

## **Lesson Plan: Magna Carta Gallery Talk**

### **Goal**

Greater awareness of concepts of freedom, democracy, personal and political power, “radical words” and radical acts—including the notions of freedom of thought, freedom of imagination, freedom of expression, and related artistic creativity.

### **Objectives**

Students will learn about six significant historical documents spanning almost 800 years that were written as a quest to end injustice and to claim human rights. Students will engage with works of art that present themes and concepts related to the documents.

### **Procedure**

- Introduce self, theme, do’s and don’ts in the Museum Pavilion (5 Minutes)
- Overview of the documents (15-25 minutes)
  - Introduce the documents in the exhibition including the name of the document and its purpose—who wrote it/why/ its effects. Connect each document with the theme of “radical words” (see below)

NOTE: You may or may not want to cover all six of the documents in detail and you most likely WILL NOT include all information about every document. The information is here for your background knowledge. Share what seems reasonable depending on the dynamics of your group and their reason for visiting.

#### **1. Magna Carta**

- Barons rebelled against unfair treatment/taxation
- Forced King John to agree to their requests
- First time a king was forced to concede rights to his subjects in British history
- Changes from June 15 to June 19: rights extended to all “freemen,” not just barons
- Some consider Magna Carta as a very early effort to address women’s rights as it protects widows
- Clause about “Enforcement Council”(power above the king)—subsequently left out of the document
- Annulled by Pope a few weeks later
- Reinstated in 1216

#### **2. Constitution**

- George Mason’s copy of draft; almost all of his edits were included in actual Constitution
- He voted against ratifying; was an anti-federalist
- The document was not radical enough
- He did vote for the 1789 Constitution WITH the Bill of Rights

3. Declaration of Independence
  - Certainly a radical document!
  - Very parallel to the situation that led to the creation of Magna Carta (unfair taxation, no representation!)
4. Emancipation Proclamation
  - Wasn't actually as radical as it might have been
  - Did not proclaim ALL slaves must be freed
  - Instead, all slaves in "outlaw" (non-Union) states
  - Was political, however—led to the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment in 1865
5. Declaration of the Rights of the Women of the United States
  - Written by the National Women's Suffragette Association founded in 1869
  - July 4, 1876 (100 years after the Declaration of Independence)
  - Nine articles of impeachment
  - Protest that the rights guaranteed to men are NOT enjoyed by women
  - Originally the women planned to present a moment of silence and hand out copies of this Declaration of Rights. They were NOT given the time in the program so they went to a side stage and read it publicly.
6. Universal Declaration of Human Rights
  - Formation of United Nations motivated by post-World War II dread and determined to be more effective than the League of Nations
  - United Nations commissioned a group to study human rights
  - Eleanor Roosevelt was United States representative to the commission and chair of the group
  - Ideas that by virtue of being human, you have rights, and the issue of how governments treat their citizens is an international concern—relatively new ideas in human history

### **Related Artwork**

Engage with works of art related to concepts of freedom, democracy, personal and political power, "radical words," and radical acts.

Suggested works of art:

- *The Martyrdom of St. Catherine of Alexandria* by Luca Signorelli
- *Wisdom Supporting Liberty* by Jules Dalou
- Milk jug
- Impressionist works
- *Little Dancer Aged Fourteen* by Edgar Degas
- Works in the exhibition *Make It New* (while it's here!)

(You may do this talk in either direction: Art ← → Documents)

### **Closure**

- Consider "radical" and its connotation in today's world. Are there other thoughts about "radical" after this talk?
- In what ways are words and artworks similar in their power to express radical ideas? In what ways are they different?
- How is courage related to this topic?