



The Levine JCC Butterfly Project

Freedom Writers movie clip - Extension Activity

(Approximately 30-60 minutes)

Rationale

Through this exercise, students will examine the individual's role as a responsible citizen when witnessing situations of bias.

Using the example of Miep Gies (the Dutch woman who risked her life to keep the Frank family hidden), the clip from *Freedom Writers* connects the story of Anne Frank and the suffering of the Jewish people during the Holocaust and WWII to the Eastside neighborhood in Long Beach, California in the early 1990s. Her diary provides a context in which these students can draw parallels between their struggles for acceptance as minority high school students to the struggles that Anne felt as a victim of anti-Semitism during WWII.

We see the significance of the role of the individual in Miep's actions and we better understand why she risked her life to try to protect others. Students in school settings often find themselves confronted with similar choices where their actions or inactions have consequences that affect themselves and others. After viewing this clip the students will internalize and reflect on the message and investigate how they can take action in everyday life.

Student Objectives

- Examine how discrimination based on bias can escalate into acts of violence.
- Discuss the impact of prejudice on individuals and society.
- Recognize the role of individuals in interrupting the escalation of hate.

Freedom Writers Summary



Sandra and Leon Levine
Jewish Community Center
5007 Providence Road
Charlotte, NC 28226
charlottejcc.com





After witnessing her students' prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory actions towards each other, the teacher decides to have students research past examples of prejudice and discrimination by reading *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Unexpectedly, it is a book to which the students feel an instant connection. Not only can they understand Anne's adolescent angst, but they also identify with her feelings of helplessness and alienation in a world she cannot control, but which threatens to destroy her. With drive-by shootings, random attacks and gang wars a normal part of their own lives, they see the destructive power of prejudice and blind hatred.

When the students learn that Miep Gies is still alive in the Netherlands, they embark on a fund raiser to bring her to their class as a guest speaker. It is the emotional highlight of the film. Visibly moved by the courageous stories of this now elderly woman, the students instantly see her as a hero.

Play video clip [Freedom Writers](#) (3 minutes)

Possible Response Activities (Individual or Group)

Writing, artistic expression and/or discussion of:

- What Miep Gies meant when she said anyone can be a “small light in a dark room”
- Whether you or someone you know has been a “small light in a dark room”
- A risk you took because it was the right thing to do. What was the outcome? How did it make you feel?
- Whether Miep Gies is a hero
- Standing up for a friend or a friend standing up for you
- Miep Gies and how she came to be in a position to help the Franks
- The Austrian soldier and his choices towards Miep