

## Norman Rockwell's "Four Freedoms" Paintings

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After the Japanese attacked the United States in December of 1941, the U.S. entered the second World War. Artist Norman Rockwell explained that he "wanted to do something bigger than a war poster, make some statement about why the country was fighting the war." Later, as he looked for inspiration he turned to a speech by President Roosevelt in 1941. In that speech President Roosevelt spoke about a future world order founded on the "essential human freedoms." This address became known as the "Four Freedoms" speech.

Rockwell decided to illustrate each of those freedoms using his Vermont neighbors as models: "I'll express the ideas in simple, everyday scenes." These paintings, which later became government posters, were by far the most popular works of art produced during World War II.

In the relevant part of the speech, President Roosevelt announced:

*In the future days, which we seek to make secure, we look forward to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms.*

*The first is freedom of speech and expression—everywhere in the world.*

*The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way—everywhere in the world.*

*The third is freedom from want—which, translated into world terms, means economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants—everywhere in the world.*

*The fourth is freedom from fear—which, translated into world terms, means a world-wide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor—anywhere in the world.*