

## **Promise Of Liberty**

### America's Core Values

#### **Thematic Question:** What are America's Core Values?

If you choose a guided experience at Peoria Riverfront Museum, please let our Group Visit specialists or your tour guide know you have participated in this pre-visit activity. This will allow our team to give you the best experience possible.

#### **Overview**

All students have a different relationship with America. It is important to preface this conversation with a caveat lesson: actions speak louder than words. What are the values outlined by the scaffolding of ink on paper, and how do we see these promises kept and neglected throughout US history?

#### **Goals**

Students will be able to:

Identify core values of America as a nation

Analyze values using primary sources

Produce productive and respectful conversation about American history, government, and lived experiences.

#### **Suggested Grades**

Recommended grades 9-12

Illinois Social Science Standards Identified

SS.9-12.IS.

SS.9-12.CV.

#### **Pair/ Small Group Discussion**

Get together in pairs or small groups and identify the core values of your school. This may be quick for students to identify if your school has its values written on the walls or spoken in daily affirmations or could take some time for students to reflect on how their school ecosystem runs. Have students reflect on their role in school “society”. How do these identified values help them as students? Do these values provide empowerment, safety, empathy, learning, etc.?

After reflection, ask students, “What values do our school and our country share?”

### **Pre- Visit Discussion**

Ask students what they believe are America's values or give them a list and have them talk about what each means and give examples of them in present-day.

Some students refer to documented quotes they already know: "life liberty and the pursuit of happiness", the Preamble, "freedom and justice for all", etc. These are all great and correct. Feel welcome to center these in your discussion if your classroom has the understanding. To provide additional structure and increase relatability, the core FORE has been developed by "Let's Cultivate Greatness", an organization based in Washington state creating secondary social studies curriculum for teachers, by teachers. Core FORE refers to the following values: Freedom, Opportunity, Representation, and Equality. Most values students will come up with should fall under one of these four.

Encourage healthy, respectful, and educated critiques. These conversations should empower students to participate as active citizens. Citizens should be encouraged to celebrate and critique society and shape the government under which they live.

### **Pre-Visit Activity Values Highlighted in the Declaration of Independence**

Use the following transcription to read the Declaration of Independence. Peoria Riverfront Museum encourages you and your classroom to read it, outload or watch a video of a reenactor. On July 4, 1776, the Second Continental Congress voted to approve the Declaration of Independence inside the Pennsylvania State House (now Independence Hall). Four days later, on July 8, 1776, the citizens of Philadelphia were summoned to the State House Yard by the bells of the city. At noon, Colonel John Nixon publicly read the Declaration of Independence for the first time. Following the event and continuing long into the night, the bells of the city rang in celebration. Reading **and** listening to this influential document is important to immerse students.

Encourage reading and conversation regarding the entire document, but you can find specific connection to the core FORE in the following passage:

*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, - -That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to affect their Safety and Happiness.*

### **During Visit Discussion**

Welcome students to try to read the Declaration of Independence from its original form during your visit. Spoiler alert: it's difficult. Cursive handwriting can be difficult to decipher today, plus the language itself is one step away from old English.

Remind students of their in-class discussion. What values does this document outline we as a nation should uphold? Explore as a class or in small groups the documents in the exhibition. Find a few that really stand out to you, whether from look, content matter, or location in the gallery. All documents on view can be utilized in this discussion.

Ask students, after learning more about the document and seeing it in person, what of the core FORE connects? What promises of the core FORE are being kept? Neglected? For who?

### **Post-Visit Quick Write/ Discussion**

What do you hope for America's future? Think about what you hope the country can achieve and how you can help make it a reality.

### **Post-Visit Project Suggestion**

Remind students that history is happening all of the currently all around us. Have students choose a present-day issue in America. This can be topical and in the news right now, or something that has happened in the last few decades. Let them research a primary source relating to this issue and analyze it. What values can be connected to this document? For example, a student may choose to analyze the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, attributing it to Opportunity. Or they may look more contemporary at President Barack Obama's 'A More Perfect Union' speech, analyzing its direct and hopeful nature, potentially connecting it to Representation, and Equality. Your classroom can take this project and these conversations to many topics.