

Asuka Yokohama

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Mr. Lawson

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The Freedom Readers

Being ignorant is embarrassing. I think The Freedom Writers Diary should be a mandatory book in all eleventh or twelfth grade classrooms because this book can give those students a good chance to know the serious problems around the writers and the students themselves, which includes racism and immorality. First, the authors are almost the same age as the students who are going to read it, and this will effectively help the authors' messages reach the students. The parallel between them is that such ages make it easier for students to feel close to the problems. Second, students will also know that the problems that they are going to read about are so serious that should be focused on. Some entries from the book are about shocking events that are alarming. Third, students will also know about the futures of the victims, and it is not always bad. All of the authors overcame their sad pasts and live successfully. Similar problems happen now as well, but the bulk of children ignore them because even they do not know that these problems are going on, and it ought to be changed by making The Freedom Writes Diary a mandatory book in particular age's classrooms to be read.

Generally, the similarity of the ages between the authors and students will helpfully let the students think deeply about the sad things that happened to the authors. People tend to take the matter seriously when they have some connection to what they read, such as being the same age

group as the teller of the story. Also, because of this empathy, students will be aware that the problems could affect them too—or, it may have even already happened to them. In the book, writers talk about “undeclared war” a majority of the time. The “war” is unfair, as one Freedom Writer puts it, “Sometimes we suffer because of many things over which we have no control” (xiv). The writer’s point is that they struggle through the “war” because the victims themselves do not have the solution for it. For example, black people are beaten up just because of the color of their skin in this book, and similar events could possibly be taking place around the students though they do not know about it. To protect the innocent victims, “outsiders”, who are ignorant people, need to notice these facts by reading this book because the victims published this book with hope to be known and read by others, such as the same agers as the writers.

Furthermore, students will recognize how bad the problems are by reading about them in the book. One of the arguments of the opponents against putting the copies of The Freedom Writers Diary in high schools is that some events in the book are too violent to let children read. *So what?* I have to say to them. The violence is a reality that children, who by the way as the same age as the students, suffer with while most students do not know about it. For instance, one Freedom Writer was molested by her uncle, and I could barely believe it. The terrible incidents presented in the stories are surely something that happened no matter how hard other people try to ignore it. In their process of growing, some persons, especially around the age of eleventh and twelfth grade, want to know about the stories dealing

with real-life rather than high-tales or glossed-up affairs. I think that students who are sixteen to eighteen years old are mature enough to know about them. Since the authors write unvarnished facts that are really happening in the “undeclared war,” some of the stories may be hard to believe. However, the students will know how the problems in the real world are terrible by reading it.

Finally, students can also learn good aspects of the “undeclared war;” not everything that happened around them is touched by sadness. In a lot of entries in The Freedom Writers Diary, the writers overcame their personal problems in the “war” by changing themselves. One Freedom Writer insists that “the Freedom Writers chose to...make their positive experiences a lesson for generations to come” (xv). Basically, the writer is saying that Freedom Writers want people who face similar problems to have hope like they do. Even though some people think their problems are too hard to overcome, the Freedom Writers do not want them to give up but instead want them to be their own help by changing their life and making themselves better like the Freedom Writers succeeded in doing. Difficulties sometimes make people stronger and more successful people than those who do not struggle. Students can learn about not only the bad aspects of the “undeclared war,” but also good results that come from difficulties by reading the book.

I once was against allowing The Freedom Writers Diary to be read by children. The reason was, the same as that many other people have already voiced, that the authors write about violence using bad words. However, in

reading this book, I have come to recognize that the bad words make the story sound real. This is how most of teenagers talk. Since the writers bluntly cuss in their diary when they face difficult situations, I feel as though the stories that the authors write positive things are their honest thoughts which are not simply followed a format to be nice. Some adults might be worried that their children are going to use those bad words after reading the book, but it is a completely irrelevant issue. I feel the bad words are sort of tool used to draw people's attention to the topic that writers really want to tell people about: they had experienced violence, racism or immoral problems, but they overcame all of these things by changing. I want students—especially the impressionable children who are in the eleventh and twelfth grade—to know about these real problems and feel something by reading about them.