

Securing the Blessings of Liberty

A lesson for the Liberty Medal Ceremony

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About this Lesson

The purpose of this lesson is to explore the phrase “secure the Blessings of Liberty” from the Preamble of the U.S. Constitution through the Liberty Medal Ceremony and its recipient. Students will establish criterion to analyze the current winner and future candidates for the award. The Liberty Medal is presented annually by the National Constitution Center to “men and women of courage and conviction who strive to secure the Blessings of Liberty to people around the globe.”

Grade(s) Level**7-12****Classroom Time**

1-2 class periods

Constitution Connections

Preamble: "to secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our posterity"

Background

Established in 1988 to commemorate the bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution, the Liberty Medal was first awarded to Lech Walesa and since then has been awarded annually "to men and women of courage and conviction who strive to secure the blessings of liberty to people around the globe." To learn more about the medal and its recipients go to the National Constitution Center Liberty Medal website at

<http://constitutioncenter.org/libertymedal/>

What did the Founding Fathers of the United States Constitution have in mind when they wrote, "secure the Blessings of Liberty?" No doubt they did not envision securing

the blessings of liberty beyond the borders of the young United States. Nor could they have envisioned an award honoring these efforts. The Liberty Medal was created to honor the two hundredth anniversary of the signing of the U. S. Constitution. The Constitution serves as the law of the land of the United States and also as a beacon of hope for those seeking liberty both in the US and around the world. The Liberty Medal recipients are chosen because they have worked to secure liberty to people around the world. Often their efforts are controversial and difficult. However, all of the recipients were chosen because their actions helped to "secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity." This lesson will use the Liberty Medal to explore "the Blessings of Liberty"

Objectives

Students will:

- Read the Preamble to the Constitution.
- Discuss their ideas about what the Founding Fathers meant when they wrote "secure the Blessings of Liberty". What are the "Blessings of Liberty"?
- Examine the biography of current Liberty Medal winner.
- Research and nominate a historic figure for the Liberty Medal, and defend their choice in a classroom deliberation.

Standards

NSS-C.5-8.2 FOUNDATIONS OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

What are the foundations of the American Political System?

NSS-C.5-8.5 ROLES OF THE CITIZEN

What are the Roles of the Citizen in American Democracy?

NSS-US.5-12.3 ERA 3: REVOLUTION AND THE NEW NATION (1754-1820s)

Understands the ideas and interests involved in forging the revolutionary movement, and the reasons for the American victory

Activities

1. Students will read the Preamble with a partner or silently. Students will write a short **Journal Entry:** What do you think the Founding Fathers meant by the phrase “secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity?” How would you describe the “Blessings of Liberty?” How would one “secure” liberty?
2. After students have thought about/written about the journal questions above, have students discuss with a partner their answers to the questions. The teacher will then guide a class discussion about the phrase “secure the Blessings of Liberty.” Students will make a list on the board and record the thoughts of their classmates. This list will be useful in establishing criterion.
3. After students have discussed their impressions of the phrase they will be introduced to the Liberty Medal. The teacher will explain that the award was created for the 200th anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution and that it is meant to honor men/women who have secured the blessings of liberty throughout the world. The National Constitution Center “awards men and women of courage and conviction who strive to secure the blessings of liberty to people around the globe” as criterion for awarding this medal each year.
4. Students will then create their own class criterion for the award in which they may/could expand on their earlier list. This list should be based on their prior discussions regarding “secure the Blessings of Liberty.”
5. Students will examine the biography of the current medal winner/watch the medal ceremony and identify qualities/activities/etc. of the recipient that they believe qualify him or her to receive the award. To see biographies and speeches of this year’s recipient go to the National Constitution Center’s site on the Liberty Medal at <http://constitutioncenter.org/libertymedal/>.
6. Have students watch the Liberty Medal Award ceremony that will be broadcast live September 13th on WPVI-TV/6abc and webcast live on www.6abc.com. If the ceremony has already passed you can find video of the ceremony on by searching “Liberty Medal” on www.6abc.com.
7. Deliberation/discussion questions:
 1. Do you believe this recipient to be a good choice for the Liberty Medal? Why or why not?
 2. Are there negative consequences to securing the blessings of liberty? Is so what are they?
 3. Is this recipient controversial? Why or why not?

Assessment

Students will choose a figure from history and write a nomination for that person to win the Liberty Medal. Students should use the criterion established by both the National Constitution Center and the class discussions. Students should be able to defend their candidate/nominee to the rest of the class in a deliberation.

Follow Up Activity

Liberty Medal Deliberation:

Student nominees will be presented and defended in a deliberation with the rest of the class. Students will explain their choice and why they believe this person is the best choice for the honor of the Liberty Medal. Other students will question the nominations and put forth their own candidates for the medal. At the end of the deliberation the students will choose a historic figure to be awarded the Liberty Medal.

Option 1: Students could also write a nomination for their historic figure for the Liberty Medal.

Option 2: Students could nominate a member of the local community to be awarded the Liberty Medal.

Further Resources

National Constitution Center Press Release: Liberty Medal Recipient;

<http://www.constitutioncenter.org/Files/libertymedal2010.pdf>

National Constitution Center website: www.constitutioncenter.org/libertymedal

Interactive Constitution at the National Constitution Center:

<http://ratify.constitutioncenter.org/constitution/>

Simulcast of the Liberty Medal ceremony at www.6abc.com

Tony Blair Biography

http://constitutioncenter.org/libertymedal/recipient_2010.html