



GET CREATIVE  
WITH ART ONLINE

MODULE No: 7 of 8

# FREEDOM

- Lesson Background for Teachers -



# LESSON AIMS and OBJECTIVES

- to recognize the different forms of freedom and why freedom is important in people's lives
- to understand the human fights for freedom
- to think about different ways freedom can be depicted in Art

## FOCUS

Art, Drama, Language (SMSC) Spiritual, moral, social, cultural understanding

## AGE RANGE

Ages 9 – 11 (Adaptable for younger or older pupils)

## SKILLS

Analytical Thinking/ Creativity/ Perception/ Self Awareness

# Theme: Freedom

## What do we think of when we think of it?

The concept of freedom refers to the ability of the person to think and act as s/he wishes without being coerced or oppressed.

When a person has freedom they can think, move and act freely in all aspects of his/ her personal and social life.

For many people, the concept of freedom is closely linked to the sense of 'National Freedom'. That is, a person's ability to live in a free country, or at least one without interference from a controlling state.

But freedom can take many different forms. Other forms of freedom include political freedom (-free exercise of civil rights and free expression of political beliefs), social freedom (-free action in a non-discriminatory social environment), intellectual freedom (-thought, free from stereotypes and prejudices and the ability for free formation of personal perception), religious freedom and professional and economic freedom (-the choice of each person to choose freely their professional orientation).

# Why is it important?

The concept of freedom is important both individually and collectively.

One of its most important aspects is that in people can live without fear in the place, with the conditions and with the people they want to. Within a framework of freedom, people can freely shape their personalities, exercise their skills, develop their critical thinking and change the world through their actions.

# How does it affect our lives/ our world?

Living in either a free context or a restricted society directly affects human life individually as well as collectively. Freedom is a necessary condition for the establishment and functioning of democratic processes. These should ensure that societies are able to function more fairly and to secure crucial civil rights for citizens, such as equality and meritocracy. Most people find a situation where they lack freedom stressful and difficult to accept. This is why we often see revolutions and war across history and around the world.

# Did you know ...

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948, came in the aftermath of World War II. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights sets out fundamental rights and freedoms for all humans.
- “The child shall have the right to freedom of expression”: In the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which entered into force on 20 September 1990, the States Parties undertake to respect the child's right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and recognize the rights of the child to freedom of association and to freedom of peaceful assembly.
- ‘Freedom Day’ has been celebrated in South Africa on 27<sup>th</sup> April each year since 1995. It marks the end of over 300 years of colonialism, segregation and white minority rule in South Africa and the establishment of a new democratic state, constitution and government, first led by Nelson Mandela from that date.

# HOW MIGHT AN ARTIST PORTRAY FREEDOM?

Artists all over the world have been inspired by different aspects of freedom. There are many examples of artists past and present who express the topic of 'Freedom' through broad themes related to their historical period, to contemporary social changes and demands and to the political movements of the time.

A frequent artistic subject has been the depiction of historical scenes with revolutions and fights of various nations for freedom and independence. Sometimes, we see artworks which present issues of oppression, slavery or human rights violations, in order to communicate messages about the right to freedom at an individual or collective level. They highlight the values of equality and respect for human rights.

Such subjects are presented through different media and techniques, from paintings to sculptures, photographs, posters, engravings, installations, street art, video art and performance. Similarly, and depending on the period and the art movement, we can see artworks that depict themes of "Freedom" in realistic or symbolic or abstract ways with different forms and colours.

Museums, galleries and archives all over the world include in their collections artworks and documents related to the concept of 'Freedom'. Apart from their permanent collections, many museums also organize temporary exhibitions with a specific focus on human rights and freedom.

# OUR MAIN ARTWORK



- Title: THE DEFENSE OF THE HOMELAND ABOVE ALL ELSE
- Artist: THEODOROS VRYZAKIS 1814 – 1878 Greek
- Medium: Oil on canvas
- Dimensions: 183 x 132 cm
- Date Completed: 1858
- Location Displayed: THE NATIONAL GALLERY, ATHENS, GR (Nafplion Annex)
- Web link <https://www.nationalgallery.gr/artwork/yper-patridos-to-pan/>
- How was it acquired by the gallery: Donated by the University

## How does it communicate ‘Freedom’?

The painting presents a symbolic representation of ‘Free Greece’, standing like an ancient Greek kore (i.e., an Archaic stone statue, typically carved in marble or limestone) with her arms open, a laurel wreath on her head and the broken chains of slavery at her feet. Around her are many leaders and heroes of the Greek War of Independence. In the background is the Parthenon. Although the painting is focused on Greek history, according to the official website of “Greece 2021 Committee” for the 200 Years after the revolution, the painting sends the message “of a new beginning without chains of slavery” (<https://www.greece2021.gr/ellada-2021/2611-theodoros-vryzakis>). It can be said to communicate in a symbolic way the timeless and universal values of freedom of all people and nations.

Its painter, Theodoros Vryzakis, is considered one of the most important Greek artists. He is very famous for paintings of historical scenes, especially of the Greek War of Independence. When his father was hanged by the Turks in 1821, he was sent to the Capodistrias Orphanage on Aegina with his brother. Later he went to Munich to study at a Greek school founded there (“Panhellenion”) for the orphan children of fighters of the Greek War of Independence. He later studied at the Munich Academy of Fine Arts. His paintings with scenes from the Greek War of Independence were made also into lithographs.

## IN CONTEXT

Are there other works by the same artist (or others) that help us understand it more?



The oil painting, “The Apotheosis of Athanasios Diakos” by Konstantinos Parthenis, celebrates Athanasios Diakos, an emblematic hero of the revolution for the Greek Independence. He died in a tragic way in 1821 and this painting is considered as a masterpiece of the Greek modern art. (\*See the Gallery link at the end to discover the symbolic elements of the painting and how artists can be inspired to integrate symbols or other artists’ influences in creative ways.)



Artist Eugene Delacroix was another painter who tried to capture the fight for Greek freedom in his work, “Episode from the Greek War of Independence”, in 1826. Rather than an ethereal presentation of victory, however, it displays the bravery and the idea of fighting for freedom for all people.



Bella Raftopoulou’s 1955 sculpture, “Freedom”, shows that the theme of freedom can be at the forefront of the minds of many artists. This time, the concept of freedom is presented as a woman, in the form of a stone sculpture, with only her torso and face and raised arms.

# OTHER ARTWORKS THAT SAY SOMETHING ABOUT 'FREEDOM'



From Italy

- Title: GUERRA – FESTA
- Artist: FORTUNATO DEPERO 1892 – 1960, Italian
- Date Completed: 1925
- Location Displayed: NATIONAL GALLERY OF MODERN ART, ROME, IT

## What it says about 'Freedom'

Depero's tapestry represents a combat scene during the First World War when the artist was drafted into the army. His image tries to remove the violence associated with combat, hiding it under a joyful festival scene suggested by the colors and shapes. Exhibited for the first time in 1926, it achieved immediate success and was purchased by the National Gallery of Modern Art in Rome.





From Sweden

- Title: BIRD CAGE CLOCK
- Artist: PIERRE JAQUET-DROZ VERKSTAD 1721 - 1790,  
Swiss
- Date Completed: 1780 - 1790
- Location Displayed: THE NATIONAL GALLERY, STOCKHOLM, SE

## What it says about ‘Freedom’

Verkstad was an incredible watchmaker, able to turn his mechanical creations into fantastic works of Art, as well as the most brilliant examples of engineering. His ‘Bird Cage Clock’ shows the birds as prisoners in a gilded cage – and even as prisoners of time itself. A life lived inside a golden cage is a life inside a jail without true freedom.



From United Kingdom

- Title: Bathers of La Grenouillère
- Artist: Claude Monet
- Date Completed: 1869
- Location Displayed: THE NATIONAL GALLERY, London

## What is says about ‘Freedom’

This painting shows some of the ‘freedoms’ we may have in a democratic society.

We might question whether there is equality – are all the swimmers men? Are the women allowed to join them? There is however choice to bathe, go out on the water in a boat or walk on the river bank and observe.

People probably don’t have to pay for this pastime which provides an opportunity to exercise and relax.

Can we still wild swim in rivers? What are the safety issues or is the water safe – consider pollution.

Are there hidden things that restrict freedom?

The artist draws our eyes to two ladies on the bank. How does he do that and what might you guess about them?

# PUPIL ACTIVITIES:

## (POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES TO USE AS APPROPRIATE WITH YOUR PUPILS)

Teachers can choose from each category below or devise their own – or different activities, like creating computer generated images, a piece of music/ song/ rap inspired by art or researching other galleries or pieces of art they feel illustrate this theme.

## ART ACTIVITIES

Freedom has often been represented in Art as a figure of a divine angel or goddess. Using the Artworks presented in this module as inspiration, make your own sculpture in clay, plasticine, carved potato or papier- mâché, to represent a goddess or woman of freedom, like Bella Raftopoulou’s sculpture, “Freedom”.

Freedom means different things to different people around the world. For Malala Yousaf, it was the freedom to study. For children in the developing world, it could be the freedom to play and not work. Use photography to capture the best possible image to show what Freedom means to you. It might be something that you value or enjoy in your own life. Or it might be symbolic or of a written message or an animal representation like a running horse or soaring bird to show how you might ‘feel’ freedom.

Working in pairs, create your own large ‘Freedom poster’. Use your brightest coloured paints and pens to depict a freedom celebration or fiesta. Inspired by the tapestry of Depero (“Guerra – Festa”), stick glitter and fabric and three dimensional textures to the surface to bring your celebration of freedom to life. Discuss how to include everything that means freedom to you both, from your own experiences to the right to freedom guaranteed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

There are many artistic symbols for peace and freedom, from slogans to representations of doves and ‘peace-signs’. Research them in books, catalogues, galleries or online and then adapt what you find to design and draw your own new ones. Display them in a classroom ‘Peace & Freedom’ Exhibition or scan or digitally draw them and display them virtually.

# LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES

Imagine you're a historic Freedom fighter, far from your home. You are preparing to go into battle to fight for your country and your freedom. Think of your fears and hopes and dreams, as you face the battle to come, and write a letter expressing all your thoughts to your loved ones back home.

The pulling down of the Berlin Wall was one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's most symbolic acts of people wanting freedom. Research that day in books or online, then write about what you might have seen and done if you had been there and took part in the reunification of that country. You can express your actions by way of a poem or a short story or by writing a newspaper article, describing what you saw and did.

Words are powerful and can impact history. Martin Luther King's, 'I Have a Dream' speech from 1963 was one of history's most celebrated pleas for equality and freedom. Research the words and the effect of that speech to inspire you to write your own, 'Manifesto for Freedom'. Deliver it to the class, setting out the kind of world you imagine would have true peace, equality and freedom.

Freedom does not mean that we can do everything we like without respect for the rights of others. To avoid chaos, societies need rules and structures. Have a team debate, with the class divided into two teams. One side should develop the arguments for less regulation and greater freedoms while the other should present the benefits of more rules and a greater focus on responsibilities.

## DRAMA ACTIVITY / Circle Time

Keep an empty space in the class. Consider what lack of freedom may mean to you right now. If you have a mental idea, enter the empty space and take a position depicting it (pay attention to your body posture, your facial expression and the focus of your eyes). No movement is required, but you will need to stay there for a few moments. One by one you can enter the space and complete the collective group image showing different aspects of "lack of freedom".

Let's here, one by one all players, in-role, completing the sentence: "I want to live free of.../I want to be free to...". When everyone has expressed themselves, now create an ideal collective still image, containing all the elements you heard. What does this image depict? Are there elements that we can create for ourselves instantly, or after some sort of action? Discuss: how can we maintain/achieve personal or collective freedom.

Make a space in the classroom to represent a prison or place where there is no freedom. One by one, enter that space and using your body posture, facial expressions, and the focus of your eyes, act out how the loss of freedom makes you feel. Think about people who have been without their freedom for a long time. When everyone has finished, each choose one word to explain what the experience made you feel. Share the words and the emotions you felt 'in prison'.

## USEFUL RESOURCES:

Video Link: People from 23 countries were asked, 'What Does Freedom Mean to You?'

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=8MtP8vuVoS4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8MtP8vuVoS4)

United Nations, Universal Declaration of Human Rights Articles (-Everyone is entitled to Freedom...)

[www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights](http://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights)

UNICEF Resources on the Convention of Rights of the Child

[www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/resources](http://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/resources)

Online Discussion: What image can best represent freedom?

[www.quora.com/What-is-the-best-image-to-represent-freedom](http://www.quora.com/What-is-the-best-image-to-represent-freedom)

\*Symbolism in Konstantinos Parthenis painting, "The Apotheosis of Athanasios Diakos"

<https://www.nationalgallery.gr/artwork/apotheosi-tou-athanasiou-diakou/>