

QUICK

S T A R T S

Ask your students what freedom means to them. Here are some exercises to stimulate exploration of this theme.



Have your students discuss and define class limits and freedoms. What kind of limits on behavior must be set to ensure learning and civil discourse? What sort of freedoms must be preserved? Ask students to think about this and compose a list that they will live—and learn—by. (If you'd like to start small, ask them to make a list of limits and freedoms for the next field trip or class party.)



Have students suggest experiences in their own lives that exemplify freedom. Some examples might be getting a driver's license, having a job and money of their own, spending time with friends. After you've collected a couple dozen examples, ask them to separate these specific freedoms into general categories. For example, "choosing my own clothes" might come under the category "self-expression." "Spending time with my friends" might be considered "free association." Compare the list of your students' valued freedoms to the ones you study in class.

Then, explore limits. Ask students to give examples of the limits to their freedoms: curfews, chores, homework, dress codes, and so on.



Divide your class by whether students are left-handed or right-handed, announcing that all right-handed students must stay after class. When questions and protests arise, discuss the concept of fairness with respect to freedom and authority.



What's freedom for? Ask your students how they use their freedom. What do they do with their free time? Can we measure the value of freedom by how we use our freedom?



Artistic freedom. Enlist an artistic student and stage this scenario: Have the student carefully and conscientiously draw a picture on the blackboard, illustrating a topic discussed in class. Ask the student to sit down. Then turn to the blackboard and erase the picture or write over it as you continue the lesson. The student should protest vociferously that you have no right to erase his work, that you're not respecting him and his freedoms. Get the class involved in the debate and see where it leads.



Limits, limits, limits. Ask students to suggest examples of limits in our society: speed limits, hunting quotas, fishing limits, age limits in the military, height limits at the amusement park. Choose one or two that interest your class and debate the pros and cons. Why was the limit set? What would happen if the limit were lowered? Raised?



It's a free country, isn't it? Ask students to respond "true" or "false" to the questions listed below. When you hit a nerve, stop and discuss the issue and try to develop an understanding of what is meant by a free society. Is a free society merely one that guarantees the greatest liberty for the greatest number of individuals?

- Americans need a permit to stage a public protest—true or false?
- Americans need a permit to possess a gun—true or false?
- Police always need a warrant to search you, your car, or your home—true or false?
- You have to be a taxpayer to vote in America—true or false?
- You can drive 85 mph on the highways in America—true or false?



Explore Supreme Court cases that define students' rights in school. These include *Fraser vs. Bethel School District* (free speech) and decisions on student searches, school prayer, censorship of student newspapers, and limits to student speech. Take it a step further and look at court cases that define prisoners' rights. Then, have students compare the two. These "rights cases" provide an excellent opportunity for debate and/or role play.

"They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety."

—Benjamin Franklin