

**Book Title: From Darkness to Light**

**Edited by: Julie Landsman**

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This book is a collection of personal stories gathered through a Fairview Press Publishing essay contest in Minneapolis, MN. Each of the 60 short stories are written by teens who found the courage to write about their triumphs in overcoming troubles and sorrows ranging from family dysfunction, illness and disability, drugs and alcohol, body image, peer pressure, depression, immigration, and frequent moves. This book examines the turbulent lives of some Minnesota youth and in some cases, their successful outcomes.

After reading the book's introduction, I mentally prepared myself to read about the pain and sorrow inflicted upon our young people. However, I had tears in my eyes every time I read another story. Knowing that teens had written it themselves made it worse--and knowing that it could be a teen I knew in rural Minnesota just made my heart pour out. It took a great deal of courage for these young adults to share their challenges and success stories with strangers. I think many of us could feel some connection to bits and pieces of these stories in our own lives: "In reality I was a boy who was afraid, lonely, and insecure...and...light poured into my darkness" (Byrne, p. 174).

I think that all general education teachers should read this book. It may help them better understand the reasons for a student's poor grades or bad attendance. Instead of punishing a student, they may be more inclined to stop and ask why that behavior is occurring and take the time to talk with and listen to the student.

I thought the editor did an excellent job of not changing the tone or style of each student author. All 60 authors told their stories very well, particularly considering how difficult it must have been for them to relive their distressful situations again. With this book, the teenagers offer hope, healing and improved self-esteem for other teens facing obstacles in their lives.