

H.S. Level Learning Activity- What is the Meaning of Freedom?

Examine the chronological list of quotations about freedom and complete 1-4.

1. Which statement(s) about freedom do you agree with? disagree with? Explain.
2. Do any of these authors appear to disagree with each other? Explain.
3. Which statement about freedom comes closest to your own beliefs? Explain.
4. Write your own twenty-first century definition of freedom.

Follow-up assignment: Locate and explain other definitions of freedom.

- Euripides, Greek dramatist (484-406 BC). "Greeks were born to rule barbarians, . . . not barbarians to rule Greeks. They are slaves by nature; we have freedom in our blood."
- Marcus Tullius Cicero, Roman statesman (106-43 BC). "Freedom is participation in power."
- Christian New Testament, Galatians, 5:1. "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery."
- Samuel Adams, American revolutionary leader (1771). "The truth is, all might be free if they valued freedom, and defended it as they ought."
- James Madison, future United States President (1788). "I believe there are more instances of the abridgment of the freedom of the people by gradual and silent encroachments of those in power than by violent and sudden usurpations."
- Lord Acton, English historian (1877). "Liberty, next to religion, has been the motive of good deeds and the common pretext of crime, from the sowing of the seed at Athens. . . At all times sincere friends of freedom have been rare, and its triumphs have been due to minorities."
- Rosa Luxemburg, German socialist (circa 1900). "Freedom is always freedom for the man who thinks differently."
- Rabindranath Tagore, Indian philosopher (1861-1941). "He only has freedom who ideally loves freedom himself and is glad to extend it to others. He who cares to have slaves must chain himself to them. He who builds walls to create exclusion for others builds walls across his own freedom. He who distrusts freedom in others loses his moral right to it."
- Woodrow Wilson, United States President (1913). "American industry is not free, as it once was free; American enterprise is not free; the man with only a little capital is finding it harder to get into the field, more and more impossible to compete with the big fellow. Why? Because the laws of this country do not prevent the strong from crushing the weak."
- Franklin D. Roosevelt, United States President (1934). "The freedom guaranteed by the Constitution is freedom of expression and that will be scrupulously respected - but it is not freedom to work children, or to do business in a fire trap, or violate laws against obscenity, libel and lewdness."
- Franklin D. Roosevelt, United States President (1941). "(W)e 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 the freedom of every person to worship God in his own way - everywhere in the world. The third is freedom from want - which...means economic understanding . . . The fourth is freedom from fear, which means...a world-wide reduction of armaments."
- Theodor Adorno, 20th century philosopher (circa 1950). "People have so manipulated the concept of freedom that it finally boils down to the right of the stronger and richer to take from the weaker and poorer whatever they have left."
- Martin Luther King, Jr., American Civil Rights leader (1963). "We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor. It must be demanded by the oppressed . . . Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever. The yearning for freedom eventually manifests itself, and that is what has happened to the American Negro."

Ronald Reagan, United States President (1985). "We stand on the threshold of a great ability to produce more, do more, be more. Our economy is not getting older and weaker, it's getting younger and stronger; it doesn't need rest and supervision, it needs new challenge, greater freedom. And that word - freedom - is the key to the Second American Revolution we mean to bring about.... Let us resolve that we will stop spreading dependency and start spreading opportunity; that we will stop spreading bondage and start spreading freedom."

Rudolph Giuliani, Mayor, New York City (1994). "Freedom is about authority. Freedom is about the willingness of every single human being to cede to lawful authority a great deal of discretion about what you do and how you do it."

