

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**AP<sup>®</sup> U.S. History**  
Teaching History Using  
Cultural Artifacts

CURRICULUM RESOURCE

The College Board  
New York, NY

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# Introduction

Margaret Favretti  
Scarsdale High School  
Scarsdale, New York

Teachers of AP U.S. History might view teaching with cultural artifacts as adding time pressures to an already packed curriculum. Yet, few approaches to teaching history are more intriguing and fruitful for developing student understandings and analytical skills. This curriculum resource seeks to show teachers how approaching U.S. history through the visual arts, literature, music, and architecture can open a unique doorway for students seeking to make sense of the past.

The teaching approaches contained in this resource build on the fact that adolescents learn history best when they can be actively involved in exploring the past and when its relevance to them is clear. High school students who learn how to investigate the past through cultural artifacts can quickly apply the historical thinking skills developed through their studies to the world around them today. The process of artifact analysis directly relates to textual analysis and working with all kinds of evidentiary sources.

Approaching history through cultural artifacts also allows teachers and students to explore history thematically, examining such topics as American identities, cross-cultural interaction, and cultural attitudes. This thematic approach also reinforces the development of essential analytical skills. The tools presented here will allow students to see how the material history of an era—its works of art, architecture, literature, music, and other cultural constructs—can provide a deeper understanding of other topics in U.S. history and enable students to make important connections between different time periods and ideas.

## **Connections to the Revised AP U.S. History Curriculum Framework**

These lessons are designed to be useful to educators throughout the course, introducing content, skills, and concepts that can be revisited and reinforced throughout the year.

Lesson 1 looks at foundational visual analysis skills, whereas Lesson 2 focuses on Period 4 (1800–1848) and Lessons 3-5 address Periods 7 (1898–1945) and 8 (1945–1980) of the revised AP U.S. History curriculum framework. These eras mark critical moments in defining American culture and attitudes.

All lessons engage students in real interpretation and reveal complex contextual understandings for students who might otherwise miss them. Each lesson follows a similar pattern: visual or textual analysis for context depth followed

by interpretive creative exercises to develop students' analytical abilities and provide opportunities for interpretation.

Teaching this series of lessons shows the importance of contextual changes: While Americans in the first half of the 19th century sought to define American culture, Americans at the beginning of the 20th century challenged the old rules. By the 20th century, many artists found a rough grace in urban grit and valorized the mechanized world, and poets, writers, and musicians incorporated diverse cultural traditions into their work. Americans identified themselves with technological progress and industrial power. They viewed speed, innovation, productivity, and efficiency as the cultural characteristics with which the United States could begin to dominate the global economic, political, and cultural scene. In both periods, American artists sought to elevate those aspects of the land or society viewed as unique strengths—Jefferson's arboretum at Monticello, landscape painting and tourism, idealism, and, later, speed, productivity, and diversity. In both cases, doing so meant shifting long-held assumptions and boundaries.

More explicit connections to specific key concepts, historical thinking skills, and thematic learning objectives of the new AP U.S. History curriculum will be noted at the beginning of Lessons 2-5.

### **Connections to the AP U.S. History Exam**

Students will need to use visual and literary evidence in the DBQ in the new format AP U.S. History exam (as has been a component of the DBQ in the older exam as well).

### **Instructional Time and Strategies**

The content and strategies presented here can be used throughout the AP U.S. History course; its purpose is to introduce strategies that can be returned to and built upon throughout the year. Having said that, the lessons presented here are not dependent on one another in order to be useful; that is, it is not necessary that students have completed Lesson 3 as it is presented here in order to be comfortable with the content and processes of Lesson 4. The content is flexible enough that teachers can use as much or as little as they may find useful for their particular situations.

The lessons themselves are able to be scaled up or down as well, to meet the time constraints a teacher may find him- or herself facing. Visual analysis conversations presented here can be held in as little as 15 minutes or may serve as an introduction to a related assignment that could take several days to complete. Similarly, students can examine a single cultural artifact in class discussion or have extended discussions of several works at once, which would necessarily take more time. Using cultural artifacts to teach important concepts (such as identity) and skills (such as analysis) does not add to the overall time it takes to teach the course.

# Considering Context: A Toolkit for Visual Analysis

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Margaret Favretti  
Lisa Yokana  
Scarsdale High School  
Scarsdale, New York

## Essential/Guiding Questions

- How does historical context, including political, economic, and social realities, affect cultural expression and the interpretation of that expression?

## Lesson Summary

This lesson introduces students to the basics of visual analysis—the foundational skills that all of the following lessons rely on—and then invites their participation in an analysis of contemporary cultural artifacts of their choosing, linking these items to their impressions of contemporary American life. It may be most useful to use these activities early in the year, as they introduce skills and concepts that can later be applied throughout the curriculum.

### ► Connections to the AP U.S. History Curriculum Framework

One of the nine historical thinking skills in the new AP U.S. History Curriculum Framework is that of contextualization, which involves the ability to connect historical developments to specific circumstances of time and place and to broader regional, national, or global processes. This skill can be approached from a wide variety of different angles, and this lesson will help students to develop the ability to understand that what people do and how they react to others is the result of the ways in which their personal biases and cultural contexts interact.

### ► Student Learning Outcomes

Students will evaluate the role that social, cultural, and historical contexts play in the reading of artifacts.

### ► Student Prerequisite Knowledge

Students should have a basic understanding of how to analyze a primary source (taking into account the author, intended audience, purpose, authorial bias, and historical context). Moving to the analysis of cultural artifacts and literature will build upon and expand this understanding.

### ► Common Student Misconceptions

Teachers sometimes hope that students will understand the complexities of contextualization because it applies to their everyday lives, yet students often do not think critically about the social and individual factors influencing their own biases and decisions. It can be helpful to begin the year with a lesson showing how context affects one's perceptions and interaction with the world.

### ► Materials or Resources Needed:

Students will supply objects or images for discussion; no further special materials are needed.

## Activity 1: An Introduction to Visual Analysis

**The following are general guidelines for visual analysis. This procedure is applied in all of the lessons featured in this curriculum resource, and the questioning strategies featured here can be applied to conversation about any works of art, artifacts, or architecture relevant to the curriculum.**

Since human expressions of all types are examples of the interaction between social and personal contexts, being able to interpret visual evidence is essential for students to more readily grasp the complexity of context.

By the time students are in AP U.S. History, some have already had experience with visual analysis, making inferences, and using primary sources. They may have learned to note the basic context of a primary source using “the W’s”: what is it, where and when was it made, who made it, for whom was it made, and for what purpose (why). This is a good starting point!

### Selecting an Artifact

The first step for teachers is to choose an artifact to analyze. Options include any type of visual artifact, including buildings, sculpture, photographs, and film. By choosing an example that relates to the period being taught, teachers can follow the curriculum while students are learning to analyze works in context. A wealth of high-quality images are available online, especially on museum websites, and can be projected in the classroom or printed. The resources section on page 55 provides a list of websites that may provide useful material for analysis.

### **Step 1: Observation**

Visual analysis proceeds from close observation, and the elements of this phase should include the following:

- Ask the students to look silently at an image for a few minutes.
- Then ask them what they see. Allow only concrete descriptive responses—postpone any interpretations of what might be happening in the image. Right now, they are learning to look and are taking a visual inventory of the image. Interpretation comes later.
- After students have noted the obvious content—person, boat, tree, etc.—they can be asked to describe the elements that make up the image, including color, shape, texture, lines, patterns, balance and use of space.

There are a variety of ways to encourage slow, careful observation. You may have students draw the image for 5 minutes before describing what they see, or they could keep a running list of everything they see as the observation time progresses, and others ask students to describe the image as they would to a person who cannot see it.

Although you may have extensive background information on the image(s) being shared, they should resist the urge to share that information at this stage as it may hinder students' ability to form their own observations. At a later point, you may share information relevant to his/her objectives.

### **Step 2: Interpretation**

Once students have spent several minutes on observation, they should move to interpretation. Interpretation is about putting together the narrative of the image (where applicable), thinking about the choices the artist or creator of the cultural artifact made and the intent behind those choices. Questions to guide the early stages of interpretation might include the following:

- If looking at a painting or photograph, what is happening? What is the story? What is the evidence for that in the image?
- What feelings, emotions, and moods are present? What evidence is in the photograph or painting that makes you respond this way? Is the background, for example, romantic, gloomy, inviting, or off-putting?
- Encourage students to begin thinking about how the different subjects and elements may relate to one another in the image.
- If using a literary example, ask students to note the qualities of the language being used. Are there words or phrases that especially stand out? Do the students note any patterns or repetition in the language used? Why do they think these particular items were repeated or emphasized?

The next level of interpretation involves analysis of the choices of the creator of this artifact:

- What is the point of view of the creator of this cultural artifact (painting, photograph, building, poem)? What do you see that makes you say that?
- Who is the intended audience? Insist on specific evidence from the work to back up their interpretation.
- What can you infer from the choices of content, color, mood, setting, composition, materials, style, or size of this painting, photograph, or building?
- If there are people in a photograph or painting, what do you think about the way the people are dressed? Why do you think the painter or photographer chose these people, this setting, these colors, and the activities portrayed in the painting?
- What other information would you like to know in order to be able to assess their inferences?
- How do these paintings, photographs, or buildings compare to others you have seen from different eras?
- You may opt to give one or two pieces of relevant historical or contextual information at this point, if it will serve to move the conversation forward or take it in a new direction. (A great example of this is featured in Lesson 5, where students are introduced to the photographs of Dorothea Lange, informed that they were produced as part of the Farm Security Administration [FSA], and then are asked for their thoughts on why her work was or was not an appropriate use of government funds.)

Students can think further about the importance of historical context by addressing such questions as, what effect do you think the time period or historical context had on the creator of this artifact as they created this work? How do you think the work might have in turn influenced the time period? What else do I need to know about the individual creating this artifact (his/her personal context)? Has this work affected me? Is it relevant in today's context? Once you understand it, has it changed the way you think?

In encouraging thoughtful interpretation, it is important that the person facilitating the discussion not ask leading questions or those with a yes/no answer. Open-ended questions allow students to present and consider multiple viewpoints.

Within this resource, this basic framework has been applied to the analysis of art, architecture, and even literature and music of Periods 4, 7, and 8. Every type of primary source has certain compositional elements that students can observe if they watch, listen, or read closely. The movement from concrete observation to supported interpretation will also be repeated in the students' historical essay writing, where they will develop an interpretation based on evidence found in primary sources of all sorts.

# Nation-Building in the Atlantic World

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Margaret Favretti  
Stephen Mounkhal  
Lisa Yokana  
Scarsdale High School  
Scarsdale, New York

## Essential/Guiding Questions

This lesson relates to several Period 4 Essential Questions that are keyed to the Thematic Learning Objectives, including Identity; Work, Exchange, and Technology; Peopling; Politics and Power; America and the World; Environment and Geography; and Ideas, Beliefs, and Culture. These Thematic Learning Objectives and their associated Essential Questions can be found on pages 13–19 of the Curriculum Framework.

In order to answer these essential questions or to interpret relevant events and evidence, students should begin by acquainting themselves with the context of the time. Close analysis of visual objects will uncover for students the cultural context of the time and reveal answers to these questions.

## Lesson Summary

The activities within this lesson are composed of a series of discussion suggestions, applying the visual analysis methods described in Lesson 1, Activity 1 to the examination of art, architecture, and literature of Period 4. Each discussion is not dependent on the others; teachers are invited to use as many as they wish. There are two segments of this lesson: the first comparing and contrasting Jeffersonian neo-classical enlightenment rationalism with Emersonian transcendentalism and the neo-Gothic spirit and the second exploring the Hudson River School's romanticism and commentary on American society.

## ► **Connections to the AP U.S. History Curriculum Framework**

This lesson relates to Key Concepts 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 of the revised Curriculum Framework, which can be found on pages 38–43 of the Framework.

It additionally addresses the following Historical Thinking Skills, described in the Framework:

- Patterns of Continuity and Change over Time (Skill 2)
- Comparison (Skill 4)
- Contextualization (Skill 5)
- Historical Argumentation (Skill 6)
- Appropriate Use of Relevant Historical Evidence (Skill 7)
- Interpretation (Skill 8)
- Synthesis (Skill 9)

This lesson also connects with Learning Objective CUL-2: Analyze how emerging conceptions of national identity and democratic ideals shaped value systems, gender roles, and cultural movements in the late 18th century and the 19th century. (See p. 19 in the AP U.S. Curriculum Framework.)

## ► **Student Learning Outcomes**

Students will:

- Gain greater familiarity with visual analysis techniques and be able to use these techniques effectively when studying and interpreting cultural artifacts
- Understand and be able to describe and explain connections between the ideology of an era and the art and artifacts that it produced
- Be able to identify and evaluate patterns of continuity and change over time

## ► **Student Prerequisite Knowledge**

Before this lesson, it will be helpful if teachers have introduced students to:

- The visual analysis toolkit (see Lesson 1, Activity 1)
- The difference between primary and secondary sources as well as the ability to look critically at a primary source (taking into account authorship, intended audience, purpose, authorial bias, and historical context)

► **Common Student Misconceptions**

- Students often underestimate the contested nature of the struggle to create a national identity in the early Republic, and assume that symbols of national ideals and consensus were always present, self-evident, and no longer contended.
- Anything teachers can do to help students see contingency and the role of constructed images and cultural artifacts in this process will enhance students' understanding both of this period and of historical processes.

► **Materials or Resources Needed:**

- Sources of suggested images have been included in the Resources section on page 55.

## **Activity 1: Monticello and the Neo-Classical Cultural Context**

The following series of discussions all focus on the analysis of the architecture and grounds of Monticello. Chronologically, Monticello could also be taught as an important example of the context for Period 3. It has been included at the beginning of Period 4 because it also shows change and continuity in the American cultural context over time.

The following discussions allow teachers to take students through a close visual analysis of Monticello, using several images of the outside of the main home, the gardens, and the long view of the location of the home and gardens on the mountain. Background information and historical points have been included in the discussion suggestions, but as teachers follow the steps in the visual analysis guidelines in Lesson 1, students will generate many of these points on their own. All of the images are available at <http://www.monticello.org>.

### **Discussion 1: Jefferson and Neo-Classicism**

Thomas Jefferson's Monticello is an archetypal example of American neo-classical thought. Jefferson borrowed ideas freely from Europe, characteristic of America's elite, designing the Virginia Statehouse as an exact copy of a Greek temple, and his own house as a neo-classical repeat of the ornamented farms at the Villa Rotonda in northern Italy and Chiswick, outside of London. The Greek and Roman architectural motifs made visual the attitudes of the new leadership and made central the notion that homes (as well as government buildings) could embody the values of the society and stimulate civic virtue.

Visit the website of Monticello (<http://www.monticello.org>), and use the images of the home and gardens as tools throughout these conversations. Show students examples of exterior views of Monticello alone first, and then compare it to an exterior view of the Villa Rotonda. Guide them through the process of visual analysis using the following questions.

**Observation:**

- What do students notice about Monticello?
- What architectural characteristics do they observe?
- What similarities between Villa Rotonda and Monticello do students notice?
- Where have they seen these architectural forms before?

**Interpretation:**

- Why the interest in classical and Renaissance architecture? Students will have no difficulty finding important associations between secular democratic values from classical Athens and Rome and the secular political ideals of the new republic.
- Why would an interest in classical forms be important during the Enlightenment period?

**Discussion 2: Jefferson: The “Civic Gentleman” versus the “Merchant Tradesman”**

Monticello is an ornamented farm, which was understood on both sides of the Atlantic to be the mark of an educated gentleman enacting the agrarian ideal. By 1796, George Washington had happily retired to agricultural innovation at Mount Vernon, and Jefferson envisioned a similar future for himself. In his view, cities were disgusting places, filled with noise, pollution, and disease, and they were also the home of lowly commerce and “dirty” trade deals. Jefferson proposed limiting the commercial development of rural areas in favor of his agrarian ideal. His home, far removed from the commercial filth and hubbub on its “small mountain,” exemplified the true agrarian gentleman’s ability to further himself through education and contemplation and to avoid selling out his ideals to profit and greed.

Show students the long aerial view of Monticello and its groves and gardens, and guide discussion using the following questions.

**Observation:**

- How is the home situated within its grounds?
- What do they notice about the grounds?
- What else do students notice about Monticello when viewed from far off?

**Interpretation:**

- What attitudes about nature and work do the layout and contents of the grounds signify?
- Why would Jefferson make the grounds appear “natural?”
- Why were the slave quarters hidden from view?

**Further Discussion:**

- What role does this notion of the “civic-minded (disinterested) gentleman” play in Americans’ attitudes about our political scene today?
- Are these notions of disinterestedness still with us? Do we still want our politicians to be disinterested? Ask students for evidence to back up their assertions.

**Discussion 3: Jefferson and a Unique American Identity**

European culture, including food, fashion, politics, and art, dominated American society. Some attention to the garden and groves of Monticello will reveal Jefferson’s efforts to develop a unique national identity within an Atlantic world system of exchange. When Jefferson went to Europe, he brought with him American seeds, continuing the transatlantic tradition of the early explorers, and holding up for admiration (or at least curious interest) the unique gifts of North America. He began to view his garden, especially after the Lewis and Clark expedition, as a museum of truly American species—an arboretum.

It was also fashionable in Europe to take an interest in the exotic and wild world of North America as well as to study the experiment in democracy (e.g., Alexis de Tocqueville). It was typical of gentlemen farmers in Europe to collect favorite species and experiment with plant propagation, but Jefferson’s garden had a theme. The European landscape had been by this time denuded for grazing and fuel, but one thing the young United States had aplenty were trees. The trees Jefferson saw were hundreds of years old, and he saw them as much more than wild vegetation needing to be tamed—they were a central part of the uniquely American character. While the ornamented farm was the embodiment of picturesque, restrained natural beauty, the trees were the embodiment of the wild grandeur of the American landscape, emerging onto the global stage and dwarfing the old world with their scale and raw sublimity.

The following questions can guide the visual analysis for this discussion.

**Observation:**

Look at the plant lists (especially the trees) at Monticello, which can also be found on the Web site.

- What native species (such as Red and Sugar Maples, Copper Beech, White, Red and Balsam Fir, White Pine, and so on) do students recognize? There are 120 varieties of North American trees there, to say little of the collection of flowers and vegetables.

**Interpretation:**

- What was Jefferson attempting to do by creating an arboretum out of his garden?

- How might his arboretum relate to his Enlightenment context and also 18th century notions of “gentlemanly disinterestedness”?

**Further Discussion:**

- To what extent do choices such as these succeed in asserting a unique cultural identity?
- How do Americans assert their cultural identity today?

## Activity 2: Changes in Attitude and Context—1820–1848

These discussions can assist students in understanding changes and continuities in American attitudes about its identity; its relationship with the rest of the world; and its own economic, political, and social development during Period 4. Students will consider how independent American culture was from European influence and attitudes.

Economic change in the early decades of the 19th century, as reflected in such phenomena as the American System, opening of the Erie Canal, mass manufacturing in the rapidly industrializing North, continuing commercial development based on European and Asian markets, and a profitable and growing Caribbean and southern slave economy, was both a source of pride and of consternation. Partly in response to these changes, American Romantics, including the Transcendentalists, began to assert the core values of individualism which defined American culture for the rest of the century and are still with us today. Belief in individuality over conformity, and trusting the spirituality found in conscience and nature rather than classical rationalism, motivated many to heighten their sense of cultural independence, to take on the challenges of the frontier, to bring about a Second Great Awakening, to push for wider democracy, and to fight for reforms meant to guarantee human dignity.

By the 1820s, artists had begun elevating the American landscape toward the pinnacle of the visual arts. While still producing historical and allegorical paintings and portraits of earlier eras, artists moved the wild frontier, picturesquely tamed or sublimely overpowering, to the core of American cultural expression, reflecting its position in American experience. American artists and writers not only commented on the ills of society as European Romantics were doing, they helped to define the greatness of America in their own and others’ eyes.

Representative of this approach was the American writer Ralph Waldo Emerson, who began documenting his musings on individualism and spiritual and cultural independence in his journals at the beginning of the 1830s. Eventually published as the essay “Self-Reliance” (1841), it is most often cited as the archetypal statement of transcendentalism. Students will find an understanding of transcendentalism in the American cultural context to be indispensable to their grasp of all of the Essential Questions in Period 4.

## **Discussion 1: Emerson, Whitman, and the Transcendentalists' Response**

Distribute the handout on Readings for Lesson 2, Activity 2 found in Appendix A (page 61), featuring selections from "Self-Reliance" to Walt Whitman's poem "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer" (1865).

### **Part I: Emerson**

#### **Observation:**

For each Emerson segment, students should make observations about his style (i.e., word choice, repetition, persuasive elements) and identify these points in a list.

#### **Interpretation:**

- What is Emerson objecting to and trying to "transcend"?
- According to Emerson, what makes a person "self-reliant"? Why is that a good thing to be?

#### **Further Discussion:**

- What would Emerson have thought of Jefferson? William Lloyd Garrison? Frederick Douglass? (Students may have studied other thinkers and activists of the years 1820–1848 for other fruitful comparisons.)
- What would Emerson have thought of today's dependence on technology? Why?

### **Part II: Whitman**

#### **Observation:**

Ask students to read the Whitman poem aloud several times to make them familiar with its word choices and sounds. Then they can read it silently with the following task: Draw a line where they think the tone shifts in this poem. One could also ask students to draw a line where they feel that the narrator's feelings change. (They may have some difference of opinion, but a consensus will no doubt form around lines five or six.)

Next, ask students to underline three or four words from the portion of the poem before the tone shift, which they think control the first tone and to try to identify it, labeling it with a word or phrase. Ask students to share their ideas. Have them do the same activity for the tone below the line. (They may point to the "charts" the "learn'd" and the words such as "divide" or "add" and see the mathematical, scientific aspects of these words above the line. Below the line, they may point to "rising and gliding" and to "wander'd" and "perfect silence," and can see this tone as more transcendental.) What do they notice about each grouping of words?

Based on these examples, ask students what they think the hallmarks of transcendentalist literature might be. The following observations might be made: A representative piece of Transcendentalist literature must be in first person; this poem uses the personal pronouns “I” or “me” or “myself” seven times in eight lines. It also reifies the rejection of conformity and rational thought by having the speaker leave the “learn’d” lecture hall and wander off by himself to contemplate the raw experience of the stars in an unmediated manner. If one were to draw a line after line five and make a list of important tonal words above the line and below the line, one would find “proofs,” “figures,” “columns,” “charts,” “diagrams,” “sitting,” “add,” “divide,” “measure,” “lecture,” “lecture-room” and “sick” above the line. This constellation of cause and effect may be familiar to some of your students. Below the line, we find their opposites: “rising,” “gliding,” “wander’d,” “mystical,” “night air,” “perfect silence” and “stars” as a kind of release from school.

**Interpretation:**

After a thorough observation, any and/or all of the following questions may guide discussion:

- What do you think was Whitman’s intent in writing this poem? Why do you say that?
- In what ways does this poem add to our understanding of the ways in which attitudes were shifting during Period 4?
- Define transcendentalism based on evidence from the reading.
- In what ways is Whitman’s poem consistent with Emerson’s ideas?
- In what ways are Whitman’s attitudes present in today’s America?
- To what extent to Transcendentalist ideas such as those expressed by both Emerson and Whitman drive the reform impulses in the American identity today?

**Discussion 2: Thomas Cole (1801–1848) and the Hudson River School Teach Americans How to See the World**

The opening of the Erie Canal meant tremendous changes for the Hudson Valley. New York City grew significantly in both population and importance. Western New York’s populations skyrocketed, with some communities growing from a few hundred inhabitants to tens of thousands within a few years (leading to the loss of control over traditional values that encouraged the Second Great Awakening). New York’s middle class gained leisure time, disposable income, and an appreciation for developments in European art. Steam travel made the upper Hudson accessible in a day. The City itself became filled with sewage, and summer

epidemics of cholera, yellow fever, and typhus were common. This context was fertile ground for enterprising hotel owners, who opened the first ever American nature tourism hotel, the Catskill Mountain House, in 1824. The businessmen's plan was to "sell" views of nature, and the hotel owners invited Cole, Bryant, Irving, Cooper, and other well-known poets, writers, and painters to produce a pamphlet called "Scenery In the Catskills," promoting the views around the Mountain House.

Cole fell in love with the area, built a home and studio in Catskill (Cedar Grove), and except for two tours to view the European landscape and trips to New York City, he never left. His work defined what became known as the Hudson River School, which included such artists as Durand (a friend of Cole's and founder of the National Academy of Design), who began painting landscapes almost exclusively in the 1830s; Jasper Cropsey; Sanford Gifford; John F. Kensett; and Frederic Church (Cole's student). Church in turn influenced Albert Bierstadt, best known for his massive composite paintings of the grandeur of the American West. Writers who were active members of the Hudson River School were Washington Irving, whose Knickerbocker Tales became associated with sites around the Catskill Mountain House, James Fenimore Cooper (some of whose Leatherstocking Tales are set in Kaaterskill Clove), and William Cullen Bryant. In a radical shift away from the 17th and 18th century desire to control nature and the association of the woods with Satan and fear, Americans were learning to value their natural landscape as uniquely American high culture, and as a spiritual experience, transcending both time and drudgery.

An analysis of some of Cole's work can make transcendentalism visual and elicit discussion that can help students understand the cultural context that engendered the Second Great Awakening, fueled Jacksonian Democracy, and inspired reformers such as William Lloyd Garrison and Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

**Visual Analysis:**

Cole's work can best be analyzed by students in three groupings:

1. The Course of Empire series paired with a group of paintings showing Native Americans in nature, which demonstrates his philosophy that the human condition is not improved by "civilization," that commerce kills true social values, and that the Indians had it right
2. A group of paintings showing a pastoral harmony in a picturesque views of "homes in the woods"
3. A group of paintings showing the overpowering divine force of nature

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The Course of Empire (NYHS 1835–1836)</li> <li>■ Indians Viewing the Landscape (1827)</li> <li>■ Falls of Kaaterskill (1826) (Indians in middleground viewing the falls)</li> <li>■ Last of the Mohicans (1826)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Daniel Boone (1826)</li> <li>■ Home in the Woods (1847)</li> <li>■ River in the Catskills (1843)</li> <li>■ View on the Catskill, Early Autumn</li> <li>■ View on the Schoharie (1826)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Schroon Lake (1838)</li> <li>■ Catskill Mountain House: The Four Elements (1843–1844)</li> </ul>

Links to online sources of all images are available in the Resources section on page 55.

#### **Observation:**

Assign students a group number from 1 to 3. Tell them they will be responsible for determining what the images in their numbered group have to do with each other. Students in each group will focus on the paintings in that group. This activity could, of course, be amended to focus on a smaller selection of Cole’s paintings: the whole class could study paintings from the same group, or students working individually or in pairs could focus their observations on taking a “visual inventory” of a single painting from within one of the groups.

#### **Interpretation:**

- What ideas do these images represent? What values or attitudes are privileged in the painting?
- Do those ideas critique or admire American society?
- To what extent are these paintings transcendentalist? In what ways?
- What aspects of life do they romanticize?

#### **Further Discussion:**

In groups, students should consider some or all of the following questions and present their ideas to the class:

- What is distinctly American about Cole’s work?
- What changes have taken place already making it possible for Cole to popularize his views (e.g., defeat of Native Americans in the Northeast, an opening of the “west,” rapid urbanization and growing industrialization)?

- In what ways has the cultural context shifted beyond what Jefferson imagined? In what ways does Cole engage similar issues to those Jefferson addressed?
- Why are most of the transcendentalists and American romantics from the northeast?
- What attitudes does Cole encourage? Are they consistent with Emerson's? What actions could be linked to those attitudes? (Possibilities include Thoreau refusing to pay taxes to support the Mexican War, Garrison refusing to compromise, the drafting of the Declaration of Sentiments, Frederick Douglass declaring himself free in his mind, and an expanding democracy that included simple frontiersmen.)

► **Formative Assessment**

Reflecting on the examples seen during class, instruct students to write an essay (2-3 pages) comparing the poetry of Walt Whitman or another transcendentalist (perhaps William Cullen Bryant) and the work of painter Thomas Cole, focusing on one or two representative poems and paintings. They should make sure to address the following:

- Do the painting(s) and poem(s) share a similar tone or do they differ in tone? Explain.
- Do the painting(s) and poem(s) share similar subject matter? Explain.
- Do the painter(s) and poet(s) present similar messages or commentary on American society? Explain.

Students should make sure to give specific evidence or examples in support of their points.

Focusing the essay on the three questions above will allow the teacher to gauge students' ability to:

- Thoughtfully and accurately **describe** the qualities of specific visual and written works [descriptive component]
- **Interpret and analyze** the purpose or intention behind the artists' choices, and place the work in the context of themes and issues important to this era in American history [analytical component]
- **Clearly and cohesively express** an idea [expressive component].

Student work can then be evaluated according to these three abilities:

Descriptive Component	Analytical Component	Expressive Component
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Do students accurately describe the tone and stylistic characteristics of the creative artists they write or talk about?</li> <li>■ How well do they do this?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Have students discussed what the subject and stylistic choices of these artists may mean?</li> <li>■ How well have they done so?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Are their inferences and conclusions logical? Do they make sense?</li> <li>◆ Have they taken historical context into account in their analysis?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Do students use full, well-organized paragraphs?</li> <li>■ Do students present and support a clear thesis or point of view? Have they given specific evidence in support of their points?</li> </ul>

### ► Reflection on Formative Assessment

Structuring assessment according to the above three categories will allow the teacher to tailor next steps according to the particular aspects of the assignment with which students struggled. They may have a grasp of historical content and context, for example, but struggle to structure their analysis in a cohesive and convincing way. Use the following guidelines when giving written or verbal feedback to students and considering next instructional steps:

#### *Descriptive:*

- If you see that students have not understood the characteristics, themes, and concerns of the Hudson River School artists or transcendental poets, you can provide additional instruction and review. You can ask students to compare and contrast the works of Cole and Frederick Church, another Hudson River School painter (see [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/chur/hd\\_chur.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/chur/hd_chur.htm)). Doing a similar exercise with different poems by Whitman, Bryant, or others can further refine students' understanding of the period. You can then re-assess students' understanding by assigning a short essay in which they identify the main characteristics of this period's artists and support their points with examples.

- If students do not accurately describe the tone and stylistic characteristics of the creative artists they write or talk about, you can review major components and examples of tone and style, discuss as a class how to identify tone and style, and then ask students to look at different paintings and write down their observations of tone and style. Students can do this in pairs or small groups first, discussing this in their pair or small group, and then share out to the class as a whole.

*Analytical:*

- If a student struggles with seeing social or political commentary in an artist's work, you can give one or two examples (perhaps Cole's glorification of "wild" and yet comforting landscape while urbanization and the transportation and industrial revolutions threaten America's natural beauty) and then have a conversation about what the artist might be saying.
- If students have not addressed effectively the meaning of the subject and stylistic choices of these artists, talk about these again. Point out that these artists are choosing to paint landscapes and review the historical context of their work (the market revolution, industrial revolution, transportation revolution, and rapid urbanization are all occurring simultaneously). Ask students how stylistic choices of some Hudson River School paintings show certain feelings about nature and man's place in nature. Point out to students what an artist might be saying by placing a safe and cozy looking cabin in a "wilderness" setting (show Cole's *Home in the Woods* here). Does the wilderness seem scary? Does it seem tame? Is it still wild, or free, or pure in some sense? What is the artist saying about nature and human's place in nature in the changing United States? Why might they be saying this while so many changes are taking place? Help students think about the need or desire to create an art that is distinctly American, valuing something that Europe does not have (relatively unspoiled nature), and also the need perhaps to warn Americans of what they will lose if progress is not pursued carefully and thoughtfully. Looking again at Cole's *Course of Empire* would be helpful here.

*Expressive:*

- If a student's essay does not have a thesis, give an example of a thesis statement that could accompany what he or she wrote, or that could be drawn from the evidence they present.



# The Gilded Age and the Transition to “Modernity”

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Margaret Favretti  
Tom Maguire  
Lisa Yokana  
Scarsdale High School  
Scarsdale, New York

## Lesson Summary

The discussions in this lesson apply visual analysis techniques to the examination of ideas and themes related to Period 7, specifically the Gilded Age and Modernism.

## Essential/Guiding Questions

This lesson relates to Period 7 Essential Questions, which are keyed to the Thematic Learning Objectives of Identity; Work, Exchange, and Technology; Peopling; Politics and Power; America in the World; Environment and Geography; and Ideas, Beliefs, and Culture. The Essential Questions can be found on pages 12–19 of the Curriculum Framework.

### ► Connections to the AP U.S. History Curriculum Framework

This lesson relates to Key Concepts 7.1, 7.2, and 7.3 of the revised Curriculum Framework.

It additionally addresses the following Historical Thinking Skills, described in the Framework:

- Patterns of Continuity and Change over Time (Skill 2)
- Comparison (Skill 4)
- Contextualization (Skill 5)

- Historical Argumentation (Skill 6)
- Appropriate Use of Relevant Historical Evidence (Skill 7)
- Interpretation (Skill 8)
- Synthesis (Skill 9)

In addition, it connects to the following Thematic Learning Objectives:

- CUL-3: Explain how cultural values and artistic expression changed in response to the Civil War and the postwar industrialization of the United States.
- CUL-6: Analyze the role of culture and the arts in 19th- and 20th-century movements for social and political change.
- CUL-7: Explain how and why “modern” cultural values and popular culture have grown since the early 20th century and how they have affected American politics and society.

### ► **Student Learning Outcomes**

Students will:

- Gain greater familiarity with visual analysis techniques and be able to use these techniques effectively when studying and interpreting cultural artifacts
- Understand and be able to describe and explain connections between the ideology of an era and the art and artifacts that it produced
- Be able to identify and evaluate patterns of continuity and change over time

### ► **Student Prerequisite Knowledge**

It will be helpful for students to know about the following post–Civil War developments:

- The growth and consolidation of major industries, led by the railroad industry, and the leadership of individuals such as Vanderbilt, Carnegie, and Rockefeller, “captains of industry” or “robber barons”
- The accompanying rapid urbanization, growth of tenements, and tensions between workers and big business
- The new immigration (primarily from eastern and southern Europe)

### ► **Common Student Misconceptions**

- Students may think either that everyone was rich or poor, or over-emphasize divisions and the degree to which American society was contested at this time.

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- Students may not understand the terms modern and modernism. The fact that these terms can refer to a time before their grandparents were born will be counter-intuitive.
- Students may think that advancing technology is always a public good.

### ► **Materials or Resources Needed:**

- Sources of suggested images have been included in Appendix B on page 64.

### **Background:**

Cultural attitudes of the Gilded Age reflected the widening gap between rich and poor. The wealthiest Americans tried to shield themselves and their families from the hardships of the working classes. Wealthy New Yorkers surrounded themselves with markers of their own untaxed (until 1916) wealth, throwing lavish parties, building ostentatious mansions in New York and in vacation areas like Newport, RI, and collecting art.

During the Gilded Age, the “right kind” of art for those who had cultivated aesthetic sensibilities to collect was either the reliable Old Masters (the Frick Collection is a good example) or “Oriental” art. Collectors also sometimes acquired Impressionist views, often from Europe but sometimes from American impressionist painters, to demonstrate how “modern” they were.

The fact remained that the majority of people were poor. Their difficult lives did not go unnoticed by writers, poets, and photographers, known as “muckrakers,” whose work facilitated the Progressive reform movement of the first part of the 20th century.

In the early 1900s, another group of artists, later known as the Ashcan School and represented by such painters as Robert Henri (1865-1929), John Sloan (1871-1951), and George Bellows (1882-1925), began to comment on social conditions through their art. In 1908, these artists opened their first exhibit of works putting the gritty reality of urban life on display. Rebelling against American Impressionism, Henri urged his students to “Draw your material from the life around you, from all of it. There is beauty in everything if it looks beautiful to your eyes.”<sup>1</sup>

## **Activity 1: Changing Attitudes from the Gilded Age to Modernism**

The following activity is comprised of three discussions. Discussions 1 and 2 highlight the ways that visual evidence can deepen understanding of social roles and status in late 19th century, and the following discussion concentrates on the changing interests and intentions of artists in this era, and the changing role that art played in society.

<sup>1</sup>Quoted in “American Realists of the Early 1900s,” National Gallery of Art. (<http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/features/slideshows/american-realists-of-the-early-1900s.html#>).

Images for the discussions are included in the appendices and could be copied as handouts; alternately, teachers can locate the works of art on museum Web sites (see resources section for links), project the images in class, and hold full-class discussions this way.

### **Discussion 1: John Singer Sargent, *Elizabeth Winthrop Chanler (1893)***

Trained in the style of the Old Masters, Sargent’s portraits became popular on both sides of the Atlantic. Elizabeth Chanler was 26 and in London for her brother’s wedding at the time this portrait was painted. Her father was a prominent Democratic Congressman from New York, and her mother was a descendant of John Jacob Astor. The portrait returned with her to New York.

#### **Observation:**

Ask students to describe what they see in detail. What do they notice first? What observations take a few minutes to arise?

#### **Interpretation:**

- What can you infer about the sitter’s social status? Why?
- Why might someone have this portrait painted?
- What does the portrait and the setting say about the people who commissioned it and the context of their lives?

### **Discussion 2: William Merritt Chase, *Idle Hours (1894)***

William Merritt Chase was one of hundreds of American artists who studied in Europe during the 19th century. By the 1890s, Impressionism had been embraced by American artists who were similarly moving away from the now clichéd formal vocabulary of the Old Masters.

#### **Interpretation:**

Questions you might want to ask after “what do you see” could be:

- Who are these people? What are they doing?
- What is their social status? How can you tell?
- What is the artist telling us about this class of people’s lives?
- What types of people would want to buy this painting?
- To what extent are your inferences consistent with what you already know about the Gilded Age? To what extent do the images add to your knowledge of the context of the time?

### Discussion 3: George Bellows, *The Lone Tenement* (1909)

#### Interpretation:

Questions that might follow an extended observation period could be:

- Why would the subject matter of this painting have been shocking?
- Why did the artist select the primary colors he did? Why did he leave out others?
- How does this compare with the Chase painting?
- What does this painting say about notions of art in the early 20th century?
- What changes had taken place in American life that would have encouraged artists to move toward a realistic representation of urban life?

### Activity 2: Being Modern

This activity will use three images from the Modernist era and ask students to analyze them visually and to interpret the cultural context and historical implications of modernism.

Students may discover on their own that the changes in this era were happening so quickly, and were so unlike anything anyone had previously known, that many different kinds of cultural boundaries were being crossed. People migrated across the world to find opportunity and African Americans moved in large numbers to urban centers (usually in the North) seeking work and safety. Domestic mechanization freed many middle class women to become educated and pursue careers. Agitation for suffrage continued. The NAACP encouraged African Americans to become educated in professions and set about to protect their rights. New forms of music, such as marching bands, Ragtime, and Jazz, blended cultural traditions and encouraged whites and blacks to mix.

Technological and industrial innovation increased efficiency and production, and people’s lives speeded up. “Progress” became synonymous with American culture, increasingly seen as fast, efficient, gleaming, moving, mechanized, mass-marketed, and superlative. Being the newest, fastest, tallest, most innovative were all cultural imperatives and the United States demonstrated, through World’s Fairs and daily commerce, that it could lead the world in all of these categories. By 1910, the United States was no longer dependent on the old world but rather had become an equal partner. Technological advances in photography and film, as well as in audio transmission, projection, and recording, revolutionized art-making and expanded its distribution, in addition to changing its message.

In most cases, images for the following discussions are included in Appendix B (page 64) and could be copied as handouts; alternately, teachers can locate the works of art on museum Web sites (see Resources section for links), project the images in class, and hold full-class discussions this way.

### **Discussion 1: Charles Sheeler, *Cris-Crossed Conveyors, River Rouge Plant, Ford Motor Company (1927)***

#### **Observation:**

Following the toolkit provided in Lesson 1, ask students to look at the image for 5 minutes, silently, and make notes about what they see. Encourage them to note both general and detailed observations. After the 5 minutes are up, ask each student to each contribute at least one observation. Allow only concrete descriptive responses.

#### **Interpretation:**

The following questions may be used to guide discussion:

- How would you describe the mood of this photograph? What evidence in the photograph makes you respond this way? (Answers will be varied. The angle that the photographer has chosen is very important here. By placing the conveyor belts above us and in the center of the photograph, he is reinforcing their importance, and also giving the viewer the perspective of being smaller and less important than the machinery.) Who is the intended audience? What other information would you like to know in order to more confidently assert your interpretation?
- What is the artist’s view of industry and technology? What visual evidence supports their interpretation?
- Students may notice the photograph’s architectural reference to a cathedral or the cross-like configuration of the conveyor belts. Ask them why the artist might have chosen to include these references.
- Some may talk about the smallness of the viewer because of the camera angle (worm’s eye view). Others may notice that there are no people in the photograph. Ask for their thoughts on why these compositional choices may have been made.

### **Discussion 2: Joseph Stella, *Brooklyn Bridge (1919–1920)***

This Stella painting is a good entry into abstraction, as there are still realistic and identifiable aspects of the bridge for students to cling to. Also, the subject matter and its relationship to movement, speed, and technology makes it easier for students to understand the artist’s need for using abstraction to portray these themes. A link to the image is available on page 57.

#### **Observation:**

As students begin to examine the image, you can ask questions such as

- What do you see in the image? Students may initially make a visual inventory of the realistic portions, (e.g., cables, gothic arches, stop light, etc.).

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- What kinds of lines are used: straight or curvilinear? (straight and taut, although some curvilinear)
- What type of movement is portrayed: slow or fast? And how does the artist portray it?
- What is the scale of the bridge in relationship to the viewer? How does the artist convey this? (By pushing the subject matter up very close to the picture plane and having some lines and elements go off the edge, we have the feeling we are very close even on the bridge.)

#### **Interpretation:**

- Ask students what mood or emotions Stella was trying to convey about the bridge and technology. What visual evidence supports these conclusions? (e.g., color, overlapping, confusion that results from the overlapping, scale) As a class or in small groups, students might discuss:
- What is the artist’s opinion about technology? Speed?
- How does the abstraction contribute to meaning?
- What does this image tell us about the cultural context of the time?

#### **Discussion 3: Paul Strand, *Wire Wheel* (1917)**

Strand’s photo came to the Metropolitan Museum of Art from Alfred Stieglitz. Stieglitz was not only the pre-eminent modern art photographer of his day; he was a patron of the arts. This is relevant because it points out that not only had art patronage, art schools, museums, and the infrastructure for supporting new directions in art been established in the United States, many artists supported each other in their more radical pursuits. This resulted in a profusion of new ideas and directions, often including art commenting on art at the same time as commenting on its cultural context, and the establishment of the United States at the forefront of global cultural development. The Strand photo is a fantastic opportunity to discuss car culture with your students.

#### **Observation:**

Have students look at the image for an extended period of time and share the details of what they are noticing.

#### **Interpretation:**

Ask students to consider the following:

- What is the photographer’s attitude toward the car? How can you tell?
- In what ways does the automobile (especially as represented by Strand) symbolize American society?
- Is the automobile still a relevant symbol of American society today?

Last, help students make the historical connections. Using these suggestions, the discussion can transition from being about this photograph in particular to being about the era more generally:

- In what ways would these images be uniquely American?
- What can we learn about cultural attitudes toward machines, cars, industry, urbanization, mass culture, and power from the visual images?
- In what ways did this set of attitudes contribute to decisions made and actions taken during the first half of the 20th century?

### ► **Formative Assessment**

Working individually or in groups, students will take on the role of museum curators and design a new exhibit to showcase this emerging style called “modernism.” Instruct students to research more modernist works of art, choose 3-5 related works for their exhibit, and to write the labels that will accompany these works stating the name of the artist, the date and title of the artwork, and including 2-4 sentences describing the work.

In planning their exhibit, students should make sure their choices are united by a theme or idea: what is it *about* modernism and modernist artists that they want to express to viewers?

Students could draw a diagram or make another kind of visual representation showing the arrangement of their choices in the exhibit (e.g., what will viewers see first as they enter the exhibit, what next, what last) and explaining the reasons for their choices. Students can be directed to any number of museum Web sites for ideas of works to include.

Students should be prepared to present their work to the class as a whole, and defend the choices they made in aligning their particular selection of works with their overall idea or theme.

### **Evaluating the Formative Assessment:**

Use the rubric on the following page to give students feedback on their assignment. Check the appropriate boxes and provide students with clear, written feedback so that they can better understand and have a record of their strengths and weaknesses. Give specific actions they can take to improve in the areas where their understanding or response was deficient.

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	<b>Excellent</b> (e.g., insightful, comprehensive, sophisticated)	<b>Very Good</b> (e.g., clear, accurate, and thoughtful)	<b>Satisfactory</b> (e.g., addresses question effectively and competently)	<b>Needs Improvement</b> (some parts of response ineffective or inaccurate)	<b>Unsatisfactory</b> (bulk of response ineffective or inaccurate)
The student has researched and presented at least three works from the Modernist era.					
The student has a clear secondary theme/organizer that is well articulated in verbal and written presentation.					
The information on the exhibition “labels” is accurate and not based on students’ own ideas or opinions.					
Student can clearly articulate aspects of the subject and style of works that classify them as “modern.”					
Student can relate themes and content of works to a broader historical and social context.					

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## ► Reflection on Formative Assessment

Instructional next steps will depend on which aspects of the assignment were particularly challenging to students. Options for next steps may include the following:

- If students have not described accurately the types of subjects and stylistic characteristics of Modernist works, define again the terms “subjects” and “stylistic characteristics” and list examples of each with students. Look, as a class, at two additional paintings (not studied initially) and ask students to share ideas about the subjects depicted and stylistic characteristics for each painting. Write their responses on the board and then ask students to offer other possible subjects or stylistic choices of modernist artists and add these to the list (making sure that students’ responses are accurate and correcting as needed). Make sure that those students who initially did not identify subjects and stylistic characteristics contribute to this class discussion. You can follow with an additional painting and a quick writing exercise, perhaps a history tweet, in which you have students list, using no more than 140 characters, the subject and stylistic characteristics of the painting. Sharing tweets as a class could be fun and would also help reinforce these ideas.
- If students have not discussed the possible *meanings* of the subject and stylistic choices or have not done so logically and taking historical context into account, you can do the same exercise as described earlier this time having students share in class discussion what artists may have been attempting to communicate by their choices. Ask students to list historical events or developments occurring at the same time as an artist was working on a painting, and discuss as a class how these events may have influenced the artist’s choice of subject or stylistic characteristics.

As an extension to this lesson, students might read William Carlos Williams’ “The Great Figure,” compare it with Whitman’s “When I Heard the Learn’d Astronomer,” and then look closely at Charles Demuth’s *The Figure 5 in Gold* (1928). Ask students to comment on their observations and conclusions, and have them consider whether the pioneering spirit captured by Cole and the transcendentalists had its parallel in the individual heroism of worker, reformer, and inventor.

# Ideas, Beliefs, and Culture in the Progressive Era: The Ashcan School

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Emma Lapsansky-Werner  
Haverford College  
Haverford, PA

## Essential/Guiding Questions

How and why do opinions and interpretations of works of art change over time?

What is the role of the art critic in influencing popular response to works of art?

## Lesson Summary

This lesson is an investigation into the works of the Ashcan school, with particular emphasis on understanding the ways that the writings of art critics influence popular opinion, and may change over time or contradict one another.

Goals:

- To introduce students to the early 20th century Ashcan School art movement
- To help students understand the complex relationships between art and other aspects of history
- To reinforce students' appreciation for the difference between a "historical phenomenon" (such as art) and the interpretation of the historical phenomenon (critics' reviews)
- To reinforce previous and future lessons about the place, power, and uses of the media and the visual in American history

This lesson is designed to be expandable for a class, a teacher, or a curriculum that has ample space for and/or interest in the Progressive Era, or compressible as needed due to time constraints. The learning activities can be conceived either as in-class/whole-class discussion topics or as small-group work either during class time or as out-of-class collaborative assignments.

## ► Connections to the AP U.S. History Curriculum Framework

This lesson addresses the following Historical Thinking Skills addressed in the revised Curriculum Framework:

- Patterns of Continuity and Change over Time (Skill 2)
- Comparison (Skill 4)
- Contextualization (Skill 5)
- Historical Argumentation (Skill 6)
- Appropriate Use of Relevant Historical Evidence (Skill 7)
- Interpretation (Skill 8)
- Synthesis (Skill 9)

It also addresses the following Thematic Learning Objectives:

- CUL-6: Analyze the role of culture and the arts in 19th- and 20th-century movements for social and political change.
- CUL-7: Explain how and why “modern” cultural values and popular culture have grown since the early 20th century and how they have affected American politics and society.

## ► Student Learning Outcomes

As a result/outcome of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Define the Ashcan School as an early 20th-century painters’ perspective (movement), identify several of the painters identified with this movement, and describe their painting styles in terms of content and technique (i.e., subject, medium, color choices, background location, etc.)
- Think critically about the possibility for, and place of, “pure art” in American society versus art that consciously aims to convey a specific social or political message
- Interrogate, investigate, analyze, articulate, and evaluate the comparison between “reviews”—which represent changes in “opinion-over-time”—and “facts” (i.e., the existence or non-existence of an event or phenomenon)
- Explore how and why “modern” cultural values and popular culture have grown since the early twentieth century

- Investigate how ideas about culture, including what is “good” or “bad,” “beautiful,” “unattractive,” “boring,” or “offensive” change over time, and how ideas vary with the historical narrators’ perspectives, background, and experience.

## Teacher Prerequisite Knowledge

- Familiarity with the visual analysis toolkit (see Lesson 1, Activity 1)
- Basic knowledge of the Progressive Era

### ► Student Prerequisite Knowledge

To be successful in this lesson, students need to:

- Know how to locate information on the Internet
- Be able to read and evaluate contradictory narratives
- Understand how to seek definitions/understanding of unfamiliar terms and concepts

### ► Materials or resources needed:

- Access to the internet, either in or out of classroom
- Audio-visual tools to project images (or printed images available for students’ use)

Each of the two activities requires between 15 minutes and 2 hours of class time, plus 1-2 hours of homework time, plus 30 minutes to 1 hour of small-group time (preferably outside of class). Total time, then, can use as little as ½ hour of class time plus 1 hour of homework time. Alternatively, the lesson may be expanded to engage a teacher or a class that wishes to use this topic to provide foundations and/or skills for future modules (e.g., the Federal Artists programs of the 1930s or the social activist arts, e.g., the protest folksongs of the 1960s).

## Activity 1: Introduction to the Ashcan School

In the last few minutes of a class period dealing with Progressivism, and its focus on noticing urban problems and attempting to devise bureaucracies to rectify them, have students talk about whether they read or listen to reviews of their favorite movies, videos, or other media phenomena. What sources do they consult for these reviews? How did they choose them?

### Discussion:

Display five or six works by Ashcan School painters (see the resources section for links and suggestions) and ask the students to describe what they see. What can students guess from the painters' choices of content, color, mood, setting, and composition? What does the painting portray? How big are these paintings, and does size matter? Are the people portrayed as happy or sad? Does the background seem attractive? Romantic? Gloomy? Inviting? Off-putting? What do you think about the way the people are dressed? Why do you think the painter chose these people, this setting, these colors, and the activities portrayed in the painting? How do these paintings compare to paintings you have seen from previous eras?

As the classroom conversation moves into the interpretive stage, you can define the Ashcan School (a group of eight painters who had studied together at Philadelphia's Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, and then collaborated on a 1908 exhibition of daily life in New York City's working-class neighborhoods). Their work created a sensation that soon drew in a handful of other painters, whose works continue to merit attention and study. Ask students what they think the goals and interests of the Ashcan painters were (and if students have done the Bellows discussion in Lesson 3, they will already have some background information and expertise.)

## Activity 2: The Role of the Reviewer

As recently as 2011, a London exhibition of Ashcan school works was reviewed in the London Daily Telegraph, by Andrew Graham Dixon, an art critic who characterized Ashcan School artists as on a conscious mission to use the techniques of classical painting to make art more inclusive of those outside the upper classes, who were traditionally portrayed by painters. Dixon also described Ashcanner George Bellows as "one of the finest American painters of the early 20th Century," and Dixon describes the Ashcan school as a group of artists who were on a conscious mission to change art. (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/art-reviews/8373232/An-American-Experiment-at-National-Gallery-Seven-magazine-review.html>)

But just a few years earlier, in 2007, in reviewing a related exhibition, critic Ken Johnson wrote a very different interpretation for the *New York Times*, arguing that Ashcan school painters were mostly frivolous and not consciously trying to make a social statement:

The painters of the Ashcan School just wanted to have fun. They chronicled the lives of poor city dwellers, but they were neither social critics nor reformers. Robert Henri, George Luks, John Sloan and other early-20th-century American realists identified with the group were high-spirited fellows who prided themselves on fielding a baseball team that regularly defeated those of the National Academy of Design and the Art Students League. They liked to dine in

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fancy restaurants and hang out at McSorley's, the men's-only tavern on East Seventh Street. They enjoyed the theater, the circus and trips to Coney Island. No Puritan crusaders, they were manly epicureans, and their virile hero was Teddy Roosevelt.

Such is the view propounded by "Life's Pleasures: The Ashcan Artists' Brush with Leisure" at the New-York Historical Society. Organized by James W. Tottis, associate curator of American art at the Detroit Institute of Arts, the exhibition presents more than 80 paintings by 22 artists dating from 1895 to 1925 that focus on scenes of recreation: bars and restaurants, sporting events, carnivals, parks and beaches.

Johnson says that these painters "were not of world-class spiritual depth or formal imagination. But they were a lively bunch of provincial rebels who created America's first true avant-garde, and their chapter in the book of history is still fascinating." (<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/28/arts/28sloa.html>)

► **Discussion: Considering the Reviewer**

Introduce students to these or other reviews of Ashcan painters' works from recent exhibitions, using the links provided. Students may be asked to read these reviews for homework, or you can create handouts of the articles for in-class use.

- Discussion question: Based on your reading of these reviews, what do you think the goals/interests of the Ashcan painters were? How was reading a review of Ashcan school work different from discussing the paintings as a class?

As a class and/or as small groups, ask students to search the Internet for definitions of the Ashcan school painters and for other reviews and exhibitions of the Ashcan School paintings. You may want to share a list of Ashcan painters' names with them first to aid in their research.

- Discussion question: Did your ideas about the goals/interests of the Ashcan School painters change when you did more research? If so, how?

Students can be asked to explore why art and artists of one era continue to interest people of later eras. You can ask them, for example, to compare the examples of these painters to that of Michael Jackson, and why he holds enduring interest. Such a brief class discussion, of maybe 10 minutes or so, meets students where they are, and asks them to turn their vision to the popular culture of another time and place.

## ► Follow-up Discussion

Ask students to break into small groups and discuss:

- How do each of these writers describe the Ashcan school painters?
- Where do their views differ? Where do they converge?
- What is the role of an art critic?

## ► Formative Assessment

Of these two reviews of Ashcan artists, one writer felt that the artists had a social agenda—to document life beyond the upper classes and broaden ideas about who art is for and about. The other argued that the Ashcan artists “were neither social critics nor reformers,” and that they “just wanted to have fun.”

As an extension of this conversation, ask students to choose the review with which they most agree. They should prepare a short statement on their position citing evidence from specific works of art by the artists referenced in the reviews:

- How does *style* support your argument?
- How does *subject* support your argument?

In class, hold a short debate between students holding opposing views. Students holding similar views can work in groups and combine and edit their notes in order to build an effective argument. They should be prepared to defend their own positions and should be able to pose questions to their opponents in order to challenge their views.

## Evaluating the Formative Assessment

Student work can be evaluated either individually (based on their written statements) or in groups (based on their performance in the class debate). Teachers can use this rubric to organize their feedback, which could be delivered verbally or in writing:

	Excellent (e.g., insightful, comprehensive, sophisticated)	Very Good (e.g., clear, accurate, and thoughtful)	Satisfactory (e.g., addresses question effectively and competently)	Needs Improvement (some parts of response ineffective or inaccurate)	Unsatisfactory (bulk of response ineffective or inaccurate)
The student(s) can clearly describe the arguments put forth in the articles.					
The student(s) demonstrate a clear understanding of the <b>artistic style</b> associated with the Ashcan school.					
The student(s) demonstrate a clear understanding of the <b>subject matter</b> associated with the Ashcan school.					
The student(s) select specific and relevant examples of Ashcan school works to support their point of view.					
The student(s) can pose thoughtful questions that challenge the position of their opponents.					

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## ► Reflection on Formative Assessment

If the formative assessment shows that students did not fully understand the Ashcan School and its distinctive characteristics, you will want to reteach this material. Following are possible ways to do this:

- If students have struggled to provide a clear argument as to whether the Ashcan painters were on a social mission or just having a good time, the teacher can ask students to consider the social messages in some contemporary musicians' works. The teacher can show a YouTube video and present the lyrics of songs by Green Day or Coldplay, for example, and ask students if these artists are primarily about social or environmental reform, having fun making music and being successful, or making money. Inevitably students will have different opinions here, and the teacher can use this discussion to underscore that artists, just as all people, can and often do operate from multiple impulses and motives that can at times appear to be unrelated or even contradictory. Students can then be led to consider whether or not clarity or purity of motive shapes an artist's impact and influence.
- If students have struggled to reach meaningful conclusions regarding what stylistic choices of medium, colors, size, or technique say about artists' "social and/or political place in their world," ask students how stylistic choices might complement a choice of subjects. The instructor can help students see that attention to style as well as subject can help us understand what the artist is saying. For example, students can look at William Glackens' *Shop Girls* (<http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/23.230.1>) and note how the stylistic elements of this painting underscore that while this class of women is in some ways an indiscriminate mass (note the distinctions or lack of distinctions between dress), it is at the same time made up of social individuals who are fully and nobly human in their capacity to talk and interact with and enjoy each other. Lead students to consider what this statement about shop girls tell us about Glackens' sense of his own social and political place. Who is he defending, ennobling, and identifying with in his work? This particular painting can also help students see that social realism can also be gentle realism, and that criticism of modern mass society can still be empathetic and supportive of society's common people and their shared humanity. After this discussion, give students an addition exercise, asking them to look at George Bellows' *Kids* (<http://poulwebb.blogspot.com/2012/12/ashcan-school-george-bellows-part-1.html>), and list the stylistic choices they see and ways those choices influence the viewer's understanding of the subject matter. Have students work in pairs or small groups and then report back to the class. Use student responses to gauge their understanding, and continue with additional examples, choosing ones with different subjects in order to have students think about style and subject in different contexts. Examples can be found at <http://www.artcyclopedia.com/history/ashcan-school.html>.

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As an extension, the teacher could use the exercise outlined here to reinforce previous and future lessons about the place and power of the media and visual arts in American history, for example:

- Tom Nast cartoons from the Civil War era, which was overtly political
- Yellow Journalist cartoons from the Spanish-American War, also overtly political
- Later, these can all be linked to Depression Era music such as “Brother can you spare a dime” and the paintings of Ben Shahn, which express an economic point of view and are more influenced by Matisse and Diego Rivera than by the Ashcan folks who were in New York during Shahn’s youth there.
- Teachers who are interested in focusing on the history and uses of the media might use this exercise to talk about how newspapers work: the *New York Times* article, for example, was “above the fold,”—that is, the story was located near the top of the newspaper where the reader would see it immediately upon picking up the paper. The teacher might ask students to look at the way newspapers in their hometown display stories today. What topics get front-page coverage, and what topics are located farther back in the paper? What topics are above the fold, and which are lower on the page?

In the interest of further developing students’ understanding of the historical/cultural context of the Ashcan painters’ works, teachers could briefly remind students of simultaneous developments in social history with which the students may be familiar, and ask students to relate the Ashcan painters to these events. Topics may include the following:

- Freud’s visit to America in 1908, and the subsequent flurry of interest in psychology
- Progressive Era academics such as anthropologist Franz Boas who questioned the long-held view of some cultures being “more advanced” than others
- The zenith of the prohibition movement
- Child labor and/or women’s labor laws
- Ways in which progressivism crystallized new ways of thinking about the “management” of increasingly complex and compacted societies



# The Role of Arts and Culture in the Twentieth Century (Ideas, Beliefs, and Culture)

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Ted Dickson  
Providence Day School  
Charlotte, NC

## Essential/Guiding Questions

- How have artists depicted movements for social and political change?
- How have culture and the arts influenced movements for social and political change?
- What is the relationship between culture and social and political change?
- How do culture and the arts reflect and document social and political change?

## Lesson Summary

This lesson builds on the strategies developed in earlier lessons and asks students to apply these skills to a wide range of cultural examples (music, poetry, visual art, etc.). Each exercise involves comparing the role different cultural artifacts played in movements for social and political change. This comparative approach also examines the effect that comparisons across genres have on one's interpretation of a work.

### ► Connections to the AP U.S. Curriculum Framework

Each activity is keyed to a specific Key Concept (the numbers below reference the Key Concept in the AP U.S. History Curriculum Framework):

- 1920s: Great Migration (Harlem Renaissance): Lawrence, Hurston, Hughes (KC 7.2.3)
- 1930s: Depression and Democracy: Dorothea Lange and Woody Guthrie (KC 7.1.3)

- 1940s: WW II: Rosie the Riveter & Freedom Road (and Rockwell)  
(KC 7.3.3)
- 1950s: Defending and challenging the social order (KC 8.3.1)  
Ideas: Rock and Roll and the Beats v. Rockwell, etc.
- 1960s: Songs of Protest/Social Change – Ideas (KC 8)
- 1970s: The Environmental Movement: R. Diebenkorn & Joni Mitchell (KC 8.3.2)

It additionally addresses the following Historical Thinking Skills, defined on pages 3–11 in the AP U.S. History Curriculum Framework:

- Patterns of Continuity and Change over Time (Skill 2)
- Comparison (Skill 4)
- Contextualization (Skill 5)
- Historical Argumentation (Skill 6)
- Appropriate Use of Relevant Historical Evidence (Skill 7)
- Interpretation (Skill 8)
- Synthesis (Skill 9)

Students will use the skill of Crafting Historical Arguments from Evidence as they analyze song lyrics, poems, photographs and paintings. Students will also use the skills of Comparison and Contextualization and Chronological Reasoning as they connect the cultural sources to the relevant Key Concepts and to cultural sources they have previously studied.

### ► Thematic Learning Objectives

- This lesson connects with the following Learning Outcomes linked to Ideas, Beliefs, and Culture:
  - ◆ CUL-6: Analyze the role of culture and the arts in 19th- and 20th-century movements for social and political change.
  - ◆ CUL-7: Explain how and why “modern” cultural values and popular culture have grown since the early 20th century and how they have affected American politics and society.

### ► Student Learning Outcomes

As a result of these activities, students should be able to:

- Compare and contrast the cultural sources from different media and genres to each other and to cultural sources used previously in the course looking for both continuity and change.

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- Contextualize those sources by connecting them to the concurrent events in U.S. history, noting ways how each may have shaped the other.
- Describe the role of culture and the arts in several 20th-century movements for social and political change, explaining how and why “modern” cultural values and popular culture have grown since the early 20th century and how they have affected American politics and society.

### **LESSON 5:** **The Role of Arts and Culture in the Twentieth Century**

## Teacher Prerequisite Knowledge

It will be helpful for teachers to be familiar with the visual analysis toolkit (see Lesson 1, Activity 1) and to have knowledge of the Great Migration, and the Great Depression.

### ► Student Prerequisite Knowledge

Students can do the following activities even if they have not engaged in the earlier lessons presented here, but if this is the case, the teacher may have to spend more time introducing the skill of viewing art. Students will also need to read brief background information prior to each activity to fully be able to contextualize and compare the various cultural sources.

### ► Common Student Misconceptions

Students have a tendency to ascribe too much agency to cultural sources in terms of their ability to bring about political and social change. The analytical structure outline below will help students correct this imbalance. There is no consensus on how culture and the arts affected movements for social and political change. Some of the cultural sources in these activities describe or reflect shifts in values. Others actively influenced those political and social movements by inspiring, promoting, or supporting them. This difference is a useful analytical approach to use with students.

## Activity 1: The Great Migration

This activity is designed to be used during discussion of the social conflicts of the 1920s based on Key Concept 7.2 of the Curriculum Framework (7.2.III.A concentrates on the Great Migration).

Step 1: Have students read about the Great Migration to prepare for class.

Students can read the appropriate pages in their textbook as well as the summary of the September 13, 2010, NPR interview with Isabel Wilkerson about her book *The Warmth of Other Suns* (<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=129827444>).

Step 2: Lead a short discussion on Great Migration, focusing on the questions of what it was, why it occurred, and what its effects were.

Student answers should include the following information (from NPR or from their textbook):

- From 1915 to the 1960s, more than 6 million African Americans moved out of the South to cities in the North and West. From 1910 to 1930, the number of African Americans living in the North tripled. This migration resulted in significant increases in the population of African Americans in northern cities and industrial jobs.
- Push factors: Jim Crow, violence, sharecropping
- Pull factors: economic opportunity
- Effects: politics, suburbanization, ghettos, violence

### Step 3: Analysis of Cultural Artifacts

Distribute the handout on page 68 to students, or, alternately, share the two cultural artifacts by projecting them in the front of the room for the class. The analysis can happen as a class, or students can work together in smaller groups and report their findings back to the class. Regardless of the format of the discussion, the following questions should be covered:

1. What is the point of view toward the Great Migration expressed in the painting?
  - Students should consider the number and variety of migrants, their apparent anonymity, and their destinations. They should also consider the painter's use of color.
2. What seems to be the main point of the text? Cite examples from the text.
  - Hurston focuses on the conflicting emotions of the migrants.
3. What aspects of the Great Migration are highlighted in these sources? How do these sources enhance your understanding of the Great Migration? What aspects of the Great Migration are these sources ignoring?
  - These sources focus more on the migration itself and paint it in a positive light. The artists are not addressing the experience of the migrants when they get to the North (such as racism and race riots)—are they helping to mythologize the experience?

4. How do these sources connect to sources we have examined previously in the course?
  - Students may connect these sources to slave songs, or perhaps, readings from Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, or other Harlem Renaissance writers covered in an English class.
5. What role did these three documents play in the African-American struggle for social change?
  - Are the artists just documenting what is happening (**reflecting** changes)? Or are they encouraging others to migrate almost like cheerleaders? (**influencing** change)? Who is their intended audience? What was the relationship between the Great Migration and the Harlem Renaissance?

## Activity 2: Depression and Democracy

This activity is designed to be used during discussion of the effects of the Great Depression based on Key Concepts 7.1 and 7.2 of the Curriculum Framework (7.1.III.A discusses government responses to the Depression and 7.2.III.B concentrates on migration during the Depression).

Step 1: Have students read about the Great Depression in their textbook to prepare for class. This can be either textbook reading or reading from other sources recommended by the teacher.

Step 2: In class the following day, present a brief slideshow of Dorothea Lange's photographs. (See the resources section for sources). The slideshow should begin with photographs that are more documentary in purpose without any clear propaganda use, and end with her most famous work, *Migrant Mother*. Throughout the slideshow, help students discuss the following questions, and encourage them to think about the difference between social documentary and political commentary.

1. Go through the slideshow once during the observation part of the analysis process. Which photographs are most memorable to students? Why?
  - Most students focus on the expressions on the faces of the people on Lange's photographs and pick one based on that. Some students pick a barren landscape or a juxtaposition photo.
  - Although some historians have questioned the accuracy of Lange's account, I tell the students her story about the creation of the Migrant Mother photograph. Some of the details are available on the Library of Congress Web site. This reinforces the power of this photograph for the students and leads to a discussion of why it is the iconic photograph of the Great Depression.

2. Cycle through the slideshow again and ask students for their thoughts on what the purpose of Lange’s photographs might be.

- Students correctly connect Lange’s photographs to the goals of the New Deal and to the first quote.
- Once a student brings up the idea that these photographs are propaganda, I introduce another Lange quote: “Everything is propaganda for what you believe in, actually, isn’t it? . . . I don’t see how it could be otherwise. The harder and the more deeply you believe in anything, the more in a sense you’re a propagandist.”

3. Is there a precedent for this kind of art?

- Students usually connect Lange to Jacob Riis and Lewis Hine or to James Montgomery Flagg in World War I, but there are other possible connections depending on which of Lange’s goals the students want to explore.

Ask students to write for 2 minutes on the following question, and then lead a discussion based on student responses:

- Is this an appropriate use of government funds?
- Is there a difference between the government sponsoring art and sponsoring propaganda?
- Should governments sponsor artistic endeavors? Why or why not?

Step 3: In the same class or the following session, introduce Woody Guthrie to students by playing a recording of *This Land is Your Land* (Note: In Bruce Springsteen’s introduction to his live version of this song, he describes why Guthrie wrote the song.)

- Guthrie wrote this song as an angry response to Irving Berlin’s God Bless America. In fact his original title for the song was “God Blessed America.” In discussing the last of Guthrie’s verses (based on the original written lyrics), Robert Santelli wrote the following: “Its message was unmistakable: the American utopia that Berlin wrote about didn’t exist for all of its citizens. Though an immigrant who knew firsthand poverty and squalor, Berlin chose not to write about it in ‘God Bless America.’ But Guthrie did in “God Blessed America.” He too loved America—or at least the promise of America—and he had little faith that it would right itself; but not blind faith. When he wrote “God Blessed America,” Guthrie didn’t whitewash the country’s imperfections. Rather what he did was tell it like it is, as indicated by what he wrote at the end of the page: ‘All you can write is what you see.’” (Santelli, p. 73)

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Step 4: Play the Asch recording (see the Resources section) of Woody Guthrie singing “This Land is Your Land,” and then facilitate a discussion about the following questions:

1. What are the possible messages of the song?
  - Students should be able to contrast the patriotic use of the song today with the more critical message of the original version.
2. What seems to be the message of the two Depression verses?
  - Most students are familiar with the song but not with the two Depression verses. Students interpret the Private Property verse as showing the conflicts between the “haves” and the “have nots” or perhaps showing communist leanings. They also have fun speculating about how he knew what was on the other side of the sign.
  - Students connect the Relief Office verse to the attitudes toward the Depression that they read in oral histories and to the Lange photographs. Some perceptive students speculate about Guthrie’s views toward Christianity because of the “shadow of the steeple” and the “God blessed America for me” lines.

Step 5: Ask students to write for 2 minutes answering the following questions. This can be collected and used for a formative assessment or can be used as the basis for further discussion. Some possible responses are included in the notes below.

1. Compare the goals of Lange and Guthrie.
  - Historians talk about Lange’s work as “visual democracy” and Guthrie’s work as calling for a “renewal of democracy.” Although both artists are sometimes accused of having communist leanings, they were primarily interested in a renewal of democracy to combat the problems of the Great Depression.
2. What role did Lange and Guthrie play in promoting social and political change?
  - Both Lange and Guthrie were trying to do more than just document the world around them. They were trying to influence people to support social and political movements (The New Deal, the labor movement, etc.) to try to make the United States a better place.
  - You can emphasize Guthrie’s influence on other musicians from Pete Seeger to Bob Dylan to Bruce Springsteen. When studying the road to U.S. entry into World War II, for example, you can play Guthrie’s song, “Sinking of the Reuben James.”
  - You can also use Lange’s photographs of Japanese-American internment during our discussion of the World War II Home Front.

## Activity 3: Rosie the Riveter, Freedom Road, and Norman Rockwell

This activity is designed to be used during discussion of the World War II Home Front and the questions about American values that were raised during the war (based on Key Concept 7.3.III of the Curriculum Framework).

Step 1: Play recordings of the songs ***Rosie the Riveter*** and ***Freedom Road*** for students (see Resources section for links). After each one, hold a brief discussion of their initial impressions of the songs: Which aspects were most memorable? Have they heard either of them before?

Step 2. Distribute handouts of the lyrics, or project them in the front of the room. You might want to play the songs a second time when students have the words in front of them.

Step 3. Lead a discussion focusing on the following questions. For some questions, you may want to have students discuss their thoughts with a partner first, and then share their ideas with the class.

1. What is the purpose of this song? (Ask students to cite specific lyrics to support their answers).

Rosie the Riveter:

Influencing: recruitment of women for the workforce.

“Rosie is protecting Charlie, working overtime, etc.”

Reflecting: celebrating the patriotism of women in the workforce. “She’s making history, working for victory, etc.”

Freedom Road:

Influencing: recruitment of African American support for the war effort and perhaps for enlisting in the armed forces.

“Black and white together, unite and fight! etc.”

Reflecting: promoting the message of the “Double V” campaign.

“Some folks think that freedom just ain’t right  
Those are the very people I want to fight. etc.”

2. Identify three aspects of World War II depicted in these songs.

■ Students might refer to:

- ◆ The service of “Rosie the Riveters” in the workforce
- ◆ The African American campaign to fight racism at home and fascism abroad
- ◆ The use of songs for propaganda
- ◆ The references to Allies (Moscow) and Enemies (Hitler and Hirohito)

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- ◆ Putting cash into the national defense by buying war bonds
- ◆ The opportunities for people left out of “mainstream” America (women and minorities) to prove their citizenship and to try to become part of the American identity.

3. Compare and contrast the purposes of these two songs:

- See above. Answers should also compare the contexts for the two groups.
- For an additional comparison, students can compare these songs with Norman Rockwell’s *Four Freedoms* paintings (see resources section for link). What is the purpose of these works? How does it relate to the songs? Is one medium (music or visual art) more compelling than another? (Make sure that students understand that Rockwell’s *Four Freedoms* paintings depict the freedoms noted in Franklin D. Roosevelt’s *Four Freedoms* speech and relate directly to the stated war aims put forth in the Atlantic Charter. (See <http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/fourfreedoms> and <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/atlantic.asp>.)

### ► **Formative Assessment for Lesson Five**

As a continuation of this conversation, instruct students to write an editorial in which they defend or attack these songs and/or paintings as being either patriotic or un-American. In particular, they should:

- Write from the perspective of a U.S. citizen in 1942, placing their comments in a historical context.
- Identify the gender and ethnicity of the characters they are assuming and demonstrate what impact this has on his or her comments.
- Give specific evidence from the lyrics or paintings in the editorial to support the views presented there.

### **Evaluating the Formative Assessment**

Teachers should provide students with written feedback on their assignments, which can be guided by the following elements of the students’ learning experience:

*Presenting an effective argument:*

- Do students defend or attack their selected example as being patriotic or un-American?
- Do they reference specific evidence from within the paintings or lyrics to support their position?
- Are their points clear and do they make logical sense?

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*Understanding context:*

- Do they identify the gender and ethnicity of their character and demonstrate how this informs their character’s comments? Is it made clear how this point of view affects their review?
- Do students put their statements in historical context?

Students’ answers will vary—the goal here is to see them using the analytical models already discussed. They may argue that Freedom Road influenced change by promoting the Double V campaign but that Rosie the Riveter reflected the changes already happening in the World War II workforce. The more perceptive students will link these songs to efforts made by “outsiders” in wartime to prove their patriotism and win full citizenship (part of the American Identity theme).

### ► Reflection on Formative Assessment

Next instructional steps can vary according to the particular aspects of the assignment that may have been challenging to students. Following are suggestions related to delving deeper into *content and context* and to understanding *skills of argumentation*. Since all student will have selected from the same three works in their editorials, these discussions can be had as a full class:

*Reviewing content and context:*

- If students struggle with identifying and understanding the meaning of elements in visual documents such as Rockwell’s *Four Freedoms*, students can be assigned Bruce Cole’s article on Rockwell’s Four Freedoms (<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203440104574406903628933162.html>), and Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Presidential Address to Congress on January 6, 1941, in which he enumerated the Four Freedoms (you can find a copy of this speech at <http://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/great-depression/resources/united-states-during-pre%E2%80%93world-war-ii-period>). Ask students to define, first in writing and then in class discussion, each of the Four Freedoms and to explain why they were so significant to Americans at this time, especially to women and African Americans.
- If students have not identified the gender and ethnicity of their character and demonstrated how this informs their character’s comments, ask them to pick a gender and ethnicity and make a statement showing how this identity might influence the character’s thinking. Help them see, for example, how a Japanese American, a German American, or an African American might view World War II from various perspectives. A German American, for example, might be sympathetic with the German cause, or might want to express his American patriotism very overtly in order to avoid condemnation as un-American, or might even have both feelings going on at the same time.

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- If students fail to put their statements in historical context, ask them to list specific historical events or developments occurring at the time the songs and paintings were created, and to list at least two ways that specific events may have influenced or been reflected in a song lyric and a Four Freedoms painting. Push students to be logical and specific.

### *Reviewing skills of argumentation:*

- If students have only summarized or described the work and have not defended or attacked the songs as being patriotic or un-American, review with them the purpose and definition of an editorial. Have them pick a position (the songs are patriotic, the songs are unpatriotic), write a sentence expressing that position and putting it in the opening paragraph of their editorial, and give examples from the song lyrics supporting that position.
- If students fail to use specific evidence, ask them to list the specific aspects or components of the song lyrics or paintings that they believe supports their character's comments. Again, push them to be specific and detailed.

A follow-up discussion or assignment might invite students to connect these songs to other sources that have previously been examined in class. Answers here will depend on your curriculum. Some students may connect Freedom Road to other poems by Langston Hughes and Paul Laurence Dunbar; to A. Philip Randolph's letter to Eleanor Roosevelt about the proposed March on Washington; to the previous Great Migration activity; and maybe even to earlier sources from slavery, abolition, and Reconstruction. In addition to connecting Rosie the Riveter to World War II propaganda posters, students could make connections to images of women in World War I propaganda posters as well as to the women's suffrage movement and political, social, and economic activities in the Progressive Era.

## **Activity 4: Defending and Challenging the Social Order**

This activity is designed to be used during discussion of postwar American society based on Key Concept 8.3 of the Curriculum Framework (8.3.I.B These economic and social changes, in addition to the anxiety engendered by the Cold War, led to an increasingly homogeneous mass culture as well as challenges to conformity by artists, intellectuals, and rebellious youth).

**Step 1:** Distribute the handout found on page 69, containing an excerpt from Robert Hughes's *American Visions*, and have students read it for homework. Instruct them to look up the artists and television shows mentioned in the reading and to come to class prepared to discuss them.

Step 2: Hold a brief discussion with students, asking them to summarize Hughes’s argument about television’s effect on American culture. Ask the students if they think that conformity was replacing American individualism.

Step 3: Play a recording of Malvina Reynolds’ song “Little Boxes”(see the Resources section for a link) as a starting point to discuss challenges to conformity. What words and other devices are used to address the idea of conformity?

Step 4: Note that other cultural phenomena of the 1950s challenged the social order, as opposed to conforming to it, and it is this division that students will examine in their next assignment. Distribute the handout on page 70 as an introduction to the assignment. Students will choose an individual, publication, or other cultural phenomena that either conformed to or rebelled against the social norm of the era, and they will locate a single cultural artifact that will aid them in sharing their ideas with the class. This task could be assigned for homework over a one or two night period or could be expanded to be a larger assignment if you wanted to include a significant written accompaniment to their presentations.

Step 5: Have students lead small-group or full-class discussions, wherein they share their cultural artifact and lead a discussion (similar in format to the analyses of other cultural artifacts you have been doing all year—first describe, then interpret) on its significance. Why do they feel that this example promotes or challenges conformity? Do any other students agree or disagree with their thoughts?

## Activity 5: Songs of Protest and Social Change

What role did music play in the 1960s movements for social and political change?

This activity is designed to be used as a formative assessment after the class discussion of the social and political movements of the 1960s and 1970s based on Key Concepts 8.1, 8.2, and 8.3 of the Curriculum Framework. It can also be used as a summative assessment.

Step 1: Distribute the handout on pages 71–72, with two short articles about music and social change. Have students work in small groups to answer the following questions. (Note: This activity is similar to the Short-Answer Questions that are on the new AP exam.) This activity can also be completed as a homework assignment prior to class.

1. According to the Time article, why are Seeger, Dylan, and Bikel in Mississippi?
2. According to the Time article, what role was folk music playing in the movements for social and political change?
3. What problems does Weissman suggest need to be considered when examining the question of the influence of songs on social and political change?

## *The Role of Arts and Culture in the Twentieth Century*

### **LESSON 5: The Role of Arts and Culture in the Twentieth Century**

4. What are the two different interpretations that social scientists have offered on the connection between popular music and social change?
5. What is Weissman's argument? With which social science interpretation does he seem to agree?
6. Which social science interpretation seems to best match the argument made in the Time article?
7. Which source is more useful to a historian studying this question?
8. What are some other possible interpretations of the role music plays in social and political change? (Cite songs we have examined earlier in this course.)

Step 2: The teacher distributes the handout on page 73 introducing the music analysis assignment. Students will choose a song from a list provided and will prepare an analysis of the lyrics and a discussion of the ways that the song promoted social change. Students will create a "one pager" handout or a poster featuring the song's lyrics, a relevant photograph or other visual example, and notes from their analysis.

Step 3: On the day that the assignment is due, the teacher hangs each poster on the wall or displays each on a desk. The students circulate and read the posters while the teacher plays the songs that the students used. Alternatively, each student presents and explains their poster.

Step 4: To reinforce their learning, at the end of the activity, the students as a class can select the three songs and the three images that they think have had the greatest impact.



## Resources

### Lesson 1: Considering Context: A Toolkit for Visual Analysis

Additional resources for visual analysis strategies:

- Artful Thinking routines: <http://www.pzartfulthinking.org/routines.php>
- Artifact and Analysis: <http://www.smithsonianeducation.org/idealabs/ap/index.htm>
- The Artist’s Toolkit, ArtsConnectEd: <http://www.artsconnected.org/toolkit/index.html>
- Visual Thinking Strategies: <http://www.vtshome.org>

Additional collections of images:

- Picturing America: <http://picturingamerica.neh.gov>
- Library of Congress digital collections: <http://www.loc.gov/library/libarch-digital.html>
  - ◆ Extensive online collections of newspapers, photographs, maps, audio files, and other historical documents

### Lesson 2: Nation-Building in the Atlantic World

#### Activity 1: Monticello and the Neo-Classical Cultural Context

- Images of Monticello for all discussions in this lesson can be found at <http://www.monticello.org>
- Villa Rotonda: <http://www.villarotonda.it>
- Chiswick House and Gardens: <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/daysout/properties/chiswick-house/>

#### Activity 2: Changes in Attitude and Context—1820–1848

- Discussion 1: Emerson, Whitman, and the Transcendentalists’ Response
  - ◆ Ralph Waldo Emerson, Self-Reliance: <http://www.emersoncentral.com/selfreliance.htm>
  - ◆ Walt Whitman, When I Heard the Learn’d Astronomer: <http://www.bartleby.com/142/180.html>
- Discussion 2: Thomas Cole and the Hudson River School Teach Americans How to See the World
  - ◆ The Course of Empire: <http://www.explorethomascole.org/tour/items/69>
  - ◆ Indians Viewing Landscape: <http://www.explorethomascole.org/gallery/items/229>

- ◆ Falls of Kaaterskill: <http://www.explorethomascole.org/gallery/items/229>
- ◆ Last of the Mohicans: <http://www.explorethomascole.org/gallery/items/33>
- ◆ Daniel Boone: <http://www.explorethomascole.org/gallery/items/32>
- ◆ Home in the Woods: <http://www.catskillarchive.com/cole/>
- ◆ River in the Catskills: <http://www.explorethomascole.org/gallery/items/28>
- ◆ View on the Catskills, Early Autumn: <http://www.explorethomascole.org/tour/items/22>
- ◆ View on the Schoharie: <http://www.explorethomascole.org/gallery/items/37>
- ◆ Schroon Lake: [http://www.adkmuseum.org/discover\\_and\\_learn/collections\\_database/detail/?q=&cat=6&id=22](http://www.adkmuseum.org/discover_and_learn/collections_database/detail/?q=&cat=6&id=22)
- ◆ Catskill Mountain House: The Four Elements: <http://www.explorethomascole.org/gallery/items/29>

### Lesson 3: The Gilded Age and the Transition to “Modernity”

General resources for this lesson (sources mentioned in the introduction and background information):

Cited in introduction and background information:

- The Theory of the Leisure Class: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/833/833-h/833-h.htm>
- The Frick Collection: <http://www.frick.org>
- Introduction to the Ashcan School, by the Metropolitan Museum of Art: [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/ashc/hd\\_ashc.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/ashc/hd_ashc.htm)
- American Realists of the Early 1900s, National Gallery of Art: <http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/features/slideshows/american-realists-of-the-early-1900s.html#>)

#### Activity 1: Changing Attitudes from the Gilded Age to Modernism

- Discussion 1:
  - ◆ John Singer Sargent, Elizabeth Winthrop Chanler: <http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=21621>
- Discussion 2:
  - ◆ William Merritt Chase, Idle Hours: <http://www.cartermuseum.org/artworks/282>
- Discussion 3
  - ◆ George Bellows, The Lone Tenement: <http://www.nga.gov/collection/gallery/gg71/gg71-46558.html>

## Activity 2: Being Modern

- Discussion 1:
  - ◆ Charles Sheeler, Criss-Crossed Conveyors, River Rouge Plant, Ford Motor Company: <http://www.metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/190016915>
- Discussion 2:
  - ◆ Joseph Stella, Brooklyn Bridge: <http://whitney.org/Collection/JosephStella/4215>
- Discussion 3:
  - ◆ Paul Strand, Wire Wheel: <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/49.55.318>

## Lesson 4: Ideas, Beliefs, and Culture in the Progressive Era:

### The Ashcan School

Background information on Ashcan School:

- Overview presented by the Metropolitan Museum of Art: [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/ashc/hd\\_ashc.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/ashc/hd_ashc.htm)
- Overview by ArtCyclopedia: <http://www.artcyclopedia.com/history/ashcan-school.html>

Two reviews are mentioned as suggested readings in the lesson:

- London Daily Telegraph: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/art-reviews/8373232/An-American-Experiment-at-National-Gallery-Seven-magazine-review.html>
- New York Times: <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/28/arts/28sloa.html>

Additional reviews and articles:

- New York Times obituary of the well-known woman Ash Can artist: <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/02/16/arts/theresa-bernstein-an-ash-can-school-artist-dies-at-111.html?module=Search&mabReward=relbias%3Aw>
- Discussion of ethnic imagery in Ashcan School art: <http://brickhaus.com/amoore/magazine/ash.html>

## Lesson 5: The Role of Arts and Culture in the Twentieth Century (Ideas, Beliefs, and Culture)

### Activity 1: The Great Migration

- Jacob Lawrence, The Migration Series: [http://www.phillipscollection.org/migration\\_series/](http://www.phillipscollection.org/migration_series/)
- Zora Neale Hurston, Jonah’s Gourd Vine: <http://zoranealehurston.com/books/jonahs-gourd-vine>
- Langston Hughes, One Way Ticket: <http://www.georgeking-assoc.com/gointochicago/poetry.html>
- Wilkerson, Isabel. 2010. *The Warmth of Other Suns*. New York: Vintage.
  - ◆ Additional information also available at <http://isabelwilkerson.com/>
- Music by Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, and/or Bessie Smith. iTunes and/or YouTube searches should turn up many options for teachers.

### Activity 2: Depression and Democracy

- Dorothea Lange photographs: <http://www.shorpy.com/dorothea-lange-photographs>
- “Dorothea Lange’s ‘Migrant Mother’ Photographs in the Farm Security Administration Collection: An Overview” ([http://lcweb.loc.gov/rr/print/list/128\\_migm.html](http://lcweb.loc.gov/rr/print/list/128_migm.html)).
- Woody Guthrie, This Land is Your Land
  - ◆ Recording (from The Asch Recordings, Vol.1): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1my1jn6QHzE>
  - ◆ Lyrics: [http://www.woodyguthrie.org/Lyrics/This\\_Land.htm](http://www.woodyguthrie.org/Lyrics/This_Land.htm)
- Santelli, Robert. 2012. *This Land is Your Land: Woody Guthrie and the Journey of an American Song*. Philadelphia: Running Press.
- Trachtenberg, Alan. 1989. *Reading American Photographs*. New York: Hill and Wang.

### Activity 3: Rosie the Riveter, Freedom Road, and Norman Rockwell

- Rosie the Riveter
  - ◆ Recording: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=55NCElsbjEQ>
  - ◆ Lyrics: <http://lyricsplayground.com/alpha/songs/r/rosietheriveter.shtml>
- Freedom Road
  - ◆ Recording: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vFf9gDNbi-Q>
  - ◆ Lyrics: <http://www.austincc.edu/dlauderb/2341/Lyrics/FreedomsRoad.htm>
- Four Freedoms, Norman Rockwell: [http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers\\_of\\_persuasion/four\\_freedoms/four\\_freedoms.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/four_freedoms/four_freedoms.html)

#### Activity 4: Defending and Challenging the Social Order

- The reading on postwar American society is excerpted from American Visions:
  - ◆ Hughes, Robert. 1999. *American Visions: The Epic History of Art in America*. New York: Knopf
- Malvina Reynolds, Little Boxes
  - ◆ Recording: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2\\_2LGkEU4Xs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2_2LGkEU4Xs)
  - ◆ Lyrics: <http://www.lyricstime.com/malvina-reynolds-little-boxes-lyrics.html>

#### Activity 5: Songs of Protest and Social Change

##### Readings:

- “Folk Music: They Hear America Singing,” *Time*, July 19, 1963, pp. 53–55. <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,896904,00.html>  
Also reprinted in: Brackett, David. 2005. *The Pop, Rock, and Soul Reader*, 127–128. New York: Oxford University Press.
- “Can Music Cause Social Change?” 2010. In Weissman, Dick. *Talkin ‘Bout a Revolution: Music and Social Change in America*. New York: Backbeat Books.

##### Music:

- Specific songs are not required for this lesson, but teachers can search iTunes and YouTube for recordings of the musicians featured in these articles, including Bob Dylan, Peter, Paul, and Mary, and Woody Guthrie.

##### Formative Assessment:

- Norman Rockwell’s Four Freedoms: [http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers\\_of\\_persuasion/four\\_freedoms/four\\_freedoms.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/four_freedoms/four_freedoms.html)



## Appendix A:

### Readings for Lesson 2, Activity 2

*From Self-Reliance*, Ralph Waldo Emerson (1841)

Source: <http://www.emersoncentral.com/selfreliance.htm>

. . . And we are now men, and must accept in the highest mind the same transcendent destiny; and not minors and invalids in a protected corner, not cowards fleeing before a revolution, but guides, redeemers, and benefactors, obeying the Almighty effort, and advancing on Chaos and the Dark.

Society is a joint-stock company, in which the members agree, for the better securing of his bread to each shareholder, to surrender the liberty and culture of the eater. The virtue in most request is conformity. Self-reliance is its aversion. It loves not realities and creators, but names and customs. . . .

. . . Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist.

. . . Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind.

. . . My life is for itself and not for a spectacle. I much prefer that it should be of a lower strain, so it be genuine and equal, than that it should be glittering and unsteady.

. . . If, therefore, a man claims to know and speak of God, and carries you backward to the phraseology of some old mouldered nation in another country, in another world, believe him not. Is the acorn better than the oak which is its fullness and completion? Is the parent better than the child into whom he has cast his ripened being? Whence, then, this worship of the past? The centuries are conspirators against the sanity and authority of the soul. Time and space are but physiological colors which the eye makes, but the soul is light; where it is, is day; where it was, is night; and history is an impertinence and an injury, if it be any thing more than a cheerful apologue or parable of my being and becoming.

Man is timid and apologetic; he is no longer upright; he dares not say "I think," "I am," but quotes some saint or sage. He is ashamed before the blade of grass or the blowing rose. These roses under my window make no reference to former roses or to better ones; they are for what they are; they exist with God to-day. There is no time to them. There is simply the rose; it is perfect in every moment of its existence. Before a leaf-bud has burst, its whole life acts; in the full-blown flower there is no more; in the leafless root there is no less. Its nature is satisfied, and it satisfies nature, in all moments alike. But man postpones or remembers; he does not live in the present, but with reverted eye laments the past, or, heedless of the riches that surround him, stands on tiptoe to foresee the future. He cannot be happy and strong until he too lives with nature in the present, above time.

. . . If our young men miscarry in their first enterprises they lose all heart. If the young merchant fails, men say he is ruined. If the finest genius studies at one of our colleges, and is not installed in an office within one year afterwards, in the cities or suburbs of Boston or New York, it seems to his friends and to himself that he is right in being disheartened and in complaining the rest of his life. A sturdy lad from New Hampshire or Vermont, who in turn tries all the professions, who teams it, farms it, peddles, keeps a school, preaches, edits a newspaper, goes to Congress, buys a township, and so forth, in successive years, and always like a cat falls on his feet, is worth a hundred of these city dolls. He walks abreast with his days and feels no shame in not “studying a profession,” for he does not postpone his life, but lives already. He has not one chance, but a hundred chances.

. . . And why need we copy the Doric or the Gothic model? Beauty, convenience, grandeur of thought and quaint expression are as near to us to any, and if the American artist will study with hope and love the precise thing to be done by him, considering the climate, the soil, the length of the day, the wants of the people, the habit and form of the government, he will create a house in which all these will find themselves fitted, and taste and sentiment will be satisfied also.

As our Religion, our Education, our Art look abroad, so does our spirit of society. All men plume themselves on the improvement of society, and no man improves.

Society never advances. It recedes as fast on one side as it gains on the other. Its progress is only apparent like the workers of a treadmill. It undergoes continual changes; it is barbarous, it is civilized, it is christianized, it is rich, it is scientific; but this change is not amelioration. For every thing that is given something is taken. Society acquires new arts and loses old instincts. What a contrast between the well-clad, reading, writing, thinking American, with a watch, a pencil and a bill of exchange in his pocket, and the naked New Zealander, whose property is a club, a spear, a mat and an undivided twentieth of a shed to sleep under. But compare the health of the two men and you see that his aboriginal strength, the white man has lost. If the traveller tell us truly, strike the savage with a broad axe and in a day or two the flesh shall unite and heal as if you struck the blow into soft pitch, and the same blow shall send the white man to his grave.

The civilized man has built a coach, but has lost the use of his feet. He is supported on crutches, but lacks so much support of muscle. He has got a fine Geneva watch, but he has lost the skill to tell the hour by the sun. A Greenwich nautical almanac he has, and so being sure of the information when he wants it, the man in the street does not know a star in the sky. The solstice he does not observe; the equinox he knows as little; and the whole bright calendar of the year is without a dial in his mind. His note-books impair his memory: his libraries overload his wit; the insurance-office increases the number of accidents; and it may be a question whether machinery does not encumber; whether we have not lost by refinement some energy, by a Christianity entrenched in establishments and forms some vigor of wild virtue. For every stoic was a stoic; but in Christendom where is the Christian?

. . . And so the reliance on Property, including the reliance on governments which protect it, is the want of self-reliance. Men have looked away from themselves and at things so long that they have come to esteem what they call the soul's progress, namely, the religious, learned and civil institutions as guards of property, and they deprecate assaults on these, because they feel them to be assaults on property. They measure their esteem of each other by what each has, and not by what each is . . . But that which a man is, does always by necessity acquire, and what the man acquires, is permanent and living property, which does not wait the beck of rulers, or mobs, or revolutions, or fire, or storm, or bankruptcies, but perpetually renews itself wherever the man is put. "Thy lot or portion of life," said the Caliph Ali, "is seeking after thee; therefore be at rest from seeking after it." Our dependence on these foreign goods leads us to our slavish respect for numbers.

A political victory, a rise of rents, the recovery of your sick or the return of your absent friend, or some other quite external event raises your spirits, and you think good days are preparing for you. Do not believe it. It can never be so. Nothing can bring you peace but yourself. Nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles.

*When I heard the Learn'd Astronomer* (Whitman, 1865)

Source: <http://www.bartleby.com/142/180.html>

When I heard the learn'd astronomer;  
When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before me;  
When I was shown the charts and the diagrams, to add, divide, and measure them;  
When I, sitting, heard the astronomer, where he lectured with much applause in  
the lecture-room,  
How soon, unaccountable, I became tired and sick;  
Till rising and gliding out, I wander'd off by myself,  
In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,  
Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.

## Appendix B

### Images for Lesson 3



John Singer Sargent, Elizabeth Winthrop Chanler (Mrs. John Jay Chapman), 1893, oil, 49 3/8 × 40 1/2 in., Smithsonian American Art Museum, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC / Art Resource, NY.



William Merritt Chase (1849–1916), *Idle Hours*, ca. 1894, oil on canvas, Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, Texas.



George Bellows, *The Lone Tenement*, 1909. Oil on canvas. Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.



Charles Sheeler, *Criss-Crossed Conveyors*, River Rouge Plant, Ford Motor Company, 1927. Gelatin silver print. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.



Paul Strand, *Wire Wheel*, 1917. Silver-platinum print. © Aperture Foundation Inc., Paul Strand Archive.

## Appendix C: Lesson 5: The Role of Arts and Culture in the Twentieth Century

### Activity 1: The Great Migration



Jacob Lawrence, *The Migration Series*, Panel no. 1: During World War I there was a great migration north by southern African Americans, between 1940 and 1941. Casein tempera on hardboard. 12 x 18 in.; 30.48 x 45.72 cm. Acquired 1942. The Phillips Collection, Washington DC.

And black men's feet learned roads  
some said good-bye cheerfully . . . others  
fearfully, with terrors of unknown dangers  
in their mouths . . . others in their eagerness  
for distance said nothing. The daybreak  
found them gone. The wind said North.  
And men moved, like great herds before the  
glaciers.

Zora Neale Hurston,  
Excerpt from *Jonah's Gourd Vine* (1934)  
Source: [http://zoranealehurston.com/books/  
jonahs-gourd-vine](http://zoranealehurston.com/books/jonahs-gourd-vine)

## Handout for Activity 4: Defending and Challenging the Social Order

But the greatest change in the American pattern was not in bricks and mortar but in the media. Through the 1950s television—once a little glowing screen the size of a dinner plate with flickering gray images on it—took over the life of Americans. It rearranged their domestic habits, it filled up their waking hours, it administered their dreams and taught them their desires. It was the most powerful means of advertising that had ever been devised, and very soon the tiny group of mega-networks that controlled it realized that the best way to make it profitable was to turn all its content into a mere carrier for ads. The entire content of television was thus shaped by the imperatives of the market. Since the 1950s and 1960s also brought new and infinitely more sophisticated techniques of market research and audience-sampling than had ever existed before, this guaranteed that all TV would be aimed at the Great Middle; and by a kind of cybernetic feedback, the desires of the Middle, once shaped by TV's power, were easily sounded out and became the pretext for further Middling. The rapid expansion of an American mass culture meant that more Americans were required—by their peers, their authorities, their media—to hold the same values and symbols in common and not deviated from them.

The result was unification: an enormously enhanced belief in an American culture, arising from the pervasiveness of American mass culture. The phrase “the American way of life,” as though there was only one, had never been heard so often as in the 1950s—it would have meant very little to most Americans in the eighteenth or even the nineteenth century, who still tended to regard America as the great open field to which different ways of life could rub along freely, side by side, in friction and tolerance. But there was something distinctly coercive about the idea of “the American way of life.”

As television's power eclipsed radio's, it weakened American regionalism by giving all Americans the same images of desire through ads and the same fantasy images through narrative. In short, a huge administered monoculture began to grow, and it started to blot out the earlier ideas of a Texan, a Virginian, a Californian, or a New York cultural ethos. It worked in the same way as the death of the frontier had, sixty years before. Just as the vanishing of the mythic West only made its fictive images vastly more popular, so the massing and incorporation of American culture produced intense nostalgia for “old” and “real” America, its folkways and idiosyncrasies, its threatened values. Naturally, television and other media then fed off this, recycling folk stuff and small-town imagery in an endless loop into the national monoculture and dramatizing “difference” with shows like “The Beverly Hillbillies.” The analogue of this process, in art, was the popularity of certain painters whose work evoked lost or fading Americas of one kind or another. There was Anna Mary Robertson Moses (1860-1961), Grandma Moses, the folk-primitive painter from Eagle Bridge, New York, with her copious and ever-charming vignettes of rural America. There was Andrew Wyeth (b. 1917), whose austere

dun-and-gray realist pictures of reclusive New Englanders, bleached frame houses, and open windows with lace curtains blowing a little spookily in the wind provided images of hardscrabble Puritan rectitude, tinged with close-lipped sentimentality: to this day, Christina's World, 1948, his subtly ominous painting of a polio-crippled girl gazing at a distant house and apparently crawling toward it (according to Wyeth, though, she was picking berries) vies with American Gothic in popularity.

Source: Robert Hughes, *American Visions: The Epic History of Art in America* (Knopf, 1999), 507–508.

## The 1950s: Defending and Challenging the Social Order

### How did each of the following challenge the conformity of the 1950s?

- Malvina Reynolds – *Little Boxes*
- Jackson Pollock
- The Beats
- Elvis
- Hugh Hefner
- Grace Metalious's *Peyton Place*
- *Mad* Magazine
- Alfred Kinsey
- cool jazz
- Jackie Robinson
- Rosa Parks
- The Little Rock Nine

### How did each of the following promote conformity in Post-World War II America?

- Grandma Moses (cite a specific image)
- Andrew Wyeth (cite a specific image)
- Norman Rockwell (cite a specific image)
- Billy Graham
- The Pledge of Allegiance
- Ray Kroc
- Walt Disney
- William Levitt
- The Cold War
- TV
  - ◆ Leave it to Beaver
  - ◆ I Love Lucy

Choose a person, event, or phenomenon from either list, and research the ways that it either promoted or challenged conformity in the 1950s. Locate one cultural artifact—perhaps a letter or article written by the person, a recording of a song by a performer, a clip from a TV show—that reinforces your ideas, and bring this in to share with the class. Come in prepared to lead a class or small-group discussion, analyzing and interpreting the artifact you are sharing, with a particular focus on whether this examples promotes or challenges social conformity.

## Handout for Activity 5: Songs of Protest and Social Change

### “Folk Music: They Hear America Singing” - *Time Magazine*

Pete Seeger, Theodore Bikel and Bob Dylan are three of the most sought-after folk singers in the business. But last week they were doing the seeking. At a voter registration rally two miles out of Greenwood, Miss., all three stood on a flatbed truck parked on a dusty field beside Highway 82 and sang the gospel-like *We Shall Overcome*. The audience, 200 Negro dirt farmers, lustily joined in:

*We shall overcome—some day  
Oh, deep in my heart,  
I do believe.  
We shall overcome—some day*

All over the U.S. folk singers are doing what folk singers are classically supposed to do—singing about current crises. Not since the Civil War era have they done so in such numbers or with such intensity. Instead of keening over the poor old cowpoke who died in the streets of Laredo or chronicling the life cycle of the blue-tailed fly (the sort of thing that fired the great postwar revival of folk song), they are singing with hot-eyed fervor about police dogs and racial murder. Sometimes they use serviceable old tunes, but just as often they are writing new ones about fresh heroes and villains, from Martin Luther King to Bull Connor. In Chicago, integrationist songs are sung not only at the North Side’s grubby Fickle Pickle, but also in the Camellia House of The Drake. In a cocktail lounge in Ogunquit, ME, a college girl shouts out: “Sing something about integration.” Seeger has done so before a crowd of 45,000 at the Boston Arts Festival; and the Peter, Paul and Mary recording of Bob Dylan’s *Blowin’ in the Wind* is, according to Warner Bros. Records, the fastest selling single the company has ever cut. *Blowin’* is young Dylan at his lyrically honest best. It sounds as country-airy as *Turkey in the Straw*, but it has a cutting edge.

Source: “Folk Music: They Hear America Singing,” *Time*, July 19, 1963, 53–55

“Can Music Cause Social Change?” by Dick Weissman

Most songs last about 3-minutes long. It is possible, but difficult, to capture a major issue in such a short time capsule. The song “We Shall Overcome” comes to mind. Anyone who ever participated in the civil rights movement knows that this song beautifully represents the struggle. There are a number of problems in attempting to define social change, or even a specific issue, in such a brief format.

One problem is that many issues are too complex to be treated in this way, at least for a mass audience. Dylan’s song “Only a Pawn in Their Game” is one of his more profound political songs. The basic concept of the song is that the murderer of Mississippi civil rights leader Medgar Evers was simply a representative of a hopelessly unjust system that convinces poor white people that they are superior to African Americans. Dylan cites the sheriffs, the police, politicians, and the educational system as all part of this machinery. In the final verse, Dylan pays tribute to Evers, saying “they lowered him down as a king,” a sort of a loose play on the name Martin Luther King, as well as an eerie predictor of the tragic fate that awaited Martin Luther King 5 years later, in 1968.

This is a truly profound song, but it couldn’t possibly have gained mass acceptance for several reasons. For one thing, the message is far too complex. For another, in deemphasizing blame for an individual and ascribing it to a system, the song remove’s the listener’s ability to avenge the wrongful death. Compare this song to Dylan’s “Blowin’ in the Wind.” That song has a great sing-along chorus, and it specifically refers to the oppression of African Americans. The hook line, “The answer is blowin’ in the wind,” inspired the pop-gospel singer Sam Cooke to write his own political song, “A Change Is Gonna Come.” When all is said and done, the “Pawn” song is a teaching tool, offered to people who do not necessarily want the lesson. “Blowin’ in the Wind” is a song that appears to raise issues but, in fact, raises only questions and offers no answers.

Even though a song cannot create social change, it can certainly be the inspiration that ultimately leads to such changes. “Solidarity Forever” tells the union member that by uniting with other workers, it is possible to counteract the power of management. “Which Side Are You On?” told coal miners that their only chance was to join together in a union. These songs did not create change, but they certainly helped to pave the highway that could lead to change . . .

Historically, such radical social scientists as Theodor Adorno saw popular music as being entirely the creature of the marketplace and viewed it as musical drivel. Today’s radical social theorists, like George Lipsitz and Josh Kun, have a more idealistic vision of what popular music can do. They marvel at capitalism’s inability to control its content, and they laud the musical hybrids that involve different ethnic and racial strands.

Source: Dick Weissman, *Talkin ‘Bout a Revolution: Music and Social Change in America* (New York: Backbeat Books, 2010).

## What role did music play in the 1960s movements for social and political change?

### Assignment:

1. Pick one of the following songs from the 1960s and early 1970s to analyze. You may also pick a different song if you get it approved by the teacher.
2. Find an image (photograph or painting) from the time period to connect to your song.
3. Create a “one-pager” or a poster that includes each the following:
  - a) The song lyrics—including the singer, date, and song title
  - b) A copy of the image—including the artist, date, and title (if there is one)
  - c) Your analysis of the role that the song played in the 1960s movements for social and political change
  - d) Your analysis of the role that the image played in the 1960s movements for social and political change
  - e) Your analysis connecting the image and the song and comparing their impact
  - f) A bibliography citing the source of the image and the song lyrics and any other resources you used

### The Civil Rights Movement (KC 8.2.1)

- We Shall Overcome (Pete Seeger)
- This Little Light of Mine (The Freedom Singers)
- Eyes on the Prize (The Staple Singers)
- Mississippi Goddam (Nina Simone)
- Mississippi (Bob Dylan)
- A Change is Gonna Come (Sam Cooke)
- People Get Ready (Curtis Mayfield)
- Keep on Pushing (Curtis Mayfield)
- This is My Country (Curtis Mayfield)
- Respect (Aretha Franklin)
- Say It Loud (I’m Black and I’m Proud) (James Brown)

### The Anti-War Movement (KC 8.1.3)

- The Ballad of the Green Beret (SSgt Barry Sadler)
- Lyndon Johnson Told A Nation (Tom Paxton)
- Eve of Destruction (Barry McGuire)
- I Ain’t Marching Anymore (Phil Ochs)
- I-Feel-Like-I’m-Fixin’-To-Die-Rag (Country Joe & the Fish)
- Fortunate Son (Creedence Clearwater Revival)
- For What It’s Worth (Buffalo Springfield)
- The Times They Are A-Changin’ (Bob Dylan)

Women’s Rights (KC 8.2.2)

- The Pill (Loretta Lynn)
- I am Woman (Helen Reddy)

- Masters of War (Bob Dylan)
- Okie from Muskogee (Merle Haggard)
- Ohio (Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young)

The Counterculture (KC 8.3.3)

- San Francisco (Be Sure to Wear . . . ) (Scott McKenzie)
- White Rabbit (Jefferson Airplane)

## Contributors

### Ted Dickson

Ted Dickson has been teaching AP U.S. History (and other courses) at Providence Day School in Charlotte, North Carolina since the fall of 1991. He earned his AB in History from Princeton University in 1983 and his MA in Modern American and Modern European History from the University of California, Santa Barbara, in 1991. He has been involved in the ongoing revision of the AP U.S. History course since inception in 2006, serving on the original Course and Exam Review Commission and serving as the Co-Chair of the AP U.S. History Course Development and Assessment Committee 2010-2013. He is now the Co-Chair of the Test Development Committee for the new AP U.S. History exam. Since 1994, he has been involved at the AP U.S. History reading as a reader and a table leader, and he has scored the piloted test items for the new exam. Ted has made numerous presentations at The Organization of American Historians Annual Meeting and other conferences on topics ranging from Teaching the Civil War to Teaching American History Through a Global Lens. His publications include *America on the World Stage: A Global Approach to United States History*, which he coedited with Gary Reichard. Ted has earned four national teaching awards including the Kids Voting USA Jinx Patterson Education Award (1995), The Organization of American Historians 2002 Mary K. Bonsteel Tachau Pre-Collegiate Teaching Award, The United States-Eurasia Award for Excellence in Teaching, 2003, and The National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Outstanding Teacher of American History, 2011.

**Margaret Favretti** and **Lisa Yokana** teach at Scarsdale High School, where they have worked together since 2008. Favretti is a cultural historian trained at Yale and Middlebury. She has been team-teaching interdisciplinary courses since 1985. She has served on the Executive Board of the World History Association, and as Chair of the History Academic Advisory Committee of the College Board. Favretti has earned recognition for outstanding teaching from both the World History Association and the Organization of American Historians. Yokana is an art historian trained at Williams and Columbia. She has curatorial experience and is also a working artist. Yokana has earned recognition from the American Watercolor Society and has been teaching for over a decade. Yokana divides her schedule between studio art and architecture classes and interdisciplinary teaming with the entire faculty. She currently co-Chairs the Interdisciplinary Committee, developing opportunities for cross-disciplinary experiences school-wide. Both Favretti and Yokana team with Tom Maguire and Stephen Mounkhal, who contributed some of the content for this publication, and with whom they developed and taught the lessons herein.

### Emma Lapsansky-Werner

Emma Lapsansky-Werner, PhD, has taught American history (with an emphasis on social history, African American history, American religious history, and the American West), first at Temple University (and, since 1990, at Haverford College). Enjoying the challenges of a diversity of students, she has also taught at Princeton

University, University of Pennsylvania, Community College of Philadelphia, and has taught and/or consulted at a number of public history venues. At various times, she has served on the governing boards of the Organization of American Historians, the Pennsylvania Historical Association, and the Friends (Quaker) Historical Association. A co-author of the Pearson Education high school history text, and of a college-level African American history text, she has also served as an AP reader, as well as on the redesign-development committee of AP U.S. History. The author of a number of publications on American social history, she currently teaches history, and writing seminars in the discipline of history, at Haverford College.