

NORMAN
ROCKWELL
MUSEUM

+



LITERACY
NETWORK



GUIDE FOR TUTORS

NORMAN ROCKWELL MUSEUM

SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY FOR LITNET TUTORS AND LEARNERS!

Dear LitNet Tutor,

We are excited to invite you and your learner to Norman Rockwell Museum as our guests for a new pilot program. Explore Norman Rockwell's paintings together as a way to enhance your lessons and engage with the universal language of art. We hope you will use this guide to prepare for your visit.

In this guide you will find information on some of Rockwell's most important works as well as suggested discussion questions to encourage further dialogue for each painting.

Visits can be scheduled on weekdays (Monday-Friday; Closed Wednesday) starting January 5th through March 31st.

To reserve your LitNet Tutor & Learner visit, please email: learn@nrm.org with your requested date and total number of participants. An NRM team member will follow up with you. Please Note: reservations will be booked under the tutor's name, and the tutor will receive an email confirmation of their reservation.

Sincerely,

Learning & Engagement Team
Norman Rockwell Museum

[About Norman Rockwell](#)

Norman Rockwell (1894-1978) was one of the best known and beloved American artists. His illustrations explore the small dramas of life in a New England town and some of the most important social issues of his day. Rockwell lived and worked in Stockbridge, MA for the last 25 years of his life.

[About Norman Rockwell Museum](#)

The Museum houses the world's largest and most significant collection of Rockwell's work, including 998 original paintings and drawings. Rockwell's Stockbridge studio, moved to the Museum site, is open to the public from May through October, and features original art materials, his library, furnishings, and personal items. The Museum also houses the Norman Rockwell Archives, a collection of more than 100,000 items, including working photographs, letters, personal calendars, fan mail, and business documents.

[Mission](#)

The Norman Rockwell Museum illuminates the power of American illustration art to reflect and shape society, and advances the enduring values of kindness, respect, and social equity portrayed by Norman Rockwell.



Norman Rockwell (1894-1978)

Stockbridge Main Street at Christmas (Home for Christmas), 1967

Background Information

Rockwell's 1967 depiction of *Stockbridge Main Street at Christmas* was a fold-out feature in a popular magazine called *McCall's*. It was designed so that families could take it out and display it in their homes. If you drive down this street today, it looks largely unchanged. Rockwell said, "Stockbridge was the best of New England," and it was his home for the last 25 years of his life. In fact, his Stockbridge home and studio are included in this very image: note the smaller white and red buildings at the far right side of the canvas.

Rockwell's painting has come to symbolize Christmas in America, just as Rockwell intended. Rockwell takes you on a Christmas Eve Walk along Stockbridge's main street –past the public library, the antiques and gift shops, the insurance office, the supermarket behind its Greek-revival facade, past the barbershop, the old town office, the new town bank, and down to the rambling historic hotel. *McCall's* reached out to its national audience by adding, "Wherever you happen to hail from—city, suburb, farm, or ranch— we hope you will have, for a moment, the feeling of coming home for Christmas."

Rockwell's assistant Louie Lamone photographed each building, and Rockwell hired a local architect, Angela Kalisher to help draw them. Since he painted the buildings individually, the result is a scene that lacks perspective. Established in 1773 as a stagecoach stop, the Red Lion Inn has always been the social hub of town. In a window above the market, a Christmas tree glows in a room that was Rockwell's studio from 1953 to 1957. The Old Corner House, which became the home of the first Norman Rockwell Museum two years after the painting was completed, stands at the left border of the painting.

Norman Rockwell, *Home for Christmas*, 1967. Illustration for *McCall's*, December 1967. Norman Rockwell Museum Collection, Norman Rockwell Art Collection Trust. ©NRFA All rights reserved.

NORMAN ROCKWELL MUSEUM



Norman Rockwell (1894-1978)

Stockbridge Main Street at Christmas (Home for Christmas), 1967

Discussion Questions

- › How would you describe the overall scene?
- › How does this town differ from the place where you grew up?
- › This represents a real street in the Berkshires; have you been there before?
- › Maybe you have been in one of these buildings. If not, consider visiting after your time at the Museum so you can discuss what is the same and what has changed.

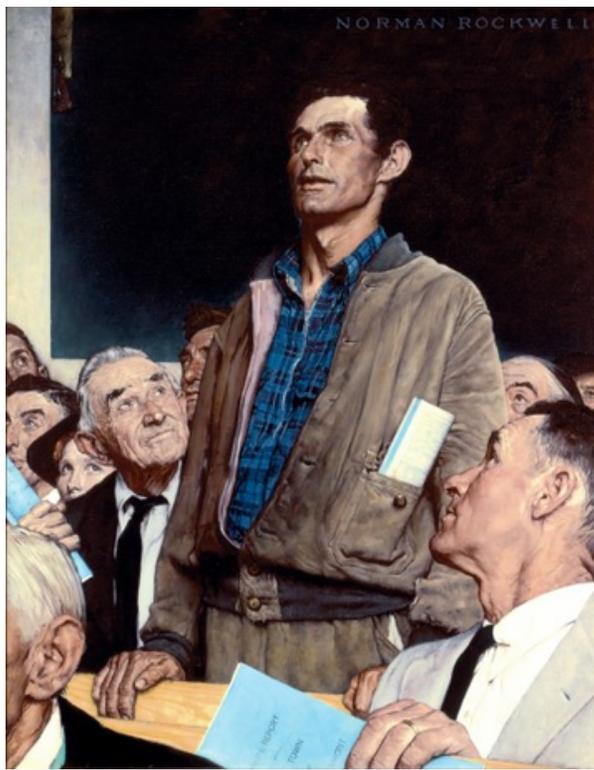


FOUR FREEDOMS GALLERY INTRODUCTION

Background Information

This gallery was designed for Norman Rockwell's iconic *Four Freedoms* paintings. Rockwell was inspired to create this series after hearing a speech given by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1941. When the speech was given, and when Rockwell began these paintings, the US was not yet actively involved in WWII, though it was looking more and more like involvement would become inevitable—a milestone not only for the US but for the world.

FDR's speech focused on four core values of American society that he believed should be afforded to people the world over: *Freedom from Fear*, *Freedom From Want*, *Freedom of Worship*, and *Freedom of Speech*. Rockwell's illustrations were circulated around the country inside *The Saturday Evening Post*, a very popular general interest magazine. The paintings were a phenomenal success.

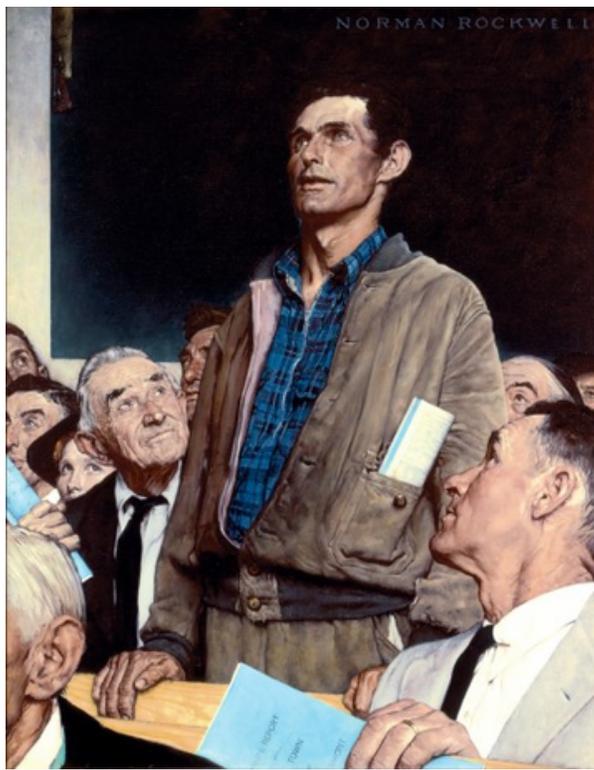


Norman Rockwell (1894-1978)
Freedom of Speech, 1943

Background Information

Norman Rockwell's *Freedom of Speech* is arguably among the most iconic works of American art. Popular from its first publication in *The Saturday Evening Post*, the painting continues to be relevant today, addressing issues relating to freedom of thought and speech, and the power of advocacy and community. It is the only work in Rockwell's *Four Freedoms* series that is based upon a specific event.

On November 9, 1940, the school in Rockwell's town of Arlington, Vermont, burned down. A replacement school was proposed for approval and townspeople were asked to vote in favor of the project and raise taxes. Jim Edgerton, a farmer and neighbor of Rockwell's, was hit hard by the collapse of milk prices during the Depression and an outbreak of disease among his herd: his eighty-acre dairy farm was going out of business. The impact of additional taxes would have been a challenge for the man, who, in the words of his son Buddy, "held everyone's full attention as he passionately outlined his minority position. Finishing with thanks and a nod of his head, he sat down; and then the townspeople voted to build the new school." Rockwell includes himself as a witness to the scene here. He can be seen on the left side of the painting.



Norman Rockwell (1894-1978)
Freedom of Speech, 1943

Discussion Questions

- › What do you notice about the man who is standing?
- › How is he dressed differently than the other people in the crowd?
- › How might you describe the people's reactions to him?
- › Have you ever had to stand up and share an opinion in front of a large group of people who may not all agree with you? If so, what was that like; if not, how do you think that would feel?



Norman Rockwell (1894-1978)
Freedom from Fear, 1943

Background Information

Here we see an American family – parents tucking their children into bed at night. As in many of his paintings, Rockwell gives us a view through to the space beyond the immediate scene. Here we see the warm light shining up the stairwell from the living room below. The house feels cozy, safe, and secure. The child’s doll is not tucked close to the chest like a security blanket, but has been cast aside for the night on the floor. It may at first read like a peaceful bedroom scene.

Yet, *Freedom from Fear* was painted while Europe was under siege. The only clue we have here to the larger story is when we zoom in to the text on the newspaper with headlines: “bombing, horror.” Reports were coming in from Europe where parents could not so securely tuck their children in due the nightly bombardments and Nazi atrocities. The father of three sons, Rockwell intended to convey the notion that all parents should have the freedom to put their children to bed each night with the assurance of their safety.



Norman Rockwell (1894-1978)
Freedom from Fear, 1943

Discussion Questions

- > What is happening in this image?
- > What is the relationship between these people?
- > What time is it? How do you know?
- > What do you notice about the newspaper?
- > If you are a parent, how does this image make you feel?



Norman Rockwell (1894-1978)
Freedom from Want, 1943

Background Information

The piece was inspired by, and has since become a model for, the all-American Thanksgiving. The most appropriated of Rockwell's artworks, its composition is familiar to many, and has made its way into the public consciousness.

The painting features the artist's neighbors and family members, who posed in his studio at individual sessions. The work reflects Rockwell's mastery of visual texture in art, from the gleam of white china on a white tablecloth to the transparency of water in glasses. Despite Rockwell's artistic optimism, he had misgivings about depicting the bounty of the holiday when much of Europe was "starving, overrun [and] displaced" during World War II. In letters to Rockwell, the public commented upon the abundance of food, but also the importance of community and conviviality as a point of emphasis.

Norman Rockwell, *Freedom from Want*, 1943. Illustration for *The Saturday Evening Post*, March, 6, 1943. Norman Rockwell Museum Collection, Norman Rockwell Art Collection Trust. © 1943 SEPS: Licensed by Curtis Licensing, Indianapolis, IN. All rights reserved.



Norman Rockwell (1894-1978)
Freedom from Want, 1943

Discussion Questions

- > What is happening in this image?
- > How would you describe the people in this painting?
- > Does your family have any special traditions that involve holiday meals?



Norman Rockwell (1894-1978)
Freedom of Worship, 1943

Background Information

Emphasizing unity despite differences, Rockwell's *Freedom of Worship* presents a vision for a world without discrimination based upon religious practice or belief. The artist considered this to be one of the strongest paintings in his *Four Freedoms* series.

For Rockwell, the positions and gestures of hands are second only to the expressive qualities of faces, as is evident in this work. The words "Each according to the dictates of his own conscience" inscribed above, reflect Rockwell's own views. The words also appear in many US state constitutions and were originally penned by President George Washington to the United Baptist Chamber of Virginia, in 1789: "Every man, conducting himself as a good citizen, and being accountable to God alone for his religious opinions, ought to be protected in worshiping the Deity according to the dictates of his own conscience."

Norman Rockwell, *Freedom of Worship*, 1943. Illustration for The Saturday Evening Post, February 27, 1943. Norman Rockwell Museum Collection, Norman Rockwell Art Collection Trust. © 1943 SEPS: Licensed by Curtis Licensing, Indianapolis, IN. All rights reserved.

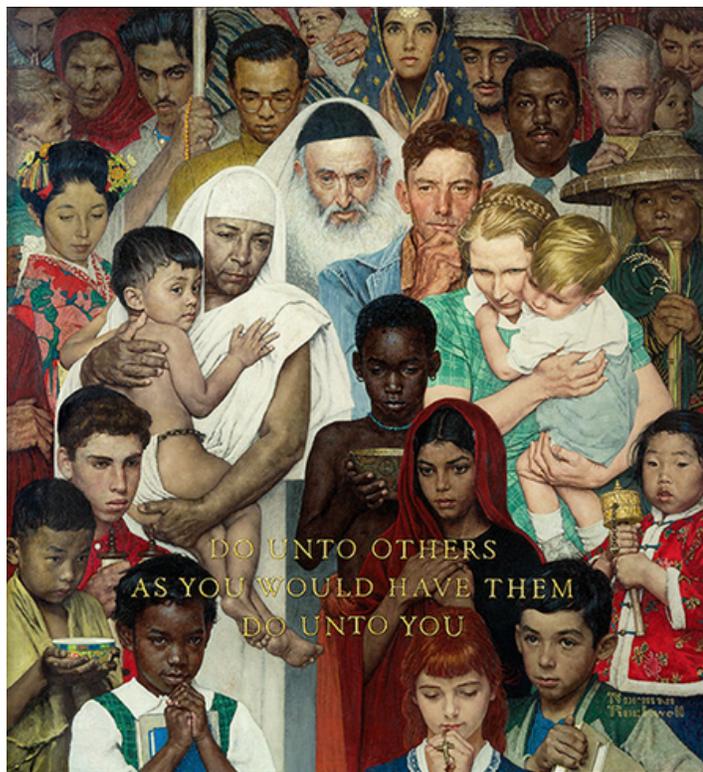


Norman Rockwell (1894-1978)
Freedom of Worship, 1943

Discussion Questions

- › What do you notice about this painting?
- › Discuss the words at the top of the painting and what they mean.
- › Why do you think Rockwell put people of different religious traditions together?
- › Is there anyone you are close with that has beliefs that are different from your own?

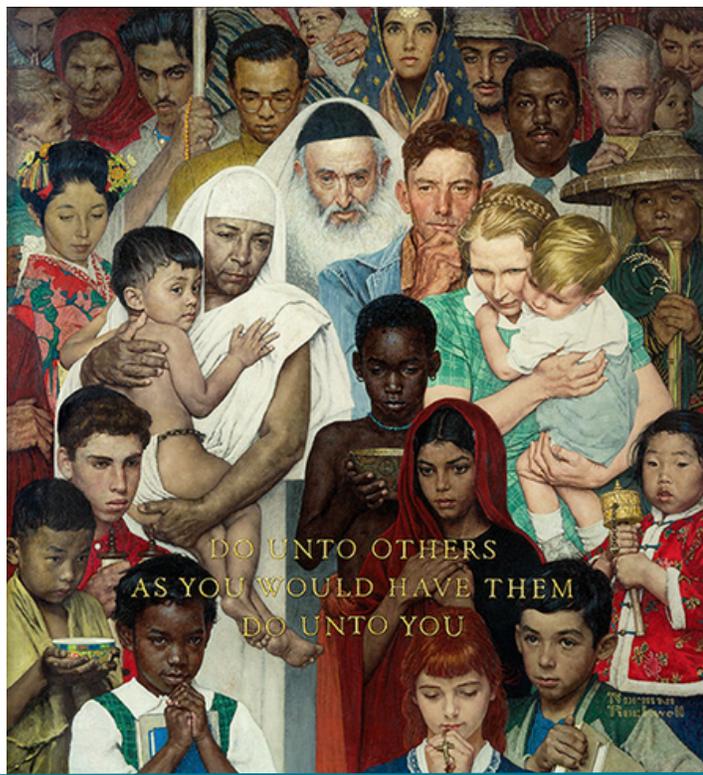
Norman Rockwell, *Freedom of Worship*, 1943. Illustration for *The Saturday Evening Post*, February 27, 1943. Norman Rockwell Museum Collection, Norman Rockwell Art Collection Trust. © 1943 SEPS: Licensed by Curtis Licensing, Indianapolis, IN. All rights reserved.



Norman Rockwell (1894-1978)
Golden Rule, 1961

Background Information

In preparing to paint this 1961 *Saturday Evening Post* cover, Norman Rockwell noted that many countries, cultures, and religions incorporate some version of the golden rule into their belief systems. “Do Unto Others as You Would Have Them Do Unto You” is a simple but universally recognized concept. Rockwell paints a diverse group of people representing different ages, genders, races, ethnic backgrounds, and religious traditions. And most importantly, all as equals. Rockwell said “I had tried to depict all peoples of the world gathered together.” Rockwell was a compassionate man, and this simple phrase reflected his philosophy.



Norman Rockwell (1894-1978)
Golden Rule, 1961

Discussion Questions

- > What do you notice about the people in this painting?
- > Why do you think Rockwell features children so prominently here?
- > Does your own culture or religious traditions have a similar phrase to the one painted: “Do Unto Others As You Would Have Them Do Unto You?”

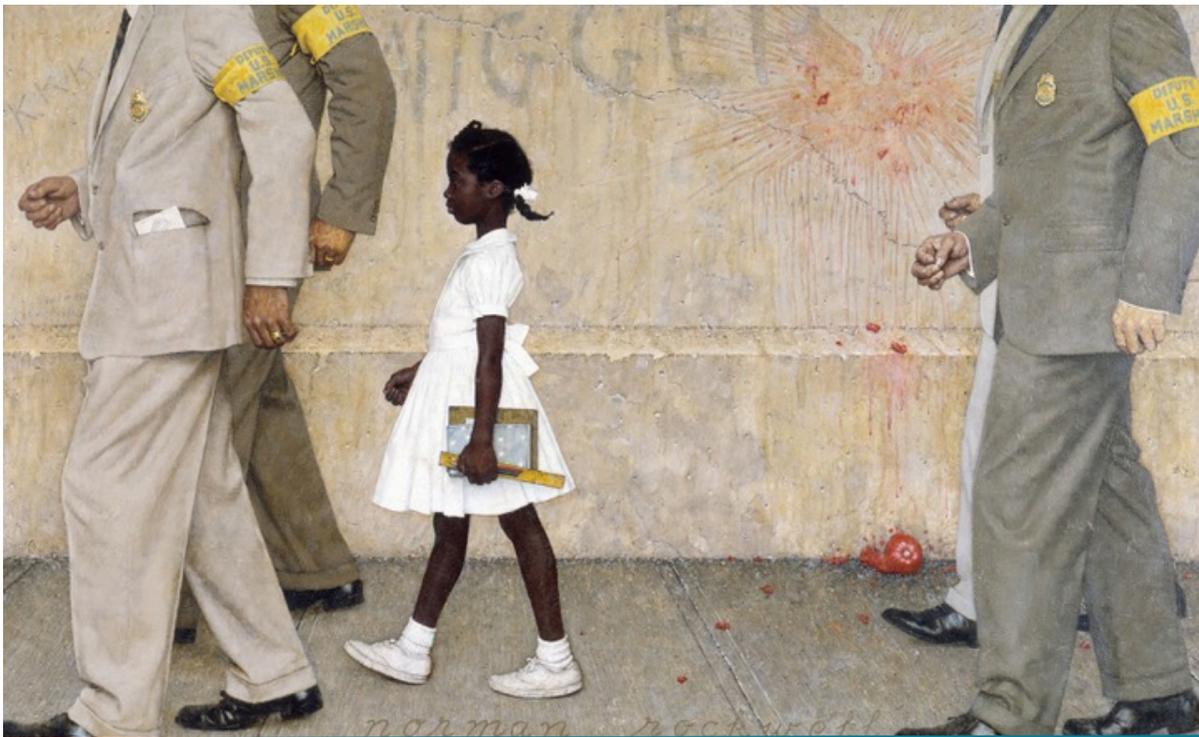


Norman Rockwell (1894-1978)
The Problem We All Live With, 1964

Background Information

Norman Rockwell's 1963 painting *The Problem We All Live With* marked the illustrator's powerful entry into social commentary and civil rights advocacy, aligning art with activism at a pivotal moment in American history. Published in *Look* magazine, the image remains one of the most iconic artistic representations of the fight to desegregate American schools in the 1960s and 1970s. With this painting, Rockwell makes an important departure that captures a pivotal moment of the Civil Rights Movement.

After the US Supreme Court ruled in 1954 that school segregation was unconstitutional, New Orleans was slow to take action. It was not until November 1960 that four young black girls (Ruby Bridges, Gail Etienne, Tessie Provost, and Leona Tate) were the first to desegregate the schools in their city. In his symbolic depiction of this event, Rockwell paints a young black girl being escorted to school by federal marshals. Rockwell purposefully cropped the image so that we don't see the marshals' heads, thereby drawing our full attention to the brave young girl. Racial slurs are graffitied on the wall. Someone has violently thrown a tomato towards her, yet she marches steadfast in her step with her book in hand. Interestingly, Rockwell places us as the viewer in the very place the riotous crowd would have been standing, perhaps to invite us to think further of our own reactions to the scene before us.



Norman Rockwell (1894-1978)
The Problem We All Live With, 1964

Discussion Questions

- › What do you notice about this painting?
- › Where do you think these people are going on their walk?
- › How do you think the smashed tomato and hateful graffiti contribute to the storytelling in this image?



Norman Rockwell (1894-1978)
New Kids in the Neighborhood, 1967

Background Information

Rockwell painted this image to accompany an article about the desegregation of Chicago suburbs that was published in *Look* magazine in 1967. Here, as he does in many works exploring more challenging topics, Rockwell focuses on children who are sympathetic subjects. A black family is moving in—the family’s furniture is in the driveway and the mover is still unloading the large truck. In front of the truck stand two black children and three white children. The white children have come to see their new neighbors. Are they just curious or feeling territorial? If we look more closely, we see opportunities for greater connection. All three boys have baseball gloves, both girls are wearing pink hairbows, and both groups have pets.

Look carefully at the house next door. Who is in the window, peeking through the curtains? Is she a nosy neighbor ready to start gossiping about the new neighbors? Or is she the person who sent the children next door to welcome the new children? As we look upon this scene, Rockwell asks us to consider what might happen next.



Norman Rockwell (1894-1978)
New Kids in the Neighborhood, 1967

Discussion Questions

- > What is happening in this image?
- > What do the children have in common?
- > What might the kids' body language be suggesting?



Norman Rockwell (1894-1978)
Glen Canyon Dam, 1969

Background Information

Located on the Colorado River in Arizona, Glen Canyon Dam was built to provide hydroelectricity and flow regulation from the upper river basin to the lower. Completed in 1966, it formed Lake Powell, the second largest man-made lake in the United States. However, the destruction of the ecosystem in the Colorado River below dramatically altered the landscape where the Navajo people farmed and herded. In addition, the creation of Lake Powell flooded many sacred sites. Rockwell decided to humanize this work by featuring a Navajo family contemplating the project's impact on indigenous people. The artist and his wife Molly drove to Black Mesa in search of models, where they met and photographed the John Lane family and their horse. Rockwell completed the painting at his Stockbridge studio using his sketches and reference photos that he had gathered, including images of the Dam and Lake Powell taken from the canyon rim, from an airplane and from a boat.



Norman Rockwell (1894-1978)
Glen Canyon Dam, 1969

Discussion Questions

- › What do you notice about this painting?
- › What might the figures' body language indicate?
- › How would you compare and contrast the different animals that are pictured?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR YOUR VISIT

Audio Tours via the Norman Rockwell Museum Mobile App:



Select audio tours on the mobile app have been translated into additional languages. The main Norman Rockwell audio tour is available in English and Spanish (partial). The *Four Freedoms* audio tour is available in English, Spanish, French, German, Arabic, Japanese, and Chinese.

Public Transportation to Norman Rockwell Museum:



Scan this code to access the maps for Berkshire Regional Transit Authority's B-Bus routes.

Norman Rockwell Museum is found along the Green #21 Bus Route.



Scan this code to access for the South County Connector, an On-Demand transit program for everyone. Operating 7 days a week within the towns of Egremont, Great Barrington, Monterey, Stockbridge, West Stockbridge, and Sheffield.