



NHD PERFORMANCE SCRIPT COVER PAGE

Please Note: All text in this template must be in 12 point font.
Times New Roman, Arial, or Calibri fonts accepted.

PLEASE make a copy of this template before editing.

PERFORMANCE INFORMATION	
Project Title	The Freedom Writers: Breaking Educational and Societal Barriers for a Better Future
Student Name(s)	Maritza Barragan Orozco
Division	Senior Individual Performance
Performance Runtime	9:58
Thesis	The Freedom Writers broke barriers set by both their educational system and racist society by proving that they as "at-risk" and "unteachable" teens had the capacity to care for their education and future and change their lives for the better.


PERFORMANCE OVERALL SCENARIO	
Story Setting(s)	Timeframe
Classroom 203 of Woodrow Wilson Highschool in Long Beach, California	Circa 1993
Story Synopsis	
<p>The performance begins with a narrator giving a brief introduction of the Freedom Writers to the audience, as well as state the Thesis. Then Erin Gruwell is introduced to the audience as a starry-eyed young teacher ready to start the first day of school and change the lives of her students through education. Her dreams of students eager to change the world are quickly crushed when her students, the school's "unwanted kids," did everything in their power to try and get her to quit as soon as possible. They hated her. In their eyes, she was just another white person and educator that didn't care about them. As the story unfolds, Maria, one of her students, gives insight on the kinds of lives the students faced outside of school and why their pasts fuel their harsh actions in the classroom.</p> <p>Erin's struggle with her students comes to a climax when she intercepts a racial caricature her students made of another student. With a horrifying resemblance to propaganda used in Nazi Germany against the Jews, the note drives her to compare their hatred for each other to that of the Nazis. However, she's in for a shock at what her students have to say in response: "What's the Holocaust?"</p>	

Determined to teach her students about tolerance, she has them read books like the Diary of Anne Frank to connect their lives to. As her students get more and more engaged in the story of Anne, it comes to an abrupt halt as Maria storms into class one day angry because she didn't know that Anne would die. To Maria, the survival of Anne Frank gave her hope that maybe things would turn out well for her as well. But together the class realized the power of Anne's writing and how it continues to keep her alive.

Erin Gruwell and the Freedom Writers faced countless barriers, but together they used writing to let their voices be heard and spread their message of intolerance to the world.

CHARACTERS		
Character	Performer	Description/background for the character
Erin Gruwell	Maritza	Erin is a new teacher in her early 20s from suburbia. She is earnest and kind. Some might say she's a bit naive. She speaks with a standard-issue California dialect. She was inspired by events like the Civil Rights Movement and the Tiananmen Square Protests to try and make a difference in the world. She initially studied to become a lawyer and fight injustice in the courtroom. But after witnessing a little boy watch his father throw a Molotov cocktail in awe during the Rodney King Riots on the news, she decided to become a teacher and fight injustice in an urban school district.
Maria Reyes	Maritza	A teenage Latina gangster, Maria is loudmouthed and aggressive. She speaks with an LA Chicano dialect and uses grammatically incorrect speech. She has a confident swagger and a tough exterior. Like many of the Freedom Writers, she grew up in a neighborhood where gang violence was a normal part of life. Gunshots and sirens were an everyday occurrence. At age 5 she witnessed her cousin die of 5 gunshot wounds by the Los Angeles Police Department. Soon afterward, her father was sentenced to serve time for a murder he didn't commit because he refused to testify against one of his homeboys. At eleven she was jumped into the gang life and became third generation.

OVERALL STAGE SETTING

Describe the Stage(s) of the Performance Add Photo of Stage (if possible)	Color Use Scheme	
<p>The stage is a classroom, so the desk and chair are the focal points. The notebook paper, plastic champagne glass, book, and the alarm clock and phone will sit on the desk until needed. The denim jacket will rest on the chair when not in use.</p> <p>**The plastic champagne glass was very difficult to get visible in the picture due to its transparency, but it is in front of the small book. Sorry!</p> 	Background Design	There is no background in this performance.
	Props	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -A ripped piece of notebook paper with a racial caricature of a black man drawn on it -A plastic champagne glass -A small book -A small alarm clock to hide my cell phone that makes a school bell sound when I tap on it (the school bell sound is used as a transition) -A small foldable table to act as a desk -A small foldable chair -A baggy, worn denim jacket reminiscent of the Dickies jackets worn by street gangsters in the 90s.

COSTUMES & PROPS BY SCENE

Please add or remove costume & props by scene as needed. This is only a template.

Scene #	1	
Costume(s) Visual(s) or Costume(s) Description(s)	Set Design & Props	
Narrator's Costume: A brown, frilly blouse with white polka dots is paired with a pair of straight cut jeans. A pair of black high heeled ankle booties are worn to make the outfit sleeker and professional-looking. A pearl necklace sits on the collar bones.	Background Design	(No background)
	Props	(None)

COSTUMES & PROPS BY SCENE		
Scene #	2	
Costume(s) Visual(s) or Costume(s) Description(s) If costumes and props remain the same, write "same as scene # in the boxes below"	Set Design & Props	
Erin's Costume: Same as scene 1	Background Design	(same as scene 1)
	Props	(same as scene 1)

COSTUMES & PROPS BY SCENE		
Scene #	3	
Costume(s) Visual(s) or Costume(s) Description(s) If costumes and props remain the same, write "same as scene # in the boxes below"	Set Design & Props	
Erin's Costume: Same as scene 1 Maria's Costume: Same as scene 1, but the baggy denim jacket is worn to hide the blouse and necklace. The combination of the baggy jacket and the looseness of the jeans is intended to make the outfit resemble Chicana gangsters. I chose straight cut jeans rather than the baggy pants Chicana gangsters are infamous for because these are loose enough to resemble the gangster feel but sleek enough to be able to be worn with my more professional-looking costume.	Background Design	(same as scene 1)
	Props	-Chair

COSTUMES & PROPS BY SCENE		
Scene #	4	
Costume(s) Visual(s) or Costume(s) Description(s) If costumes and props remain the same, write "same as scene # in the boxes below"	Set Design & Props	

Erin's Costume: Same as scene 1	Background Design	(same as scene 1)
	Props	-A ripped piece of notebook paper with a racial caricature of a black man drawn on it

COSTUMES & PROPS BY SCENE		
Scene #	5	
Costume(s) Visual(s) or Costume(s) Description(s) If costumes and props remain the same, write "same as scene # in the boxes below"	Set Design & Props	
Erin's Costume: Same as scene 1	Background Design	(same as scene 1)
	Props	-Plastic champagne glass

COSTUMES & PROPS BY SCENE		
Scene #	6	
Costume(s) Visual(s) or Costume(s) Description(s) If costumes and props remain the same, write "same as scene # in the boxes below"	Set Design & Props	
Maria's Costume: Same as scene 3	Background Design	(same as scene 1)
	Props	-Plastic champagne glass -Small book

COSTUMES & PROPS BY SCENE		
Scene #	7	
Costume(s) Visual(s) or Costume(s) Description(s) If costumes and props remain the same, write "same as scene # in the boxes below"	Set Design & Props	
Erin's costume: Same as scene 1 Maria's costume: Same as scene 3	Background Design	(same as scene 1)

	Props	(none)
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COSTUMES & PROPS BY SCENE		
Scene #	8	
Costume(s) Visual(s) or Costume(s) Description(s) If costumes and props remain the same, write "same as scene # in the boxes below"	Set Design & Props	
Maria's Costume: Same as scene 3 Erin's Costume: Same as scene 1	Background Design	(same as scene 1)
	Props	-Small book

COSTUMES & PROPS BY SCENE		
Scene #	9	
Costume(s) Visual(s) or Costume(s) Description(s) If costumes and props remain the same, write "same as scene # in the boxes below"	Set Design & Props	
Erin's Costume: Same as scene 1	Background Design	(same as scene 1)
	Props	(None)

PERFORMANCE SCRIPT BY SCENES

Please add or remove scene pages as needed. This is only a template.

SCENE 1 - SCENARIO		
Purpose of the Scene	Key Elements	
Introduction/Giving Background on the Freedom Writers and Erin Gruwell • Brief summary of the Freedom Writers' and Erin Gruwell's story • Thesis stated	Setting	Classroom 203 of Woodrow Wilson Highschool in Long Beach, California
	Timeframe	Circa 1993
	Characters	Narrator
Summary of the Scene		

The story begins with a narrator giving brief information and introduction on the Freedom Writers and Erin Gruwell.

DIALOGUE - SCENE 1	
Character & Action	Dialogue
Character (Actor Name) <i>(Action & movement direction)</i>	(Spoken words)
Narrator (Maritza)	The Freedom Writers were a group of 150 Long Beach high schoolers in the mid 1990s that were once labeled at-risk and incapable of learning by their educators. However, with the help of their teacher Erin Gruwell,
<i>(States Thesis)</i>	The Freedom Writers broke barriers set by both their educational system and racist society by proving that they as "at-risk," "unteachable" teens had the capacity to care for their education and future and change their lives for the better.
Character (Actor)	
Character (Actor)	
Character (Actor)	
Character (Actor)	
Character (Actor)	

SCENE 2 - SCENARIO		
Purpose of the Scene	Key Elements	
Erin Gruwell is Introduced/Her motivation and Inspirations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Erin is introduced Her aspirations to make a difference in the world Her reason for becoming a teacher 	Setting	Classroom 203 of Woodrow Wilson Highschool in Long Beach, California
	Timeframe	Circa 1993
	Characters	Erin Gruwell
Summary of the Scene		
Erin Gruwell is introduced as she excitedly prepares for the first day of school. She talks about being motivated by moments in history where others fought to make the world a better place and how she was inspired to do the same. She describes her initial plan to become a lawyer and fight injustice in the courtroom and how watching the Rodney King Riots on the news inspired her to fight for kids in the classroom.		

DIALOGUE - SCENE 2	
Character & Action	Dialogue
Character (Actor Name) <i>(Action & movement direction)</i>	(Spoken words)
Erin Gruwell (Maritza) <i>(sighs in content, looks around classroom in excitement)</i>	Ahh, today is the first day of school.
<i>(addresses audience in an introductory tone)</i> <i>(once she finishes speaking, she taps the phone hiding behind the alarm clock to make a short school bell sound while transitioning)</i>	My name is Erin Gruwell. This will be my first-time teaching, and I'm very excited. See, for my entire life I've wanted to make a difference in the world just like the civil rights activists my father taught me about. I figured, what better place to do so than with the leaders of tomorrow? At first, I wanted to protect kids by becoming a lawyer, but after watching the Rodney King Riots on TV, I realized, by the time the kid is in the courtroom the battle's already lost. The real fighting should happen in the classroom. If kids could learn to pick up a gun, why couldn't they pick up a pen instead?
Character (Actor)	
Character (Actor)	
Character (Actor)	

Character (Actor)	
Character (Actor)	

SCENE 3 - SCENARIO		
Purpose of the Scene	Key Elements	
Show How the Students Posed as a Barrier/Introduce Maria and Give Students' Perspective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chaos in the classroom • Students had no respect for their teacher • Maria Reyes is introduced • Maria shows the negative view the students had for Gruwell • Maria describes the impact of their dangerous lifestyles on their schoolwork. 	Setting	Classroom 203 of Woodrow Wilson Highschool in Long Beach, California
	Timeframe	Circa 1993
	Characters	Erin Gruwell Maria Reyes
Summary of the Scene		
<p>Erin talks about how chaotic her classroom was as students separated themselves into racial groups and disrespected her presence and authority. Maria enters the scene annoyed with her new teacher and with being placed in a class full of the school's delinquents and "dumb kids." She expresses hate at how her teacher acts like she cares about them and believes that Gruwell is just going to be yet another person who doesn't care and who will disappoint them. She backs up her thinking by using the fact that Erin has no idea what horrors she and the other students go through. Maria then explains to the audience that race is the key to their friends and enemies.</p>		

DIALOGUE - SCENE 3	
Character & Action	Dialogue
Character (Actor Name) <i>(Action & movement direction)</i>	(Spoken words)
Erin Gruwell (Maritza) <i>(sighs in exhaustion, slumps in chair and shakes head in disappointment; speaks in a frustrated tone)</i>	My work has been cut out for me. The students immediately segregated themselves based on racial identity. Paper airplanes made of my syllabus flew around the room as the kids completely ignored my presence and mingled within their own groups, playing with their pencils and defacing their desks with gang insignias. It was chaos! I felt like a failure.

Maria Reyes (Maritza) <i>(puts on jacket, speaks with an LA Chicano dialect, hostile tone, sits back in chair in a delinquent-like manner, sighs in exasperation before introducing herself, pronounces her name in Spanish)</i>	<p>Damn! I don't wanna be in this stupid class. My name Maria Reyes, and my freshman English teacher Ms.Gruwell is way out there. How is <u>she</u> gonna handle four classes of all the kids the school doesn't want? I give her a week before she quits.</p>
<i>(speaks with an aggravated tone, eyes slowly looking from one side of the room to the other as if watching the teacher walk across the classroom)</i>	<p>God, I can hardly look at her. She pretends she cares for us but we ain't gonna buy that. We all know she's going to treat us like everyone else has. Why should I care about graduating when I don't even know if I'll be alive by then? She's just some white, perky lady who walked in with her polka dots and pearls who thinks she's gonna change our lives. But she's never known what it's like to be hungry. She's never gonna understand what it's like to walk outta your house with the fear of being <u>shot</u>. She doesn't come from where I come from.</p>
<i>(stands, uses grammatically incorrect speech)</i> <i>(once she finishes speaking, she taps the phone hiding behind the alarm clock to make a short school bell sound while transitioning)</i>	<p>Where I come from, it all comes down to what you look like. It's all about color. On the streets, you kick it in different 'hoods depending on your race and your gang. Same [thing] at school, we separate ourselves from those who are different from us. We kill each other over race, pride, and respect.</p>
Character (Actor)	
Character (Actor)	
Character (Actor)	

SCENE 4 - SCENARIO		
Purpose of the Scene	Key Elements	
Nazis in the Classroom/Major Turning Point <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Erin intercepts a note passed around the classroom with a racial caricature and is shocked that her students would 	Setting	Classroom 203 of Woodrow Wilson Highschool in Long Beach, California
	Timeframe	Circa

make something so similar to Nazi propaganda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Her students don't know what the Holocaust was • Her students do know what it's like to be shot at 	Characters	Erin Gruwell
Summary of the Scene		
Erin finds that her students have made a drawing depicting one of their African-American classmates that depicted him with exaggeratedly large lips. In horror, she finds that it resembles Nazi propaganda depicting the Jewish with rat-like noses and cannot believe that her students would create such a thing. When she tells them off for it, her students give her puzzled looks. With even more horror, she finds that her students have no idea what the Holocaust was, but each of them have been shot at before.		

DIALOGUE - SCENE 4	
Character & Action	Dialogue
Character (Actor Name) <i>(Action & movement direction)</i>	(Spoken words)
Character (Actor) Erin Gruwell (Maritza) <i>(takes off jacket, speaks with an uncharacteristically nonchalant tone)</i> <i>(picks up ripped notebook paper after the word "notebook"; avoids showing its contents to audience)</i>	One day during class, one kid got tired of a black student's excessively disruptive antics, so he ripped a piece of paper from his notebook and drew a picture on it.
<i>(gestures with hand to sweep the room)</i> <i>(Imitates a small yanking motion with hand when saying "I yanked")</i> <i>(looks at note and shakes head slightly when saying "horror")</i>	The note made its way all around the classroom lifting a roar of laughter behind it until it finally reached its target. He looked at it for a moment before his lip started to quiver and his eyes filled with tears. I yanked the note from his hands and stood in horror as I looked at it.
<i>(Holds out note so the audience can see the picture, walks slowly across the set to show everyone in</i>	In the note was a crude drawing of the black student's profile with huge, exaggerated lips. The protruding lips of the boy reminded me of pictures of Jews with long rat-like noses, which were spread by Nazis during World War II. Though I had been at my wit's end with this student, I turned ballistic.

<i>the manner a teacher would to her students)</i>	
<i>(speaks to audience in a manner that implies that they are now the students)</i> <i>(shakes head in disbelief when saying “Just like you guys do,” then pauses before speaking again)</i> <i>(changes voice to imitate student when saying “Uh, Ms. G, what’s the Holocaust?”)</i>	<p>“This is the same type of propaganda the Nazis used during the Holocaust! They did this because they thought that by wiping out everyone different from them, their lives wouldn’t be as miserable. Just like you guys do.” But then, someone asked “Uh, Ms. G, what’s the Holocaust?”</p>
<i>(pause, chuckle of disbelief as she says “What?” to audience)</i> <i>(speaks incredulously when saying “Raise your hand if you’ve heard of the Holocaust?”)</i> <i>(a moment of silence ensues as she finishes speaking, she makes eye contact with judges with a pained look)</i>	<p>What? “Raise your hand if you’ve heard of the Holocaust?” All I got were blank stares. As I began making connections in my head, I asked, “Ok... now raise your hand if you’ve ever been shot at?” Nearly every hand went up.</p>
Character (Actor)	
Character (Actor)	

SCENE 5 - SCENARIO		
Purpose of the Scene	Key Elements	
The Failure of the Educators to their Students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Erin is unable to give her students worthwhile literature because her co-workers believe her students are too stupid The effects of being called worthless on a child 	Setting	Classroom 203 of Woodrow Wilson Highschool in Long Beach, California
	Timeframe	Circa 1993
	Characters	Erin Gruwell

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Her students didn't know better but to live up to the harsh titles they were given • She wanted her students to know they deserved the same as the more privileged kids • She broke this barrier by getting the books herself since the school wouldn't support her • Toast for Change 		
Summary of the Scene		
<p>Eager to engage the minds of her students, Erin tries to get the school's books for her students. She is quickly shot down though when her colleagues and supervisors tell her that her kids are too stupid and incapable of understanding the works. She can't believe that her fellow educators were saying such things about her students. She emphasizes the negative effects such words have had on her students. She decided to break this barrier by taking extra jobs to buy the books herself. She then bought apple cider and plastic champagne glasses so that her students could toast for a change in their lives.</p>		

DIALOGUE - SCENE 5	
Character & Action	Dialogue
Character (Actor Name) <i>(Action & movement direction)</i>	(Spoken words)
Erin Gruwell (Maritza) <i>(speaks with an inspired tone, like an inflating balloon)</i>	I immediately decided to throw out my lesson plan and make tolerance the core of my curriculum. I wanted to give them literature that would make them think critically and relate their lives to.
<i>(speaks with tone of disbelief, like a deflating balloon)</i> <i>(hits hand with a fist with every "again," voice gets louder)</i> <i>(pause before the last "again", voice softens)</i>	But when I asked to use the school copies, they said, "Your students are too stupid to appreciate the works." I felt like I had been punched in the stomach. What if a kid hears words like "dumb," "stupid," or "nothing" again and <i>again</i> ...and again? What if they hear it so often that they believe it?
<i>(forms air quotes for each adjective when she says "smart, rich, and white")</i>	Most of my students had heard these words their <u>entire lives</u> and didn't know any better but to act accordingly. But I wanted that to change. I wanted them to know that they deserved something as simple as the school's books that were reserved for the "smart, rich, and white" kids.

<i>(lifts plastic champagne glass as she says “Toast for Change,” waits a moment and sets it back down)</i>	I didn’t want this barrier to hold me back, so I bought the books myself. With these books, I wanted my students to find themselves in the stories and to break away from their pattern of low expectations. I wanted them to read a book cover to cover for the first time in their lives and use that as an opportunity to change. So I decided to have a “Toast for Change.” I didn’t care if they were failing all their classes or had been kicked out of every school they’d ever been to. This was a chance to start anew.
Character (Actor)	
Character (Actor)	
Character (Actor)	

SCENE 6 - SCENARIO		
Purpose of the Scene	Key Elements	
Maria’s Toast for Change/Maria’s Refusal to Believe a Book Could Change Her <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maria’s Toast for Change • Maria’s distaste in reading a book to change herself 	Setting	Classroom 203 of Woodrow Wilson Highschool in Long Beach, California
	Timeframe	Circa 1993
	Characters	Maria Reyes
Summary of the Scene		
Maria vows to change herself in a touching moment where she wants to have a better life than her family members had. However, she is shocked when Gruwell gives the students copies of <i>The Diary of Anne Frank</i> as a means to help them change. She decides to read the book to prove her teacher wrong.		

DIALOGUE - SCENE 6	
Character & Action	Dialogue
Character (Actor Name) <i>(Action & movement direction)</i>	(Spoken words)
Maria Reyes (Maritza) <i>(puts on jacket, picks up glass, stares at the ground)</i>	I don’t wanna be pregnant by the time I’m 15 like my momma.

<i>with a somber and pensive expression)</i>	
<i>(slowly looks up at audience)</i>	I don't wanna spend the <u>rest</u> of my life behind bars like my daddy.
<i>(voice loudens with passion)</i>	And I don't wanna be six feet under by the time I'm 18 like my cousin!
<i>(voice softens as she makes eye contact with audience members)</i>	I wanna change.
<i>(sets glass down, voice lightens to show that she is in the present telling her story and not acting it out anymore)</i>	I was very excited about the prospect of changing, but then Ms Gruwell said, <i>(picks up book, speaks in a mocking and doubtful voice)</i> "These <u>books</u> will help you change." <i>(scoffs) (squints at book)</i> <i>Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl.</i>
<i>(clicks tongue, uses a jeering tone)</i> <i>(uses a mocking voice when saying the underlined part)</i> <i>(sets book down)</i>	'The hell is this? Why should I have to read about a little girl who doesn't look like me? This girl "Anne Frank" isn't Latina or from the 'hood like me. Anne doesn't speak Spanish or live in Long Beach. There's nothing about this girl that I could have possibly related to. That's when I decided, you know what, I'm gonna read this stupid thing just to prove to Ms. Gruwell that <u>I'm not gonna "find myself" within the pages of a book.</u>
Character (Actor)	

SCENE 7 - SCENARIO		
Purpose of the Scene	Key Elements	
Maria Gains Interest in the Book <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maria slowly starts to get invested in the story Maria relates to Anne and believes that everything will turn out okay. 	Setting	Classroom 203 of Woodrow Wilson Highschool in Long Beach, California
	Timeframe	Circa 1993
	Characters	Erin Gruwell
Summary of the Scene		
Erin recalls how Maria came into class constantly asking questions about the book and how she realized that she was reading the book after all. Maria then recalls how she became more interested when she found that Anne had a difficult life; just like Maria did. Maria started to relate to her and gains hope that Anne will survive in the end.		

DIALOGUE - SCENE 7	
Character & Action	Dialogue
Character (Actor Name) <i>(Action & movement direction)</i>	(Spoken words)
Erin Gruwell (Maritza) <i>(takes jacket off, sighs in remembrance and speaks in nostalgic tone)</i> <i>(uses air quotes when saying “smoke”)</i> <i>(tone of surprise when saying “She’s actually reading!”)</i>	Maria was really the benchmark for reading this book. She came in everyday and asked questions like “Are Peter and Anne gonna hook up?” or “So when is Anne gonna ‘smoke’ this Hitler guy?” Based on her questions and how they always had some sort of gangster twist on it, I realized, “She’s actually reading!”
Maria Reyes (Maritza) <i>(puts jacket on, speaks in an intrigued voice)</i> <i>(excited voice when saying “And <u>that’s</u> when I knew that she was gonna make it,” then changing to a determined voice for the remainder of her words.)</i> <i>(once she finishes speaking, she taps the phone hiding behind the alarm clock to make a short school bell sound while transitioning)</i>	The story got interesting when things started going bad. That’s when I thought, “Ok, maybe she’s not this spoiled little girl that I thought she was; maybe she doesn’t have a perfect little life.” Eventually I got to the entry where a bird lands on her window – the window where she can’t even reach her hand out because she’ll get caught – and she writes “Sometimes I feel like a bird in a cage and I wish I could fly away.” And <u>that’s</u> when I knew that she was gonna make it. She was gonna make it because... why else would we be reading this book? And she was gonna make it because she was a good person, and she didn’t do anything wrong.
Character (Actor)	
Character (Actor)	
Character (Actor)	
Character (Actor)	
Character (Actor)	

SCENE 8 - SCENARIO		
Purpose of the Scene	Key Elements	
Maria's Hope is Shattered/Class Learns that Writing Keeps a Person Alive After Death <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maria's hope is shattered when Anne dies She feels that if Anne didn't make it, neither will she The class realizes that Anne's spirit is kept alive in her writing 	Setting	Classroom 203 of Woodrow Wilson Highschool in Long Beach, California
	Timeframe	Circa 1993
	Characters	Maria Reyes
Summary of the Scene		
<p>Maria charges into class angry that Anne ended up dying. In an emotional moment, she describes that Anne's survival represented her hope that she herself would make it too. The fact that Anne didn't became another loss of hope on her difficult life. Erin feels guilty and responsible because she thought that everyone knew of Anne's death. However, one of the students teaches the class how writing gives voices to those who are silenced and gives life to those long gone.</p>		

DIALOGUE - SCENE 8	
Character & Action	Dialogue
Character (Actor Name) <i>(Action & movement direction)</i>	(Spoken words)
Maria Reyes (Maritza) <i>(grabs book, walks forward angrily as if storming into the classroom, throws book down angrily, yells)</i> <i>(voice breaks when saying the word "dies")</i> <i>(pauses and looks away with a grimace when she finishes speaking)</i>	"Why didn't you tell me?! Why didn't you tell me that Anne <u>dies</u> ?"
<i>(speaks softly)</i> <i>(makes a crashing motion with hands when saying "crashing down")</i>	At the very end when she doesn't make it, I felt that disappointment that I felt every other time in my life when I really believed in something. It was that same feeling of going to the window and hoping my dad would come home from prison... and

<i>(says “desperately” with desperation in her voice)</i>	he never did. Everything came crashing down at that moment because I so <u>desperately</u> wanted her to make it.
<i>(voice gets more emotional as she speaks)</i> <i>(voice cracks and face contorts when she says “because,” continues the rest of her words with anguish in a slight sob)</i>	I wanted her to make it because if she, a good person, didn’t make it, then what were the chances that somebody like me, who was a bad person, would make it?
Erin Gruwell (Maritza) <i>(removes jacket in a pained silence with a troubled look on her face)</i> <i>(voice brightens in amazement when saying the word “amazing”)</i>	I-I felt horrible. I had just... <u>assumed</u> that everyone knew. But then something amazing happened. Another student stood up and said, “She did make it Maria. She made it because she wrote about it. How many of our friends have died, and we’ve never even read an obituary? But because Anne Frank wrote about it, she’s gonna keep on living.”
Character (Actor)	
Character (Actor)	
Character (Actor)	

SCENE 9 - SCENARIO		
Purpose of the Scene	Key Elements	
Conclusion/Short Term and Long term Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Freedom Writers defied the odds and changed their futures The significance of their name and <i>The freedom Writers Diary</i> The Freedom Writers Foundation and their work today The barriers broken by the Freedom Writers 	Setting	Classroom 203 of Woodrow Wilson Highschool in Long Beach, California
	Timeframe	Circa 1993
	Characters	Erin Gruwell
Summary of the Scene		
Erin describes how her students rose and defied all the odds against them. She describes what their name means and how they published their stories together and formed the Freedom		

Writers Foundation to help kids like them across the country. Then she describes how they broke all of the barriers that told them they'd never make it and how they used their education to change their lives and make a better future for themselves.

DIALOGUE - SCENE 9	
Character & Action	Dialogue
Character (Actor Name) <i>(Action & movement direction)</i>	(Spoken words)
Erin Gruwell (Maritza) <i>(speaks in amazement)</i>	And after this moment, Maria Reyes and 149 other kids found themselves in the pages of a book. They followed in the footsteps of Anne Frank and wrote their story. For a group of 150 students, change meant that they didn't have to be like that strung-out mother or that deadbeat dad. That they could be the first in their families to graduate or go to college.
	As my students learned to see the parallels to their own lives in the books they read, they wrote their own diaries to give themselves a voice. Inspired by Anne's writing and the Freedom Riders' courage to take action, they named themselves the Freedom Writers and went on to publish <i>The Freedom Writers Diary</i> in 1999, which brought their stories of broken barriers -both personal and as a class- to the world. Since their graduation we've formed the Freedom Writers Foundation to share the methods of success from our classroom to those around the country as well as sharing our story around the world.
	The Freedom Writers managed to break the countless barriers life had thrown at them. From suffering terrible childhoods, to educators who believed they were incapable of learning, to a racist society that had them convinced that after high school they end up dead or in jail, each of the Freedom Writers rose up to the challenge and used their education to build a future for themselves. They broke their barriers for a better life; a life they had once believed impossible. Thank you.
Character (Actor)	
Character (Actor)	
Character (Actor)	

Character (Actor)	
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The Freedom Writers: Breaking Educational and Societal Barriers for a Better Future

Maritza Barragan Orozco

Senior Division

Individual Performance

Process Paper: 499 words

Process Paper

Breaking Barriers is such a perfect theme. I had trouble picking a topic because history is full of broken barriers; the theme could fit so well with any topic. I wanted a perfect topic to fully take advantage of the opportunity presented by the theme. When searching for a topic this year, I remembered a film about the Freedom Writers, a group of Los Angeles high schoolers who with the crucial help of their English teacher, Erin Gruwell, defied all odds against them by proving that they weren't unteachable gangsters and could make it to graduation. I remembered the students that despite facing barriers such as sexual and domestic abuse, homelessness, and gang violence their entire lives, still managed to turn their lives into those of success and tolerance. I was inspired by their struggles and their courage. The Freedom Writers broke barriers set by both their educational system and racist society by proving that they as "at-risk," "unteachable" teens had the capacity to care for their education and future and change their lives for the better.

Researching was difficult. While I easily found primary sources due to the recentness of the topic, but it was difficult to come by secondary sources that didn't repeat what I'd already learned. The most detailed information came from reading *The Freedom Writers Diary: How a Teacher and 150 Teens Used Writing to Change Themselves and the World Around Them*, a book made of the compiled journals the Freedom Writers were assigned to write in throughout their high school career, and Erin Gruwell's *Teach with Your Heart: Lessons I Learned from the Freedom Writers: A*

Memoir. These two books were crucial in my research because they chronicled every detail of Gruwell and her students' story.

I love to find a compelling topic that makes a compelling story. I love making it come to life through performance so that my audience truly understands the emotions of the people involved. I felt that by choosing performance I could adequately portray and do justice to the struggles of the Freedom Writers. I chose to play Erin Gruwell because she was the reason these students realized that they had the capability to change, and she gives the audience the perspective that in order to help her students break barriers, she had to break countless of her own. I chose to play Maria Reyes to represent the perspective of the students because I know it is crucial to show why they felt and acted so negatively. Maria is a real Freedom Writer, and I chose to play her because I could relate to her as a Latinx teenager.

Both Erin Gruwell and the Freedom Writers faced many different barriers, like traumatic pasts, educators who had given up on and opposed them, and a racist community, to name a few. But with much endeavor, Gruwell helped the Writers care for their education. Together, they overcame the barriers they had faced their entire lives to become successful members of society.

Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources

Chung, Connie, et al. "Freedom Writers Primetime Live Interview." *Primetime Live*, season 7, episode 15, ABC News, 15 Apr. 1998.

This ABC Primetime Live episode was one of the ways the Freedom had become known nationally for the first time. It was extremely useful because it had interviews with the Freedom Writers while they were still in high school.

The Freedom Writers, and Erin Gruwell. *The Freedom Writers Diary: How a Teacher and 150 Teens Used Writing to Change Themselves and the World Around Them*. Broadway Books/New York, 1999.

This book is a compilation of the diaries the Freedom Writers and Erin Gruwell kept throughout their time together in high school. This book was used for inspiring much of my script, especially in portraying the perspective of the Freedom Writers. It really helped me understand their troubled lives and how that impacted the way they viewed Gruwell, school, and the world. Much of my research came from this book. It also contained newspaper headlines, which helped me find more sources.

"Freedom Writers Foundation; Freedom Writer Teachers to Write Follow-Up to New York Times' Best Seller the Freedom Writers Diary." *Science Letter*, 29 Jul 2008, pp. 3339. *elibrary*, <https://explore.proquest.com/elibrary/document/209059169?accountid=2868>.

This newspaper article details how the Freedom Writers Foundation was to hold the 2008 Freedom Writer Teachers Workshop. The Foundation has a teacher-training program to help teachers across the country and Canada to use Gruwell's strategies to help their own classrooms. It gave me insight on how Erin Gruwell and the Freedom Writers have continued to make change long after their time together in the classroom.

Gruwell, Erin. *Teach with Your Heart: Lessons I Learned from The Freedom Writers*. Broadway Books, 2007.

This book was the most detailed source in my research because it gave me all the barriers Erin encountered from her first day of class all the way to where the Freedom Writers are now as adults. I would say that this was my best source because she helped me understand and relive her and her students' struggles. Much of my script was inspired by quotes in this book. It especially helped me portray Erin Gruwell and her endeavors in dealing with her troubled students.

Hahn, Don and Lori Korngiebel, directors. *Freedom Writers: Stories from the Heart*. PBS, Public Broadcasting Service, 2 Sept. 2019, www.pbs.org/video/freedom-writers-stories-from-the-heart-jkr5ap/.

This PBS special followed the journey of Erin Gruwell and her students and had many different Freedom Writers tell their stories as adults. I used it to comprehend where many of them came from emotionally and to see just how much they'd changed. Part of my script was inspired by Maria describing how reading *The Diary of Anne Frank* changed her.

Haynes, V. Dion. "CATHARTIC WRITING COURSE CHRONICLES STUDENTS' PAIN." *Chicagotribune.com*, 29 Aug. 2018, www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1998-02-10-9802100266-story.html.

This newspaper was one of many newspapers released with updates of the Freedom Writers, and this one described how Gruwell assigned diaries to her students where they wrote about their pain, both past, present, and the future.

LEAD, director. *This Teacher Taught The Impossible. This Teacher Taught The Impossible | Erin Gruwell @ LEAD Presented By HR.com*, 8 Apr. 2015, www.youtube.com/watch?v=h4mF7CP3rSM.

This video was of a speech Erin Gruwell gave about her story to the LEAD Conference. Her words inspired my script when she spoke of her "Toast for Change" and how it truly changed their lives.

Meindersma, Sandy. "Freedom Writer: Woman Shows How At-Risk Kids Can Succeed." *Telegram & Gazette*, Nov 22, 2009. ProQuest, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/269044524?accountid=2868>.

This newspaper recorded the contents of a speech Maria Reyes gave at the Boy's and Girl's Club Northeast Region Keystone conference in 2009. This source helped me understand the negativity she had before meeting Erin Gruwell. I learned about her past; I learned how she was jumped into a gang, how education had never been the priority in her family, and how she would be on probation when she joined Gruwell's class.

PBS, Houston, director. *Maria REYES on InnerVIEWS with Ernie Manouse*, 25 Mar. 2015, www.youtube.com/watch?v=797_cGr4pwE.

This video was an interview with Maria Reyes. It was very useful to learn about her speech and behavioral mannerisms. It was also very useful because it really went into her personal experience with the intolerance of Long Beach. I related to her struggles as a Mexican American facing intolerance.

Reem, Craig. "The Hottest 25 People in Orange County: Erin Gruwell." *OC Metro*, 1997, pp. 30.
ProQuest, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/219625360?accountid=2868>.

This newspaper described how Erin Gruwell and her newly graduated students were raising money to visit Anne Frank's home and Auschwitz and to pay for their college tuition.

"Southeast; Students Bring Teenager Who Wrote about Sarajevo to L.A.: [Home Edition]." *Los Angeles Times (pre-1997 Fulltext)*, Mar 19, 1996, pp. 4.
ProQuest, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/293207433?accountid=2868>.

This newspaper announced how the Freedom Writers had raised enough money for Zlata Filipovic, a Bosnian diarist hailed as the "modern-day Anne Frank," to visit Long Beach and meet them.

Talks, Tedx, director. *TEDxConejo - Erin Gruwell - The Freedom Writers. TEDxConejo - Erin Gruwell - The Freedom Writers*, 15 May 2011, www.youtube.com/watch?v=nDq9o9j3-CU.

This video was of Erin Gruwell speaking at TEDxConejo. Her words greatly inspired specific parts of my script. In her speech she showed part of a

documentary the Freedom Writers made where Maria Reyes described her story. I used this to learn how to use Maria's dialect and show her emotions.

Trierweiler, Hannah. "Talking with ERIN GRUWELL." *Instructor* (1999), vol. 118, no. 4, 2009, pp. 27-28.
ProQuest, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/224394810?accountid=2868>.

This article contained an interview with Erin Gruwell discussing how their foundation has helped so many teachers that are struggling through similar things she did and why they aren't being helped financially.

Wride, Nancy. "She Opened their Eyes and they Opened Up their Lives; Education: Erin Gruwell used the Holocaust to Teach Students about Tolerance. Then they Filled a Book about Horrors of their Own.: [Home Edition]." *Los Angeles Times*, Nov 14, 1997, pp. 1-E, 1:3.
ProQuest, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/421254700?accountid=2868>.

This newspaper was written by Nancy Wride, a writer that worked closely with the Freedom Writers in taking the very first steps in making their story known locally. She was mentioned often in Gruwell's *Teach With Your Heart*, so I tried to find as many of her articles as I could.

Wride, Nancy. "Truth Stronger than Friction; Troubled Teens Find Hope Amid Holocaust: [Orange County Edition]." *Los Angeles Times*, Oct 12, 1997, pp. 1.
ProQuest, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/421227564?accountid=2868>.

This newspaper article mentioned various of Gruwell's teaching methods as well as people who helped her along the way, such as her superintendent Dr. Carl Cohn, who supported her when her colleagues didn't, and John Tu, a co-founder of a technology company who sponsored much of their field trips and other expenses.

Wride, Nancy. "Civil Writers; Teacher, Student Authors Pitch Tolerance, Book in N.Y.: [Orange County Edition]." *Los Angeles Times*, Jan 16, 1998, pp. 1.
ProQuest, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/421396886?accountid=2868>.

This newspaper article is a summary of a field trip the Freedom Writers took to New York City to receive the Spirit of Anne Frank Award for their efforts to

promote tolerance, as well as to work with Doubleday, the publishing house that published Anne Frank's diary, to publish *The Freedom Writers Diary*.

Secondary Sources

Choi, Jung-Ah. "Reading Educational Philosophies in Freedom Writers." *The Clearing House*, vol. 82, no. 5, 2009, pp. 244-248. *elibrary*, <https://explore.proquest.com/elibrary/document/196884218?accountid=2868>.

This scholarly journal article discusses the educational theories that are the foundation of Gruwell's pedagogy. It recognized these theories as creating a family within the classroom, viewing students as inventors of knowledge rather than receivers, self-realization, and creating her own curriculum as opposed to the standards. This article helped me understand what is at the core of the Freedom Writers' story and what makes their success unique.

"Freedom Writers" Founder Motivates the Marginalized." *Reading Today*, vol. 22, no. 6, 2005, pp. 13. *ProQuest*, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/223425489?accountid=2868>.

This newspaper was about the speech Gruwell gave at the 50th Annual Convention of the International Reading Association. It gave me ideas on how to end my performance because she ends her speech by "passing the baton" to her audience to help students in need.

"How California Teacher Erin Gruwell Inspired a Generation of Writers." *PBS SoCal*, 29 Mar. 2019, www.pbssocal.org/uncategorized/california-teacher-erin-gruwell-inspired-generation-writers/.

This article is a summary of the story of the Freedom Writers. It includes a Q and A with Gruwell about their recent documentary.

LaGravenese, Richard, director. *Freedom Writers*. Paramount Home Entertainment, 2007.

This was a movie made about the Freedom Writers that really brought their story to fame. This movie was how I found out about the Freedom Writers in the first place, but I made sure to avoid basing my script on the film. I did not want to make a project over the movie because it is in the nature of films to oversimplify and dramatize. Of course, a performance must do a little of this too, but I wanted to create my project based on *The Freedom Writers Diary* and more reliable sources because after all, this book was how their story became known in the first place. I referenced this movie only to learn the characterization and mannerisms of my characters, such as behavior and dialect.

McLellan, Dennis. "ORANGE COUNTY CALENDAR; on Road to Unity with Freedom Writers; A Teacher's Modest Effort to Give Teens a Lesson in Tolerance Blossoms into Life-Changing Experience for them and those they Inspire.: [Orange County Edition]." *Los Angeles Times*, Feb 13, 2000, pp. B-11. ProQuest, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/421502998?accountid=2868>.

This newspaper article summarized the story of the Freedom Writers, from Freshman year to post-graduation. It also documented how they were going across the country in a busy schedule for their book tour, interviews, and TV guest shots.

Piccalo, Gina. "Did 'Writers' Get it Wrong?; the Portrayal of a Long Beach High School in 'Freedom Writers' Raises Hackles in the City. the Teacher Who Inspired the Film Speaks Up for it.: [HOME EDITION]." *Los Angeles Times*, Jan 09, 2007. ProQuest, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/422123821?accountid=2868>.

This newspaper documented some of the criticism the Freedom Writers movie got after it was released because some of the locals were upset with the negative light their city and schools were portrayed in. Gruwell and the director of the movie stood by the film because they stressed that the movie took place about a decade earlier, and that much of the negative portrayals were accurate to the time period and played a major role in the lives of her students.

Reis, Jacqueline. "Voices of Writers Inspire Students." *Telegram & Gazette*, 07 Nov 2008. eLibrary, <https://explore.proquest.com/elibrary/document/269026943?accountid=2868>.

This article was a summary of a speech Erin Gruwell gave to a city's Jewish community and high school students that retold her and her students' story. At the end of the article there were some quotes from the high school audience's

optimistic impression. That was helpful in understanding how students gain hope in their teachers after hearing Gruwell's story and how they, like the Freedom Writers, were amazed to find that there were teachers who cared about them.

Writers, Freedom, and Erin Gruwell. "Freedom Writers Foundation." *Freedom Writers Foundation*, 2016, www.freedomwritersfoundation.org/.

The Freedom Writers created this nonprofit foundation that funds scholarships and promotes innovative teaching. I used their website to contact them to try and set up an interview with Maria Reyes, but I did not receive a response.