



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2026 Volume IV: Resistance from Aristotle to Star Wars

Writing as a Form of Resistance: From Anne Frank's Diary to the Freedom Writers, One Classroom. Many Voices. Stronger Together

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Introduction and Rationale

In the modern-day classroom, students are repeatedly resisting what I would call an essential part of their life. Their education. In a teenager's eyes, we live in a world where school feels forced when it should feel like a privilege, feelings of school being treated as obligatory "unpaid labor," not freedom; and all they see is a world where social media influencers are displaying successful careers through the internet and not even mentioning school achievements.

What I and many other educators are viewing in today's classroom is paving the way for a very scary future for education and our country. What students are seeing today is that the value of education seems to be altered to fit an agenda versus facing facts. They are missing out on a vital fact that the resistance of knowledge is a recipe for a doomed society. With educators serving today as the primary giver of information to our youth, the question of why students resist such valuable information becomes a great topic for research.

Some main questions guiding this unit are as follows:

What does resistance look like, and how can we see it in text? How do students see each other differently, when they are all very similar? What helps people find common ground across race, culture, and/or trauma?

So, what do we do? How do we frame a lesson where we are allowing students to state their claims on how valuable their education is? Or how they can see there is a way where they can use a simple trait of knowledge to be seen as a statement. Where we can begin to see into the mindset of why education is useful, and then create a new visual for them to see the one freedom that they are resisting, who so many across this world literally lose their lives trying to defend. With this being a shortened version of a full six-week unit, my goal for you would be to keep going after this initial movement. Students need to understand that what they take for granted (their education) is a sacred value in other parts of the world that some people actually lose their lives trying to defend.

At what point did education become a fear? Has the fear of failure chemically changed their way of thinking? Have they discovered that one can be successful without actually being fully educated, and that basic reading,

writing, and arithmetic can still allow them to get a job to begin their journey in the working world? This is the paradox. Resisting the freedom that allows them to be free in the first place.

Since I am only able to complete a 2-week unit, based on the mandatory guidelines of my school district, I plan on using excerpts from the books *The Freedom Writers Diary* and *Diary of a Young Girl* to help bring this unit to life. *The Freedom Writers Diary* is about a young, brand sparkling new teacher, who begins her teaching career in a rough school district. She quickly learns that almost all of her students are African American and Hispanic, while the very lowest demographic were the very few white/Caucasian students.

The book quotes, to sum this up, “How a Teacher and 150 Teens Used Writing to Change Themselves and the World Around Them.” The Freedom Writers phrase modifies the group of activists from the civil rights movement named the “Freedom Riders” who challenged racial segregation through interstate transportation. While reading these diary entries, you will be able to see how the students begin to challenge silence through documentation. ¹

It becomes a form of resistance through action. The book includes hundreds of journal entries from her students as well as herself. She encourages her students to “just write.” These two books are obviously substantially different. The common theme here is they are both diaries. One is from a single Jewish girl’s perspective of her experience in hiding, and the other is a reflection on various moments of life, as well as reflections on Anne Frank within *The Freedom Writers Diaries* itself. ²

As we all know, the more your students write, the better writers they become. Writing can be private, as a diary should be, but then it could also change the future of knowledge by allowing people to have a different point of view. It allows them to no longer be an outsider to their own opinion, and more to give them an actual viewpoint to hold onto. There is also a movie based on the freedom writers, I highly, HIGHLY encourage you to watch it, to really get a grasp of this book, and to watch these students grow into amazing and brilliant humans.

It’s really a breath of fresh air to see students hit their “A-ha” moments. I feel like if this unit is conducted right, I think that you will have an amazing moment where your students can get a sense of trust with you. At the beginning of the year, this really hits because you have a group of brand-new faces. What better way to get them to trust you than by allowing them to be vulnerable in a safe space.

The biggest difference between the two books, like I mentioned, is that one was written by one single person, while the other is a collection of entries from Ms. Gruwell’s students over a period of time. One was writing a journal of her feelings while in hiding from Nazi persecution while the other was written from personal experiences of racism, gang violence, discrimination and other triggering acts of violence. They are not historically relevant. However, pairing the two texts allows you to share themes of hope, and the desire to be understood. We don’t want this to be used as a way for students to compare sufferings. It’s a way where students can make sense of their own journeys and worlds around them to find a common theme. ³

Students’ resistance to education is usually a defense mechanism. They resist assignments, usually authority and whatever expectations the school district has because their past traumas and experiences have taught them to expect that failure is imminent. This exact reason is why you should pair these two texts, because it explores how resistance within their own life, is actually allowing the violence, hatred, and stereotyping to continue. It keeps them silent.

How does writing become a form of resistance? You will likely hear students ask how? Or maybe you open

with class discussion on that simple question. By challenging imposed identity, creating new vision for the future, refusing to allow specific people to be erased from history, writing allows for a piece to last a lifetime of change. We can see that in the Declaration of Independence. That simple document; is what has kept our country free from English rule. A piece of paper, signed by a bunch of guys in wigs and coats that has kept this country free for 250 years.

We want them to write to resist the silence. We can't imagine who Anne Frank was if her diary was never found. She would have been lost to the world, as we all know she perished in a concentration camp after her family was caught in hiding during the Holocaust. But, due to her writing, her legacy continued and will continue until the end of time because of how loud her silenced voice is and forever will be. It allows us to recognize signs of history repeating itself. When you resist education, you allow for tyranny to become a normal part of your life. ⁴

Which is something most students don't actually understand. So, I encourage you to continue even after this introductory unit, to go on to develop a deeper level of understanding for your students that discusses how being uneducated is actually worse than being educated itself. There are plenty of resources out there where you can begin to develop a unit that discusses how students resisting their education, is the very thing that could in turn lean to a tyrannical rule of government. I encourage you to explore readings such as *I am Malala* or *Zlata's Diary* to continue to build on why students need to understand what true resistance in education looks like and how they are setting the future of their children's world could look like. *The Freedom Writers Diaries* become a safe space. The students begin to realize how beneficial journaling is during their own personal hard times and it becomes a "favorite" thing for them to do throughout the story, but it's also amazing to see the perspective from the teacher's point of view.⁵

The strengths of my students lie in their ability to value their independence and their awareness of social issues, their ability to balance home life and school life, language barriers, and other difficult areas in their walks of life, but they still show up for school every day. One take-back that I want you to remember is that just because their head is down, doesn't necessarily mean that they aren't listening. The mental process that I have yet to figure out, of why students feel the need to resist something so obvious, is something of almost a level of remarkable.

So, let's put this into a different perspective. If we think about it, when we got our first jobs either after high school or even during, did they ask for our high school transcripts? Did they ask what number we rank in our class? Did they ask what kind of extracurricular activities we participate in? Not really. They want to know if we can complete the job, be a valuable asset to their industry, and sometimes they ask if you are bilingual. Which many of my students that I work with every day in the Hispanic community are.

Students today are almost taught that if you don't get a full education, you will never get a job. Which clearly is not true at all. So, we need to stop that mindset. Yes, you can get a job without being fully educated on the Pythagorean theorem, or the reacting points of whatever it is they do in chemistry, but that's not the point. The point is, that there is a purpose hidden in education that the students don't see, and this unit is going to show them what those values are.

In regards to completion, I encourage you to really allow your students to actually write. Write what they are thinking about at the moment of completion. Allow them to still make the decision on how they chose to view their education going forward. There is no right or wrong. There is an ethical answer to these and it's time our students see it through the end.

As a current grad student at Texas A&M University studying educational psychology, I felt a massive pull to this topic of resistance because we live in it every single day with our students. We as teachers are often looked at as tyrants, dictators, micro-managers, and my favorite line that I hear, “not their mama’s”. Well, sweet student of mine, you are correct, I am “not your mama,” but what I am is your teacher, whom you spend more time with during your adolescent life than your actual families.

If we do the math, your students will spend roughly 19,519.5 hours of their lives with their teachers as a group from kindergarten through walking the stage at graduation. This is based on the estimated start time for our students in our district of arrival time, which is 7:45 in the morning, to the dismissal bell, which rings around 4:00 every day, 182 days out of the school year. Just about their entire childhood is spent with us at school.

My students in our fairly large school district live in a world where many of them are not always encouraged at home. They live with a mentality that passing is enough, and constantly ask “how many do I have to have right to pass?” Instead of just simply doing the best you can. My favorite thing to say back is “how do you know how many you got correct?” Are you smarter than you are putting off to me? I mean certainly if you can actually count how many you know are correct, to where you can blow off the rest of the assignment.

I teach freshman and sophomore age students in a low income, or Title 1, school district. We have a diverse community of students with what we say in layman’s terms as “low reading levels.” My students generally are ranging, on paper, in the 3rd and 4th grade reading levels, as calculated by their beginning of year to end of year MAP scores. In my class, with many students that are still actively trying to learn the English language (ESL, or English as a second language) we can see the correlation of these MAP scores to their retention in the classroom.

I find myself wondering, how can I get this message across to them? How can I implement “student-led teaching” into my room to help? Maybe recruiting the help of some of my bilingual students that have an impressive vocabulary to really help with translation, but then you are stuck with wondering if they said it right. No part of me likes to depend on electronic translation tools, especially with students trying to learn the language as I fully believe the best way to learn is submerge yourself into the language without interruption to crutch on your own language, but I would be lying if I told you that I didn’t buy the new Air Pods with the translation feature to listen in real time just to make sure they are saying what I said correctly. Because I absolutely did.

The curriculum unit that I am striving to develop will in theory help students understand what it means to develop a healthy habit of resistance. I am not striving to introduce a theory that the students see as a “you’re messing up” situation, but more giving them an opportunity to reflect, and to create an awareness of what it means to resist the very freedoms that are granted to them at birth, and to learn what it could mean to truly resist the number one thing that will keep their country and the world from being run through tyranny. That missing key is what we call education. My vision for this whole unit is going to bring my studies of psychology and real-life examples of how worlds beyond ours look when the right to education is taken away, and for them to understand that education is actually a form of resistance in itself.

I personally feel that this unit is going to be one of the most beneficial for our students at my school, not just because of the demographic, but I can without a doubt say that one of the most common phrases we as teachers here is “when are we ever going to use this?” My hope is that our students at Rudder High School, and across the country for whatever teachers choose to read this unit, will be able to see how every subject that is taught in their life has a purpose. We may not see it in its entirety right off the bat, but there is a

purpose for every part of education, and you should not resist it. Can you be successful without a good portion of it? Yes; however, I choose to not live in the mentality of surviving on the bare minimum.

Back to the part about students that are asking “how many do I need to pass?” It’s like saying “what all do we need to know just to get a job...” and that is just not a good enough mentality for me. Because I was that student. I was a “C’s get degrees” kid. I was a “that’s good enough” kid, and I was a teen mom that struggled growing up because of that mentality. It’s not good enough for me, and it’s certainly not good enough for my kids. And now look at me. I’m working at Yale University, developing this unit alongside brilliant professors, and education has taken me further than any spot I’ve ever been in. So, I strive to build this unit SO GOOD, that they can see a new mindset to want to know more. And then hopefully by the end of their senior years, allow them to see where they began, and where they are on their last day of high school. We as educators strive daily to help students understand that being educated is not a bad thing, so quit looking at it like it is. You don’t have to live in fight or flight mode your whole life. You don’t have to keep yourself where your community has told you you’d never leave from. Your life is whatever you want it to be. You are not bound by your own mental boundaries. Your mental boundaries are bound to you.

Student Demographic

The home life of many of my students today is something that our generation could never comprehend. I have students in my classroom that are already working to help their parents pay bills due to the extremes of our current economy. I have students that are only in attendance for the threat that if they aren’t, then they along with their entire family of illegal immigrants gets deported (true story by the way.) I have students that want nothing more than to just go to work, start making money, and doing adult things with no regards that their current reading levels are not even close to being on par with the reading levels that are actually needed to perform their future jobs or even some careers well. I will get to that here shortly.

Almost 80% of the students at Rudder high school are classified as economically disadvantaged. By definition, we know that it means that over 80% of our students belong to families who face significant financial hardship. These hardships could impact their educational success. Students may not be able to attend school because they have to help parents pay bills. Maybe they live too close to the school to take a bus, but they don’t want to risk the walk to school because of the dangers of the neighborhood they live in.

The neighborhood across the bridge closest to us is where a large portion of our students live, and according to my school resource officers, it reflects a higher crime rate with many of the students in our school being involved in crime-related activity. In 2023, I had a student in my class that was involved in a high-conflict shooting with a peace officer, and he is still suffering the consequences of those actions. He was 14 years old. Last year I had a student also from my class that shut the entire school down after posting on a public forum how someone can call in a shooting threat to our school by giving all of the information that they needed to say. Here is the kicker, it was happening while we were all in class. She was not in my class directly at the time as this happened not in my class period with her, but yes, she was actively telling someone the words to say while they called in a school shooting which caused our whole school to go into a secure lock down. Talk about nerve wracking, and then heartbreaking to hear that it was one of my kids that made that choice, and now there is no telling what her future will look like.

Although disadvantaged, many of our students' identities and worldviews are shaped by their families' strong cultural traditions and ties to the community. Rudder High School, a 5A high school, has a strong attendance population of approximately 1700 children across all four grades of the secondary level. The Hispanic community makes up approximately 65% of the population. Of that population, you have a vast number of students who are a growing majority of emergent bilingual students that are trying to take command of the English language within the four domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The Black/African American population makes up approximately 18% of our students. 14% of the population falls under the white/Caucasian race, mixed races come in at approximately 1.5%, and the remaining 1% is seen in the Asian and Native American community. We have a fairly even gender ratio of 51% Male and 49% female, with an approximate student-teacher ratio of 24:1.

Unit Content

Journal Prompt: What does resistance mean to you? In what ways do you find yourself “resisting” every day.”

My goal is to make this unit stretch about ten days. My reasoning simply stems from the fact that my district requires us, as the English department, to have a certain number of matching grades per six weeks. So, it's easiest for me personally to hit this unit during our first few weeks of school beginning on our 3rd week since we have BOY testing during the second week. I plan on orchestrating a different theme for each week. But primarily focusing on *The Freedom Writers Diary* the first week and the *Diary of Anne Frank* the second week. I teach high school freshmen, and they would have already read the *Diary of Anne Frank* in 8th grade, so this will be a great opportunity for you to add that into your curriculum as a review and to help activate background knowledge to see what all they remember from when they read it the previous year.

Writing as resistance

The Freedom Writers Diaries is a collection of diary entries from ELAR Teacher Erin Gruwell's students, where she gave students an empty composition notebook to just write. Write their emotions at that moment. Write how they are feeling about class. Maybe write about their life outside of the classroom. What kind of struggles do they face? What trauma do they experience? How can they relate to other students around them?⁶

I want to draw attention to this same approach but of course dig deeper. I am a big fan of journal entries as bell-ringers. I want to encourage you to allow your students to be writing as much as possible regardless of the class you are teaching, because it's such a valuable tool that the students need. Our literacy rates in America are extremely low. The more students are implementing reading and writing into their daily lives, the better off they will be. There should be a healthy mix of scripted journal prompts and free writing.

One big issue that I notice with my students is that they tend to “write like they talk”. Which is a big “No No” in our classroom. Sure, if they are working on creative writing then that's absolutely fine; however, for what we are working on, and trying to enhance their skills as writers especially for state testing situations, they absolutely need to work on academic language. What I did over summer school was I allowed students to write a journal entry, and then I encouraged them to translate their exact words into academic language. “Sound smart,” is what I told them. And it clicked. I will be repeating this exact same practice this year with

this journal entry. Ideally, by the time we get to the end of this unit, our students will be writing more academically without even thinking about it. It will already be instilled into their mind as an expectation that they should be writing more academic, and less “street”.

This book is obviously way too big to read as a class during the six weeks, and to be honest like I said it’s really just a bunch of diary entries from these students. So we will be taking excerpts out of it and using them as reference points, but still sticking with the theme for each week and using it as a tool to segue into the next conversation and topic.

What I like about it, is that it gives students a good way to examine the relationships between power and resistance. In the book itself, students won’t read it as something that comes specifically from the government, but more about the power within schools, their own families, race, poverty is a really big one, and several other things that we will have included.

In order for this unit to make sense, I need their experiences to become part of the unit itself. I want to know their history, their failures, their culture, and whatever perspective they can use to create their voice. While they are developing this part of their resistance movement, I want them to build connections and relationships with each other. Compare each other’s stories. In what world can one live in if they can’t respect the fact that everyone comes from a different walk of life and they all look different for everyone.⁷

Ultimately, *The Freedom Writers Diary* shows that writing in itself is absolutely a form of resistance. What I mean is that around the world, there are cultures that are not allowed to be educated. They are punished for doing so. There are several ways you can go about this. Through stories like *The Handmaid’s Tale*, *I am Malala*, articles based in sub-Saharan Africa where women’s rights to be educated are removed. There are so many avenues you can take to help our kids see that it truly is a privilege to be educated. A privilege that so many people here in America take for granted. Resistance can be looked at in a multitude of ways. Proving that you are better than what society says you are. Sometimes it doesn’t come from society, maybe it comes from your own family. Maybe it does come from the classroom. I fully intend to inform my children that resistance really does begin in the classroom. Loving yourself enough to want to be educated. Striving to be better than what your community says you will be. Telling yourself that your limits are not defined by your surroundings.⁸

The Power of a Diary

When dipping into the *Diary of Anne Frank*, it’s important that the main focus of this part of the unit is to really encourage students to realize how powerful this diary has been for several generations after the Holocaust. It provided a whole new insight and point of view of what life was like while she was in hiding. I think it also allows students to really begin to reflect on their own personal lives in today’s scary society of deportation and losing family due to it. A diary is a safe place. It should be a spot where your students are comfortable diving into their feelings, emotions, and just giving permission for students to write the words that they aren’t comfortable speaking out loud.

At the end of the unit, students will be writing a personal essay. Hopefully in your scopes you have something similar that is requested by your district, so that you will have your required assessment complete. We don’t

want our students to reveal whatever trauma they are experiencing but more or less allow students the ability to develop their voice, and develop their style of writing while using their personal experiences to anchor them to the writing itself.⁹

Historical Framing

Remember that when you are discussing the two different topics, they need to remember that what happens in freedom writers is not the same as what you would read in Anne Frank's diary. The diaries are just a reflection of their feelings when they were reading about it at the moment. Anne Frank was a young Jewish girl who was hiding with her family during Nazi rule in Europe. She wrote during her time of hiding where she and her family placed possible death while hiding from antisemitic persecution. The Holocaust was specific historical genocide.¹⁰

In today's world, our students face what I guess you could call the same "verbiage", but the extent is quite different. Today our students face racism on a daily basis, neighborhood violence, poverty, challenges within their own families, and social differences. The point is that we want the students to be able to recognize what other people are going through, or have gone through, to be able to create a connection.

Excerpts

Excerpts from Anne Frank need to be based on picking parts of why she writes. Why is her diary the one thing that she can trust to listen to? What her feelings of isolation have felt like. How even in her situation she never gave up on hope. How she describes herself. How she wants to be remembered even if she dies and if someone were to find her diary. Make sure that you pull shorter sections from the book so that the students can easily reference it and it can be re-read over and over again. ¹¹

In *Freedom Writers* I chose excerpts where students felt like they were unheard or not understood. Where they were stereotyped, it can even be from the view of Ms. Gruwell, where on page 47, she talks about how other teachers stereotyped her by assuming as a first-year teacher she would be a failure because she was with freshmen, which statistically are the most challenging group coming out of eighth grade. She went on to discuss different things that she was called just because she chose to dress nice to work to set the image. They would say harassing things to her when she was able to take kids on field trips when the other teachers just didn't want to or didn't seem to find the need to and then there was a point where she understood why first-year teachers there leave so quickly because of how the staff that is supposed to be the village she works with put her down so much. Pull the parts where it discusses that Anne Frank was the same age as most of the kids in your class. They can find similarities just in that alone.¹²

Teaching Strategies

The strategies you should use should help students understand that writing can be a very substantial form of resistance. It can be used as a historical record. Branching back to your essential question, “How do you want to be remembered?” Since our students will be reading sections from *The Freedom Writers Diaries* and the *Diary of Anne Frank*, it’s important for them to understand the purpose of a diary.

Safe and secure teaching environment

Our kids want nothing more than a safe place. The environment should be treated with respect and honesty. Since we will have discussions based on prejudice, discrimination, violence, isolation, grief, fear, etc. It could lead to very personal feelings. And that is a good thing. Because that shows that you have connected with your students. Which is what needs to happen for this unit to be beneficial. Everyone should speak to each other with a graceful and understanding tone, respectful of everyone’s differences, and ultimately have a judgment free zone. I think there is also a good point to make that if you hear silence, sometimes that’s a good thing. Silence is louder than any confession sometimes.

I do, we do, you do

While reading different excerpts, you should have guided annotating practices within the excerpts. This will be the best way to really analyze the diaries of both the Freedom Writers and Anne Frank. During the I do part, you can have students underline parts where the writers are revealing a more emotional side that he or she was in at that exact moment. Maybe putting letters that show where the writer was resisting moments. For the “we do” part, do it all as a group. So, it wouldn’t hurt to pull more than one example from the texts so that you can have plenty of examples. Once you hit the “You do” section, you should be able to see that they are capable of explaining any reasoning they have for their reasonings.

Repeated reading

It’s obvious that students should be reading these passages more than one time. The purpose is to where students can comprehend different parts of each excerpt each time they read it. They should be able to identify who is actually the person writing, what all is happening, and what is the main problem that is being addressed. On the second reading, they should be able to find the voice of the writer. How are they feeling at this moment? Ask questions like how can you use your own voice in your writing to be able to draw other readers in more to allow others to feel the same way you are feeling. On the final reading, where can we identify the resistance? Where can we find the common ground that connects themselves with the two different stories?

Annotating

I like to provide a key for them to use to help with annotating. Whether you write it on the board, or provide it on any teacher-made material, they need to have a reference point to be able to provide so the students are able to easily reference what is expected of them when it comes to annotating. V for voice, R for resistance, S for stereotyping, and any other underlying theme that you want to incorporate into your unit for this.

Student choice

I don't believe that education should be put in a box. When it comes down to the final project where they will write their personal narrative, I want the students to be able to choose their own reflection. This will increase engagement, since most kids like to be in control of their own learning. This will allow them to do that. This will let them dismiss any feelings of feeling controlled. It allows them to honor their own experiences with their own willingness to be vulnerable. They may only share a short topic or not go into detail but this will allow them to resist the situation that left them feeling vulnerable. It puts their experiences into history. This personal narrative will almost be their own diary entry. If someone were to read it one hundred years from now, how would it make them feel? That being said, you should be prepared for a very sensitive essay from some of your students. Remember that you should still remember any campus reporting policies, but also your students should know ahead of time that this could potentially impact them and to maybe be cautious about what they chose to share if it comes to a sensitive topic.

Classroom Activities

Beginning this lesson in a way that will set the framework for how students are going to participate is crucial. What I did with my students, and it turned out to be a massive success, as well as the perfect way to help students branch this lesson plan from year one to year four, was to have my kids do a "letter to my future self" assignment. I had friends and other co-workers donate scrapbooking material and fun things that they can use to decorate their envelopes and letters. We had 100% participation from all students. I gave them the option to either write a letter to themselves to open on the last day of freshman year, or the last day of their senior year. Either way, I would happily save them in my closet in my room in a box labeled with their class. When you are ready to give your students their letters, make it a "reunion" experience for them. My school has a rotunda that is like the central hub for my school. So we will be doing a "reunion in the rotunda" event where I will invite all of my former freshmen, who are all now seniors, to read their letters. Reflecting on how much they have changed in the last four short years. All of my students wanted to write a letter to themselves to open on their last day of high school. Our box of letters is absolutely a beautiful sight. My honest hope is that they forget about it. What a surprise that will be when they realize why we are there.

Every day in class, students should begin the day with their journal entry and end with an exit ticket which checks for mastery of the topic for each day. I will be providing a prompt, whether it be an open prompt idea to just write what they are feeling, or it will have a specific topic for them to journal on. This shouldn't take more than 5 minutes. Things to remind students of is their writing style. Is it in street talk, or is it academic. Remind them that we will eventually be developing skills to enhance academic language. In the Freedom Writers' diaries, you will see that all of the journal entries are revised to be perfected language. They are grammatically correct. In a common classroom today, there would be a low level of grammar and spelling. So, encourage academic writing and revising. You should also have an opener of vocabulary. Now I believe in quality over quantity when it comes to vocabulary. Limit vocabulary that will be utilized each day in your lessons. Allow students to listen for the vocabulary words within your unit so they can see how you use them in your sentences and life. This is part of your "I do" section. When you continue throughout, you should allow students to be able to use the new vocabulary words in their work (we do and you do). The repetition of being able to use these words throughout the day will increase their knowledge. Gallery walks are a great way to show different scenarios and to get students really talking. Placing different scenarios around the room and

then allow them to respond to each scenario with it being either constructive resistance, which you will need to use the word constructive as vocabulary so they know the difference, and destructive resistance, uncertain how they should respond, and responding based on the situation will allow them to find how resistance can feel challenging. ¹³

I plan on having an image of an iceberg for one of my activities. It can either be drawn by your students, or it can be printed. Above the water, I want them to label the things that they notice about a person usually within the first ten seconds of meeting them. Things like clothing, appearance, language, age, how they act in public, etc. Below, they should put what kinds of things they don't know until later. Things like: what are their fears, responsibilities, goals, talents... it doesn't have to be all negative. It can still be positive, but it's just not something they will know about that person until they actually get to know them. With this, you should add one of your excerpts about a character from the Freedom Writers book. You should have pulled an excerpt from a character where they were either affiliated with a gang, or judged based on their skin color, or financial status based on their clothing. With it comes discussion questions such as what labels were placed on the person, and how does writing allow the person to challenge the label that they were given by the outsider? All of your readings for each day should show a trend of profiling, discrimination, unfair suspicion, they need to see the trends. Find the causes and effects in some of your entries, this happened because of this. Was it based on assumption? Was it the behavioral response? Back to the power of a diary section of this unit, you could bring it to life by allowing students to identify the purpose in that excerpt. Anchor charts will help majorly here. I would want my students to write as many reasons around the word "diary" to help distinguish why someone would write a diary. In the reading that you choose, find one where a student was journaling about a time when someone didn't understand what was going on. Students should identify what happened, what did the writer say publicly and privately, identify the types of emotions that were established, and what they want the readers to understand. ¹⁴

Finding Anne's voice is one of my favorite assignments to do, because it allows for people to see a timeline of events. If they paid attention in previous years, they should know how long Anne Frank was in hiding. Personal testimonies can give perspective on the events happening. For this reading you should pick an entry where you see Anne talk about how even in isolation there is hope. Students need to hear this part out loud. From your voice. They should be able to describe Anne's voice and annotate while listening.¹⁵

When choosing your assignments for your own, I encourage you to find a common theme. Match all themes together. From your journal entry prompt, to the reading, to the activity, and the exit ticket. All of it should be connected each day to where you are able to complete a fully rounded segment for that day. Eventually you should end your unit with a personal narrative. You should return to the prompt for the first day, and students should write a narrative on what resistance means to them now, and how their version of resistance has changed over the course of this unit. This is where the paradox of resistance comes into play.

When I began this unit, I wanted students to see their lives through resistance in education. I still want them to see that, but I want them to view hardships as something they shouldn't run away from, but instead, find the reasons they need to go through hardships to change the fate of their own future. In their personal narrative, I want them to be able to choose an event in their own life to write about. It can be a time someone misunderstood them, or maybe they misunderstood someone, or maybe a time when they felt like they had to do a certain thing to be accepted.

Maybe it was an initiation into a gang, or just a group of friends doing truth or dare. Maybe a moment when they changed their mind. They can pick. Of course, you will have students that will say "I don't know what to

write about” so have some topics ready to go just in case. Create your rubric to where students can check off each section. I know my students work best visually, so a check list to make sure they have included all parts of the requirements is helpful. This narrative should be no less than 750 words.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this whole unit should bring students back to the central idea that resistance doesn’t always have to be negative. If they chose to resist, they need to have the deepest understanding of what it means to be resistant in that situation, and they should be able to reflect on their choices. They should be able to see the progression of their mentality, where they originally resisted on impulse to actually having a logical reasoning to resist at that moment.

At the beginning, your students will likely have the same viewpoint that resistance is only used as a sign of rebellion. With examples where they say they refuse to do school work, or maybe even come to school, maybe they refuse to follow the state law of the cell phone ban. As this entire unit develops, they begin to see more complex and real-world problems other than just being lazy.

I think it is perfectly fine to call students out during this unit. Obviously with respect, because I think it’s a fair assumption that they need to be able to see the different point of view on it. And at the end they should be able to see that some resistance is quiet, but it’s still powerful and has a deeper meaning.

The personal narrative gives students the opportunity to put it all into words. Our job as teachers is not to change their mind, it’s to get them to understand the value of resistance, and to make them develop a deeper level of critical thinking when they face a moment where they should decide which level of resistance they should use in that moment. I think the biggest take back that students should also realize, is that these two books were written by CHILDREN. Kids their own age. Freshman age kids, who have written what was a simple diary entry and changed the world through the lens of resistance. ¹⁶

Appendix on Implementing District Standards.

This curriculum unit aligns with the Texas Standard of Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, and emphasis on collaboration with other students as well as communication, making connections, and developing critical thinking to be able to accurately perform this unit.

9.1(A) engage in meaningful and respectful discourse by listening actively, responding appropriately, and adjusting communication to audiences and purposes;

9.1(B) follow and give complex oral instructions to perform specific tasks, answer questions, or solve problems and complex processes

9.1(D) participate collaboratively, building on the ideas of others, contributing relevant information,

developing a plan for consensus building, and setting ground rules for decision making

9.4(E) make connections to personal experiences, ideas in other texts, and society

Endnotes

1. 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* (New York: Broadway Books, 1999).
2. The Freedom Writers and Gruwell, *The Freedom Writers Diary*.
3. The Freedom Writers and Gruwell, *The Freedom Writers Diary*; Anne Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl* (New York: Bantam Books, 1993).
4. Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl*.
5. The Freedom Writers and Gruwell, *The Freedom Writers Diary*.
6. The Freedom Writers and Gruwell, *The Freedom Writers Diary*.
7. The Freedom Writers and Gruwell, *The Freedom Writers Diary*.
8. The Freedom Writers and Gruwell, *The Freedom Writers Diary*.
9. Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl*.
10. Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl*.
11. Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl*.
12. The Freedom Writers and Gruwell, *The Freedom Writers Diary*, 47.
13. The Freedom Writers and Gruwell, *The Freedom Writers Diary*.
14. The Freedom Writers and Gruwell, *The Freedom Writers Diary*.
15. Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl*.
16. The Freedom Writers and Gruwell, *The Freedom Writers Diary*; Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl*.

Annotated Bibliography

Frank, Anne. *The Diary of a Young Girl*. New York: Bantam Books, 1993. The diary of Anne Frank is a first person account of the life of a young girl living in a dusty attic for over two years hiding from the Nazi regime during a period of time known as the Holocaust. Her journey of writing this diary was not based on a notion of having a piece of history for someone to leave or for someone to find. It was made with the present in mind, a way for her to have a safe space to acknowledge her feelings while living in hiding from persecution. Because Anne documented the events that happened in real time, while they were occurring, this diary allows for readers of future generations to learn about the life of a young girl who at the time had no idea how her story would end. And one day it did. The entries stopped. They were eventually found and her diary didn't continue. This text is essential to the curriculum because it demonstrates how something as simple as a diary can become the voice that keeps echoing about one of history's most horrific time periods. Teachers are encouraged to use selected passages that fit their curriculum basis from the diary to examine how her voice plays roll in certain times of her life while in hiding. It allows for readers to grasp tone, and personal testimony. Students will eventually see that through her diary she is able to confide in a friend that she can tell her deepest thoughts to. It also allows for people to reflect on Anne's thoughts, fears, emotions, and herself.

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*. New York: Broadway Books, 1999. In this unit, I pair the diary of Anne Frank with *The Freedom Writers Diary* because they can see how they can use writing to tell people how they should process whatever experiences they deal with every day. Much like Anne Frank does in her diary. The theme of resistance and tying these two texts together to show how writing can resist silence, how writing can allow for history to be changed, and how voices can still be heard when used in context.

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