

★ Enrichment Activity 11



To Enter or Not to Enter World War II

The war in Europe in the late 1930s created conflict among Americans over the proper role and response of the United States to the fighting. As the war grew

worse for the Allies, President Roosevelt increasingly felt it necessary to involve the United States. Other influential Americans held differing views.

DIRECTIONS: On January 6, 1941, President Roosevelt delivered a speech to Congress in which he outlined the four freedoms for which the Allies were fighting, and called for Congress's support. Two weeks later, University of Chicago president Robert M. Hutchins, in a national radio address, responded to Roosevelt's speech. Read the excerpts below from both speeches, and then answer the questions that follow.



Roosevelt:

... 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.

That is no vision of a distant millennium. It is a definite basis for a kind of world attainable in our own time and generation. That kind of world is the very antithesis of the so-called new order of tyranny, which the dictators seek to create with the crash of a bomb. . . .

Freedom means the supremacy of human rights everywhere. Our support goes to those who struggle to gain those rights or keep them. Our strength is in our unity of purpose.

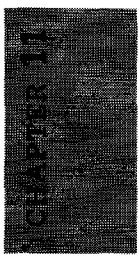
Hutchins:

With the President's desire to see freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear flourish everywhere we must all agree. . . . The question is whether entrance into this war is likely to bring us closer to this goal.

... The reason why we have no chance to help humanity if we go into this war is that we are not prepared. I do not mean, primarily, that we are unprepared in the military sense. I mean that we are morally and intellectually unprepared to execute the moral mission to which the President calls us. . . .

Have we freedom of speech and freedom of worship in this country? We do have freedom to say what everybody else is saying and freedom of worship if we do not take our religion too seriously. But teachers who do not conform to the established canons of social thought lose their jobs. People who are called "radicals" have mysterious difficulties in renting halls.

... [We] know that millions of men and women are disfranchised in this country because of their race, color, or condition of economic servitude.



★ Enrichment Activity 11 (continued)

... The aims of a democratic community are moral. United by devotion to law, equality, and justice, the democratic community works together for the happiness of all the citizens. I leave to you the decision whether we have yet achieved a democratic community in the United States.

What, then, should our policy be? Instead of doing everything we can to get into the war, we should do everything we can to stay at peace. Our policy should be peace.

... But most important of all, we should take up with new vigor the long struggle for moral, intellectual, and spiritual preparedness. If we would change the face of the earth, we must first change our own hearts.

By Robert M. Hutchins, from an address given January 23, 1941, on the National Broadcasting Company.



Questions to Consider

1. What were the four freedoms that Roosevelt supported?

2. On what points did the president and Dr. Hutchins agree?

3. On what points did the president and Dr. Hutchins disagree?

4. What did Dr. Hutchins mean when he said, "If we would change the face of the earth, we must first change our own hearts"?

5. **GO A STEP FURTHER** ► If the United States faced a similar world situation today, and these two arguments were presented, which one would you support and why? Be able to defend your answer.

