

Freedom from Want: What Does Freedom from Want Look Like to You?

Overview:

After having the opportunity to view and discuss Norman Rockwell's *Freedom from Want*, students will reflect on how this freedom is present in their lives. *Freedom from Want* represents having the basic human necessities, such as food, water, shelter, and companionship. It will be important to review the idea of basic needs as part of this lesson, since students may equate want with the ability to have luxuries above and beyond the basic necessities.

Enduring Understandings/ Essential Questions:

1. Though we live differently today than in years past, basic needs are universal.
2. Our basic needs have not changed over the years.
 - How do we live differently today from the way people lived in the past?
 - What are humanity's basic needs?
 - Are these needs the same as in years past, or are they different?

Objectives:

1. Students will compare illustrations from different times in history and reflect on similarities and differences.
2. Students will create an image inspired by Norman Rockwell's *Freedom from Want* reflecting their experience.
3. Students will write a brief, cohesive text to accompany their original piece of art.
4. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the difference between needs and wants.

Background:

The title of the illustration, *Freedom from Want*, can be confusing. Students may interpret it as meaning the freedom to have anything they wish. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in his January 6, 1941 address to Congress, referred to the right of everyone, everywhere in the world, to enjoy "freedom from want of basic necessities." The United States was just pulling itself out of the Great Depression. President Roosevelt famously told Americans in 1933 that "the only thing we have to fear is fear itself," but the nation was justified in its concerns during that turbulent time. The stock market crash of 1929 had swiftly transformed the Roaring Twenties into the Great Depression. Banks closed their doors, bread lines became a common sight, and so-called Hoovervilles dotted the landscape. Jim Crow policies and racial inequality were facts of life for millions, and much of the nation's grain belt became a dusty wasteland, fostering a mass exodus of destitute migrants seeking jobs that were no longer available.

The President and his New Deal team worked intensively to address the emergency, but they were simultaneously becoming concerned about the international situation. As they were well aware, much of the world shared in America's economic misery, and by the mid-1930s a number of aggressive dictators in Europe and Asia who addressed the global malaise by offering a kind of new fascism had begun to emerge. Americans were overwhelmingly isolationist at the time, and concerned about solving their domestic problems first. FDR had to be content with speaking out against international lawlessness, yet as the end of the decade neared, he also began to muse about the meaning of freedom on a worldwide scale.

During the Great Depression, many people "wanted" for the basic necessities, especially food, clothing and shelter. In addition, during World War II, many items such as sugar, butter, meat, rubber, gasoline, and other things were rationed. Families received coupons limiting the amount of these items that could be purchased during a given amount of time. In *Freedom from Want*, Norman Rockwell pictures some of life's necessities clearly, including food, water, shelter, family and friends, in an image that both reflected and shaped our vision of the Thanksgiving holiday.

Norman Rockwell's *Freedom from Want* includes members of his own family and community seated around the table, reflecting the sense of connectivity forged by coming together over a meal. Second from the left is the artist's wife Mary Barstow Rockwell, and directly across from her is Rockwell's mother, Nancy Hill Rockwell. Seen in the foreground, James Martin invites the viewer to the table, and is the only model to appear in each of Rockwell's Four Freedoms paintings. The other people appearing in the painting were Rockwell's neighbors in Arlington, Vermont.

GRADE

K-2

THEME

Four Freedoms

LENGTH

This activity should take one 30 minute period.

DISCIPLINE

Social Studies; Language Arts: Reading; Language Arts: Writing

VOCABULARY

Illustration; Needs; Wants; Past; Present; Time periods

Materials:

Multimedia Resources:



Norman Rockwell (1894-1978)
Freedom From Want, 1943.
Illustration for *The Saturday Evening Post*, March, 6, 1943.
From the collection of Norman Rockwell Museum.
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Classroom Supplies

- Freedom from Want activity sheet or drawing paper
- Pencils, crayons
- Writing paper

Activities:

- Show Norman Rockwell's *Freedom from Want* illustration to the class.
- Review observations and inferences. If you created a graphic organizer focusing on needs and wants, it would be helpful to use it during the review.
- Have students think about a dinner gathering that they have attended. Direct students to picture in their minds the occasion, including the details of the setting, people around the table, and the food served.
- After a few minutes, direct students to turn and talk to their partner(s) about their memory of the dinner experience. Encourage students to share their remembrances with the class.
- Invite the students to recreate *Freedom from Want*, to show how Norman Rockwell might have painted it if he had been a part of their gathering.
- Provide students with lined paper to write a brief text to accompany their illustration. For younger students, if appropriate, record their dictated comments on paper.
- Display their projects and allow students to view each other's illustrations and read the accompanying texts.
- Encourage follow-up discussion about the differences and similarities between Norman Rockwell's *Freedom from Want* and their own.

Assessment:

- Did students share their thoughts in a way that is appropriate to the task?
- Did they use details to depict their specific experiences?
- Did their written text relate to their illustration? Is it cohesive and organized?
- Did students demonstrate the ability to compare and contrast illustrations from the past and present?



Norman
Rockwell

Standards:

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

Applied Standards

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.1.1

Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.1.7

Use the illustrations and details in a text to describe its key ideas.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.2.1

Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.2.7

Explain how specific images (e.g., a diagram showing how a machine works) contribute to and clarify a text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.K.1

With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.K.7

With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the text in which they appear (e.g., what person, place, thing, or idea in the text an illustration depicts).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.1.2

Write informative/explanatory texts in which they name a topic, supply some facts about the topic, and provide some sense of closure.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.K.2

Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/explanatory texts in which they name what they are writing about and supply some information about the topic.

D1.3.K-2.

Identify facts and concepts associated with a supporting question.

D2.Eco.2.K-2.

Identify the benefits and costs of making various personal decisions.

D2.His.2.K-2.

Compare life in the past to life today.

D3.2.K-2.

Evaluate a source by distinguishing between fact and opinion.

D4.2.K-2.

Construct explanations using correct sequence and relevant information.

D4.5.K-2.

Ask and answer questions about explanations.