THEMES AND WRITING PROMPTS

Freshman Year

Ms. Gruwell’s Diary Entry (Before the first day of class)
How does Ms. Gruwell feel about her freshman students being labeled? What does she feel is the key to teaching them? What field trip does she want to take them on?

Diary 1 First day of school
At the beginning of The Freedom Writers Diary, students describe their thoughts after meeting Ms. Gruwell and having her class for a few days. What were your first impressions of your teacher and class when you arrived? Do you feel differently now?

Diary 2 Racial segregation at school
Ms. G writes about people being labeled in her school with words such as “bone head, remedial or basic.” She goes on to describe students labeled based on their ethnicity. Describe how you might be labeled if someone was to judge you before getting to know you. Explain why it is important to get to know someone before categorizing them.

Diary 3 Getting “jumped”
What are some of the rules of teenage life that adults just don’t understand? How does one earn respect from another? What are the problems with wanting respect, deserving respect, earning respect, fighting for respect? Do you agree that people often look, act and dress just like the people they hate? Why or why not, and why do you think this is?

Diary 4 Race riot on campus
The writer of this diary ran away from the scene of a fight because he/she thought he/she would be blamed for the fight. Think of a time when you, someone you know, or a character in a book or movie was blamed for something for which you/they weren’t responsible. Why did you/they get blamed? Was it due to past actions, friends, mistaken identity, general reputation or simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time?
How are you personally judged by others based on the people you hang around with? How do you feel about this?

**Diary 5 Buying a gun**
Have you or someone you know ever handled a gun or other weapon for the purpose of protection? Why did you need to? How did you feel when you had it with you? Did others know about it? How did they react to you because you had it? What do you think of a society that handles things by weapons, shooting, stabbing, and killing?

**Diary 6 Death of a friend**
Have you been to the funeral of a friend? Have you had other important people die in your life? How does death affect the way you feel about people and life? Does it change the way you live or would like to live?

**Diary 7 Gang initiation**
What have you done that was “worth it” that someone else may not understand? Explain what you did, or do, and why it is important to you.

**Diary 8 “Rushing” a sorority**
How important is it to do things to fit in to have friends? To what lengths have you gone to fit in? Have you ever done something as part of a crowd that you later felt bad about when you were alone? As teenagers, why do you think fitting in is so important? What lengths have you seen others go to fit in?

**Diary 9 Tagging**
The writer of this entry states, “What goals do I aim for? I don’t aim, because I don’t have any goals; instead I deal with what comes.” Think about yourself and your view of the future. Do you have long term goals for yourself or are you living one day at a time? Explain your answer.

**Diary 10 Proposition 187: Discrimination**
Do you feel that writing allows you to express your feelings and gives you a voice that is not judged? Why or why not? What is an issue that is important to you that you would like to write about?

**Diary 11 Dyslexia**
The writer in this entry describes how he struggled in school and compensated by developing his abilities in baseball. He even reveals animosity toward school and anxiety of reading aloud: “Everyone would laugh at me and call me stupid.” What is the major challenge this student faces? How does he feel about himself now? What has happened to him to make him feel this way?

**Diary 12 Juvenile hall**
The writer states that he/she has gotten in trouble and even spent time in Juvenile Hall. He/she goes on to state that he/she has turned his/her life around. Describe a time when you got into a situation you should not have and what you do now to attempt to stay clear of this type of trouble. Do you relate to the story this student has told? Why or why not?

**Diary 13 The projects**
The writer explains his struggles of not having a father as he grew up and his realization that his friends also had to grow up without a father figure: “I felt sorry for him. I knew how hard it was to grow up without a father.” Have you or someone close to you, grown up without a parent figure? Describe how this has affected you or the person close to you.

Diary 14 Russian roulette
In this diary entry, a group of people who are present during an accidental shooting change the crime scene and make it look like a suicide. Why did they do this? Have you or someone you know ever chosen to change a version of events rather than tell the truth? Do you still feel the right choice was made?

Diary 15 Romeo and Juliet: Gang Rivalry
The writer discusses the fact that they do not even know why they have a problem with the rival gang: “It’s stupid because I don’t even remember why we are rivals. That’s just the way it is.” Make a list of all the differences two rival gang members may have. Next, make a list of all the similarities two rival gang members may have. When you look at the lists, what are your opinions of the violence?

Diary 16 Teenage love and running away
In this entry, the writer describes how her parents’ reactions to her relationship with her boyfriend eventually made her realize that she wasn’t as deeply in love as she originally thought. At the end of her entry she states: “I hate to admit that my parents were right all along.” Has there been a time when someone warned you about something and you didn’t listen, only to discover that you should have listened to the warning? How would you try to change the mind of someone else about to make the same mistake you made?

Diary 17 Coping with weight
The writer of this entry describes being fiercely picked on due to her appearance: “I heard people shouting, ‘Hey Fatso!’ ‘You big buffalos!’” Have you ever teased someone about something without thinking about the ill effects it has? Have you ever been a victim of bullying because you look different than others? Describe.

Diary 18 Learning about diversity
In this entry the writer recalls a saying: “It’s not the messenger, but the message.” When did you “not listen” to someone’s advice because of who they were and then realized later that the advice or message they were trying to share with you was good advice?

Diary 19 Oklahoma bombing
In this entry the writer describes people who commit acts of violence by stating: “They are just like walking time bombs waiting to go off, and when they do, the consequences can be deadly.” Think of a time when you experienced yourself or someone else “going off.” Was there something specific that triggered the event?

Diary 20 Farewell to Manzanar: Japanese internment camps
What did this student experience while living in Cambodia? What happened to her father as a result of the war?

Diary 21 Overcoming adversity panel
The writer of this diary entry recalls a panel discussion that showcased amazing individuals who overcame multiple obstacles in their lives and became successful. What qualities do these people possess that allowed them to succeed when others in identical situations were unable to break the cycle of poverty and violence?

Diary 22 John Tu: Father figure vs. absent father
John Tu makes the writer feel like Cinderella. Why would a person that you just met make you feel special?

Diary 23 Freshman turnaround
Why did this student NOT come to school? How does her teacher change the way she sees herself? Can you relate to this entry? How?

Sophomore Year

Diary 24 Homelessness
The writer of this entry describes how Ms. Gruwell’s classroom and the other students are “home,” since this student doesn’t have a permanent home. Is there a place where you feel completely relaxed and accepted? If you don’t feel at “home” anywhere, explain why.

Diary 25 Cystic Fibrosis
Do you know or have you known anyone who has a life-threatening illness? What’s your relationship with this person? What struggles do you see this person going through? How do you handle it? How does this person handle it?

Diary 26 Shyness
Have you ever been in a class at school feeling like you wanted to disappear? Describe the situation, the feelings, the “moment” and what happened. Help the reader live the scene with you and what it feels like to want to disappear.

Diary 27 Twelve Angry Men
The writer of this entry, who has just experienced seeing his/her brother go to jail for a crime he didn’t commit, states: “…they proved that justice doesn’t mean the bad guys go to jail, it just means someone pays for the crime.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Explain why.

Diary 28 Honors English
Have you ever had something or had an “opportunity” that others thought you should be really grateful for, or really lucky to have, that just wasn’t what you wanted? Did you change it? Were you happier? How did others respond? Did it matter? Was it the right move?
Diary 29 Medieval Times
In this entry, the writer describes a situation where he suffered discrimination because of the way he was dressed. Describe a time when you or someone you know was treated unfairly because of what you were wearing.

Diary 30 Lesson on tolerance
In this entry, the writer describes a ceremony Ms. Gruwell and her students hold called the “toast for change.” If you were able to have a fresh start in one part of your life, what would you change?

Diary 31 Toast for Change
In Diary 31, a student said, “I was always known as the person that was going to be a druggie, or get pregnant before I turned fourteen and drop out. Now I have the chance to prove them wrong.” In what ways are you judged by others just because of who you hang out with? What expectations are put on you just because of your ethnicity or culture? How do you feel about this? How are you planning to “prove them wrong,” as this girl states?

Diary 32 Change for the better
Who looks up to you? Who are you a role model to? How important is it to you to do the right thing, knowing this person looks up to you? Is this a responsibility you take seriously? How does this help you live your life better?

Diary 33 Testifying in murder case
The writer of this diary entry describes how she changed what she was going to say during a court trial because she didn’t want a little girl to grow up without her father. Describe a time when you changed or almost changed your mind about something because you were able to place yourself in someone else’s shoes.

Diary 34 Teenage alcoholism
In this entry a female student described how she seemed a "goodie goodie" on the outside, yet she was really an alcoholic. How do you feel you are judged incorrectly and people don’t look beyond their first impressions? When have you not looked beyond the "cover" of someone else?

Diary 35 Shoplifting
In this entry, the writer describes shoplifting some makeup to prove to her friends that she wasn’t a “goodie two shoes.” Describe a time when you or someone you know did something wrong because of peer pressure.

Diary 36 Anne Frank’s diary
The writer of this entry asks, “Why should I read books about people that don’t look like me? People that I don’t even know and that I’m not going to understand because they don’t understand me!” How would you answer this student’s question if you were his/her teacher? Why is it important to read books about different people? What did the Freedom Writers learn from reading Anne Frank’s and Zlata’s diaries?
Diary 37 Teen Diarists
The writer of this entry compares his/her life to Anne Frank and Zlata Filopovic and states: “My cage is my own house.” Have you ever felt as though you were trapped in a cage? How did you survive while you were in that situation?

Diary 38 Zlata’s Diary – Bosnia vs. L.A. riots
In this entry, the author says that he/she has a lot in common with Zlata because “while Zlata was living through a war in Sarajevo, I was living through a different kind of war – the L.A. riots.” Have you ever found that you have a lot in common with someone you thought was totally different than you?

Diary 39 Peter Maass: Article on Bosnia
Do you know anyone who has been molested? How do you know? How does it affect this person? How does this person handle themselves now? What damage has been done? What can be done to repair the damage?

Diary 40 Zlata
If you were to write a letter to an author that you have read and relate to, who would you write to and what would you say? Write the letter inviting that person to come and visit, making sure you clearly connect your experience to what you read.

Diary 41 Meeting a Holocaust survivor
Have you ever had a fear of going outside because of what awaits you? What were you afraid of? Have you ever felt like you wore a “façade” (or a mask) in order to keep yourself safe or in good standing with others? Explain.

Diary 42 The woman who sheltered Anne Frank’s family
In this entry, the writer tells of a visit from Miep Gies, who tells the students, “You, my friends, are the true heroes.” Come up with a definition for the word “hero” and describe how you or someone you know fits that definition.

Diary 43 “Moment”
After meeting Miep Gies, the writer of Diary 43 said, “They wanted us to seize the moment. Ms. Gruwell wanted us to realize that we could change the way things were . . . That's when it all became crystal clear. Anne's message of tolerance was to become our message.” What does this teach you about seizing the moment? How would you like to seize the moment?

Diary 44 Zlata accepts our invitation
Have you ever been surprised that you have gotten more in return for your efforts than what you expected? What did you expect and what did you get, and how do you feel about it?

Diary 45 Dinner with Zlata
Do you have anyone you consider a role model? Who is this person? Why do you want to model yourself after this person?
Diary 46 Diverse friendships
In this entry the writer’s father doesn’t like her best friend because she is white. Have you ever known anyone who hated every member of one racial group? Why did they feel this way? What (if any) things have you disagreed with your parents on, even though they raised you to believe otherwise?

Diary 47 “I am a human being”
The writer of this entry recounts how Zlata Filipovic was asked what her racial identity was during a presentation. Zlata’s response was, “I’m a human being”. Has there been a time when you wish you could drop your racial identity and/or change your race?

Diary 48 Terrorism
The writer of this entry recounts how Zlata wrote about, “…Bosnian children becoming ‘soldiers’ and the soldiers becoming ‘children’.” Explain what you think she meant by that.

Diary 49 Day of tolerance: A field trip
Do you think negative thoughts can turn to violence? Why or why not? Do you have many negative thoughts? How would things be different for you if you didn’t have negative thoughts?

Diary 50 Doing speed
The author of this entry has an addiction to drugs and states, “In some sick way I wish I could get caught so all this lying could be behind me.” Why would someone wish to get caught doing something they constantly try to hide?

Diary 51 Basketball for Bosnia: Weight
The author of this entry writes that she has “always been the oddball and have never felt accepted” because of her weight. Have you ever felt like an “oddball” or that you didn’t fit in? Can you think of a time when you might have made someone else feel that way? How would you handle it if you heard someone making fun of your sister, brother, or friend?

Diary 52 Divorce
Have you ever had to be the keeper of a family secret? What was that like for you? Did you keep the secret or share it with someone?

Diary 53 Friends join class
Have you ever felt that you had “hit the lottery in education?” In other words, have you ever felt very lucky to get a teacher you really clicked with, got to do a project that really meant something to you, or went to a school that really worked for you? Describe your lottery and why/how it made a difference in your life.
Junior Year

Diary 54 Racist teacher
The writer in this entry describes some of the labels that she feels are attached to the African American race. What positive or negative labels have been attached to your race(s)?

Diary 55 A grandmother’s death
The writer in this entry who witnessed a boy being beaten wrote, “Even though I could have been hurt, I wish I had done something.” Think of a situation where you’d be willing to put your personal safety on the line in order to help somebody else.

Diary 56 Race riot
Describe a time when you wanted to become violent but were able to solve the situation without violence. Do you feel that violence only leads to more violence?

Diary 57 Grade accountability
The writer of this entry states: “A truly self-reliant person finds his weak link and strengthens it.” What is one of your “weak links” and what can you do to strengthen it? Describe the characteristics of someone who is self-reliant? Do you consider yourself to be self-reliant?

Diary 58 Suicide
Why do you think so many teenagers think about suicide? Is there any way to help them? What would you say to a friend who showed signs of suicide?

Diary 59 Running away
The writer in this entry states, “I just need to get away.” Describe a time when you wanted to get away from your life. Describe a time when you wanted to run away, but knew you couldn’t because of your responsibilities to your family, school, or friends.

Diary 60 Getting a job
Some people would say that this Freedom Writer was “lucky” by landing the job with John Tu. However, what had the Freedom Writer done leading up to that moment that influenced John Tu’s job offer? What life lesson can you take from this entry?

Diary 61 Misogyny
The writer of this entry describes how double standards exist and how girls are treated differently than boys just because they are girls. Describe a time when you felt you were treated differently just because of your sex. How are women portrayed in the media? Should we have rules that limit how women are portrayed in videos or on television?

Diary 62 Molestation
The writer of this entry recalls how she was molested by a family member she trusted. Describe a time when you were betrayed (back stabbed) by somebody you trusted. How did you feel?

**Diary 63 Boyfriend abuse**
This entry was about a girl who was experiencing physical abuse by her boyfriend. She beautifully wrote, "Unfortunately, we gave each other what we were both missing. He had anger all built up inside that he needed to release on someone and I was a ball of emotions just looking for someone to love me. He was the security I needed. We were like a fire triangle, he was the oxygen, I was the flame, and together we made the fuel. All mixed together we were a fire." There are many theories as to why women stay with men who mistreat them either physically or emotionally, or both. Why do you think people who are being abused stay with the abuser? Are there any solutions to this horrible situation? If so, what can be done?

**Diary 64 Domestic violence**
Do you know anyone who is an alcoholic? What is the behavior like when this person is drinking? What is this person’s behavior like when he/she is not drinking? Have you ever had to lie for this person? How do you feel about lying for someone like this?

**Diary 65 Child abuse**
Have you or someone you know been homeless? Have you ever feared not having a place to live? Explain. How do you feel when you see a homeless person? Do you feel it is the job of society to help homeless people? Describe a time when you interacted with a homeless person.

**Diary 66 Death of brother**
In this entry a student wrote about his brother's death from a brain tumor. He said, "No matter how bad the situation got, and how many times the doctors told me he was going to die, it just didn't sink in." It's very difficult to deal with a friend's or loved one's serious illness. Have you ever had to deal with this type of situation? How did you handle it? What advice would you give to someone who is currently going through a similar situation?

**Diary 67 Anne Frank's friends visit**
"Silence will get you nowhere in life." Has this statement ever been true for you? Have you ever wished that you had spoken up for yourself or someone else but you didn’t? What was the situation and why didn’t you?

**Diary 68 Masking fears**
Do you ever feel that opening up about something will make it worse? Have you tried it anyway? How did it really feel? Did you tell someone or write it down? Explain what happened because of it. If you haven’t tried it, what holds you back? What will it take for you to tell your story?

**Diary 69 Living in the projects**
"It’s easier to pretend I don’t live where I live or see what I see.” We all have a need to escape our reality from time to time. Describe a time when you had to escape the reality of your life.

**Diary 70 Dyslexia**
Have you ever felt hopeless in your education? What made you feel this way? Has the hopelessness changed or do you still have that feeling? If not in your education, have you felt hopeless in other areas of your life? Explain.

**Diary 70**
The writers of this entry find ways to deal with learning disabilities, one by developing his sports abilities and the other by using computers while writing. Think of a time when something or someone taught you something that made your school work or life situation easier to deal with.

**Diary 71 Letter from Miep**
What or who has inspired you? Have you ever felt so inspired that the sky was the limit to what you could do? What do you do with this inspired feeling? Can you inspire someone else with your story?

**Diary 72 Student editing**
Have you ever suffered a terrible act of violence? How does it feel to find out that someone shares your story and understands how you feel?

**Diary 73 Abortion**
Do you have an event in your life that haunts your memory? Do you think about “what might have been” if only a few details were different?

**Diary 74 Catalysts for Change**
In this entry, the writer quotes his/her mother having said, “one person can make a difference that can change the whole world.” Think of a famous person or someone you know who has changed or is in the process of changing the world and describe their achievement.

**Diary 75 Freedom Riders**
The Freedom Writers were so inspired by the Freedom Riders that they chose to entitle their book after this group of courageous revolutionaries. Using strong and convincing evidence describe how the Freedom Riders tried to spread tolerance and promote change through the Deep South, explain why they accepted this challenge and did not opt for the easy way out and finally, describe their success and needed strengths in order to accomplish their goal.

**Diary 76 An American Diary. . .Voices from an Undeclared War**
In this entry the writer talks about how Ms. G went beyond to help them become successful such as staying late in the classroom and having to leave by the window so as not to set off the school alarm. Write about someone who has done as Ms. G did for her kids and gone beyond for you to make you be successful.

**Diary 77 Fund-raiser concert**
In this entry the writer talks about how the Freedom Writers held a fundraiser called “Echoes of the Soul” to raise money for their trip to Washington, D.C. The title of their fundraiser embodies *The Freedom Writer’s Diary*; explain how the fundraiser “Echoes of the Soul” relates to *The Freedom Writer’s Diary* and the Freedom Writers themselves.

**Diary 78 Freedom Writer poem**
In this entry the author describes himself as “an innocent boy now 12 years of age [who] finds himself locked up in a human-sized cage.” When do you feel alone, confined, afraid? Who do you turn to support? What do you need to feel comfortable reaching out?

**Diary 79 Freedom Writers unite**
The writer of this entry describes how the Freedom Writers are going to meet with the Secretary of Education because, “We want people who are adults to take the time to listen to teenagers and respect what we have to say.” What important information about being young would you want to explain if you had a similar opportunity?

**Diary 80 Strict father**
In this entry the author describes the pain of feeling “left out.” Think back to a time when you felt disconnected from a group or friendship. Describe the experience in detail. Looking back, what could you have done to feel more empowered? What can you do in the future to ensure others do not feel abandoned or alone? In the future, when you talk to people, really look them in the eyes, and listen more than you talk. Try this and write about it in the journal as well.

**Diary 81 Arlington Cemetery**
The writer of this entry recalls his friends who have died and states: “To me, my friends are soldiers, not soldiers of war, but soldiers of the streets.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?

**Diary 82 Lincoln Memorial: Freedom Writers have a dream**
In this entry, the author commemorates the power of dreams citing Martin Luther King and the Freedom Writers. What is your dream? Have you told any one? Why or why not? What are you willing to sacrifice to make your dream a reality?

**Diary 83 Covering up the swastika**
In this entry, the author makes a trip to Washington and is astonished to see a swastika on a wall, “just blocks away from the White House and the Holocaust Museum.” After this experience, he explains that his “judgment about Washington being perfect was wrong,” explaining he had been wrong to, “judge it for its cover.” We often stereotype people based on their exterior appearance. Think of a time when you were either a victim or perpetrator of a stereotype. Describe the situation and answer the question: what matters more, the outside appearance or the inside heart?

**Diary 84 Hate crimes**
In this entry, the writer describes how watching a movie makes him relive an attack members of the Ku Klux Klan made against him. Have you ever experienced a “flashback” to an experience you had in the past? Did it have a physical effect on you?

**Diary 85 Holocaust Museum**
In this entry, the author has an epiphany when saying she used to think, “if it doesn’t affect me, why bother?” Have you ever felt this way? What would make you take action?

**Diary 86 Dr. Mengele’s experiment with twins**
Do you think there is a connection between the Holocaust and violence that happens today? What is the connection? What can we learn from it that would help us here today?
Diary 87 Dinner with Secretary Riley
In this entry the writer shares a poem he/she wrote entitled “Stand.” List the things in your life of which you are proud.
Describe a time when you took a stand for your beliefs.

Diary 88 “Stand”
In this entry writer shares a poem that they wrote and recited to Richard Riley and other dignitaries in Washington, D.C. The poem talks about pride in oneself whether you are Black, White, Brown, or Yellow, in being proud of yourself as an individual and knowing that you can not be someone else. How can you reject peer pressure, something that tells you to be like everyone else (to lose your individuality) and to be proud of yourself and who you are as a person?

Diary 89 Secretary Riley receives Freedom Writers’ Diary
Have you ever done something that someone considered “heroic?” What was it and how did it happen?

Diary 90 Candlelight vigil
What do you think about that makes you consider giving up? What keeps you from giving up? When does it get harder or easier and what motivates you to keep going? Explain.

Diary 91 Departing D.C.
Have you ever surprised your parents with what you were capable of? What did you do, say, think, or accomplish that they didn’t think you could? Have you ever surpassed your own expectations? Explain what you did and how it felt, and if it motivated you to try to do more with life.

Diary 92 Returning a family hero
When have you felt that your family or friends were the most proud of you and loved you the most? What did you do and how did they show you?

Diary 93 Jeremy Strohmeyer: Murder
Have you ever stood by and watched something happen that you know was wrong but were unable to stop it or say something so it didn’t continue? How hard is it to do this?

Diary 94 David Cash
In Diary 94, a Freedom Writer argues that people should “rock the boat” and “speak out” when they witness an injustice. Have you observed an unjust action or behavior? What did you do? If you could go back in time and revisit that moment, would you handle it differently? Why, do you believe, is it sometimes difficult for people to speak out or act against wrongdoing?

Diary 95 Peace march for Sherrice Iverson
In this entry the writer talks about a tragedy that occurred and how their school was the central focus for the media (news). The Freedom Writers and other students decided to take a stand for peace to remember the victim of the violence. Though they stood together in peace the media ignored them, yet they stood strong to their belief to hold a peaceful assembly to remember the victim. There are times when you stand for your convictions (beliefs) that it goes only noticed by you. If a tree falls in the woods and no one is around does it make a sound? When have you made a sound for what is right even though you are the only one to hear it?

Diary 96 Senior Class President

Have you ever run for an office or tried out for something? How did the election or audition turn out? What did you learn from the experience? Would you do it over again? Why or why not?

Diary 97 Separation anxiety

Have your parents ever made you feel like he or she was tired of parenting you? Do you ever feel like you are raising yourself? What do you think about this? Do you ever feel like your parent “could care less about you?” If you could change the way your parents parent, what would you change?

Diary 98 Staying together

What are the qualities that make a good mother, a good father? What type of parent do you want to be? Describe where you want to live with your family and the type of home you hope to have.

Senior Year

Diary 99 Cheryl Best: Inspiration

“What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger.” When have you found this phrase fitting for a situation you have been in? What was it that almost “killed” you? Where were your different options for ways to respond? How did you respond? Did you make the right choice? How did this situation make you stronger?

Diary 100 “Eviction Notice”

After being evicted from his/her home, the author of this entry states, “It seems like hope is the only thing I have to hold on to.” What do you think he/she means by this? Explain a time when you felt like hope was the only thing you had to hold on to.

Diary 101 Financial problems
In this entry the writer talks about dropping out of school when their life takes a sharp turn. The Freedom Writer’s parents leave the country and they are left to run the household and care for a younger sister. The Freedom Writer talks about having been an A & B student up until then, yet no teacher would listen to their problems. Describe how you have felt when someone has been too busy, or did not take the time to listen to you when you were in need of help (or having problems). Describe your feelings and what you did to move forward.

Diary 102 Illegal immigrant
In this entry the writer talks about being an illegal immigrant and how that hinders her ability to continue her education. How the struggle of her mother to leave Mexico with young children on a dangerous journey might not have happened had her mother known that life here would not be easy for them. There are times when the path we are on is not the one we dreamt it would be to achieve our hopes and dreams. As Robert Frost’s poem “The Road Not Taken” states there are some times we must take the road less traveled on our journey and it is that which makes the difference. Write about road blocks that you had to overcome which made reaching your dreams more satisfying than if they were handed to you.

Diary 103 The first Latina Secretary of Education
In Diary 103, a student discussed his/her future goals and mentioned having to give a speech to the class about it. What are your future goals and why? How will you make this happen? What are the steps you will take? What do you think will be your biggest obstacles, and how will you overcome them?

Diary 104 Pursuing filmmaking
The author of this diary thought about four or five careers before finally writing down what he thought would be more realistic. Why do you think the author did not believe his goal was realistic? What other careers can you think of that might not be considered realistic? Write down what you would like to do for a career and explain why this is interesting to you.

Diary 105 Road not taken: Contemplating college
The author of this story says that “history repeats itself.” What do you think that means? Explain why you agree or disagree with that statement. The parents of the author of this story pressure her to get an education even though neither of them finished grade school. Why do you think education is important to her parents? What benefits do you think you will gain by graduating from high school and college?

Diary 106 Finding a mentor
The student who wrote this journal talks about how an older person helped her achieve her goals. Name at least one person in your life who is a person you look up to and describe how that person has helped you meet your goals. If you do not have a mentor, describe what type of things you would have a mentor do for you.

Diary 107 Being a mentor
In this diary, the author has a chance to help other students. Can you think of a time when you were a “hero” and made a difference in a child’s life? Explain what you did and how it made you feel. Do you see yourself as a mentor? Why or why not?

Diary 108 Los Angeles Times article
In this diary, the author mentions that he was surprised at how much people reacted to one newspaper story. How do newspaper stories impact the readers? How have newspaper or magazine journalists made a difference in your life?

Diary 109 A letter from prison
In this journal entry the author describes how she lost her father because he would not rat on his homeboys. Have you or someone you know paid a price for remaining silent? Explain.

Diary 110 Deadbeat dad
In this entry, the writer describes how his father was too much of a coward to meet his son for the first time, so he had his mother (the writer’s grandmother) send the writer away. Describe a time when you or someone you know was so afraid of facing someone or something that they ended up blowing it off. Do you think you/they made the right decision?

Diary 111 Sorority hazing
In this entry the writer talks about how they were a member of the popular sorority and watched on as new “pledges” were being hazed. The writer shares their self realization that it was unnecessary and was trying to figure out why they didn’t do something to stop what was happening. Explain in your own words why you think it is difficult for the human spirit to stand up to injustice such as hazing when it is happening? Describe a situation that you might have been involved in (either actively or passively) known about that later you wish you stood up to stop it when the injustice was happening.

Diary 112 Fear of losing a father
In this entry the writer tells of a tragedy, his dad being shot in the head, and the feelings that the writer experiences. Even though the writer’s father lived he has some physical and mental disabilities but the writer was glad their father lived. The writer talks about “living with a scar” like their father. What scar is the writer living with?

Diary 113 Death of a mother
In this entry the writer talks about losing their mother and how the “timing” was not good. When we lose a loved one the timing is never right and thoughts of what we should have said, or would have done with them run through our mind. Explain what you can do to make sure that every minute and second count in your life and the lives of the ones you love.

Diary 114 GUESS? sponsorship
In Diary 114, a student wrote, "Now that I am a part of something like the Freedom Writers, I don't have to try to fit in or to buy my way into acceptance. Material things are no longer a top priority in my life. Of course I want nice things, but I don't feel as if I have to have them to feel complete. It's funny how material things mean so much to adolescents." What do you think of this statement? Explain. Do you agree or disagree with the cliche, "Money can't buy happiness." Why or why not?

Diary 115 Spirit of Anne Frank Award
This diary entry shares how Ms. G. and the Freedom Writers traveled to New York City to receive the Spirit of Anne Frank Award. What do you think is meant by the “spirit” of Anne Frank? What kinds of values and actions are meant to be recognized by such awards?
Diary 116 New York City roommates
The writer of this entry describes how her father’s racist views made her feel uncomfortable sharing a room with girls of other races. Have you ever had someone else try to force their views upon you? Was this person successful or were you able to maintain your original beliefs?

Diary 117 Celebrating Anne Frank
In this entry the writer shares what happened when they received the Spirit of Anne Frank Award. The last line of the entry reads, “I want to go on living even after my death.” Describe a person that you know or know of, who has gone on living after their passing. Has the person been remembered and their message?

Diary 118 Abuse of power
In this entry the writer talks about the abuse their father inflicts on them and their siblings. The author ends the entry by saying that they will break the cycle of abuse. We learn many things from the positive role models around us and sometimes even more from the negative role models we see. Write about a person that you view as a negative role model and what they taught you (how you will not act or be).

Diary 119 Peter Maas: The role of a journalist
In this entry the writer talks about meeting their idol, Peter Maass, and how they felt meeting him. In the entry the writer shares Peter Maass’ views on being a war correspondent and not becoming personally involved in what they were covering as a reporter. The writer asked a “tough” question to Peter Maass about how whether he “just stands there watching people die” or does he do something. When have you had to act like Peter Maass and observe what was happening so you could report it later that ensured you or your friends would not be hurt by getting involved in an incident.

Diary 120 Book agent
In this entry the writer talks about meeting their agent and how she was compared to a “pimp” yet she did not appear to look like one in their eyes. Think of this entry along with the Peanut Game Activity and compare them.

Diary 121 Getting published
In this entry the writer tells about getting The Freedom Writer’s Diary published and about her road to being a writer including her first poem, “The American Dream.” How does this poem relate to the Diary Entry (#102) and the experiences of that Freedom Writer’s family?

Diary 122 Basketball playoffs: Teamwork
In this entry, the writer describes how feeling too much pressure caused her basketball team to lose a game. Describe a time when you were under so much pressure that you didn’t do as well as you had hoped. Have you learned techniques that help you decrease the pressure in stressful situations?

Diary 123 A lesson from Animal Farm
In this entry the writer talks about how some Freedom Writers are not doing their part and compare them to a horse (Molly) in the book, Animal Farm who prances around and does no work. The premise of the entry is that the Freedom Writers will only “split” or fall apart by their own hands. Describe a passion that you have had yet others did not share your passion. How did this difference in personal ideology change the dynamics of the group and their seeing their goal to fruition?

Diary 124 Attitude adjustment
In this entry, students shared their frustration at having to carry the load of other Freedom Writers during their project. Can you relate to this feeling? Has there been a time you've had to carry the workload for others, either at work, school, home, or somewhere else? How did it make you feel? How was this issue resolved?

Diary 125 Introducing Senator Barbara Boxer
In this entry the writer shares how they feel they are undeserving to speak on behalf of the Freedom Writers to a state senator. Describe a moment when you have felt undeserving of a gift, praise or honor but others could see beyond to who you were and why you truly deserved to receive it.

Diary 126 Attention deficit disorder
In this entry the writer talks about their life with ADD, their medicine, and speaking in front of college professors that resulted in a standing ovation. The writer talks about using humor and “antics” to develop friendships as a child but they have since found other ways to make friends. Explain why a person would “act up” to make friends and give examples of times that you did something you would not normally have done to ease your shyness in meeting new people.

Diary 127 Homosexuality
In this entry, the writer discusses her fears about not being accepted by friends and family because of her sexual orientation. Describe a time when you were afraid of not being accepted by a group of people. How did you overcome your fears? What advice could you offer somebody in a similar situation?

Diary 128 Prom queen
In this entry, the writer describes the sacrifices her mother made to ensure the safety of her family. Think of someone you know personally or from a book/movie who sacrificed a lot for the sake of others. Would you have also made this sacrifice if you were in their shoes?

Diary 129 “Whoever saves one life saves the world entire”
In this entry, the author reflects on a powerful statement: “Whoever saves one life, saves the world entire.” What does this quote mean to you?

Diary 130 Breaking the cycle
“History repeats itself” is the topic of this diary entry. What do you think this quote means? The author of this entry applies this to his own life; is this true in your life as well? What do you think we can learn from this? Do you think people possess the powers to change things so history DOESN’T repeat itself?

Diary 131 Football all-American
In this entry, the author talks about a transformation that occurred in his life. How was he able to change his life in such a positive way? Describe a time in your life when things drastically changed, either for better or for worse? If you were friends with the author of this passage, how would you help him stop his destructive behavior and accomplish his dreams of becoming an NFL player?

**Diary 132 Baseball dilemma**

In this entry, this author struggles with a decision that will affect the rest of his life. Describe a time when you were forced to make an important decision. What considerations did you think about when making your decision? Was the outcome of your decision what you hoped for? Looking back, is there anything you would do differently?

**Diary 133 A college acceptance**

In this entry, the author describes the reaction of her classmates to her acceptance into college, and she discusses Affirmative Action. This is a sensitive issue that people have many different opinions about. After researching the movement, please discuss BOTH sides of the issue, as well as your opinions on it.

**Diary 134 Fear of abandonment**

In this entry, the author talks about being abandoned by her father, and then feeling like she will be abandoned by her friends after graduation. Was there ever a time in your life when you felt abandoned by someone? How did you deal with those kinds of feelings, and what advice would you give a friend who was experiencing the same feelings?

**Diary 135 Teenage pregnancy**

In this entry, the writer talks about a situation that will change her life. At first she sees her life falling apart (unable to attend college, losing her job, etc), then she is able to create a plan to follow through with her goals/dreams. Describe a moment when you, a family member or friend had to overcome an unexpected obstacle to reach their goals/dreams.

**Diary 136 Southwest Airlines**

In this entry, the writer talks about feeling like a caged bird. The writer tells us that only caged birds sing because they have lost their freedom. For the writer they create poems and stories. Have you ever felt caged like a bird or alone? Write a poem expressing your desire to be free.

**Diary 137 Computers for college!**

In this entry, the writer talks about the hardships they went through, the hopes that they had and how they had hoped to received a gift (a computer) for their hard work to achieve good grades. The writer also talks about John Tu, an entrepreneur, who was the benefactor for the gift. The writer talks about giving back to their community the way John Tu has given to the Freedom Writers. Describe someone you emulate who gives selflessly to others? Describe how you will honor that person and do the same.
Diary 138 The giving tree: Crackhead parents
In this entry, the writer talks about trust, disappointment and change. The writer talks about Shel Silverstein’s *The Giving Tree* and how they will break the cycle of taking and become a giver. Describe a person that you know (family member, community member or entertainer) who is a giver, and continues to give even though they receive only self satisfaction in return.

Diary 139 Graduation Class Speaker
In this entry, the writer talks about their dream of being the first to graduate high school in their family. The writer talks about inspiration coming from both positive and negative influences. We are inspired by people around us either through their positive actions or their negative actions. Describe someone and their actions that inspire you to become a better person.

Diary 140 From drugs to honors
In this entry, the writer describes a life changing moment for them. They state that they hated going into rehab when it happened but looking back they realize now that it saved them. Describe a time that you had to do something that you “hated,” but looking back later realized that it was the best thing for you?

Diary 141 Overcoming the odds
In this entry, the writer talks about overcoming hardship caused by a disease called cystic fibrosis, to achieve their goals. Though this disease is debilitating, it did not stop the writer from achieving their goal, it only made their path to it different. There are many people who overcome their physical or medical issues to achieve. Describe a person that you know who has overcome a physical or medical issue to achieve their goal and thus become an inspiration.

Diary 142 Graduation!
In this entry, the writer talks about the room (Room 203) as the focal point for bringing a group of people together who normally would not socialize with each other. It was a place where people from different backgrounds came together to share a common goal and dream. Describe a place or group that you are a part of with people whom you may not normally associate with but have come to appreciate their uniqueness and contribution to the group dynamic.

Epilogue
In the final paragraph of Ms. Gruwell’s Epilogue, the book is described as “the third leg of a relay race.” Describe something specific you are willing to do to act as the fourth leg of the relay race and be a catalyst for change and acceptance in your own community.