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FREE AT LAST?

Grades: 5 through 8

Time: 15-30 minutes (plus homework)

Materials: Sample images that depict freedom and/or oppression (see below)

Relevant Subjects: Social Studies, Language Arts, History, and Media Studies

Pertinent Information: This is an excellent activity for introducing and exploring the concepts of freedom and oppression.

1. Show sample images (see below) to the group. Ask: “Do these images depict freedom? Why/why not?” Invite students to share their thoughts.
2. Divide students into small groups of around four. Give each group three images. Have the group develop a list of three ways that each image shows freedom and three ways that each doesn't. (You may need to help students see how some images show both; a few images may only show one or the other.)
3. Have the groups share their findings with the rest of the groups.
4. Lead students in a brief discussion, using age-appropriate questions to explore issues such as:
 - What is freedom?
 - Who should have freedom?
 - What boundaries should there be regarding freedom?
 - What is oppression?
 - Who gets oppressed? Why? (Make sure the concept of animal oppression is addressed.)
 - Can things affect our level of freedom? (iPods, SUVs, fashion, etc.)
 - What else can affect our freedom, and how much control do we have over what affects our freedom?
 - How might we oppress others?
 - How can we make choices that don't oppress others?

5. Have students bring an image or item from home and do the 3/3 exercise with that image/item and share their findings with the class.

Sample Images Might Include:

Animal at the zoo, a carriage horse, a television set, an SUV, a mall, a person on a motorcycle, an airplane, a July 4 picnic, Shamu the whale, an iPhone, a fur coat, a duck or bunny for sale during Easter, a Nike sneaker, a soccer ball, coffee, a piece of diamond jewelry, bottled water, a car, protesters, soda, circus animals, child soldiers, a mother with children, a father with children, etc.

Activity by Daryn Sirota, Garth Knox, & Lisa Mangiardi (IHE Students)