

The Liberty Bell as a Symbol for the Civil Rights Era

Grade Levels: 4-8

(Expected Class Sessions to Complete: 2)

Objectives:

- Students will understand the connection between symbolism used during the civil rights era and the symbol of the Liberty Bell by examining primary sources.

Standards Correlation :

Reading Information Text RI 5.1, Writing W 5.4, Reading History RH (6-8).1, RH (6-8).2, RH (6-8).7

Materials:

- Primary sources – “We Shall Overcome” lyrics, two political cartoons, Harpers’s Weekly Magazine Cover, “I Have A Dream Speech”
- Internet access for the class to gather information about the civil rights era (The students may work in partners.)
- Saving the Liberty Bell picture book by Marty Rhodes Figley – ISBN 1-57505-696-8 (To provide background on the Liberty Bell)
- Poster paper, markers, art materials (For designing poster, song, poem, advertisement)
- Chart paper, markers
- Highlighters (one for each student)

Introduction (Before the Lesson):

- Write the four essential questions on chart paper hanging around the room for the group activity. (step one of the closing)
- Students will investigate the web site <http://www.voicesofcivilrights.org/history.html> to search for facts about the civil rights era. You may want to book mark this site on the computers. Other good sites are <http://www.sitins.com/> and <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/civilrights/>.
- You may need to discuss or do a mini-lesson about how to read a political cartoon. * Refer to Suffrage Lesson for Grades 6-12 for instruction on cartoon analysis. Make an overhead of political cartoon #1 to use with the whole class, or you can meet with the groups that are assigned the political cartoons if that is more feasible. <http://www.cartoonistgroup.com/search/results.php>
- Divide the students into five groups. Consider who would work well together in a group, and group the children in a way that will foster rich discussion. Your role is to guide the discussion – the students should initiate the discussions.
- Copy enough of each of the five primary sources and worksheets for the students.
- Write “Civil Rights Vocabulary” at the top of one piece of chart paper to be used in #1 of the procedure.
- Label a second piece of chart paper with “Liberty Bell Vocabulary” to be used with step #2.

Engage/Procedure:

Whole Class Discussion:

1. Visit the computer lab as a class and work with a partner to investigate the website <http://www.voicesofcivilrights.org/history.html>.
2. Ask the class to take notes of vocabulary to share with the class that relates to the civil rights era.
3. List their vocabulary on the chart paper labeled “Civil Rights Vocabulary.” Additional websites listed at the end of the lesson plan.
 - Examples of vocabulary: discrimination, segregation, black and white, freedom, rights, support, African American, sit in, march, peace, independence, Philadelphia, Rosa Parks, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., NAACP, non-violent protests.
 - You may need to break here and continue the remainder of the lesson in another class period.

Teacher-Directed Instruction:

1. Explain that you’re going to read a picture book about the Liberty Bell, and ask the class to be prepared to share vocabulary or ideas they think of as you read.
2. List them on the chart paper labeled “Liberty Bell Vocabulary”. Read [Saving the Liberty Bell](#) to the class.
 - Examples of vocabulary: freedom, support, crack, teamwork, liberty, peace, independence, Philadelphia, symbol.

Cooperative Work:

**Refer to Suffrage Lesson that provides instructions and worksheets for analyzing cartoons as primary sources.*

1. Divide the students into five groups – each group will have a different primary source and worksheet.
2. Give each group enough copies of their primary source and worksheet so that each student has his/her own copy of each.
3. Explain to the students that they are to examine/read their resource, looking for and highlighting signs, symbols, or phrases that represent freedom and/or liberty. (Ideally, the students will discover that the signs, symbols, or phrases that they find will relate to the class notes already on the Liberty Bell and Civil Rights vocabulary chart papers.) Then, through discussion, students will complete their worksheets.
 - Group 1: “I Have A Dream” speech
<http://www.freemaninstitute.com/Dream.htm>
 - Group 2: Political cartoon #1 (doctors)
<http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/swann/herblock/images/s03496u.jpg>
 - Group 3: Lyrics to “We Shall Overcome”
<http://www.k-state.edu/english/nelp/american.studies.s98/we.shall.overcome.html>
 - Group 4: Political cartoon #2 (restaurant)
<http://loc.gov/rr/print/swann/herblock/images/s03475u.jpg>
 - Group 5: Harper’s Weekly cover
<http://www.philaprintshop.com/images/hwliberty.jpg>

Closing:

1. Cooperative Work: The students will arrive at a “group answer(s)” for each of the essential questions to be shared with the rest of the class. A recorder will write their answers on four separate Post-It notes, and will hang them on the chart paper with the appropriate question.

2. **Whole Class Discussion:** The teacher will choose a student to read the posters one by one, stressing that symbols for freedom are shown in a variety of methods relating to the civil rights movement, including the symbol of the Liberty Bell.

Post Visit-Extension (Assessments):

- You've been hired by a local organization to write a speech or song, draw a political cartoon, or design an advertisement, stamp, or poster to teach other students about the Liberty Bell and how it has been an important symbol of freedom. Design your piece including the Liberty Bell, and write a paragraph explaining what the Liberty Bell symbolizes in your piece, and why you feel your piece would be a successful example of the Liberty Bell. Be prepared to share.

Vocabulary:

Liberty Bell, discrimination, segregation, black and white, freedom, rights, support, African American, sit in, march, peace, independence, Philadelphia, Rosa Parks, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., NAACP, non-violent protests, freedom, support, crack, teamwork, liberty, peace, independence, Philadelphia, symbol, Independence Hall.

Group 1: Handout
“I Have a Dream Speech” – Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Source: <http://www.freemaninstitute.com/Dream.htm>

August 28, 1963 --

I am happy to join with you today in what will go down in history as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation.

Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves, who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity.

But one hundred years later, the Negro still is not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languished in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. And so we've come here today to dramatize a shameful condition.

In a sense we have come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note, insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds."

But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. And so we have come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice.

We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of Now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quick sands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children.

It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment. This sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality. Nineteen sixty-three is not an end but a beginning. Those who hope that the Negro needed to blow off steam and will now be content will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual. There will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges.

But there is something that I must say to my people who stand on the warm threshold which leads into the palace of justice. In the process of gaining our rightful place we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred. We must ever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to

degenerate into physical violence. Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force.

The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to a distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny. And they have come to realize that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone.

And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead. We cannot turn back. There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, "When will you be satisfied?" We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality. We can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities. We cannot be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote. No, no, we are not satisfied and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Some of you have come fresh from narrow jail cells. Some of you have come from areas where your quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecutions and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive. Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed. Let us not wallow in the valley of despair, I say to you today, my friends. And so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal.

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a *dream* today!

I have a dream that one day, *down* in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of interposition and nullification; one day right down in Alabama little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers. I have a *dream* today!

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted and every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together.

This is our hope. This is the faith that I will go back to the South with. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be

able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day. And this will be the day, this will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning, "My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the Pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring!" And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true.

And so let freedom ring -- from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire.

Let freedom ring -- from the mighty mountains of New York.

Let freedom ring -- from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania.

Let freedom ring -- from the snow-capped Rockies of Colorado.

Let freedom ring -- from the curvaceous slopes of California.

But not only that.

Let freedom ring -- from Stone Mountain of Georgia.

Let freedom ring -- from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee.

Let freedom ring -- from every hill and molehill of Mississippi, from every mountainside, let freedom ring!

And when this happens, when we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when *all* of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual,

"Free at last, free at last.

Thank *God* Almighty, we are free at last."



Group 3: Handout
Lyrics to "We Shall Overcome"

Source: <http://www.k-state.edu/english/nelp/american.studies.s98/we.shall.overcome.html>

"We Shall Overcome"

Lyrics derived from Charles Tindley's gospel song "I'll Overcome Some Day" (1900), and opening and closing melody from the 19th-century spiritual "No More Auction Block for Me" (a song that dates to before the Civil War). According to Professor Donnell King of Pellissippi State Technical Community College (in Knoxville, Tenn.), "We Shall Overcome" was adapted from these gospel songs by "Guy Carawan, Candy Carawan, and a couple of other people associated with the Highlander Research and Education Center, currently located near Knoxville, Tennessee. I have in my possession copies of the lyrics that include a brief history of the song, and a notation that royalties from the song go to support the Highlander Center."

1. We shall overcome
We shall overcome
We shall overcome some day

CHORUS:

Oh, deep in my heart
I do believe
We shall overcome some day

2. We'll walk hand in hand
We'll walk hand in hand
We'll walk hand in hand some day

CHORUS

3. We shall all be free
We shall all be free
We shall all be free some day

CHORUS

4. We are not afraid
We are not afraid
We are not afraid some day

CHORUS

5. We are not alone
We are not alone
We are not alone some day

CHORUS

6. The whole wide world around
The whole wide world around
The whole wide world around some day

CHORUS

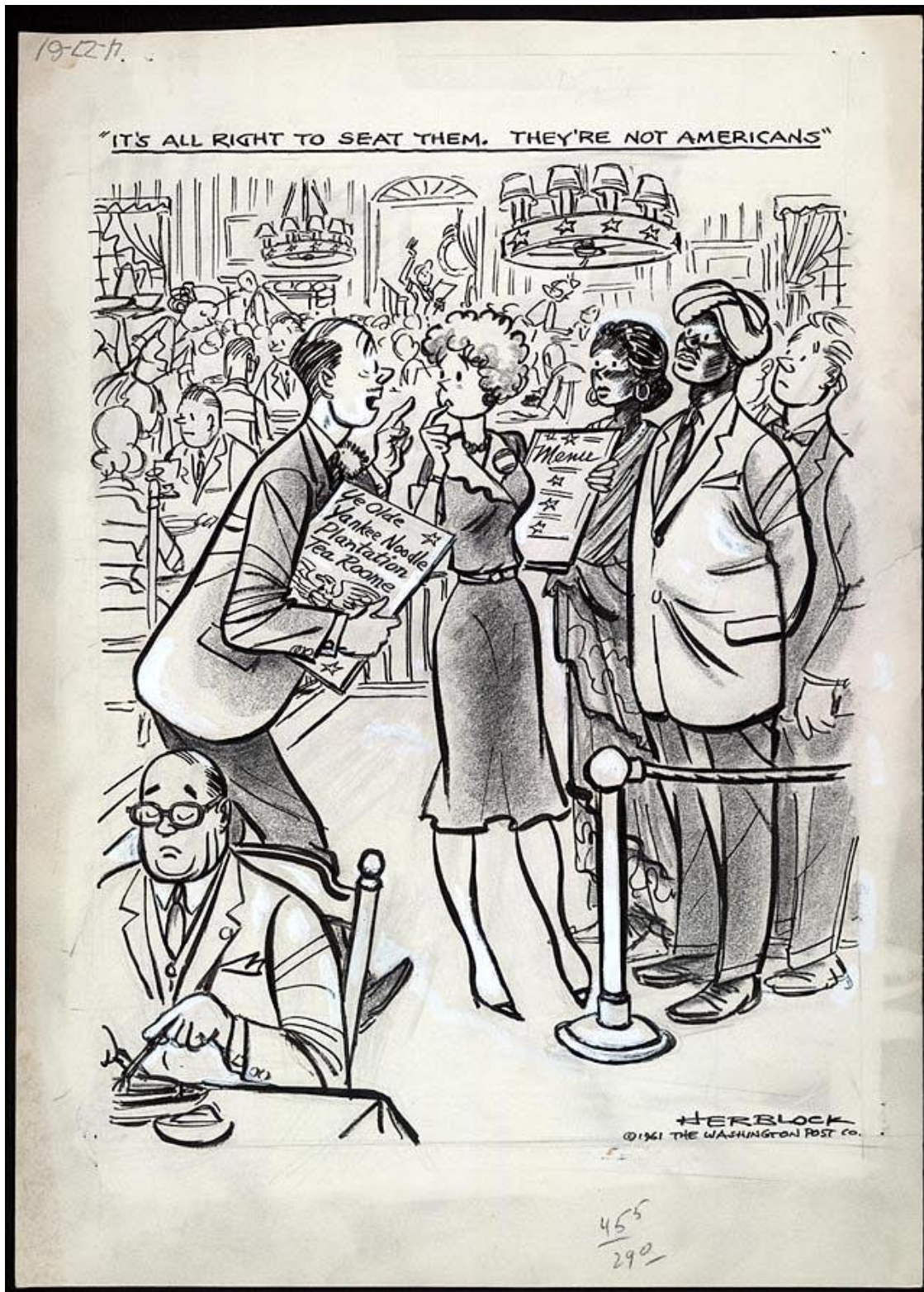
7. We shall overcome
We shall overcome
We shall overcome some day

CHORUS

Political Cartoon (Restaurant)

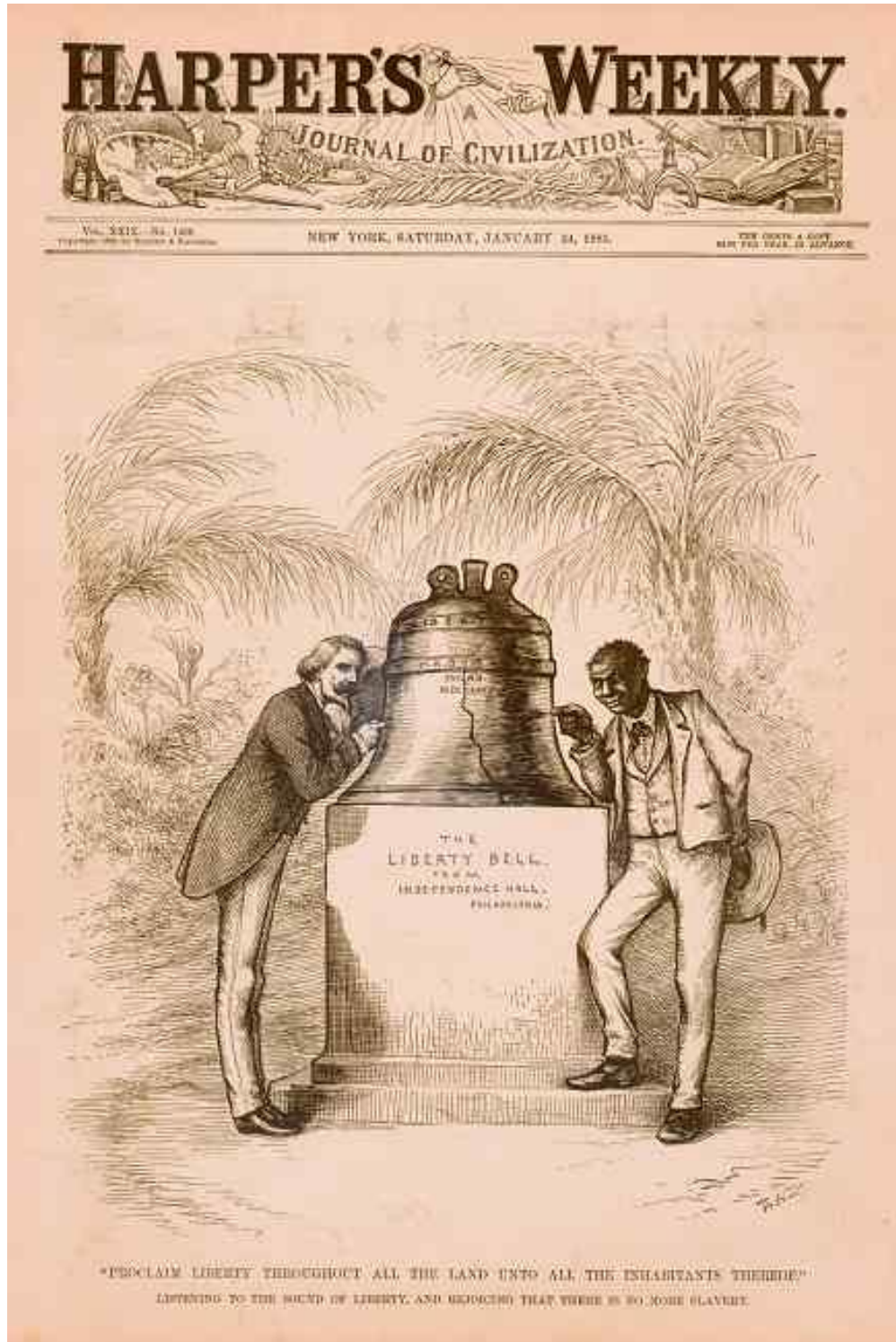
Source: Library of Congress

<http://loc.gov/rr/print/swann/herblock/images/s03475u.jpg>



Group 5: Handout
Harper's Weekly Cover
Source: Philadelphia Print Shop, Ltd.
<http://www.philaprintshop.com/images/hwliberty.jpg>

Thomas Nast. "Proclaim Liberty throughout all the Land unto all the Inhabitants Thereof.' Listening to the Sound of Liberty, and Rejoicing that there is no more Slavery." January 24, 1885.



Name: _____



Liberty and the Civil Rights Era

Work with your group to answer the essential questions below in complete sentences.

My primary source is _____

1. What is a symbol? What is symbolism?
2. What did the Liberty Bell represent to civil rights groups? Provide examples.
3. Was the Liberty Bell used successfully as a symbol during the civil rights era?
4. Have civil rights groups achieved what they set out to achieve? Explain why or why not.

Liberty and Civil Rights Era Rubric

Student Name: _____

Date: _____

Project Requirements	Possible Points	Points Earned
Project clearly depicts the group being presented.	10	
Project clearly depicts the Liberty Bell as a symbol for freedom.	10	
Paragraph clearly explains how the bell is used to symbolize freedom.	10	
Paragraph clearly explains if you feel your project is a successful example of freedom.	10	
Correct spelling and grammar (project and paragraph)	10	
Project is done neatly and is handed in on time	10	
Total Score	60	

Comments:

