

Background Information for Library Materials in Review

Book Title: <i>The Freedom Writers Diary</i>	Synopsis A true account of a teacher who confronted a room of "at-risk" students details their life-changing journey and includes diary excerpts. <u>Source: Novelist Plus - accessed via SCDiscus</u>
Book Author Gruwell, Erin	
Copyright Year: 1999	

Professional Reviews of *The Freedom Writers Diary*

Source: Follett Titlewave

Booklist (Vol. 96, No. 4 (October 15, 1999))

This collective journal brings together the work of a group of students, the Freedom Writers, from an English class taught by Gruwell at an "at risk" public high school. Inspired by The Diary of Anne Frank and Zlata's Diary, the students recorded their responses to a world dominated by abuse, drugs, crime, homelessness, and racism. Taken together, the nearly 150 entries (all anonymous but many with an oddly similar writing style) tell a moving coming-of-age story in which the authors gradually become their own heroes. In addition to chronicling this remarkable personal metamorphosis, the book demonstrates Gruwell's profound effect on her students. Not only does she radiate optimism and enthusiasm, she also shows a flair for making things happen: arranging meetings for her class with Miep Gies and Zlata; attracting coverage on Prime Time Live and in People magazine (details, unfortunately, are vague on how she managed all this). Inspiring proof of the aphorism that teachers do make a difference.

Library Journal (October 1, 1999)

When Gruwell was a first-year high school teacher in Long Beach, CA, teaching the "unteachables" (kids that no other teacher wanted to deal with), she discovered that most of her students had not heard of the Holocaust. Shocked, she introduced them to books about tolerance—first-person accounts by the likes of Anne Frank and Zlata Filipovic, who chronicled her life in war-torn Sarajevo. The students were inspired to start keeping diaries of their lives that showed the violence, homelessness, racism, illness, and abuse that surrounded them. These student diaries form the basis of this book, which is cut from the same mold as Dangerous Minds: the outsider teacher, who isn't supposed to last a month, comes in and rebuilds a class with tough love and hard work. Most readers will be proud to see how these students have succeeded; at the end of their four-year experience, the Freedom Writers—as they called themselves, in honor of the Freedom Riders of the 1960s—had all graduated; Gruwell now works at the college level, instructing teachers on how to provide more interactive classes for their students. Recommended for youth, education, and urban studies collections.—Danna C. Bell-Russel, Lib. of Congress, Washington, DC
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Awards/Distinctions Awarded to *The Freedom Writers Diary*

Source: Follett Titlewave

New York Public Library Books for the Teen Age: 2001

