

**Opening Film: "Writing Life: Annie Ernaux Through the Eyes of High School Students" by Claire Simon**

**Press Release  
16 September 2025**



Writing Life: Annie Ernaux Through the Eyes of High School Students (Director: Claire Simon) | DOK Leipzig 2025

The 68th edition of the DOK Leipzig festival will open on 27 October with the international premiere of Claire Simon's latest film. In "Writing Life: Annie Ernaux Through the Eyes of High School Students" (*Écrire la vie – Annie Ernaux racontée par des lycéennes et des lycéens*), French teenagers study the work of renowned author Annie Ernaux in school. How do they approach her texts? To what extent do her words speak to them, trigger new trains of thought or relate to their own lives? Simon observes the discussions these young people have – in Paris, in its suburbs, in Toulouse, and overseas in French Guiana, among other places.

"Claire Simon's film shows in a straightforward and thus very powerful way how arts and culture can influence the development not only of our intellect, but also of our values and our political awareness," says festival director Christoph Terhechte. "The arts often find themselves in a situation where they have to prove their relevance. Claire Simon's film demonstrates smoothly why there should be no question about the value the arts hold for society."

Ernaux is one of the most influential contemporary female authors in France and is considered a leading voice of the feminist cause. In 2022, she became the first Frenchwoman to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature. Known for her unemotional style of writing, she uses autobiographical elements to reflect on the broader structures of society, addressing such issues as class and gender roles, social trajectory, shame, abortion, and age. Ernaux describes herself as an "ethnologist of herself".

French screenwriter, actress, cinematographer, and director Simon is one of the leading international figures in documentary cinema, although her oeuvre also includes fiction films. She often takes on multiple roles in her projects, including developing the script and operating the camera. Placing the intimate in its societal context is what makes her work stand out, with a focus often on women, youth, and migrants. Simon's films have been screened at DOK Leipzig several times, most recently "Elementary" (Audience Competition) in 2024. "Writing Life: Annie Ernaux Through the Eyes of High School Students" had its world premiere at the Venice International Film Festival in August 2025.

68th International Leipzig  
Festival for Documentary and  
Animated Film

27 October to 2 November

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DOK Leipzig will open with the screening of Simon's film on Monday, 27 October 2025 at 7 p.m. at CineStar. Simon will discuss the film with the audience following the screening.

On 28 October, festival director Terhechte will have an in-depth conversation with the director about her cinematic approaches and themes. The DOK Talk "Writing Life – In Conversation with Claire Simon" is open to the public free of charge.

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# Writing Life: Annie Ernaux Through the Eyes of High School Students

**Documentary Film**

**Claire Simon**

**France 2025 | 90 min**

**German premiere**

Was sehen Jugendliche in den Werken der Nobelpreisträgerin Annie Ernaux? Wir verfolgen Diskussionen in Klassenzimmern – über Feminismus, soziale Herkunft und ihre eigenen Leben. – *What do young people see in the works of Nobel Prize winner Annie Ernaux? We follow classroom discussions – about feminism, social background, and their own lives.*

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**Language** French

**Subtitles** English, German

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