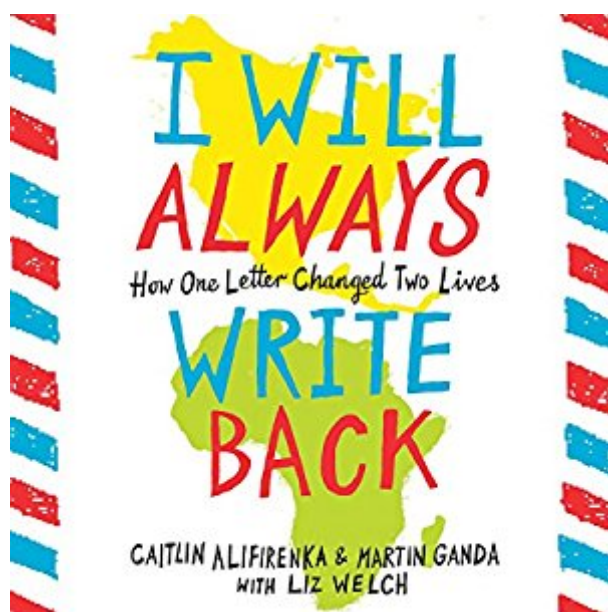


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# I Will Always Write Back: How One Letter Changed Two Lives



## Synopsis

The true story of an all-American girl and a boy from an impoverished city in Zimbabwe and the letter that changed both of their lives forever. It started as an assignment. Everyone in Caitlin's class wrote to an unknown student somewhere in a distant place. All the other kids picked countries like France or Germany, but when Caitlin saw Zimbabwe written on the board, it sounded like the most exotic place she had ever heard of - so she chose it. Martin was lucky even to receive a pen-pal letter. There were only 10 letters and 40 kids in his class. But he was the top student, so he got the first one. That letter was the beginning of a correspondence that spanned six years and changed two lives. In this compelling dual memoir, Caitlin and Martin recount how they became best friends - and better people - through letters. Their story will inspire listeners to look beyond their own lives and wonder about the world at large and their place in it.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This was an excellent story. A young upper middle class American girl becomes pen pals with a boy in Zimbabwe. The book is told through each of their viewpoints in alternating chapters. While Martin's story is amazing, what I liked best was seeing Caitlin's growth experience - from a young person's assumption that most people are similar to themselves to the gradually dawning knowledge that they are not. While her chapters felt superficial compared to Martin's, it did underscore the marked difference in their lives. When she finally starts to realize more of what his life is like compared to her own, it's a real moment of impact. This book has the potential to be a good family book and reading group selection as well, with appeal for all ages. The plot of a deserving underdog succeeding with personal determination and help from friends and family is a

winner.

When I ordered this book, I was intrigued by the story of friendship between two teens from opposite sides of the world. The early chapters establish the contrast between the lives of a teen enjoying the amenities of suburban American life as compared with her Zimbabwean counterpart, who must set aside his studies in search of the basics for the survival of his family. These two teens initially understand so little about each others' lives, families, cultures, and countries but share an inquisitiveness that slowly fosters a lasting friendship. I returned to their stories with the same eagerness they felt awaiting an answer to their last letter and found myself crying over the sincerity of the struggle to help a friend transition from the depths of poverty. I visited Zimbabwe many years ago and was happy to read about the familiar sights as well as recall the warmth of its people - so sad to know how difficult life has become there. So much was accomplished through the penpal diplomacy of these two teens and their supportive families - we all have much to learn from their example.

What a great story! I liked seeing the change in the young girls perspective. It also opened my eyes to how some people live. Having traveled overseas on more than one occassion it brought to mind the day to day struggle for food and shelter that many people have. It is awesome how they kept writing even when it was difficult. Loved the pictures included in the book.

When Caitlin picked Zimbabwe for her school pen pal program, she had no idea how it would impact her life. Twelve-year-old Caitlin lived in the Pennsylvania suburbs. Martin Ganda lived in the slums of Zimbabwe. A series of handwritten letters connected their unlikely friendship. Caitlin had no idea what life was like outside of the US, let alone the exotic country of Zimbabwe. She had no idea how lucky she was to have running water, electricity or public schools. Martin taught her that life is bigger than break-ups and mall trips. Martin knew that he could never really help his family survive the increasingly poor neighborhood without being the best of the best in his school. He studied hard but couldn't always be there with his family starving at home. He needed support. He needed Caitlin. Through terrorist attacks, strikes, sickness and starvation, they made one promise to each other: no matter what happened, they would always write back. I knew what was going to happen from the beginning of *I WILL ALWAYS WRITE BACK*, and there are pictures in the back that illustrate the outcome. Even so, I could not put the book down. It was a book about the journey and it got me (and my family) completely hooked. This is a book that every teen should

read. No more paranormal romance or apocalyptic survival stories; I WILL ALWAYS WRITE BACK puts all them all to shame. It is so real, sweet and laugh-out-loud funny "I Will Always Write Back" plus it's a true story. This book was wonderfully written. I bonded with Caitlin and Martin because I WILL ALWAYS WRITE BACK painted their situation so well and the dialogue was so true to life. I related to Caitlin when she wrote about the pen she used --- the kind that has multi-colored buttons that can turn the ink different colors. Usually books written through letters don't work because it's hard to relate with no context. Instead of writing word for word what the letters said, the authors illuminated their daily lives to give interesting context to their long distance friendship. It helped depict that friendship is more than having things in common and being good company. It's about having faith that your friend will always be there for you (in writing, in this case). I loved everything about this book and it definitely has a spot in my top five. I know it will be in yours, too. If you love adventure, friendship and to be inspired, read this book. Heck, if you hate books and reading in general, read this book --- you will like it anyway. Reviewed by Maya B.

An inspiring story of the unlikely pairing of 2 kids separated by 10,000 miles....beyond worlds apart, that kept writing each other and in so doing, each gained more than ever could have expected. Thought provoking.

My 5th grader reads aloud for 45 minutes every day. This has been a life-changing book for her (and myself) as it opens little eyes to a world they take for granted. We have paused many times throughout to talk about various life-lessons, gratitude, faith, judgement and prejudice, humanity, culture, oppression, victory, perspective and on and on... we cried and laughed -and are still talking about it... Martin and Caitlin and their families are now part of our day to day lives and conversations... exceptional and brilliant presentation for all ages. Thank you.

The letters and individual comments rang true and honest. Thank you for this beautiful story. It made me wish that I could mentor a child and make such a difference in a life. Nothing but good can come from reading this book.

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