

HANDS-ON



YOUR FOUR FREEDOMS, YOUR FREEDOM MURAL

LEVEL: middle school
SUBJECTS: U.S. history, political science, civics,
 and arts
TIME: two class periods

THE FOUR FREEDOMS



While students may wave the banner of freedom, many don't know which freedoms they enjoy and how those freedoms influence their daily lives. This activity asks students to probe the meaning of freedom.

Introduce the idea of freedom. Ask which freedoms are protected by the Bill of Rights. Ask the class to reach a consensus over the definition of "freedom."

“In the future days, which we seek to make secure, we look forward to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms.

The first is freedom of speech and expression everywhere in the world.

The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way everywhere in the world.

The third is freedom from want, which, translated into world terms, means economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants everywhere in the world.

The fourth is freedom from fear—which, translated into world terms, means a worldwide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor—anywhere in the world.”

Franklin Delano Roosevelt
January 1941

Introduce President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the "Four Freedoms Speech," which he made in his annual message to Congress in January 1941. Roosevelt had been elected for the third time. Europe was at war; Japan was waging war in the Pacific; but the United States wasn't involved.

Roosevelt outlined four freedoms—freedom of religion, freedom of expression, freedom from fear, freedom from want—that he believed should be secured for people all over the world. When you read excerpts from the speech, you may want to show your class the Norman Rockwell paintings on the four freedoms.

List the four freedoms on the blackboard. For each freedom, record students' definitions and examples.

After you've discussed Roosevelt's four freedoms, ask your class if those four freedoms are still relevant today. Are there other freedoms that are more important to Americans today? What are they? Have students assemble their own four freedoms (or five or six).

Once they've developed a class list of freedoms, divide students into teams, one for each freedom. Each team must explain their freedom (as it applies today) by acting it out in a brief pantomime, say five to eight minutes long. Students should choose music to play in the background. They should also write voice-over scripts for one or two students of each team to read while the rest of the team acts out the freedom.

Give students time to plan and rehearse their piece and choose their music.

Have a class performance!

Rick Moulden
Chinook Middle School
Bellevue, Wash.
and
June Williams
Winston Salem, N.C.

LEVELS: middle school and high school
SUBJECTS: history and art
TIME: one class period

DESIGN A FREEDOM MURAL



Divide the class into four teams. Ask each team to choose a symbol of freedom. The only catch is that students can't use any of the old tried and true symbols (Uncle Sam, flag, eagle, etc.). Have each team present their symbol to the class.

Pose the challenge of combining the symbols to make a class "mural" on the theme of freedom. If time and talent permit, paint the mural on brown paper and post it on a bulletin board.

The process of deciding how to paint a mural, which symbols to use, and how to work together will teach students something about how we balance freedoms and limits.

Merrill Thompsen
Wilson Middle School
Yakima, Wash.