

Study Guide for Summer Reading CP12B

The Freedom Writers Diary

The Freedom Writers Diary was published in 1999. It is an amazing true story of strength, courage, and achievement in the face of adversity. The book is a collection of anonymous diary entries about the real life experiences of a group of teenagers in high school.

BACKGROUND:

ERIN GRUWELL – An idealistic 24 year old first year high school English teacher who worked two extra jobs to earn money for supp

STUDENTS – considered by the administration as “unteachable” and “at risk” Many of these students experienced:

1. gun violence
2. racial tensions
3. gang warfare

PRINCIPAL, DEPARTMENT CHAIR, AND SOME TEACHERS

Did not support Gruwell’s efforts,

JOHN TU – A self-made millionaire who helped the Freedom Writers

SETTING:

TIME – 1994-1998

PLACE – Wilson High School – Room 203
Long Beach, California

HISTORICAL EVENTS THAT HAPPENED DURING THE FOUR YEARS OF THE DIARY:

1. Proposition 187 – gov’t can take away all programs for illegal immigrants
2. The Oklahoma City Bombing- Timothy McVeigh – bombs gov’t bldg
3. The Rodney King Trial – race riots after police were acquitted for brutality

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FRESHMAN YEAR

1. How do the students react to Ms. Gruwell at first?
2. One of the diary entries at the beginning of the diary compares a sorority initiation to?

FIRST TURNING POINT:

3. What was on the paper?
4. How did Ms Gruwell's Respond?

MS. GRUWELL'S CLASSROOM APPROACH:

In order to get the students interested in reading, Ms. Gruwell had them read stories and watch films they could relate to their lives. Some examples include:

5. In the book Durango Street, some of the students:
6. The students took field trips to the Museum of Tolerance and the Marriott Hotel. Who did they meet?
7. What did they learn from their trips? -
8. What did the teacher hope the kids would learn from Romeo and Juliet?
9. What is the purpose of the peanut game?

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10. How does Gruwell's class compare to the Distinguished Scholars class?

SOPHOMORE YEAR

1. Ms. Gruwell faces opposition from other teachers at the school. What is their problem with her?

2. How does Gruwell feel about the educational system?

4. In the "Toast for Change", Ms Gruwell has a party and passes out books from Barnes and Noble. What books did she give them and how did they influence them?

5. Zlata's Diary

6. What did keeping a diary teach the students?

7. Why did the students read books about the Holocaust and the War in Sarajevo?

8. When Miep visits their classes, one of the writers calls her a hero. What does she say to them?

9. After Zlata went home, she wrote to the students thanking them for their friendship, understanding, and fundraising efforts to help her people. She quoted Martin Luther King:

10. At the end of sophomore year, the Freedom Writers were in danger because:

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JUNIOR YEAR

1. When the class reads Emerson, the idea of self-reliance brings out many themes in their diaries including:
2. The *Color Purple* brings up many issues in class including:
3. How do the students react to the assignment to write about events that changed their lives?
4. What do the students discover from editing the entries of other students?
5. What does one student learn from his/her mother's discussion of Rosa Parks?
6. After watching films of the "Freedom Riders" the one white student in the class compares his experience with:
7. The students, along with help from the community, raised money to send them to Washington, DC. What places do they visit?
8. When they return from their trip to Washington, what do the students discover has happened?
9. What do the students do in response to this tragic event?
10. Why did the students decide to send their diary to the Secretary of Education?
11. How do the students feel about adults?
12. When they met with Richard Riliy, what did they find out?
13. What have Gruwell's class and the Freedom Writers as a group become for each of these students by the end of their junior year?

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SENIOR YEAR

1. What does the teacher want to focus on for senior year?
2. What was the one writer's attitude until he/she met Cheryl Best?
3. What did the writer learn from Ms. Best?
4. As the Freedom Writers look to their future, what issues confront them and threaten their dreams to go to college?
5. How did the teacher alleviate their fears?
6. What award did the Freedom Writers receive by the beginning of their spring semester?
7. Peter Maass is a journalist who is a war correspondent. He was asked by a student: "...I don't understand how a journalist can just...sit and watch people die...." What was his response?
8. Meeting adults like Connie Chung, Carol the Agent, and John Tu show the students :
9. Graduation for these students meant many wonderful things. One thing it cannot always guarantee is:
10. What did the students who earned the top 35 grade point average win when they graduated?

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11. The students learn the “power of the pen”. What does this mean?