

Find Your Freedom

Going Viral: Four Freedoms

Theme: Purpose

Interdisciplinary Subject: Civics

Duration: 1-2 Class Sessions

Grade Level: 9-12

Lesson Overview: In this lesson, students will analyze a part of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms" speech and use primary sources from the Library of Congress to gain historical context. Next, students will explore sources from the Library to draw conclusions about the impact of the speech on American culture at the time. Finally, students will write their own "Four Freedoms" speech, outlining four freedoms they believe Americans should keep front-of-mind today.

Overarching Essential Question

- Who are you and what do you believe in?

Lesson Essential Questions

- What freedoms are most important to you?
- What freedoms should Americans keep front-of-mind today?

Lesson Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Use critical thinking and inquiry skills to analyze primary sources from the Library of Congress.
- Explain the historical context of FDR's "Four Freedoms" speech.
- Draw conclusions about the "Four Freedoms" speech's impact on American culture at the time.
- Identify four freedoms they believe are important today.
- Compose a "Four Freedoms" speech that will resonate with Americans today.

Civic Knowledge

- Principles of American democracy established by the Constitution
- Gaining historical perspective

Civic Skills

- Identifying and describing information
- Explaining and analyzing information
- Working with others.
- Seeking consensus, negotiating

Civic Dispositions

- Developing as an engaged member of society
- Respecting individual worth and human dignity
- Promoting the healthy functioning of American constitutional democracy

Materials Needed

- Teacher Guide: Going Viral: Four Freedoms
- [PowerPoint Presentation: The Four Freedoms](#)
- Access to the Library of Congress or printouts of materials (listed below)
- [Handout A: Source Analysis Chart](#)
- [Source Pack](#)

Library of Congress Resources

The sources listed below are contained in the Source Pack. Students will need access to the online bibliographic information. Links are included in the Source Pack.

- Norman Rockwell, Four Freedoms, Fear: <https://www.loc.gov/item/2017875157/>
- Norman Rockwell, Four Freedoms, Worship: <https://www.loc.gov/item/2017872020/>
- Norman Rockwell, Four Freedoms, Speech: <https://www.loc.gov/item/2017872019/>
- Norman Rockwell, Four Freedoms, Want: <https://www.loc.gov/item/2017872021/>
(Note: LOC title says Fear, but the document is Want.)

Library of Congress Sources, cont.

Letter: Roman Totenberg to Knut Thyberg; 5 February, 1939: <https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200218442/>

Document: Federal Register: 6 Fed. Reg. 1299 (Mar. 6, 1941) (page 1): <https://www.loc.gov/item/fr006045/>

Cartoon: Our destiny is in his hands. "We will not accept a Hitler-dominated world. [A reproduction of a cartoon from the Detroit Free Press of Thursday, May 29, 1941].":
<https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbpe.0840270e/>

Sound recording: Speech by Franklin D. Roosevelt, New York, December, 1941.
<https://www.loc.gov/item/afccal000099/>

Photo: Newspaper extra on December 7, 1941. Redding, California:
<https://www.loc.gov/resource/fsa.8c23357/>

Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library:

Video: Four Freedoms Speech: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qrNDwyj4u1w>

Additional Resource(s):

- Optional: The Bill of Rights: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbpe.24404400/>
- Teacher Background Information: Rockwell's Four Freedoms: National Archives: https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/four_freedoms/four_freedoms.html
- FDR Library: <https://fdrlibrary.org/four-freedoms>

Standards

C3 Indicators:

D1.4.9-12. Explain how supporting questions contribute to an inquiry and how, through engaging source work, new compelling and supporting questions emerge.

D2.Civ.14.9-12. Analyze historical, contemporary, and emerging means of changing societies, promoting the common good, and protecting rights.

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.

D4.3.9-12. Present adaptations of arguments and explanations that feature evocative ideas and perspectives on issues and topics to reach a range of audiences and venues outside the classroom using print and oral technologies (e.g., posters, essays, letters, debates, speeches, reports, and maps) and digital technologies (e.g., Internet, social media, and digital documentary).

Teacher's Guide

I. Introduction

Note: "The Four Freedoms" PowerPoint presentation contains slides to guide students through each part of the lesson.

A. Ask students (Slide 2):

- What do you think are some of the most powerful speeches you have heard?
- What made the speech powerful?

Tell students that today they are going to use a variety of sources to explore a speech that, for its time, "went viral."

B. Primary Source Analysis

Divide the class into groups of four students each. Distribute [Handout A: Source Analysis Chart](#) to each student. Distribute one [Source Pack](#) to each group.

Remind students that Source 1 should be analyzed by the group, and Chart A should be filled in BEFORE they look at the other sources. (Slide 3)

Note that one of the sources is a video and another is an audio recording. Students can view/listen using a phone, tablet, or computer in their groups, or you could share these sources as a whole class.

A link to bibliographic information is provided for each source. In addition to providing key information about the sources, students will likely need to reference this information as they put the sources in chronological order.

C. Discussion: What did you find?

After the groups have analyzed the sources, ask students to share the most important observations, reflections, and questions from Chart A.

Then ask (Slide 4):

- Where did the ideas about the Four Freedoms come from?
- What was happening in the world at this time? What was the chronology of sources?
- How did you figure out the chronological order?
- Why do you suppose the "Four Freedoms" speech resonated with so many people?
- What were the most interesting sources? Why?
- Which sources gave you key information? For example?

II. Lesson Tasks

A. Show the PowerPoint slides starting with Slide 5: "The Four Freedoms Go Viral". If you are studying propaganda, you could have a discussion with students about how the government used Roosevelt's articulation of the Four Freedoms to generate support for the war effort and for the lend-lease deal.

B. Tell the students that now it is their turn to go viral (Slide 23):

Each student should:

1. Think about four freedoms that they want people to keep front-of-mind today. The freedoms could come from the Bill of Rights, like press and religion. They could be ideals like freedom from want and fear. Or students could blend ideas like FDR did.
2. Write a two-minute speech that they believe will resonate with people today.

III. Closure

A. Have volunteers share their speeches with the class then ask:

1. What freedoms do you think are most important today? Why?
2. What would you do to stand up for those freedoms if they were in jeopardy?

B. Ask students to hand in their analysis tools and speeches. Assess student work by looking for:

- apt observations, reflections, and questions on the analysis tool.
- a reasonable chronology of sources.
- a reasonable description of the historical context of the Four Freedoms speech.
- a statement of and justification for four freedoms important today in students' speeches.

C. Extensions:

- Provide an audience for students to share their speeches beyond the class: PTA meeting, social media, etc.

This lesson is part of a larger initiative, Citizen U, which aims to integrate civic learning across the curriculum for students in grades 2-12. For more lessons like it, in Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies, or to learn more about related creative, community, and professional development opportunities, please visit our [Citizen U website](#)...