



Girls on the Wall

Film Study Guide

Director: Heather Ross

2009 | Documentary | 61 Minutes | USA | English | Unrated

<https://itvs.org/films/girls-on-the-wall>

Synopsis: In this affecting documentary, the girls of the Warrenville, Illinois prison are given a chance to tell their stories in a musical based on their lives. To do this, they must reach within themselves and reflect on the life choices they have made. With unprecedented access to the juvenile prison, director Heather Ross skillfully traces these young women’s attempts to reclaim their humanity and ultimately their freedom.

Post-Screening Discussion Questions

1. A main theme of *Girls on the Wall* is the idea of the “power of storytelling.” How do you tell your own story? Through words, song, dance, etc.?
2. Why do you think it was difficult for Rosa and Whitney and the rest of the girls in the film to tell their story?
3. A message from the film is that you cannot change your life until you understand your life. What does this message mean to you, and do you agree?

4. Do you think people can change? Do you think the subjects from the film can change their attitudes and behaviors, or are these things ingrained in people? Can people learn tolerance, self respect and respect for others?
5. There has been recent crime in Chicago's schools. What do you think about this crime? What is its cause, and how can it be stopped?
6. If you were in a situation like Rosa or Whitney, and imprisoned for a crime you committed, how do you think you would recover from your crime and how would you receive your time? Do you think you would struggle, or work towards rehabilitation?
7. Have you seen any other documentary films? Do you like them? Why or why not?
8. What ideas or stereotypes did you have towards juvenile halls/teens behind bars? Did they change or stay the same after seeing the film?
9. Who was the most interesting character to you? Why did this person stick out to you in the story?
10. How do you deal with stress, pressure, abuse or difficulty in your life? Do you use art/community to cope? Have you, a friend, or a family member turned to drugs or violence to cope?