Stencil Your Own Free Speech Shirt

Did you know that free speech means more than just talking? Free speech includes any way you want to express yourself. This can include singing, writing, playing music, and much more!

Clothing is another way to express yourself and is protected as free speech. For this craft, you will learn how to stencil your own t-shirt to say what you want!

What You Will Need

- Printer
- Freezer Paper (NOT wax or parchment paper)
- Tape
- A plain t-shirt
- X-acto knife or small pair of scissors
- Iron
- Cardboard
- Fabric paint
- Paintbrush

Instructions

Step 1: Decide what you want your shirt to say! You can sketch a design onto a piece of paper, or print out what you want it to say. We also have some sample stencils of historical activist symbols that you can print out.

Peace Sign (see page 3 for more info & stencil)
Yellow Daffodil (see page 5 for more info & stencil)
Equal Sign (see page 7 for more info & stencil)

Step 2: Tape your design to a table, then tape the freezer paper on top of that, shiny-side-down.

Step 3: Use a pen to trace the design onto your freezer paper.

Step 4: Place your freezer paper over a piece of cardboard, then use an x-acto knife or small pair of scissors to cut out the design. **Please ask your parents for help with this step!**

Step 5: Place your t-shirt onto an ironing board. Place the freezer paper on the t-shirt where you want your design to go.

Step 6: Using a hot, dry iron, iron the freezer paper, shiny side down, to the t-shirt. **Please ask your parents for help with this step!**

Step 7: Place a piece of cardboard in the shirt. With the stencil ironed onto the shirt, take your fabric paint and paint over the stenciled area.

Step 8: Allow the shirt to dry before removing the cardboard. This can take a few hours to overnight.

Step 9: Once the paint is dry, remove your stencil. Voila! There you have a t-shirt with whatever you want to say on it - freedom of speech!

Peace Sign Symbol

The peace sign was originally created in 1958 as a sign to promote nuclear disarmament in the United Kingdom. The peace symbol spread to the United States, where it was used by various groups working for equality and peace - such as civil rights groups, feminists, and anti-Vietnam War activists.

Did you know? In 1965, two Iowa high school students named Mary Beth and John Tinker wore black armbands with peace signs on them to school in protest of the United States' involvement in Vietnam. School leaders suspended the two over the armbands. The Iowa Civil Liberties Union sued the school district on behalf of the students. The case led to Tinker v. Des Moines which the Tinker siblings won, helping to define the First Amendment rights of students in schools!

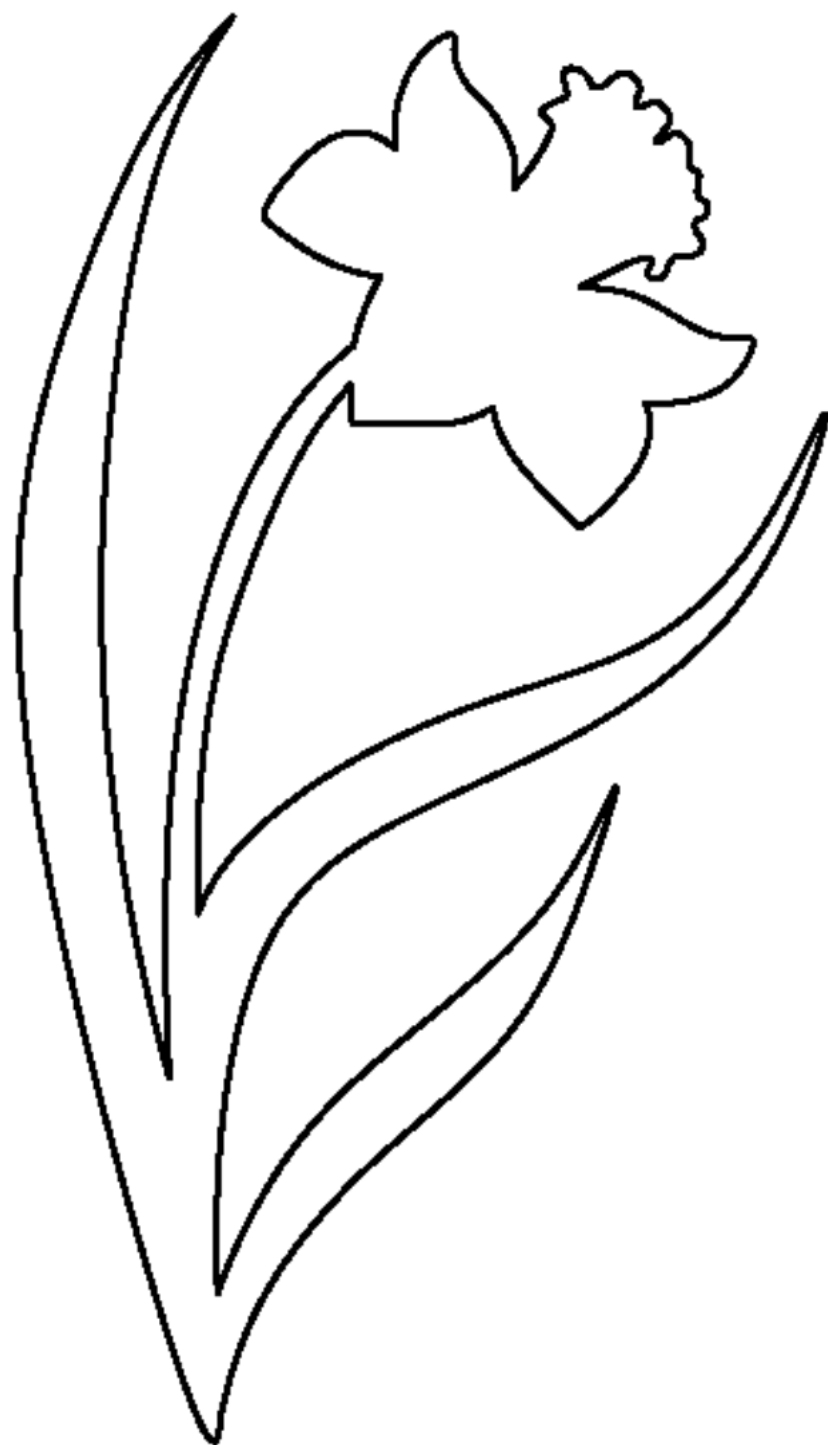See next page for stencil printout.

Yellow Daffodil Symbol

The suffrage movement had many different symbols which activists around the country used to promote their cause. The Maine Suffragettes, a group in Maine who fought for women to have the right to vote, wore a Yellow Daffodil flower as a symbol of their cause.

Did you know? Anne Gannett, the wife of Guy Gannett and former resident of the house that is now the First Amendment Museum, was a leader of the suffrage movement in Augusta, Maine! With the help of women like Anne, the right to vote for women was secured in 1920 with the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment to the US Constitution.

See next page for stencil printout.

Equal Rights Symbol

This simple logo of an equal sign was created in 1995 by the Human Rights Campaign to symbolize the fight for equal rights for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer communities around the country.

Did you know? When the HRC logo was unveiled, LGBTQ+ Americans could not be open about their status in the military, nor could they marry. Since 2011, openly gay, lesbian, and bisexual people have been permitted to serve in the military. In 2021, the transgender ban in the military was lifted. And in 2015, the US Supreme Court struck down bans on gay marriage, making gay marriage legal in all 50 states.