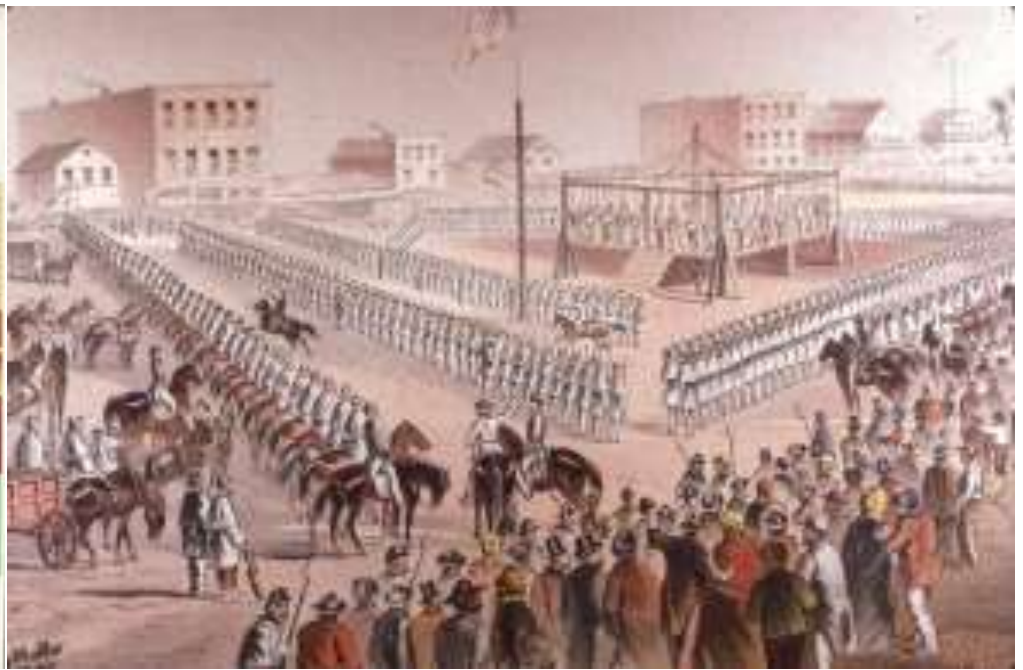
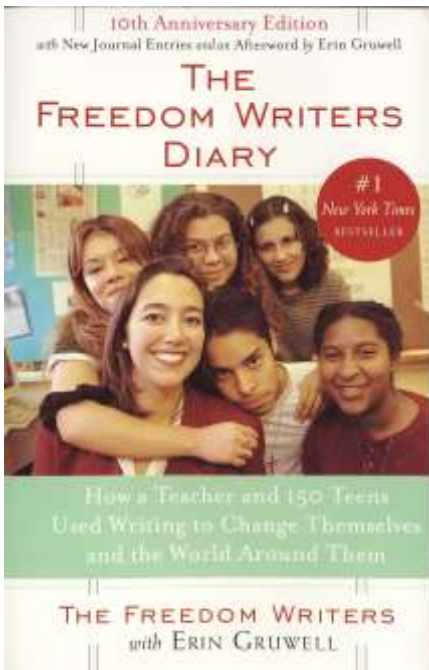


8th Grade Reading Lesson



“Freedom Writers & The Dakota Conflict of 1862”

Common Core State Standards:

8.RL.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.

RI.8.9 - Analyze a case in which two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic and identify where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation.

RI.8.6-Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints.

SL.8.1 - Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

OSEU:

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 2: There is variety and resiliency among individual Tribal people as identity is developed, defined and redefined by entities, organization and people. A continuum of tribal identity, unique to each individual, ranges from assimilated to traditional lifestyle. There is no “generic American Indian”.

OSEU2.1.9-12: Students are able to personalize topics on assimilation; examples are boarding schools, relocation, religion, etc.

Opening:

Begin by asking students about the main themes or ideas in The Freedom Writers Diary (which they have been reading now for some time). Look at the title of this lesson (on the Prezi) and the picture. Ask if anyone knows anything about the Dakota Conflict of 1862... and how that might have any connection to The Freedom Writers Diary.

- Read the Freedom Writers Bio (in Prezi and handout)
 - Questions for discussion
 - How did the LA Riots and the OJ Simpson trial impact the students in Ms G’s class?

- Why do you think they felt like they had been “written off” as “unteachable” “below average” and “delinquents”?
 - How did Ms G’s approach help turn that around?
 - How did reading The Diary of Anne Frank help turn that around?
 - In what ways did writing their own diaries help?
- View the clip from the film The Freedom Writers (in Prezi or at <https://youtu.be/9f8liieRepk>)
 - Questions for discussion
 - Why do you think the students don’t remember his name?
 - Why does his sharing of his story turn that around?
 - Why does he say he is “home” in Ms G’s room?
- View the page from Anne Frank’s diary (in Prezi)
 - Questions for discussion
 - Why did the students connect so much with Anne?
 - What allowed Anne and Zlata and Miep Gies to change these students’ lives?
- View the painting of the hanging of the 38 Dakota (in Prezi)
 - Questions for discussion
 - What do you know about this historic event?
 - Have you heard the story? Who from? What was your reaction?
- View the WoLakota interview with Elder Vernon Ashley (linked to website from Prezi or here: <http://www.wolakotaproject.org/oseu-six/oseu-six-interview-with-vernon-ashley/>)
 - Discuss one or two of the “Learn From” questions
- View the photo of one of the Dakota men who was hanged (back in the Prezi)
 - Although we don’t know all of the details, how might this man’s situation be similar to Anne’s?
 - How might it be different?
- View the Dakota 38 film trailer (in the Prezi or here: <https://youtu.be/Hf3cLT2LwuE>)
 - Questions for discussion
 - In the clip, one of the leaders says the ride isn’t about blame, it’s about healing. What do you think he means?
 - If placing blame doesn’t bring healing, what do you think does?
 - How does this idea connect with the Freedom Writers?
- View the WoLakota interview with Sidney Byrd (linked to website from Prezi or here: <http://www.wolakotaproject.org/oseu-six-interview-with-sidney-byrd/>)
 - Discuss one or both of the “Learn From” questions
 - Listen to the Minnesota Public Radio report on the Dakota Prisoner of War Letters project linked at the bottom of the Sidney Byrd interview page or here: <http://www.mprnews.org/story/2011/01/19/dakota-tribe-letters>
 - Scroll through the Dakota prisoner letter at the bottom of the Sidney Byrd page and read the English translation.
 - Why do you think Moses Many Lightning Face, the Dakota man who wrote it, is concerned about the Death of Abraham Lincoln?
 - Have you heard about this Dakota letter translation project?
- View the Legacy Letters video (in Prezi or at <https://youtu.be/Qylcehp9hDs>)
 - Questions for discussion
 - Lenor Scheffler has relatives who were on both sides of the conflict... and who, like Miep Gies, helped victims on the other side. Why do you think the idea of reconciliation is so important to her?
 - What is reconciliation?

- How can hearing about these stories or reading these letters bring about reconciliation?
- She says many Minnesotans are ignorant of the stories. How does “ignorance” keep people divided and angry?
- What connections do you make with the Freedom Writers’ experience?

Hand out the Journal activity (included in the handouts and in the Prezi) and give students some time to begin writing their stories. Make sure this activity is very invitational and that students know that they do NOT have to share anything they do not want to share. That’s how journaling works!

Invite any student who would like to share, to share with the class, or to share privately with you.

Additional Resources are at the bottom of each of the WoLakota Project interview pages in this lesson. Feel free to use those links as a beginning place for more research or more study—especially with students who have a personal interest in knowing more about the US Dakota Conflict of 1862.



The Students of Room 203

Following the L.A. Riots and the O.J. Simpson trial, the mood in our city was unsettling, and on our first day of high school, we had only three things in common: we hated school, we hated our teacher, and we hated each other.

Whether it was official or not, we all knew that we had been written off. Low test scores, juvenile hall, alienation, and racial hostility helped us fit the labels the educational system placed on us: "unteachable," "below average," and "delinquents." Somehow, Ms. G recognized our similarities, and used them to unite us. She gave us books written by teenagers that we could relate to, and it was through these books that we began to realize that if we could relate to a little girl who lived on the other side the world, fifty years before we did, we could certainly relate to each other.

We felt like Anne Frank, trapped in a cage, and identified with the violence in Zlata Filipovic's life. We were so inspired by the stories of Anne and Zlata, that we wrote letters to Miep Gies, and to Zlata, in hopes that they would come to Long Beach and share their stories with us. When Miep visited us, she challenged us to keep Anne's memory alive and "passed the baton" to us. It was then that we decided to begin chronicling our lives.

We began writing anonymous journal entries about the adversities that we faced in our every day lives. We wrote about gangs, immigration, drugs, violence, abuse, death, anorexia, dyslexia, teenage love, weight issues, divorce, suicide, and all the other issues we never had the chance to express before. We discovered that writing is a powerful form of self expression that could help us deal with our past and move forward. Room 203 was like Anne's attic or Zlata's basement, it was our safe haven, where we could cry, laugh, and share our stories without being judged.

We decided to call ourselves the Freedom Writers after learning about the Freedom Riders who fought against segregation during the Civil Rights Movement. When we began writing these entries as a simple English assignment, we had no idea that they would one day be collected and published in a book, *The Freedom Writers Diary*.

Since graduation, we have kept our promise of trying to change education. We are pursuing our undergraduate and graduate degrees, many of us at California State University, Long Beach, while continuing to share our story and mentor students across the country about what it's like to receive a second chance.

We have created this website because we want to form a community like the one we

formed in Room 203, where people feel safe, accepted, and understood. We hope that [*The Freedom Writers Diary*](#) will inspire you to succeed academically, change your community, and share your own story.

- The Freedom Writers

What parts of MY story can I tell that might help to increase UNDERSTANDING and bring about RECONCILIATION among people who see things the way I see them and people who may see things very differently?



My Journal:

A large, blank, lined area for writing, resembling a journal page. The lines are horizontal and evenly spaced, starting from the top of the page below the 'My Journal:' heading and extending to the bottom of the page.

