

Rockwell, Roosevelt and Freedom

Teacher's Notes

This article will introduce your pupils to the Rockwell and Roosevelt exhibition (Caen mémorial, June-October 2019). It focuses and expands on a very specific passage from FDR's State of the Union speech delivered in January 1941 in which he put an emphasis on freedom, or rather freedoms: freedom from fear, from want, freedom of religion and of speech. As the U.S. entered WWII, Rockwell gave shape to these concepts in four paintings that are now world-famous and the subjects of the exhibition in Caen, celebrating the 75th anniversary D-Day.

Vocabulary and structures

- war : *allies, raging, war*
- politics : *State of the Union speech, terms, president*
- religion : *worship, God, pray*
- present simple vs be+ ing : describing paintings
- past : preterite
- past hypothesis : *must /may / might / can't have +V-EN*

Pronunciation

- Roosevelt
- Understanding a speech

Listening, speaking, writing

- We suggest starting with a brainstorming **activity (A)** on the key words / names / concepts in this article to help the students think by themselves before learning about these concepts. Depending on the interest and level of the class, you can choose to show a portrait of FDR and/ or a famous painting by Rockwell from the article.
- **Activity B** involves watching the first 3'20" of a video from the Norman Rockwell

Museum on the Four Freedoms. This will give a "sense of reality" to what is explained/ broached in the article and will also help the students identify FDR, a SOTU speech and the paintings better. You can choose to show the video with or without the subtitles on. This could be a means to practise differentiated teaching. The video features as extract from the Four Freedoms speech, which is also in written form on the article pages.

- Pupils can then complete the timeline by reading the article, to help them understand the context in order to better grasp the meaning of and reasons for Rockwell's 4 Freedoms paintings. **Activity C** has them describe and analyse the paintings.
- If you have time, there is a second video **activity (E)**, this time an interview with the adult Ruby Bridges, the girl in *The Problem We All Live With*. This activity on Rockwell's work will enable the students to figure out the role of the artist: denouncing topical / burning issues in order to raise awareness, make people think about them and goad them into action.

■ The final task has pupils use what they've learned about Rockwell and the Four Freedoms to role play an interview with him.

Video Transcripts

Norman Rockwell's "Four Freedoms"

<https://youtu.be/8lzC67TgTpM>

0'00 to 3'20

FDR: At times like these...

Voiceover: On January 6th, 1941, eleven months prior to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the United States' entry into World War Two, President Franklin D. Roosevelt went before Congress to speak about the nation's State of the Union now the country was being impacted by the aggressive and brutal actions of countries half way around the world. Although the United States was not directly under attack, many of the country's allies and trade partners were.

Roosevelt was facing stiff challenges as hundreds of thousands of United States citizens were advocating for an isolationist agenda and neutrality acts that limited the country's involvement in foreign wars. Recognising this challenge, Roosevelt framed his speech envisioning a post-war world that secure and at peace, free from aggression. Founded upon four essential freedoms.

FDR: 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

understanding 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 world-wide 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.

Voiceover: Although Congress applauded the merits of his words, Roosevelt's Four Freedoms were conspicuously absent from newspaper reports of the speech.

Already America's pre-eminent illustrator, Norman Rockwell was struck by Roosevelt's ideals, and decided to depict the Four Freedoms in everyday terms that many Americans would understand and identify with. Two years after Roosevelt's speech, and following seven months of work on Rockwell's behalf, his Four Freedoms paintings were published in *The Saturday Evening Post* in February and March 1943. The overwhelmingly positive response to these images represented a significant turning point as they helped Americans to envision what they were fighting for and why the war effort should be supported.

<https://youtu.be/SKyQV0-z6HE>

MLK Day Legacy: Ruby Bridges Interview 4'08"

I was one of four six-year-old children, girls, to integrate the public school system, here in New Orleans, in 1960.

Well being six, and, not really understanding, what was going on at the time, during the

Civil Rights Movement, my parents didn't explain anything to me. I always say to people that, it would be really, really hard to explain to a six-year-old child, what I was about to encounter going to school that day. So the only thing that they said to me was that you are going to go to a new school, and you better behave. And that was the extent of it, so I had absolutely no idea what was happening at the time.

I began to realize how important my walk, through those doors, back in 1960 was in... probably about the eighties. I was, I believe seventeen or eighteen years old, when I was asked to do an interview and the reporter showed me a copy of the Norman Rockwell painting. Even though I was accustomed to looking at old magazines and um, "Eyes On Prize", and seeing all that footage, I understood that it was important but it didn't really hit me until I saw the Norman Rockwell painting. And I realize that it wasn't something that just, happened in New Orleans but it was something that people all across the country, all across the world actually recognized, especially through the painting.

And I always say that the lesson I took away, was a lesson that Dr. King tried to teach all of us. And that was that we should never look at a person and judge them, by the color of their skin. That is the lesson that I learned in that classroom at six-years-old, simply because I crossed... a picket line, a mob, every day for a whole year. They were all white screaming, yelling, threatening to, harm me and yet every day when I entered the building, there was a woman there to greet me and she was also white... And I remember not really knowing what to expect from her. If she was going to be exactly like the people outside... but she did everything

she could to make my day, filled with fun, and I loved learning. She not only taught me but she read stories to me, we played games, and we did music and everything. To the point, that I never missed a day, that whole year. I knew that if I got past the mob and inside the building that I was going to have a great day. And it was because of her. So she showed me her heart. And I began to realize that there was no way that she was like the people outside. I couldn't judge her the same way and so I believe at that moment, I learned the lesson that Dr. King died trying to teach us. And that is, as I said, you cannot look at a person and judge them, by the color of their skin. That shaped me into who I am today.

SOLUTIONS

These are examples of what students can say

A. Franklin Delano Roosevelt → *president of the USA / New Deal/ Great Depression*
Rockwell → *painter / artist / Saturday evening post*
WWII → *1939-45/ allies, enemies/ Nazi, Hitler/Pearl Harbor...*
Freedom(s) → *speech/ individual/ religion...*

B. The U.S.A.: 30s: Great Depression / recovering from WWI
Dec 41: Pearl Harbor → entered WWII
The world: 1914-1918: World War One
1939-1945: World War Two
FDR: 1933: Elected / New Deal/ relieve Depression
6 January 1941: SOTU speech: entering WWII is inevitable → focus on the 4 Freedoms
From 1941: promoting the 4 Freedoms
April 45: FDR's death/ FDR died
Rockwell: Since 1916: famous illustrator working for *The Saturday Evening Post*

Feb-March 43: The 4 Freedoms paintings published

1963: Moves to *Look* magazine. *The Problem We All Live With* cover on civil rights.

C. FREEDOM OF SPEECH: A man standing, looking proud and confident / the crowd below him looking up at him in silence. He stands for / embodies each and every one of us.

From article: Rockwell's inspiration came after he saw a man stand up in a town hall meeting and make a point no one else agreed with. Yet they listened respectfully to his opinion.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION / WORSHIP: People are praying / engaged in silent prayer. They are worshipping their God. Respect, peace and quiet prevail in the painting / impression of freedom conveyed.

From article: Almost monochrome image of people in close-up, praying.

FREEDOM FROM WANT: Thanksgiving dinner? Family reunion, all the generations are gathered round the table. Traditional meal: makes you feel hungry / feel like sharing their meal.

Cheerful people, smiling, winking, mischievous eyes... we can almost hear them.

From article: A family about to eat a Thanksgiving meal. An enormous roast turkey.

FREEDOM FROM FEAR: Family time, parents + kids, bed time. Love, peace + comfortable environment.

From article: Parents putting their two children to bed. The father is holding a newspaper reporting on the Blitz bombings of London.

D.1. The Problem We All Live With

2. Segregation in the US / in the 60s. Black and white people were separated: different schools, toilets, bus seats... + didn't have the same rights

3. U.S. marshals/soldiers/policemen are walking a young black girl to school.

Background : a wall, a tomato has just been thrown at the girl, racist writings (abuse) on the wall.

She looks peaceful, solemn and proud. The marshals: no faces : she is the real focus.

4. She may have been the victim of racist abuse the day before. There might have been a racist crime in the area. The KKK may have threatened her and / or her family / relatives.

5. The little girls used to face insults and threats every day.

Yet, her white teacher was nice to her and taught her skills and happiness.

She learnt you shouldn't judge someone by their looks / skin colour. That made her an open-minded adult.