

8th Grade Explores Freedom Through Personal Stories

The 8th grade class recently completed a meaningful and thought-provoking project that explored the complex theme of freedom. Students were challenged to interview someone who had experienced the loss, gain, defense, or protection of freedom, and then write an anecdote capturing that person's story.

The assignment began with students learning how to craft thoughtful, open-ended questions to guide their interviews. After practicing their interview techniques, they connected with individuals whose experiences with freedom were deeply personal—ranging from immigrants seeking a better life to veterans who served to defend it.

Farley, Lila 5

Mrs. Arevalo

English 8

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Freedom Interview

I interviewed my dad, Thomas Farley, on what freedom means to him. He was a marine in the United States Marine Corps. He joined in 1992 when he was 19 years old. He was in the military for 7 years and until he was 27. My dad said that he wanted to join the military because he wasn't taking school very seriously and he wanted to feel like he was doing something important. He also said that he wanted to "proudly serve his country." Another reason that he joined the military was to achieve the name of United States Marine since many people cannot claim that title. His dad, my grandpa, was also in the military so that influenced him to join as well. He also said that he "wanted to have a cool gun... just kidding." My dad told me that there is much more to it. Before my dad joined the military, he said that he never really thought about what the meaning of freedom was to him.

My dad's thoughts and meaning of freedom changed after being in the military from not really knowing what freedom meant to him to a growing love for God and America. He realized the sacrifices that people make to keep our country free. He also said that it is a big commitment to be in the army since it takes away all of your time. Today, my dad plans on keeping freedom in America for the next generations by "being a part of a patriotic group of like minded people" who do not tolerate freedom being taken away and stand up to keep freedom thriving in America. My dad also stands up for his and others constitutional rights and teaches me and my brother to do so as well. As a teacher he also "encourages fellow educators to explain to their students how important it is for us to have our freedoms and to encourage those that they teach, to learn about our freedoms and the sacrifices people have made for our country to remain free. Semper Fi." He says that teachers in public schools today do not take time to honor those who fought for our freedom. The saying "Semper Fi" is something that other marines say to each other, meaning "always faithful."

Some character traits that my dad developed from being in the marines was, "self discipline, responsibility, patriotism, bravery, honesty and a sense of pride, plus a love of God, Country and Corps." I truly do believe that being in the marines helped my dad to be a better person and a faithful follower of God. He also wanted to thank teachers out there who assign assignments like these since it doesn't happen enough. People should take time to honor our soldiers for their bravery and what they did for our country: keep it free.

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Through these powerful conversations, students gained insight into the sacrifices, challenges, and triumphs that come with the fight for freedom. Hearing firsthand accounts helped them move beyond textbook definitions, developing empathy and a more profound appreciation for the freedoms they often take for granted.

The final step of the project asked students to write an anecdote that reflected the heart of their interviewee's story. In doing so, they not only strengthened their writing and communication skills, but also carried forward the voices of those who have lived through moments of hardship, bravery, and hope—all in the name of freedom.

Lila Farley #5

Interview Questions on freedom-

What is your name?- "Thomas Farley"

When did you join the military (age/year)?- "I joined the military in 1992. I was 19 years old."

What branch were you in?- "United States Marine Corps"

How long were you in the military for?- "I was in the military for 7 years (until I was 27). "

Why did you join the military?- "I wanted to have a cool gun. Just kidding, there is a lot more to it. I wasn't taking school very seriously and I felt like I needed to do something important, so I decided that a good way to make myself be more responsible would be to go into the military. I wanted to be a marine and proudly serve my country. My dad was in the military as well. Very few people can claim the title of United States Marine and I wanted to achieve that goal."

What are some character traits that being in the military developed in you?- "The military taught me to have self discipline, responsibility, patriotism, bravery, honesty and a sense of pride, plus a love of God, Country and Corps."

Before you joined the military, what did freedom initially mean to you?- "Before I joined the military, I never really thought about it. I was just a dumb teenager."

How did joining the military make an impact on your previous meaning of freedom?- "Joining the military made me realize the sacrifices people make to keep our country free. Being in the military takes your personal time away which is a big commitment, which is required to keep our country free."

Today, how do you plan on keeping the right of freedom in America for the next generations?- "I plan to keep freedom for the next generations by being a part of a patriotic group of people who are like minded, who stand up for our freedoms and don't tolerate freedoms being taken away. I also actively stand up for our constitutional rights and I teach my children to do so also."

Anything else- " I encourage fellow educators to explain to their students how important it is for us to have our freedoms and to encourage those that they teach, to learn about our freedoms and the sacrifices people have made for our country to remain free. Semper Fi."

"Thank you Mrs. Arevalo for having this assignment. Assignments like this are not given enough in classrooms these days."