

The Narrative Healing and the Cathartic Power of Writing in *Freedom Writers*

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines the cathartic function of narratives in the film *Freedom Writers* directed by Richard La Gravenese. The film is inspired by true events set in mid-1990's and recounts the experiences of a teacher, Erin Gruwell and her 150 students. The paper explores cathartic narratives through the lens of classical and contemporary theories. Beginning with Aristotle's concept of catharsis in poetics, the study argues that the film transforms the classroom into a modern tragic space where diary-writing replaces dramatic performance as a means of emotional purification. The students' written testimonies articulate experiences of racial violence, gang attacks, loss, and marginalization, enabling a release of suppressed emotions. Engaging trauma theory, particularly the works of Cathy Caruth and Dominick LaCapra, the paper demonstrates how narrative facilitates a shift from 'acting out' to 'working through.' Writing becomes a therapeutic process that transforms anger and grief into reflection and solidarity by positioning storytelling as both personal release and collective healing. The paper contends that *Freedom Writers* exemplifies literature's enduring power to transform trauma into resilience, making the classroom a space of emotional restoration and social empathy.

Keywords: Catharsis, Trauma narrative, Narrative healing, Emotional purification, Racial violence.

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