

# Movie Reflections

## Freedom Writers

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Freedom Writers focuses on a High School class of students who had to face racism and injustice throughout most of their lives. Even though the school “integrated” them and gave them an education, the resources provided spoke volumes about what worth the school placed on that class. And yet Mrs. Gruell, a newly qualified teacher, was able to help their class learn and speak up about the injustices and racism those young people and their families were facing.

### Injustice

Injustice and racism highlighted in the movie are not just about big one off situations, but it is the denial of everyday opportunities. It wasn't just that the provision for the class was different to the other classes, it showed very clearly what the head of school and the other teacher's thought about those pupils as well. Yet, even if we think about their out of school context, a lot of the young people were faced with threats every day. Can I make it home without being stopped, beaten up or shot? Will I stay loyal to my people or lose all the security I have left?



Talk about what injustices have stood out to you?

If you try to put yourself in a young person's position, how would you have felt?

### Potential

Imagine growing up and no one believes in you. But more so imagine you were as good at something than someone else, but the other person always got chosen as the winner? A lot of the young people never seem to have had anyone who helped them to see their own potential, up until Mrs. Gruwell took over the class. No one believed they could finish High School, no one in their family had finished High School and even if they did, what would they finish High School for? Their lives were all about survival and that was their normality - no one had told them that anything else was possible. No one had given them vision for what a different life could look like.



Discuss why you think no one had believed in Mrs. Gruwell's class?

What did Mrs. Gruwell see in her students?

## Impact

As Mrs. Gruwell tried to stand up for her class, she was first of all faced with her dad's disapproval. He couldn't understand why she would work extra jobs to try and buy books for the young people to read. Secondly her marriage started to suffer as she invested more time in her class.



Explore why Mrs. Gruwell's dad didn't support her in the beginning though he was part of a similar movement. What happened that may have made him change his mind?

Do you think Mrs. Gruwell did the right thing by ignoring her husband's cry to fight for the children in her class? Why have you come to that conclusion?

## Speaking Up

When the pupils wrote down their stories in their diaries, it was probably the first time they got to speak up about what was happening in their lives. And as we speak up we let others see and take part in our joys, but also our daily grief and pain. Speaking up enables us to address the things and behaviours in our cultures that still are unjust in order to bring about change.



Share if there is anything you feel like you should speak up about. Or maybe there is someone that you know that you want to support in speaking up about something they are going through?

Lastly, how do we keep going when we are trying to make a difference but we seem to be getting constant knock backs?