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“What Freedom Means to Me”

Sponsored by the
Four Freedoms & Beyond Awards Program

Overview:

We're inviting students to write essays that explore the enduring importance of "The Four Freedoms" outlined by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in his 1941 State of the Union. These freedoms underlined the WWII Period, including many different incorporations of the freedoms into popular culture. Norman Rockwell's Saturday Evening Post covers are perhaps one of the most iconic examples.

Students are asked to write a compare and contrast essay critically examining one set of visuals: one of Norman Rockwell's Four Freedoms and one photograph of one of the Four Freedoms depicted by contemporary artist and filmmaker Maggie Meiners. Students will use these pieces of art as visual evidence, alongside various sources, to support their thesis.

Students are encouraged to pick a set/freedom that most engages them. How has American life changed from Norman Rockwell's depiction during World War II to Maggie Meiners' version today? Is Meiners' version of American life still different from the student's experiences? If so, how is Meiners' vision different? Students may describe additional freedoms that they can support as being needed in today's world that are not present in the art. Students are encouraged to elaborate on what they think, on what issues matter to them, and how they came to their conclusions, backed up by credible sources.

Enduring Understandings/ Essential Questions:

1. The Four Freedoms were very important in 1941.
2. In our changing world, there is still work to be done to ensure equal rights to all the nation and the world's citizens.
 - Are the Four Freedoms as important today as they were during the World War II era?

- Do these freedoms cover all of the human rights issues that arise today?
- Are there additional freedoms which we need to fight for so all people are treated equally, providing everyone with an opportunity to live a good life?
- Is it possible to balance the drive for individual freedom against the need for cooperation in society?

Objectives:

- Students will write an essay analyzing and comparing Norman Rockwell's art with the photographs by contemporary artist Maggie Meiners.
- Students will research present and past national and world events to support personal claims regarding the importance of the Four Freedoms.
- In addition, students may, through their research and knowledge of national and world events, name and support additional freedoms which are necessary for the sake of all people.

Background:

World War II began in 1939. The United States was not involved in the beginning of the war, however. President Franklin Roosevelt believed that the United States would eventually need to play a larger role. In January 1941, he made his speech to Congress. In his speech, President Roosevelt named The Four Freedoms, which he stated are the rights of everyone in the world. After the speech, in an effort to convey the underlying message of The Four Freedoms, the President reached out to the art world for help. Many artists created works to reflect the meaning of these freedoms in the form of paintings, sculptures, prints, musical compositions, and more.

Norman Rockwell thought a lot about these ideals. In February and March of 1943, his completed Four Freedoms illustrations were published in *The Saturday Evening Post*, each along with a related essay. Exceedingly popular at the time and distributed widely as prints and posters, Norman Rockwell's illustrations raised over 132 million dollars toward the war effort through the purchase of war bonds. Prints of Rockwell's Four Freedoms were given as premiums when people purchased war bonds in varying denominations. His illustrations became the face of The Four Freedoms and they continue to represent the meaning of these freedoms today. (Source: [Norman Rockwell Museum](#))

Like those artists in the 1940s, contemporary artist and filmmaker Maggie Meiners (b. 1972) has also created works of art based off of Norman Rockwell's vision of The Four Freedoms, but she has contemporized them for the 21st Century. In her *Revisiting Rockwell* series, she reinterprets and updates Rockwell's nostalgic, iconic images of mid-century American life.

Based in Winnetka, Illinois, Meiners was inspired by a visit in 2010 with her family to the

Norman Rockwell Museum in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. There she noticed that Rockwell's engaging paintings "were really sparking conversations among visitors." Meiners decided to recreate some of Rockwell's classic paintings with the hope that "these images will be a platform for people to use for discussion, to expand dialogue while connecting people on all levels."

All viewers of Meiners work are encouraged to look closely at her detailed photographs and compare them with Rockwell's originals from the 1940s. Viewers of the art are asked to contemplate what has changed in the world since Rockwell's originals. What has stayed the same? Those who view the art are encouraged to think critically about the artist's perspectives on civic engagement, immigration, gun control, religion, gender, racism, and the impact of technology, and to contemplate and discuss with others what we can do to protect our fragile freedoms. (Source: [Montclair Art Museum](#).)

Multimedia Resources & Classroom Supplies:

- Norman Rockwell's Four Freedoms alongside Maggie Meiners' Four Freedoms, as well as 14 other [side-by-side comparisons](#) of art by Rockwell and Meiners.
- The Four Freedoms essays originally written in 1943 and published in the [Saturday Evening Post](#).
- YouTube Video of Norman Rockwell's "Four Freedoms" from the [Norman Rockwell Museum](#).
- YouTube Video of Franklin D. Roosevelt's 1941 speech containing The Four Freedoms from the [Norman Rockwell Museum](#).
- Text of President Roosevelt's [Annual Message to Congress](#) from 1941.
- A video excerpt of President Roosevelt's [Annual Message to Congress](#) from 1941.
- Video of Maggie Meiners' *Revisiting Rockwell* exhibition as she reinterprets Rockwell's [Freedom of Speech](#) in her studio.
- Video of "What is Freedom?" from Maggie Meiners' exhibition at the [Montclair Art Museum](#) in New Jersey.
- An [Recording Observation Template](#) for observing visuals to help students identify visual evidence within the art to support their thesis.

Activity:

- Students should be given the opportunity to closely examine and discuss both Norman Rockwell's Four Freedoms and Maggie Meiners' reinterpretation of The Four Freedoms in her *Revisiting Rockwell* exhibition prior to beginning this work.
- Students should be given the opportunity to closely read President Roosevelt's Annual Message to Congress from 1941 where he discusses the Four Freedoms;

- Students should be given the option to read the Four Freedoms Essays; “Freedom of Speech” by [Booth Tarkington](#); “Freedom of Worship” by [Will Durant](#); “Freedom from Want” by [Carlos Bulosan](#); and “Freedom from Fear” by [Stephen Vincent Benet](#), all published in the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1943.
- While engaged in research, students will compile evidence supporting or disputing the importance of the Four Freedoms today.
- Students should be offered opportunities to engage in conversations and reflection about the research and their thinking about their findings in relation to the texts that they read.
- Students will write an essay comparing and contrasting the Four Freedoms represented in Rockwell’s art versus the freedoms that are depicted in Meiners’ 21st Century reinterpretation. They may name and support additional freedoms that they can support as being needed in today’s world.

Assessment:

- As students engaged in close reading of speech texts, did they mark text to elevate thinking and understanding?
- Did students use a variety of resources to research national and world events?
- In their essay, did students compare and contrast the similarity or differences of these eras, the similarity or differences between Rockwell’s and Meiners’ art, and provide supporting evidence?
- Did students clearly state their claims and provide support for them?

Standards

This curriculum meets the standards listed below. For more details on these standards please visit: [ELA and Math Standards](#), [Social Studies Standards](#), [Visual Arts Standards](#).

Applied Standards

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.2

Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.3

Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines faction in Federalist No. 10).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.5

Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2

Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.3

Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language of a court opinion differs from that of a newspaper).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.5

Analyze in detail how an author's ideas or claims are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of a text (e.g., a section or chapter).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.9

Analyze seminal U.S. documents of historical and literary significance (e.g. Washington's Farewell Address, the Gettysburg Address, Roosevelt's Four Freedoms speech, King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail"), including how they address related themes and concepts.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.11-12.1

Write arguments focused on *discipline-specific content*.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.11-12.10

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for reflection and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.11-12.8

Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the specific task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.11-12.9 Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

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CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.9-10.8

Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.9-10.9

Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

D1.5.9-12.

Determine the kinds of sources that will be helpful in answering compelling and supporting questions, taking into consideration multiple points of view represented in the sources, the types of sources available, and the potential uses of the sources.

D2.His.1.9-12.

Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.

D2.His.2.9-12.

Analyze change and continuity in historical eras.

D2.His.3.9-12.

Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of their actions changes over time and is shaped by the historical context.

D2.His.9.9-12.

Analyze the relationship between historical sources and the secondary interpretations made from them.

D3.3.9-12.

Identify evidence that draws information directly and substantively from multiple sources to detect inconsistencies in evidence in order to revise or strengthen claims.

D3.4.9-12.

Develop claims and counterclaims attending to precision, significance, and knowledge conveyed through the claim while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both.

D4.1.9-12.

Construct an argument using precise and knowledgeable claims and evidence from multiple sources, while acknowledging counterclaims and evidentiary weaknesses.

D4.2.9-12.

Construct explanations using sound reasoning, correct sequence (linear and non-linear), examples and details with significant and pertinent information and data, while acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of the explanation given its purpose (e.g., cause and effect, chronological, procedural, technical).

This lesson plan has been adapted from a lesson plan provided to educators by the [Norman Rockwell Museum](#).

Midwest Partners
Four Freedoms & Beyond Essay Criteria 2022

Topic:	<p>Students are asked to write a compare and contrast essay critically examining one set of visuals: one of Norman Rockwell's Four Freedoms and one photograph of one of the Four Freedoms by contemporary artist and filmmaker Maggie Meiners. Students will use these pieces of art as visual evidence, alongside various sources, to support their thesis. Students are encouraged to pick a set/freedom that most engages them. How has American life changed from Norman Rockwell's depiction during World War II to Maggie Meiners' version today? Is Meiners' version of American life still different from the student's experiences? If so, how is Meiners' vision different? Students may describe additional freedoms that they can support as being needed in today's world that are not present in the art. Students are encouraged to elaborate on what they think, on what issues matter to them, and how they came to their conclusions, backed up by credible sources.</p>
Participants:	<p>All students in grades 9-12 are eligible. Essays will be judged without regard to race, religion, sex, or national origin.</p>
Length:	<p>500-700 words</p>
Form:	<p>Essay is to be typed on a computer, using black type in a non-script font no smaller than 12 point or larger than 14 point. A limited vision student may use Braille, a tape recorder, or large type. A written transcript must be included, as well as a teacher's or physician's letter attesting to the student's special need.</p> <p>Please note that the entire essay must be the student's original work. This includes all research, writing, and editing, which must be done by the student themselves and not by a parent, teacher, tutor, or other helper. Essay submissions not following these guidelines will not be considered.</p> <p>Title of essay: "What Freedom Means to Me." A subtitle is permitted if written below the topic.</p> <p>The student's full name, grade level, and school must be included at the top of the essay. Any essay without this identifying information will be disqualified.</p>
Bibliography:	<p>Essays must have a bibliography listing all references utilized. Internet resources, if used, should be cited appropriately. Any essay with information copied directly from sources without using quotes will be disqualified.</p> <p>General encyclopedias, including Wikipedia, are not acceptable as sources. Essays citing general encyclopedias will be disqualified.</p>
Judging & Awards:	<p>Judging will be based on historical accuracy, adherence to topic, creativity, and originality. The utilization of proper mechanics, such as the correct use</p>

	<p>of punctuation, capitalization, and grammar, is important and appreciated. An essay will not be considered if it is not on topic or if it is not the student's original work.</p> <p>A panel of judges will narrow entries to recognize one essay from a LaSalle County high schooler and one essay from a Bureau County high schooler. Those two students will receive a minimum of \$250.00 each in the form of gift certificates to participating businesses, as well as gift certificates to go towards the purchase of a bike at The Bike Place, a project of Midwest Partners in Princeton. Participants should be aware their essays will be recognized in local media publications, the Midwest Partners website, the Midwest Partners Facebook and Instagram pages, as well as artist Maggie Meiners' website.</p> <p>A teacher with one of the two students whose essays were recognized will also receive \$250.00 in the form of gift certificates to participating businesses.</p> <p>In addition, excerpts from essays from other participating students may also be utilized on the Midwest Partners Facebook, Instagram and website.</p>
Deadline:	<p>Essays should be submitted electronically to midwestpartners56@gmail.com no later than 4pm Monday, March 28, 2022. If additional information is needed, please do not hesitate to contact Rick Brooks or Project Coordinator Jessica Gray.</p>