Westminster Abbey
Learning

British Values: Individual Liberty – teachers' notes

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SLIDE 3: Use this diagram to quickly introduce or recap the five British Values. This slide features in each Westminster Abbey British Values lesson allowing for the lessons to be taught in any order. It is important to remind pupils that many other countries share some or all of these values, but today we are examining those considered important here in Britain.

A reminder for teachers that Britain, or Great Britain, is a geographic and political term referring to the island known as Britain which includes England, Scotland, Wales and outlaying islands such as the Isle of Wight. It does not include Northern Ireland.

SLIDE 4: Ask pupils if they have heard of the idea of individual liberty and if they know what it means.

SLIDE 5: Individual Liberty is the idea that all individuals are members of a society or community and although we may be free as individuals, we are still expected to follow the rules of our communities.

Ask pupils what communities they are part of. This could include their family, school, sports groups etc.

SLIDE 6: The idea of Individual Liberty is addressed in one form or another by all the major religions of the world and, for that matter, by those who have no faith at all. These include, from left to right: Christianity; Judaism; Sikhism; Buddhism; Islam; Jainism; and Humanism.

SLIDE 7: As a king or a queen, encourage your class to let their imaginations run free and come up with rules and laws that excite them. Would your pupils turn up to school? Would they naturally think about eating healthily? Would they consider their liberty to be more important than others?

In British history, there are examples of monarchs behaving as if they were above the law, most famously King John (1199-1216). This angered his barons who responded by forcing him to sign Magna Carta – an acknowledgement that even a monarch's powers are limited by law.

SLIDE 8: An important part of the monarch's coronation ceremony is where the king or queen to be makes a series of promises to serve the people and to obey the laws of the land.

We have to be careful when considering our own liberty, as we have to think about how that might affect other people. For example, you cannot hurt someone else and you must respect other people's freedoms and cannot take them away.

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SLIDE 9: Tell your pupils about Henry III (1216-1272). The son of King John, Henry III also had troubles of his own when he came to throne. Though we remember Henry as the king who rebuilt Westminster Abbey in 1245, he was also a monarch who struggled to rule effectively, constantly clashing with his barons and other nobles.

SLIDE 10: Individual Liberty has not just been at risk from some of our kings and queens. There have been times in our history when individual liberty has been restricted.

Talk to pupils about how in both world wars, people's liberties were restricted. People had to give up all sorts of things for the sake of the war effort, for example pupils might have heard of food rationing. Many men from around the world (from what was the British Empire) joined the armed forces to fight for Britain. Some of these men paid the ultimate price – losing not just their liberty but also their lives.

SLIDE 11: Nelson Mandela was a campaigner for Black people in South Africa – fighting for their rights at a time when their freedoms were severely limited through the policy of Apartheid. Apartheid ("apartness" in the language of Afrikaans) was a system of legislation that upheld segregationist policies against non-white citizens of South Africa. It was abolished in 1991.

SLIDE 12: Here are two examples of people memorialised in Westminster Abbey. Oscar Wilde is an example of someone whose individual liberties were restricted, while Oliver Cromwell is an example of someone who restricted other people's individual liberties.

Oscar Wilde was a famous writer and poet, who was imprisoned for his sexuality. Though he was ultimately released, the public shame he experienced ultimately destroyed his career and he died soon after.

Oliver Cromwell proclaimed himself 'Lord Protector' of the Kingdom and imposed a series of restrictions on what people could believe – even, at one stage, banning certain elements of Christmas.

SLIDE 13: Talk to pupils about some or all of these examples.

From left to right:
George Frideric Handel is a famous composer who was best remembered for the 'Halleluiah Chorus', amongst other great works.
Edward Lear is famous for his 'nonsense poetry', as well as other rhymes including 'The Owl and the Pussycat'
Charlotte, Emily and Anne Bronte are sisters who are remembered for writing books, including 'Jane Eyre', 'Wuthering Heights' and 'The Tenant of Wildfell Hall'.
Rudyard Kipling is best remembered for his story 'The Jungle Book', as well as the 'Just So' stories.
William Shakespeare is perhaps the most famous poet and playwright the world has ever seen.

SLIDE 14: Ask pupils to create their own name poem. Depending on the length of pupil's names, they may want to use a middle name or their surname as well.

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SLIDE 15: Ask pupils to share their poems with the class.

SLIDE 16: In this activity, pupils design their individual contribution which can then be part of a class display. Hand out paper triangles for pupils to use. These triangles could be used like bunting and hung up around the classroom, sometimes known as "belonging bunting" or as part of a wall display.

SLIDE 17: As a plenary task, ask pupils to draw around their hand on a piece of paper or in their books. Write the phrase individual liberty on the little finger and ask them to write one sentence about what they have learnt on the palm of their hand outline. These hands could form a classroom display about individual liberty (and the other British Values).

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