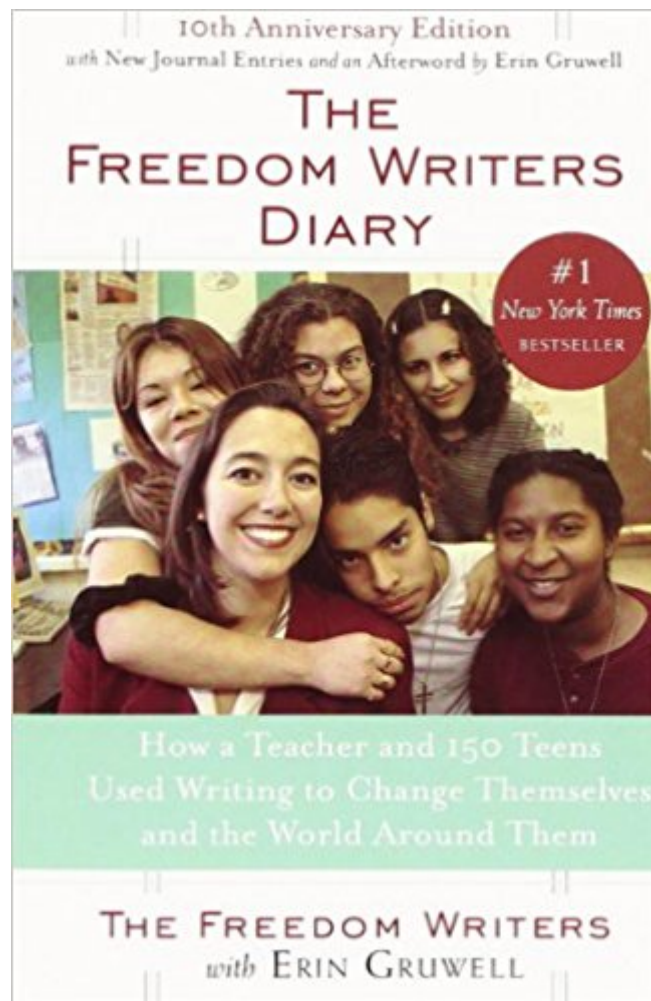


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# The Freedom Writers Diary: How A Teacher And 150 Teens Used Writing To Change Themselves And The World Around Them



## Synopsis

**#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER & NOW A MAJOR MOTION PICTURE** Straight from the front line of urban America, the inspiring story of one fiercely determined teacher and her remarkable students. As an idealistic twenty-three-year-old English teacher at Wilson High School in Long beach, California, Erin Gruwell confronted a room of "unteachable, at-risk" students. One day 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. So she and her students, using the treasured books *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* and *Zlata's Diary: A Child's Life in Sarajevo* as their guides, undertook a life-changing, eye-opening, spirit-raising odyssey against intolerance and misunderstanding. They learned to see the parallels in these books to their own lives, recording their thoughts and feelings in diaries and dubbing themselves the "Freedom Writers" in homage to the civil rights activists "The Freedom Riders." With funds raised by a "Read-a-thon for Tolerance," they arranged for Miep Gies, the courageous Dutch woman who sheltered the Frank family, to visit them in California, where she declared that Erin Gruwell's students were "the real heroes." Their efforts have paid off spectacularly, both in terms of recognition "appearances on "Prime Time Live" and "All Things Considered," coverage in *People* magazine, a meeting with U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley "and educationally. All 150 Freedom Writers have graduated from high school and are now attending college. With powerful entries from the students' own diaries and a narrative text by Erin Gruwell, *The Freedom Writers Diary* is an uplifting, unforgettable example of how hard work, courage, and the spirit of determination changed the lives of a teacher and her students. The author's proceeds from this book will be donated to The Tolerance Education Foundation, an organization set up to pay for the Freedom Writers' college tuition. Erin Gruwell is now a visiting professor at California State University, Long Beach, where some of her students are Freedom Writers.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I saw the movie, then went out and bought the book. I sat down and read the book cover to cover in one sitting; I couldn't put it down. It's true that this book has not been prettied up. There is harsh language, there is sex, and there is drugs. But the writers don't glorify sex or drugs. They speak honestly about their lives, including their struggles with addictions, abuse, pregnancy, and above all, violence. The book works because it is real. Erin Gruell's teaching worked because she allowed the students to be real, to be honest, and to be themselves. If anything, the movie downplayed Erin Gruell's accomplishments. From the book, one learns that she started her efforts to reach out to the students, including working a second job, when she was still a student teacher, a time during which most teachers, even in "safe" suburban schools, are just trying to survive day to day. The book also points out that there were 150 "freedom writers" in five classes, not the one small class shown in the movie. I have been teaching at the high school and college level for ten years. I highly recommend this book to anyone who is honestly interested in making education a more meaningful experience for the students. It's true that parts of the students' lives are not pretty. But that is exactly the point.

The Freedom Writer's Diary is a truly amazing project that teacher, Erin Gruwell and her students created. The diary is insightful and offers much meaning to the reader. This book is the product of what young people can achieve. The book is divided into a variety of topics where the students reflect on the assigned readings and make connections to their current realities. The parallels are often heart-wrenching and painful. These are their stories... The Freedom Writers were students who were labelled as at-risk and unteachable until one remarkable person, Erin Gruwell entered their lives. Gruwell rejected the labels and saw the potential that all young people possess, a lesson for us all. The back cover of the book says it the best, through the use of literature and Erin Gruwell as the guide, the Freedom Writers, "undertook a life-changing, eye-opening, spirit-raising odyssey against intolerance and misunderstanding." Highly recommended, read this and you will surely

expand your awareness.

This inspirational book is a must read for teenagers, parents, teachers, and just folks. If i could, i'd buy a copy for everyone i know. In their own voices and in beautifully crafted prose, teenagers tell stories of their daily lives: the physical and emotional war zones they inhabit become real to the reader. With the help of an inspirational teacher, these students read other teenagers' stories and learn to see thier lives in historical context. They read diaries by two girls their own age: Anne Frank, who died in the Holocaust, and Zlata Filipovic, who lived through the war in Sarajevo. This is education with a capital E. Erin Gruwell empowers these young people to transform their realities through the power of the word. The spirit of Anne Frank and the original Freedom Riders lives on in these young heros from Long Beach.

My daughter is adopted. She is also African American and her father and I are White. She is well aware of the racism in this world. Also being learning disabled reading does not come easy for her. I got her this book in hopes to peak her interest in reading. I got so very much more!! She was able to relate to the struggles the students at Wilson High School were going through. Although she is not a student that would be deemed "Unteachable at-risk" as the students in this book were she was able to put her self in thier shoes and walk along side them relating to many of their day to day issues. My daughter has always loved to journal but now does it with a whole new purpose. I really had no idea this book would make such a profound difference in her life! This book is well written and easy to understand but not oversimplified causing you to lose interest. Written in such a manner you get to know the students as if you were in class with them each day. Making it easy to feel their struggles, pain and their joys. I purchased a copy for myself and read along with my daughter. This book helped me see more clearly the struggles my daughter was and is going through living is a world marked with intolerance. I wish every school in America had thier own Mrs. Gruwell!!!!

Having spent an hour and a half with tears streaming down my face at an appearance by Erin Gruwell and four of her Freedom Writers, I bought the book. That was Friday afternoon. It's now Wednesday night, and I can't stop telling people about this book. The kids' entries ring so true to anyone who's been around today's youth for any length of time (sorry, Erin Salona). The parallels that Erin helped the kids see between Anne Frank's and Zlata's lives and their own provided the inspiration for her students to pick up a pen rather than a gun. Their message of tolerance needs to be heard by everyone! I only wish I could afford to buy a case so that I could give copies to some of

my former sixth grade students who remain "at-risk" students. A must-read for all teachers and parents!

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