

(12-14 year old) "What freedom means to me" essay contest

CONTEST WINNER: Emma Zanello Age 14, Aristes, PA

What Freedom Means to Me By: Emma Zannella Age: 12

For everyone freedom means being able to do the things that make you happy, although that is true, the true definition of freedom goes far beyond choice making. The word definition of freedom is "the power or right to act, speak, and make choices without undue hindrance or external coercion." But in my opinion that still doesn't do justice. This is what freedom means to me.

The most important thing about what freedom means to me is how we have it. Millions of soldiers in the United States fight for us, our safety, their religion, and our freedom. But soldiers have been fighting for our freedom for hundreds of years. Our military started serving in June of 1775 with our country being established a year later.

To have the courage to not let anyone stop the founding fathers from doing what the future of the United States required is what freedom means to

me. People fought for the future of this country without a second thought. They didn't come to North America, build a country with its own independence, write a Constitution, create a fair political field, and experiment with the idea of building a democracy entirely by the people for no reason. They came with a purpose, to be the opposite of everything they've ever known. To put in the immense amount of effort to build an entire country from scratch, not just for their character but for everyone for years to come, to live and thrive in a free country. This is but one reason why freedom is important to me.

Freedom is important to me because I know that a vast number of countries do not acquire freedom like we do. We have evidence of thousands of voyages made up of hundreds of colonists fleeing to America for religious and general freedom. Two distinct voyages

include the Mayflower, searching for religious freedom, and Jamestown, looking for new land to freely sell items and crops. Everyone is born with a desire for freedom, that's how our brains are hardwired. The desire for freedom isn't just a want, it's a survival instinct.

The final thing freedom truly means to me is being able to be myself. That requires much freedom to express myself and be the person I actually care for. Many countries limit this and try to make you be like everyone else, and I'm very lucky to be able to be unique and be who I want to be. Whether I do think of this daily or just look in the mirror and smile, I'm still appreciating my freedom. I love and enjoy being able to wake up and choose what I do. I also love being able to love myself and the person I'm becoming that isn't someone else.

Freedom means to me something



that words can't describe, it's simply a need that not everyone has. It's what makes me have courage and the smile I wear thinking about how far I've come. Freedom is what we have fought for, for over 250 years and more to come.



Emma won 2
Ride-All-Day passes
from Knoebel's



By: Emily Siegrist, age 14

Gerald Ford, the 38th president, once said, "We are bound together by the most powerful of all ties, our fervent love for freedom and independence which knows no homeland but the human heart." For the last 250 years, the United States has worked hard to build a place where people can live in safety and chase their goals. Instead of just being about laws in a history book, freedom is something that shapes how we live our daily lives. Freedom to me means that I have the freedom to say what I want, I can have the freedom to dream big, and the freedom to make my own choices.

Freedom of speech is the first major piece of what freedom means to me. In other words, it means that you can share your ideas without the fear of being censored. You can stand up for something that is unfair and unjust. There is also a sense of belonging, knowing you won't be punished just for being yourself and for having a different perspective.

Freedom to dream is the second major piece of what freedom means to me. Past the words in our head, true freedom also means having the freedom to dream. It gives us the right to imagine a better future and to chase our biggest goals without anyone telling us that it's impossible. Even when times get tough, having the liberty to hope keeps us moving forward. Ultimately, these dreams allow us to figure out who we are uniquely, who we want to become, and to turn our thoughts into actions that can change our lives.

Freedom to make your own choices is the

third major piece of what freedom means to me. Choosing for yourself is important, but it isn't always easy. Peer pressure can make it really hard to make your own decisions, and freedom means being able to walk away from what you think is unfair. When you aren't afraid of being judged, you get the confidence to try new things and even make mistakes, which we can learn and grow from. To me, freedom is not just a word in a history book; it is the ability to make your own choices every single day. Having this kind of freedom is a lot like riding a bike. You get the power to steer in any direction you want. Freedom is sometimes a two-way street you have the responsibility to keep your balance and handle wherever your choices take you. President Ronald Reagan once said, "Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same." This means my generation cannot take our rights for granted, and we have to protect them in our everyday lives. A simple everyday item like a bike, or even a story from a book, can show us exactly how important these choices really are.

When the United States was founded 250 years ago, our leaders wanted to build a different kind of country. They wanted a place where ordinary people had the freedom to speak their minds, shoot for the stars with their dreams, and make their own choices without living in fear. Thanks to their sacrifices, I am lucky enough to live in a world where my voice matters, my future has no limits, and my decisions belong to me.

By: Olivia Depka

Freedom means to make good decisions and choices for yourself, your family, and others that it may affect. It also means to help others to make this world a better place and to be good role models for the new generation and for the next. Like is says in the Preamble, "We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect

union, established justice, insured domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this constitution for the United States of America, we should honor it with the freedom that we have and do good.

By: Ashley Banditelli

Freedom means being able to make my own choices and live my life in a way that makes me happy. It means having the right to express my thoughts, beliefs, and feelings without fear. Freedom allows people to pursue their dreams, learn new things, and become the best versions of themselves.

To me, freedom also comes with responsibility. While I have the right to make my own decisions, I should also respect the rights and freedoms of others. Freedom is not just about doing whatever I want; it is about

making choices that are fair and respectful.

I am grateful for the freedoms I have every day, such as being able to go to school, share my opinions, and spend time with my family and friends. These freedoms help me grow, learn, and enjoy life.

In conclusion, freedom means having opportunities, rights, and responsibilities. It is something that should be valued and protected because it allows people to live with dignity and hope for a better future.

Charlotte Dressler, age 13

Freedom. A word that generations of people here on earth, from the beginning of time until the foreseeable future, have tried to comprehend. Many people have come to their own definition of freedom, changing over the years to truly accept everyone as much as they possibly could. Over time people who have been left out of these definitions have slowly trickled back into acceptance. The definition of freedom is a delicate question to be asked and it is one that everyone should have in their head in order to know how to truly have it themselves.

The definition of freedom in my personal standards is the allowance of people to be who they want to be. To have freedom is to be yourself and make your own decisions despite others' opinions. Many people have debated this, claiming that if everyone were left to their own devices the very population would be destroying itself, but this opinion stems from the fact that no country or people group has ever achieved such a freedom. With this freedom comes the responsibility for their own actions and accountability when they've made a mistake. In this freedom if everyone is allowed to be themselves you cannot disgrace someone for the amount of money they have or don't have or the clothes they wear. If you do this you are destroying your own sense of freedom and are no longer experiencing freedom yourself.

Allowing others to be accepted for who they are regardless of where they are from or what their appearance may be means that judging others cannot be accepted. This type of freedom is hard to understand and accept because we all believe our own opinions are completely correct when many times we do not know the real answer; we are merely making an educated guess.

To answer the question at hand, the definition of freedom is the undefinable allowance of people to simply be themselves while also taking in the fact that some ideas deny this freedom for others. To have true freedom one needs to have accountability for their wrong actions while also being willing to forgive others for theirs. Believing you can be who you want to be but others cannot is not freedom, but rather the disregard of the equality of humanity.

By: Alexis Tyc

What does freedom mean to me? To me, freedom is like going on a walk at Weiser State Park or even around the block when it's hot but breezy.

Freedom could also be eating your favorite food after a long day or just relaxing and watching TV.

Freedom is like having rights, like for me, it's feeling safe in my house or being able to hang out with friends. Freedom means doing whatever you want without hurting other people, hurting yourself, or getting into trouble.

Freedom means that you are able to own properties and start businesses. It means being free from fear, worry, addiction, manipulation, or social pressure.

Freedom means you get to spend time with people who care about you and love you, instead of being around people who hate you.