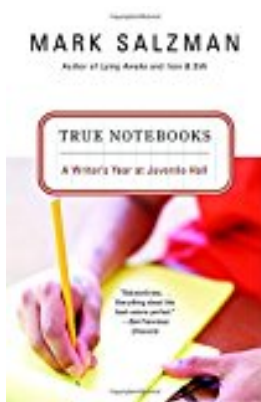


[PDF] True Notebooks: A Writer's Year At Juvenile Hall

Mark Salzman - pdf download free book



Books Details:

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Author: Mark Salzman
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Description:

From Publishers Weekly Salzman (Lying Awake; Iron & Silk) volunteered to teach creative writing at Central Juvenile Hall, a Los Angeles County detention facility for "high-risk" juvenile offenders. Most of these under-18 youths had been charged with murder or other serious crimes, and after trial and sentencing many would end up in a penitentiary, some for life. Sister Janet Harris, of the Inside Out Writers program, convinced Salzman that in spite of his reservations-about teaching writing, about being a white liberal offering "art" to darker-skinned ghetto boys-these children needed to be encouraged to express themselves in writing instead of acting out, needed to feel they mattered to

someone. So Salzman started coming twice a week to meet with three boys, although their number quickly grew. He tried to structure each session with a half hour for writing followed by each boy reading his work aloud, although after a lockdown or a class member's trial, he had to loosen the routine. While their writing themes are somewhat predictable-their anger and violent impulses, their relationships with parents and gangs, plus a tedious dose of "pussy, bullets, and beer"-the discussions these essays provoked were personal and often explosive. As productive as these classes were, everyone was always aware of the painful truth that students would soon be shipped out to more brutal facilities. Salzman doesn't dwell on that, concluding that "a little good has got to be better than no good at all." Indeed, his account's power comes from keeping its focus squarely on these boys, their writing and their coming-to-terms with the mess their lives had become. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

From Wanting to add life to a cardboard juvenile delinquent character in the novel he was trying to finish, Salzman (*Iron & Silk; Lying Awake*) visited a juvie lockup for high-risk offenders where his friend taught a writing class. Despite entering the facility wishing "we could tilt L.A. County and shake it until everybody with a shaved head and tattoos falls into the ocean," Salzman ended up teaching a class himself. The remarkable results are detailed in this wonderful book. Salzman found students who took writing more seriously than the college kids he'd taught. He also found clowns, of course, who just wanted to goof off or antagonize him, but even the manipulative kids Salzman introduces us to are stunningly *human*. Both selections from the boys' writing and Salzman's taut storytelling give us multidimensional images of teenagers thrown into a justice system concerned only with punishment. Early in the book, a friend of Salzman's complains that there are no good books about juvenile delinquents. Well, there's one now--one that examines a broken system with grace, wit, and gripping storytelling. *John Green*
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