

IDEAS 58

**International Online Teachers Society
Debate
Educational Materials For
Advance and Upper Intermediate
Students**



**International Online Teachers Society
Publishing Committee**



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THE 58th INTERNATIONAL ONLINE TEACHERS SOCIETY ESSAY CONTEST

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OF FREEDOM AND THE SILVER SCREEN

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The 1997 American historical drama opus “Amistad” is best remembered, I believe, for the main character Cinque’s impassioned plea “Give us, us free.” Spoken in apparently broken English, this request was addressed to a packed courtroom that was hearing the case of Cinque and his compatriots who had been subjected to a trial. The trial was performed in order to have them answer for mounting a mutiny aboard a ship bound for the US from Africa. Cinque and his countrymen, all natives of an African tribe, were supposed to be sold as slaves but they overpowered their captors, continued to sail, and had been hoping that they would be set free once they reached the fair land of the US. Instead, they were brought to trial, with an abolitionist lawyer defending them against blatantly prejudicial and bigoted people.

That story is just another of many such works that talk about slavery, the struggle for freedom and independence, and the travails that people in search of freedom and independence undergo. The 1977 mini-series “Roots” also comes to mind because it described very capably how the book author’s ancestor Kunta Kinte struggled from enslavement to eventual freedom. It was another striking historical drama that touched my very young heart then. I believe I was only in Grade three when that was shown on TV, and it was only my father and I who bothered to watch the late-night mini series out of all the members of our then small household. I also remember it starkly because one of my male classmates then who had dusker skin than the rest of us was called Kunta Kinte in jest by many in class (excluding me, honestly).

Like I said, there are many more similar stories.

Undoubtedly, since the dawn of civilization, freedom has been a vital factor that has either been too elusive or too loosely defined by people. By elusive we mean that many have played the role of slaves, subordinates, subjects or underlings to masters, commanders, rulers or superiors. The sad thing is, many of these masters, commanders, rulers or superiors have often been “conquerors” whose one and only objective was to subjugate and do so harshly, cruelly and unjustly. Who wouldn’t want to rise in revolt or mutiny under the conditions imposed by such masters?

Freedom is a basic right that is to be enjoyed by all. It is not a privilege to be enjoyed only by a select few. Suppression and its more extreme cousin, oppression, should never have a place in this world. A Supreme Being gave us the freedom to rule the earth. It is something that can never be taken away from us, that should be safeguarded to the best of our abilities, sometimes even at the risk of losing our very lives.

We were born free to live free.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Talk about your country’s history. Was there ever a tumultuous period in your nation’s past that involved the fight for freedom?
2. Why are people willing to risk their lives for the sake of freedom?
3. How is freedom suppressed today?
4. What are common freedoms that we all enjoy today?
5. Do you value your freedom? What are you willing to do to maintain it or get it back when it is imperiled?



WORKING FREELY—JUST NOT POSSIBLE

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Freedom is not absolute. There will always be limits to whatever freedom we enjoy. Along with freedom is the responsibility to make use of whatever freedom we do have in a most responsible manner. Perhaps that is simply going around the question of whether freedom is absolute or not, but it very much answers the question. We enjoy a lot of freedom nowadays but that doesn't mean we should throw all rules to the wind and not care about the effects of our free actions. We have been meant to be intelligent beings and that means our freedoms are in place in order to make us more aware of our duties to the world.

I, for one, have enjoyed working at my own pace and time. I have had the opportunity to work with great employers whose rules vary as those employers themselves.

Working for a phone company before, my colleagues and I were given the freedom to choose what part/s of the year we wanted to take our annual vacation leaves. However, the younger employees had to wait for the more senior ones to finish deciding on which part of the year they wanted to have their vacations on. When I worked as a call center agent, my co-workers and I had the freedom to drink all the coffee and chocolate drink we wanted, which were freely supplied by management. We were also free to browse the web on our free time, but never during working hours and never on sleazy sites.

Working for an ESL school, my co-teachers and I had the freedom to choose our working hours. However, that being so, we were not allowed to "choose" our students; they were assigned to us and choosing teachers was an exclusive option that they had. My online ESL career also involved being able to choose my working hours, but not enjoying my own country's holidays since they weren't holidays at our students' own country. As a freelance worker, I can work at the hours I choose and in as many days as I elect to work. However, deadlines are to be kept and work quality has to be consistent. Falling short of a client's expectations means you either lose a client or not get a very good feedback. That would really ruin any freelancer's reputation and imperil their chances of getting future jobs. There is no security of tenure, too.

Working with absolute freedom, I have found, is never possible. Each and every form and manner of employment holds certain rules that can not be bent or circumvented. Therefore, we have to strive to work to the best of our abilities in order to continue enjoying the freedom of knowing that we'll still have money coming.

Ahh, work. Got to get back to it now, folks.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Why is freedom not absolute, in your opinion?
2. What are your concepts of freedom? Elaborate on them.
3. Can freedom always be equated with power? Why or why not?
4. As a professional, what types of freedom do you think workers in your industry should enjoy?
5. How can freedom be controlled, monitored or restricted?



LIVING FREE

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It's been said that the best things in life are free. That may not seem so for us who have to work hard everyday to get the most out of every effort we make. All our endeavors seem to present challenges left and right. But have we ever thought about why we experience so many difficulties that enslave us? If we look at ourselves closely, we would somehow find that many of us continue to be too bound to our goals so we feel "jailed" by them. Taking it easy has never been an option for most of us mainly because we set too many goals, many of them extreme.

We are not machines that can work endlessly. Why even machines break down at some point, in fact. We always tend to focus on what we can accomplish long term than what we have accomplished short term. We pay no particular attention to our small achievements, considering them inconsequential. Maybe, that's why we often feel tired and burned out too easily. The bondage of our daily goals is too heavy.

Let us remember how God Himself reminds us to take a break once in a while. Let us cast our burdens upon Him, for he is mightier than any heavy storm that engulfs us in bondage. He wants us to be free, not enslaved by our ambitions and held in chains by our endless desires. Hard work is rewarded, but even the superheroes in us should learn to let go and let God sometimes. There are just too many things in life that, although free, tend to make us slaves. So we work ourselves out day in and day out trying to reach for them. It's always good to make our reach farther than our grasp, but we must also learn to give ourselves the freedom to laugh at a child's simple joke or smile at the chaos in our world.

To be forever bound by our ambitions is never healthy. God wants to see how His own work in us becomes successful. Let us live spiritual lives while working to reach our dreams. Let us not be enslaved by worldly inhibitions. To be so is simply not healthy.

Let us forgive ourselves for our failures, and accept that nobody can be as perfect as our Creator. He stands by us no matter what. He does not take credit for His work in and on us. His one and only joy lies in our ability to share more of ourselves to the people we live and work with.

When we are able to finally say that we have worked to the best of our ability and are prepared to work for our Creator, then we are truly free.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Why is it difficult for most people to let loose?
2. Do you find that people can be so restrictive at times? Describe specific instances when that has happened to you personally.
3. How can we be free from the bondage that is created by our own selves?
4. At what particular instances in your life do you feel "boxed in"?
5. Is it possible to enjoy complete freedom from life's many challenges? Why or why not?



FREEDOM IN CHAINS

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Freedom can be defined by the abundance of opportunities either for self-realization or some other purpose. Freedom is having a choice. However, in the society we live in, the options are dictated by need more than by any other consideration. We make our choices based on the options that we have, not on the desires we do have. However, looking at everything closely, we often have desires that are too constrictive to ever present us with options that we have difficulty deciding on. It's sort of a quandary between damned-if-you-do and damned-if-you-don't. Every so often, we get ourselves imprisoned by the choices we make.

Many times, I have often considered myself in such a state. Forever searching, forever bound by my personal goals. I try to be more forgiving to myself but often fail. This fast-paced world has so pervaded my way of thinking that I feel so boxed in. I don't forgive myself so easily, sometimes ruminating on the consequences of taking the other fork in the road. And believe me, with the number of crossroads I've been through, I have often found myself going around in circles. Funny huh? To end up right where you started is silly, but that has happened to me so many times.

Had it not been for my faith, I might have lost my handle on life a very long time ago. Whenever I feel so imprisoned, deep in doubt or high on the angst but low on the energizing hope, I give myself a firm reality check. It's not all that easy. Sometimes, I look to my own mother and my kids for inspiration. They, after all, have stuck it out with me all these years and have never given up on me. Why should I give up on life?

And most importantly, I look upon the cross. It is the cross that symbolizes man's bondage to sin and evil and that One Man decided to carry for all mankind. The Great Man who had lain helplessly nailed to the cross had one brief moment of desperation and fear, but knowing how His sufferings would soon end, He embraced the cross when it was cruelly placed on His shoulders. He freely gave up His own life so that we may live. I believe the freedom He experienced after He decided to let His Father work in him was the most liberating experience one can ever have. Painful it might have all been, but the experience of this One Man should inspire us to carry our crosses willingly and without shame.

It is our always own crosses that set us free.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. How do you personally define freedom?
2. Is absolute freedom attainable? How?
3. How do we become slaves to our own desires? Be as specific as needed.
4. What makes you feel enslaved in life?
5. If you could freely choose how to live your life, how would you do it?



Freedom in Today's society

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According to an American writer, Mortimer Jerome Adler, freedom is one's emancipation from the arbitrary rule of others. Freedom is one's own ability to live in full independence without the shackles of command. It is simply one's right for education and for life. For others, freedom is the immunity from tyranny and obligation. Children believe that it is their right to do whatever they want while adults believe that it is the right to marry and to be loved. Doctors believe that freedom is synonymous to their right to handle patients. Teachers believed that it is their right to teach. Indeed, everyone has their own concept of freedom.

There are various types of freedom which most individuals do not understand. One is that citizens have a right to free speech. There is also the freedom of equality, which is against any form of prejudice and racism. There are rights which allow us to praise whatever religion we want and there are also rights which allow us to improve ourselves. There is a law to protect the freedom of the poor and the weak and there are also laws which protect the intellectual and property rights of individuals. Such rights are imposed by the government in order to protect our freedom.

Freedom has been fought over for years. African-Americans fought for their right against slavery while people fought for their religious freedom during the Holocaust. Many heroes have fought for the rights of their people. Countries have fought against tyranny and oppression. Yet, the price for freedom is so high and many have lost their lives in securing it. Most people have even worked their entire lives just to achieve a certain type of financial freedom which is without the constraints of debt and servitude.

In today's world, freedom is often questioned. Government laws often try to prohibit the intellectual freedom of the masses. There are laws which prohibit reproductive rights while others are based on cybercrimes. Such laws often prohibit the rights of people. Because of such laws several countries are often affected by the shadows of communism and fascism. Indeed, it is true that the government is best if it governs least.

Schools and several institutions also have a negative impact towards freedom. Some schools only allow children who came from wealthy families while universities only allow students who can pay their expensive tuition. Most companies also judge their employees according to social background and even race. Because of these institutions, freedom is often questioned and the society is affected by moral stigma. However, even though there are questions about freedom, we still fight for what we believe in because we know that freedom is precious.

Questions:

1. Who was the writer who mentioned that freedom is one's emancipation from the arbitrary rule of others?
2. What are the various types of freedoms?
3. Why is freedom important?
4. Why is freedom questioned today?
5. How can we protect our freedom?



FREEDOM - A QUEST

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Freedom has been a quest since the day that we were conceived in our mother's womb. From the moment we were born, we already gained our freedom. As we were raised by our parents, we have striven to make it on our own, right after the time that we have learned how to walk and up to the time that we had our first schooling day. Most especially when we have learned how to make decisions on our own and try to make it without seeking our parents' approval when we reached the legal age. Our freedom was expressed more and was explicit when we had raised a family of our own.

Freedom is an essential part of our life. It is so hard not to be able to have and express freedom. Well, we could also say that freedom is one of the most important civil liberties in a democratic society. It is the embodiment and the meaning of life. What is life without freedom.....freedom of speech, freedom of expression, freedom to live, freedom of religion and many more. We are all entitled to our rights and freedom, each to its own and for that we should be able to enjoy and express these freedom.

In any situation, we would always want to do anything and everything on our own. We would want to express what's on our mind, all the while thinking of what we would really want to do and accomplish in life for us to be able to succeed. It is actually showing the intensity of our efforts by exploring our works and making them matter. We can never afford to squander it in trifles. We are all face with this task of freedom of oneself.

All countries struggle for their own freedom and would want to take that liberty to make his country free from oppression. It has also been a formidable menace to many a country in its quest to continually attain freedom. Disputes has arisen but still freedom prevails. This is how salient and of great importance freedom is to all of us. Freedom is the absence of interference or impediment. To many it is very valuable.

Apparently, freedom is a complex thing and yet others who live in it tend to ignore its fragility and take it for granted. As for me, freedom gives me the opportunity to speak my mind and voice out my qualms. It gives me the opportunity to speak, act and pursue happiness without a lot restrictions. It leads us to enhanced expressions of creativity, thereby producing original thoughts. This then increases our productivity resulting to a high quality of life.

Freedom has always been a quest of our forefathers and all those heroes who died just for the love of our county to attain freedom. Yes, they have died to obtain freedom for the future generations of their families. Therefore, it should not be forgotten but it should be definitely respected and cherished. Are we willing to do the same for our beloved country? Your guest is as good as mine! Give it a shot and let us not leave and let freedom remain as a quest but make a stance for it to materialize.

Questions for discussion:

1. How important is freedom for you?
2. What would you do to obtain freedom? Explain your answer.
3. How often do you take freedom for granted? Why?
4. Do you believe in freedom? Justify your answer.
5. Are you willing to do anything to attain freedom? Why or why not?



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