know canonical works to be well-educated. Further, since workers often need to read and analyze material that does not directly relate to their interests, they should be taught as students to read even material they find dry and uninteresting.

Conflict: a struggle or fight central to the story. Conflict makes a story interesting because readers want to learn the outcome. There are two kinds of conflict. In an external conflict, characters struggle against a force outside themselves. In an internal conflict, characters battle a force within themselves. Stories often contain both external and internal conflicts. *The Freedom Writers Diary* is largely concerned with external conflict, as Gruwell's students struggle with the effects of poverty, crime, drug abuse, violence, and racism.

Voice: the author's unique attitude toward the material. Since *The Freedom Writers Diary* is written by approximately 150 different students as well as Erin Gruwell herself, the voices differ. Some students are sad and depressed; others, confused or even terrified; others, exultant over achieving what for them was previously impossible.

The Importance of Setting

The Freedom Writers Diary is set in Long Beach, California, a multi-ethnic city of nearly half a million, about twenty miles south of Los Angeles. The city is so diverse, in fact, that in 2000, *USA Today* dubbed Long Beach "the most ethnically diverse large city in the United States." About 45 percent of the population is white, 15 percent African-American, 12 percent Asian, and 36 percent Hispanic. Long Beach has the second-largest

Cambodian community outside of Asia, as well as immigrants from the Philippines and Vietnam. Many families are classified as poor: about 20 percent of families and a quarter of the population are below the poverty line, including about 33 percent of all children.

The setting is critical to the story because nearly all of Erin Gruwell's students grapple with the issues of poverty, homelessness, gangs, jail, crime, violence, lack of tolerance, and drug abuse as they try to learn and stay in school. Most of her students are minorities, and all face discrimination from others in their community.

Cross-Curricular Sources

Fiction

Andrew Clements, *Frindle*
Julie Dannenberg, *First Day Jitters*
Kate Dicamillo, *Because of Winn-Dixie*
Patricia Reilly Giff, *Pictures of Hollis Wood*
William Golding, *Lord of the Flies*
Lois Griffin, *Killing Mr. Duncan*
Carl Hiaasen, *Hoot*
E. L. Konigsburg, *Silent to the Bone*
John Knowles, *A Separate Peace*
Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*
J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blooded Prince*
J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*
J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*
J.D. Salinger, *The Catcher in Rye*
Jerry Spinelli, *Loser*
Beatriz Vida, *A Library for Juana*
Tobias Wolff, *Old School*
Jacqueline Woodson, *If You Come Softly*

Nonfiction

Zlata Filipovic, *Zlata's Diary: A Child's Life in Sarajevo*
Anne Frank, *Diary of a Young Girl*
Erin Gruwell, *Teach with Your Heart: Lessons Learned from The Freedom Writers*
Elie Wiesel, *Night*

Audiocassettes

The Freedom Writers Diary

DVDs/TV

The Breakfast Club
Dangerous Minds
Dead Poet's Society

Ferris Bueller's Day Off
Freedom Writers
Good-Bye Mr. Chips
Lean on Me
Mr. Holland's Opus
Music of the Heart
One Eight Seven
Renaissance Man
Romy and Michele's High School Reunion
St. Elmo's Fire
Sixteen Candles
Stand and Deliver
To Sir, with Love

Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in Erin Gruwell's *The Freedom Writers Diary* should include these aspects:

Themes

- crime
- drug abuse
- education
- families
- friendship
- loneliness
- maturity
- social reform
- violence
- writing

Motifs

- living in a neighborhood torn apart by crime
- dealing with the effects of substance abuse
- being considered worthless
- battling with authorities and colleagues
- forging your own educational philosophy
- working hard for what you believe in
- helping students escape poverty and homelessness
- coping with shattered families
- being forced to mature too young
- sharing your feelings, hopes, and dreams in writing

Meaning Study

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have particular meaning in the book. Explain the meaning of each. Page numbers indicate the context from which the item is taken.

1. Thanks to MTV dubbing Long Beach "the gangs-

- ta-rap capital" with its depiction of guns and graffiti, my friends have a warped perception of the city, or LBC as the rappers refer to it. (p. 1) *(Erin grew up in a gated community and as the child of an upper-middle class family, she was provided with strong family support and a fine education. Her students are living very different lives, victims of poverty, crime, discrimination, and violence. Because of her background, Erin dresses in suit and pearls; her students sport less formal wear. On the first day of school, Erin rightly worries that her students will think that she is too preppy and privileged and thus could not possibly understand their lives. Initially, she is correct, but her students' perceptions change as the years progress.)*
2. "This is the type of propaganda that the Nazis used during the Holocaust," I yelled. (p. 2) *(The book's inciting incident occurs when Erin finds a racist caricature that one of her students had drawn about another of her students, Sharaud. The crude drawing, reproduced in the book, shows Sharaud, an African-American student, with hugely exaggerated lips. Erin likens the hateful drawing to propaganda disseminated by the Nazis against the Jews. She is astonished, however, to realize that her students have not even heard of the Holocaust. This incident moves her to create a new curriculum of tolerance, choosing literature that will touch her students' lives and relate to their experiences.)*
3. I know she'll believe me 'cause I'm white. (p. 9) *(In this journal entry, the writer wants to transfer from Erin's class to the Distinguished Scholars class because Erin's class is made up of black and Hispanic students and he fears that he will be attacked. This entry, as with so many others in the book, shows the pervasive racism of the area, racism that works both ways, as the black students do not like the white ones, either. Erin vows to build tolerance to combat this racism.)*
4. I think the key is to build on what they know. (p. 31) *(This is the essence of Erin's educational philosophy: she believes that all the classroom activities must directly link to students' own experiences. She designs her curriculum this way. Her methods are highly controversial, as many educators believe that students need to learn material that does not directly relate to themselves so they can discover wider worlds.)*
5. "Don't judge a peanut by its shell, judge it by what's inside of it." (p. 38) *(This writer, long discriminated against because of her weight, realizes that the "Peanut Game" that Erin has her students play is designed to teach them that we are all alike under our surfaces. This writer feels empowered by the lesson that she has learned, but more experienced readers will realize that people do not shed their prejudices that easily.)*
6. Using her as our muse, the students will begin compiling the diaries they've been keeping into a collaborative book. (p. 139) *(From the diary of a young Bosnian girl, Erin gets the idea for The Freedom Writers Diary. This is one of the turning points in the book, as the life-changing project gets started and quickly picks up steam.)*
7. My mom always told me that "one person can make a difference and can change the whole world." (p. 152) *(The writer initially does not believe that one person alone can be an effective catalyst for change, but the story of Rosa Parks convinces him otherwise. He describes how Rosa Parks challenged segregation and changed the world. However, the writer grossly simplifies the civil rights struggle and thus distorts history. Parks became a symbol, but was hardly the sole person to end segregation. This entry demonstrates the serious shortcomings of Gruwell's approach, as it leads students to gross simplification and misunderstandings.)*
8. "Freedom Writers have a dream!" (p. 165) *(Clasping hands on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, Erin's students mirror Dr. King's historic speech. This scene shows their determination to make history through educational reform.)*
9. Today at Butler Elementary School, the Freedom Writers mentored the kids. (p. 208) *(Erin has students at a local college mentor her students. In turn, her students mentor the local elementary school children. Providing positive role models, encouragement, and support helps all these students succeed.)*

10. Anne's words also inspired me because I too left the safety of Room 203 and said goodbye to Wilson High. (p. 274)
(As with her students, Erin leaves the high school after four years there. She decides to share the lessons of the Freedom Writers to bring about educational reform. To that end, she has established a foundation and lectures all over the United States and the world.)

Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

Questions 1-5 (Literal Level)

1. Where did Erin teach? What subject did she teach there?
(She teaches English at Wilson High School in Long Beach, California.)
2. How does Erin get the money to pay for books and field trips for her students?
(She has several sources. First, she works two extra jobs, one as a concierge at a local Marriott hotel, and the other selling lingerie at a department store. Second, she gets sponsors such as millionaire John Tu. Third, she runs fund-raisers such as concerts.)
3. How did Erin and her students come up with the name "Freedom Writers"?
(The name comes from the term "Freedom Riders," the title given to the African-American and white college students who rode interstate buses into the segregated southern United States in 1961 to test newly formed civil rights laws. These new laws outlawed racial segregation in interstate transportation facilities, including bus stations and railroad terminals.)
4. What official do the Freedom Writers visit while they are in Washington, D.C.?
(They visit Secretary of Education Richard Riley and give him a copy of their manuscript.)
5. What is the Freedom Writers' dream?
(They dream of spreading tolerance to diminish racism, hatred, and violence.)

Questions 6-8 (Interpretative Level)

6. Why did Erin Gruwell publish this book?
(First, she wanted to persuade people to be tolerant. Second, she wanted to convince people to adopt her educational philosophy and teaching methods. Third, she wanted to make money to help fund her students' college educations. Perceptive students might also argue that she wanted to become famous and establish her platform to jump start a new career.)
7. Why do the other teachers resent Erin so much?
(She makes them look lazy and ineffective because she works so hard and gets such impressive results.)
8. Who are the real heroes of this book—Erin Gruwell or her students? Both? Neither?
(Students who believe that Erin is the true hero can argue that none of her students' success would have been possible without her leadership and dedication. Students who believe the Freedom Writers are the true heroes can argue that they opened their hearts and minds to Erin and worked as hard as they could to excel.)

Questions 9-10 (Critical Level)

9. Do you agree with Erin Gruwell's approach? Would it work for you or the students in your school? Why or why not?
(Answers will vary. Students who prefer topical literature and enjoy journaling may endorse Erin's approach. Students concerned about personal privacy or interested in a broader-based, more traditional education may not.)
10. Do you think Erin should have kept teaching at the high school? Why or why not?
(Most readers will agree that Erin can spread her educational philosophy most effectively by teaching teachers.)

Questions 11-12 (Creative Level)

11. Imagine that you are a very wealthy and successful business person. You want to help the Freedom Writers. What would you do and why?
12. Learn more about the Freedom Writers Foundation that Erin established. Information is available on the foundation's website, <www.freedomwritersfoundation.org>. Make a poster advertising the organization.

Across the Curriculum

Art/Music

1. Make an invitation for a guest speaker to come to your class, just as Erin's students made invitations for their special visitors.
2. Draw a classroom seating arrangement to help students learn most effectively.
3. Some of the teachers criticize Erin for wearing suits and pearls to work. Design some of the outfits that she would be most likely to wear.
4. The class decides to hold a concert to raise money for their trip to Washington, D.C. Imagine that you were part of the concert committee. Which bands would you try to get to volunteer their services? Why did you choose these bands?
5. Make a play list of music that Erin's students might enjoy. Include at least twenty songs. Compare your list to a classmate's list.

Language Arts

1. Erin creates her own curriculum, choosing books for her students. Make your own list of ten books that Erin should teach in her class. Be ready to justify each choice.
2. Read *Zlata's Diary* and explain in an essay why Erin invited Zlata to speak to her class.
3. Erin believes that for literature to touch you, it must relate to your life. Choose a book that you believe relates directly to your life. In a poem or ballad, explain how the book parallels your own experiences.
4. Imagine that you are a Freedom Writer in Erin's classroom. Write two diary entries of your own, describing your life.
5. Read the *Diary of Anne Frank*. In an essay, argue whether or not the experiences of Erin's students parallel those of Anne Frank. Conversely, does Erin trivialize and ultimately dishonor the horrors of the Holocaust by comparing it to contemporary urban life?

History/Social Studies

1. Find out what happened to some of the original 150 Freedom Writers. Did they graduate from high school and go to college? What professions did they pursue? Choose at least three Freedom Writers to research.
2. Research the Freedom Writers Foundation. Find out what they do and how they want to bring about social change.

3. One of the students lists the different social groups in the high school. List the social groups in your high school and, in an essay, parallel them to the social groups in society at large.
4. Explain the novel's title, analyzing its thematic function. Explain its historical allusion.
5. The students discuss California's Proposition 187. Explain what this legislation proposed and what it did or did not accomplish.

Speech/Drama

1. Watch the movie *To Sir, With Love*. In a speech, compare and contrast it to *The Freedom Writers Diary*.
2. Role-play a scene between Erin and her unsupportive fellow teachers, in which each side discusses their positions on the topic of educating at-risk students.
3. Erin's marriage broke up over the strain of her dedication to her career. With the class, debate this issue: "Which is more important: your career or your home life?" Be sure that participants introduce arguments on both sides of the issue.
4. One student describes enacting *Twelve Angry Men* in the classroom. Read the play and direct a scene from it with some of your classmates as the actors.
5. With a partner, act out a scene between Erin and one of her colleagues, in which they discuss their differences and try to resolve them.

Science/Math

1. One of Erin's students has a learning disability. Create a chart or poster showing at least five different learning disabilities and modifications that teachers can make in their classroom to help these students learn more easily.
2. The class goes on a field trip to the Museum of Tolerance. Create a Museum of Tolerance in your own classroom, including displays, posters, books, and videotapes.
3. This student has cystic fibrosis and requires surgery. Find out more about this disease, including its causes and treatments.
4. One writer recalls a horrific incident: her father killed his mother (the writer's grandmother) by setting her on fire. Fortunately, such terrible acts are rare, but mild household burns are common. Make a poster showing the proper way to treat mild household burns.

5. One of the student writers recounts his mother's battle with lupus. Report on the latest treatment for this disease. Include information about its symptoms, as well.

Alternate Assessment

1. Watch the movie *The Freedom Writers*. Then research to find out how closely the movie version matches Erin's real experiences. For instance, find out if any of her students and guest speakers appear in the film.
2. Create a poster for a movie.
3. With some classmates, hold a roundtable discussion in which you debate whether or not the students in Erin's class really wrote these entries. If so, how heavily do you think the writing was edited?
4. Erin's students overcome significant barriers to learning. Make a chart showing ten barriers to learning. Rank them from most to least significant. Be ready to defend your choices.
5. Erin teaches her students that you can accomplish anything if you have sufficient passion. In a speech, argue that she is or is not correct.

Vocabulary Test

Using the list below, fill in the blanks with the word from *The Freedom Writers Diary* that fits the definition.

| | |
|----------|-----------|
| utopia | feisty |
| façade | naïve |
| putrid | epiphany |
| mentor | blatant |
| audacity | accolades |

- _____ 1. Boldness or daring; arrogant confidence or recklessness audacity
- _____ 2. A sudden, intuitive perception or insight
- _____ 3. A superficial appearance or illusion
- _____ 4. An ideal place or state
- _____ 5. A wise and trusted counselor, teacher, or senior sponsor
- _____ 6. Full of animation, energy, or courage; spirited; spunky
- _____ 7. Decayed; foul; corrupt
- _____ 8. Showing lack of experience, judgment, or information
- _____ 9. Brazenly obvious; flagrant
- _____ 10. Expression of approval; praise; award

3. I think the key is to build on what they know.

4. Using her as our muse, the students will begin compiling the diaries they've been keeping into a collaborative book.

5. "Freedom Writers have a dream!"

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. What is the book's primary message about life?
2. One critic characterized *The Freedom Writers Diary* this way: "Straight from the front line of urban America, the inspiring story of one fiercely determined teacher and her remarkable students." Prove this critic's statement correct, using at least two examples from the book.
3. Erin has her students sign an honor code to prevent them from sensationalizing or embellishing their stories. Do you think all these stories are true? Give at least three examples from the book to prove your point.
4. Trace how Erin changes as the book progresses. Describe what she is like in the beginning of the book when she starts teaching, and what she comes to realize.

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Sentence Completion (20 points)

Give a reason to complete each sentence.

1. Erin think that her students will not like her because _____

2. She decides to throw out her lessons and focus on tolerance when _____

3. Several students buy and carry guns because _____

4. One of the girls joins a sorority and endures humiliating hazing because _____

5. Erin has her students play the "Peanut Game" to _____

6. Many of the teachers resent Erin because _____

7. Erin has her students "toast to change" to _____

8. The class stages "Basketball for Bosnia" to _____

9. Erin has her college students mentor her high school students to _____

10. Erin leaves the high school to take a position training teacher at California State University because

Part II: Matching (30 points)

Complete each of the following descriptions with a name from the list that follows. Place the letter of your answer in the blanks provided.

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ____ 1. Renee Firestone | A. student fed up with being considered the speaker for all blacks |
| ____ 2. Miep Gies | B. humiliated by being caricatured with huge lips |
| ____ 3. Kevin | C. woman who helped shelter Anne Frank |
| ____ 4. Joyce | D. millionaire who helps the Freedom Writers |
| ____ 5. John Tu | E. Holocaust survivor who visits the class |
| ____ 6. Sharaud | F. young boy who died of a brain tumor |
| ____ 7. Jeremy Strohmeier | G. student who molested and murdered a child |
| ____ 8. Carol | H. reporter idolized by one of the students |
| ____ 9. Peter Maass | I. Freedom Writers literary agent |
| ____ 10. Zlata Filipovic | J. Bosnian teenager who visits the class |

Part III: Identification (20 points)

Explain why each is important in the book.

1. Room 203

2. computers

3. guns

4. pearls

5. The Freedom Riders

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. What makes Erin such an admirable person? Isolate and analyze at least three of her traits.
2. Miep Gies, the courageous Dutch woman who sheltered the Frank family, visits them in California, where she declared that Erin Gruwell's students were "the real heroes." Explain how her statement is true.
3. The Freedom Writers Diary follows a classic formula: the outsider teacher who isn't supposed to last a month, comes in and rebuilds a class with tough love and hard work. Explain how this motif is shown in the book.
4. What role does the book's setting play in the story? Why is the setting so important in this book?

Answer Key

VOCABULARY

1. audacity
2. epiphany
3. façade
4. utopia
5. mentor
6. feisty
7. putrid
8. naive
9. blatant
10. accolades

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. D | 6. B |
| 2. G | 7. E |
| 3. J | 8. A |
| 4. H | 9. I |
| 5. F | 10. C |

Part II: True/False (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. F |
| 2. F | 7. F |
| 3. F | 8. T |
| 4. T | 9. T |
| 5. T | 10. F |

Part III: Quote Identification (30 points)

1. Thanks to MTV dubbing Long Beach “the gangsta-rap capital” with its depiction of guns and graffiti, Erin’s friends have a warped perception of the city. They think she is in very serious danger.
2. The book’s inciting incident occurs when Erin finds a racist caricature that one of her students had drawn about another of her students, Sharaud. Erin likens the hateful drawing to propaganda disseminated by the Nazis against the Jews. She is astonished, however, to realize that her students have not heard of the Holocaust, much less have any knowledge of it. This incident moves her to create a new curriculum of tolerance, choosing literature that will touch her students’ lives and relate to their experiences.
3. This is the essence of Erin’s educational philosophy: she believes that all the classroom activities must directly link to students own experiences. She designs her curriculum this way. Her methods are highly controversial, as many educators believe that students need to learn material that does not directly relate to themselves so they can discover wider worlds.
4. From the diary of a young Bosnian girl, Erin gets the idea for *The Freedom Writers Diary*. This is one of the turning points in the book, as the life-changing project gets started and quickly picks up steam.
5. Clasp hands on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, Erin’s students mirror Dr. King’s historic speech. This scene shows their determination to make history through educational reform.

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Sentence Completion (20 points)

1. she is young, white, preppy, and affluent, while they are poor minorities
2. she intercepts an ugly racial caricature, and angrily declares that this was precisely the sort of thing that led to the Holocaust—only to be met by uncomprehending looks
3. they think this is the only way to keep themselves and their families safe
4. she wants to be accepted by her peers and be considered one of the popular girls
5. teach them to judge people for their characters, not their appearance.
6. she makes them look lazy and unconcerned for their students because she works so hard and has enormous success
7. help transform the apathetic students into active participants
8. raise money for children in Bosnia.
9. give her high school students more positive role-models
10. she feels she can do more good in the world that way

Part II: Matching (30 points)

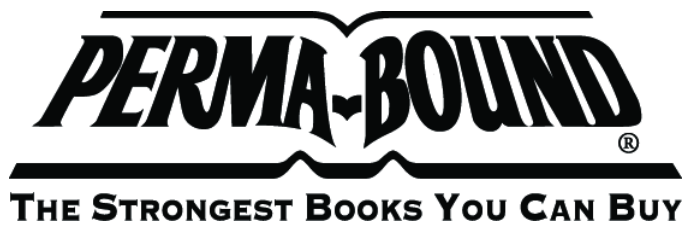
- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. E | 6. B |
| 2. C | 7. G |
| 3. F | 8. I |
| 4. A | 9. H |
| 5. D | 10. J |

Part III: Identification (20 points)

1. Room 203 is Erin's classroom. It becomes a symbol for tolerance, understanding, and success.
2. John Tu donates computers to Erin's class. This makes it much easier for the students to learn to write, as the computers have spell check and grammar check programs. At the end of the year, 35 of the computers are awarded to the students with the highest average, serving as further incentive to succeed.
3. Many of the students buy and carry guns. They show how dangerous the neighborhood is and how desperate the students have become.
4. Erin wears pearls, which suggest her elitist status. However, as the book progresses, readers learn that she is not elitist and is able to identify with her students.
5. The Freedom Writers took their name from the famous civil rights Freedom Riders.

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.



PERMA-BOUND

617 East Vandalia Road • Jacksonville, Illinois 62650
Toll Free 1-800-637-6581 • Fax 1-800-551-1169
E-Mail: books@perma-bound.com

PERMA-BOUND CANADA

Box 868, Station Main • Peterborough, Ontario K9J 7A2
Toll Free 1-800-461-1999 • Fax 1-888-250-3811
E-Mail: perma-bound.ca@sympatico.ca

Visit us online at www.perma-bound.com