

Equipping Parents to Teach the Next Generation to Recognize
Freedom and Tyranny

Why Does Freedom Matter?



For ages ~8 & up. Parents should read through the lesson before sharing with any children and should pre-screen the additional resources at the end to ensure they are appropriate for their children.

"I would rather be exposed to the inconveniences attending too much liberty than to those attending too small a degree of it."

— THOMAS JEFFERSON

■ Important Principles

- 01 How life is different when living in a free country vs. a nation under tyranny.
 - 02 How we can more greatly appreciate the freedoms we enjoy in America.
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■ Getting Started

Ask kids, one-by-one, to tell you what one of their most favorite things in life is - it can be an activity, a game, a food, a person, etc...

Give each child 30-60 seconds to tell you why they love this thing, and how it makes their lives better. Then ask each one to tell you how they would feel if they couldn't have or participate with their favorite thing ever again.

The Lesson

LIFE UNDER TYRANNY

Throughout the history of the world, the majority of people have lived in a state of tyranny. People living under tyranny don't feel safe and often cannot have or do the things they would like. Pursuing their passions in life could get them in big trouble. Under a tyrannical government, everything can be taken away from you. You usually work hard for little personal benefit, with no hope of ever getting ahead. You live under the threat of the government hurting you or taking away your belongings for breaking relatively minor laws, or for simply trying to live life in the way you desire. Your family members could also be punished severely in the same ways if you go against the system. For many, extreme poverty, hunger and even starvation are possibilities or a daily reality. Often under tyranny, it's not just the government who you have to worry about, but your neighbors and even family members might turn you in for expressing unacceptable views, for not going along with the ideology of the government, or for being of the "wrong" race or religion.

ESCAPE FROM THE SOVIET UNION

Timothy Chmykhalov was born in the Soviet Union in 1963. He was a Christian, and part of a church that was especially highly persecuted by the government. Kids could be taken from parents and put in orphanages because their parents taught them to pray. Christians couldn't get into colleges and could only get menial, poorly paying jobs. They were frequently harassed or arrested and put in prison camps for practicing their faith. They also risked incarceration in psychiatric hospitals and forcible medication with mind-altering drugs because their faith in God was considered a mental illness. One day in 1978 when Timothy was 15, he, his mother, and another family from their church took a long train ride from Siberia to Moscow, rushed past the guards at the American Embassy, and requested asylum - or for protection from the U.S. government. One from their party was captured, arrested, and put in jail. But the remaining 7 of them camped out in a 12 x 20 basement room of the American Embassy for 5 years before they were granted visas to emigrate from the Soviet Union to America.



Timothy Chmykhalov (bottom left) with his mother and the Vaschenko family seeking asylum at the American Embassy in Moscow, 1978

A CHILDHOOD IN NORTH KOREA



Yeonmi Park speaking of her escape from North Korea, 2015

Yeonmi Park was also born under a tyrannical government. She was born in North Korea in 1993. When she was a child, her father was arrested and sent to a prison camp. Her family faced starvation and she and her sister were left alone for months at a time to fend for themselves, sometimes having to eat insects to survive while their mother was away trying to earn money. When she was 13, Yeonmi and her mother escaped on foot to China. They, sadly, ended up in the hands of human traffickers who abused them horribly. They were eventually able to escape from the traffickers and then walked on foot across the Gobi Desert to Mongolia. From there, they were able to emigrate to South Korea and join a community of tens of thousands of North Korean refugees. Yeonmi came to America in 2014 and today is an author and advocate for North Korean refugees.

DISCUSSION

- How does it make you feel to hear about people who have lived under a tyrannical government?
- How would you feel if you had to live under a tyrannical system?
- What do you think it would be like for a person to grow up under tyranny but then escape to a free nation?

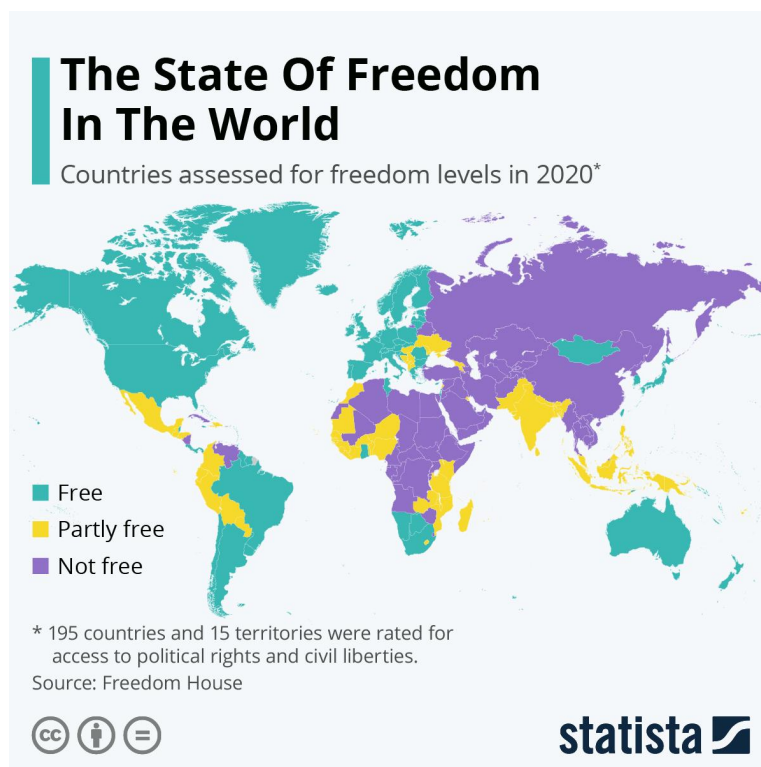
A DIFFERENT VISION

The American colonists and revolutionaries had a different vision for society. They wanted the common people to be free. They made great strides in setting up a system of government that would ensure the most freedom possible to more people than ever before in history.

Life in a free nation is not without challenges, but at least a free people are able to direct the course of their own lives to a larger degree than seen before in the history of the world. There can be hard lessons to be learned in life, no matter where a person lives. But at least in a free society it is possible for someone born poor to rise up, pursue their dreams, prosper, and create a better life for themselves!

FREEDOM AROUND THE WORLD TODAY

Even today, much of the world is not considered free. People in over half the world's nations live under some degree of tyranny within their government.



The state of freedom in the world, 2020 — Source: Freedom House, via Statista

■ What can YOU do?

Would you like to understand, on a deeper level, what it might be like to be without certain freedoms? Here are a couple of ways you may gain a greater appreciation for freedom.

ACTIVITY 01

Go one week without your favorite thing or activity. Report back how it felt to do without and then to have that favorite thing back again. Do you appreciate it more? How could this relate to freedom?

ACTIVITY 02

Interview someone who came to America from a nation where they were less free, especially under a tyrannical regime. Take notes, and report back to your family. You can prepare a formal presentation with pictures and visual aids, if you like, or just tell about what you learned and how hearing this other person's story helps you to appreciate freedom more fully.

Additional Resources

Song — I'm Proud to Be an American

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-KoXt9pZLGM>

Video — North Korean refugee Yeonmi Park telling her harrowing story of escape (parents watch first as there is some content that is difficult to hear)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ufhKWfPSQOw>

Documentary — North Korea - Life Inside the Secret State

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=en6NMBEDj1c>

Video — Story of Alan Firestone, a young Jewish boy who survived the Holocaust and then immigrated to the U.S.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k6IMCtM1c6Q>

Book — Pollock, John. The Siberian Seven. USA. Word Books. 1980.

Bonus

For those of us who were born free in America, it can be easy for us to take our freedoms for granted.

How can you, as a young person, participate in safeguarding the freedoms we enjoy in America? What can you do to help ensure our society remains free? Write a short essay, make a short video and share it, or just share your thoughts with your family.

How can you encourage your friends to more fully appreciate the freedoms we enjoy? Share with your family and take action on one or more of your ideas!

Sources

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2. "Photographs of Siberian Seven, Vashchenko and Chmykalov Families of Pentecostal Believers from Chernogorsk, Soviet Union." Keston Digital Collection, Baylor University. baylor.edu/library/index.php?id=970004. Accessed 10/15/22.
3. Behling, Julie. Beneath Sheep's Clothing — The Communist Takeover of Culture in the USSR & Parallels in Today's America. Istina Press, 2022.
4. "Siberian Seven begins fourth year in U.S. Embassy." UPI Archives, June 27, 1981.
5. Pollock, John. The Siberian Seven. Word Books, 1980.
6. Korea Herald, Dec. 13, 2015. m.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20151213000395
7. "The State of Freedom Worldwide." Statista, statista.com/chart/12541.