

# NORTH AMERICAN CULTURE – 19<sup>th</sup> Century

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**Overview** Nineteenth-century North America was a place of dizzying changes due to a combination of factors. Demographic changes occurred as the population continued to grow with the arrival of a wide array of Europeans. Unfortunately, Africans and Asians were brought against their will. The factor playing perhaps the largest role in the physical transformation of the continent had to do with the two Industrial Revolutions which bracketed the century and utterly reconfigured the way that people worked and lived, and the kinds of economic opportunities that presented themselves. Above all, the changes in technology reinforced emerging senses of identity, particularly those tied to the emerging notion of the American Dream and the concept of Manifest Destiny. Needless to say, there were winners and losers in the changes and transformations, and they contributed to a wide and varied array of cultural productions.

## VERBAL ARTS

### Literature

**Transcendentalism:** The essays of Ralph Waldo Emerson united the “common sense” heritage of Thomas Paine with Asian notions from Buddhism and Hinduism, with German Romanticism. The result encouraged free thinking and creative self-expression, as well as an emphasis on self-determination and action. Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden* championed the idea of simplicity, connections to nature, and the abolition of slavery. Walt Whitman’s poetry shocked people with its directness and formal innovations, in which he brought together a kind of Zoroastrian energy of fire and electricity, united with the flesh and blood of humanity. All the authors emphasized the capacity of humanity to transcend and build a new kind of person and a new kind of community.

**Diaries / Non-Fiction:** Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* explored the potential of America in very positive ways. However, Jean de Crevecoeur’s *What Is an American?* Reflected a deep disenchantment. Frederick Douglass was born a slave, and had the blessed fortune to be taught to read and write, despite the extreme risk of such an endeavor. His personal narrative describes how he learned to write and it contains an exploration of the culture of the time and the mindset that allowed the cruel institution of slavery to exist and thrive. Mary Rowlandson’s narrative of being captured by Indians was written much earlier, in 1682, but was popularized in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**Romanticism:** German Romanticism manifested itself in many ways in American literature, but in the fertile literary imaginations of the Americans, it took a very different direction. Washington Irving incorporated Dutch history and ghost stories in his *Tales of Sleepy Hollow* and *Rip Van Winkle*. Nathaniel Hawthorne incorporated haunted houses in *The House of the Seven Gables*, and Puritan dark tragic romance in *The Scarlet Letter*. Edgar Allan Poe’s essays explore the idea that there should always be undercurrents that potentially contradict the notions on the surface. His own work clearly reflects that, as the dark explorations of extremes of obsession and twisted psyches manifest themselves in his *Tales*. He was credited as writing the first detective novel in America, and his poetry, although verging on doggerel, is also an exploration into obsession and death.

**West / Frontier:** Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain) wrote fiction and essays about the Frontier, starting with the Mississippi River (*Life on the Mississippi*) and going toward the Nevada and California gold fields (*Roughing It*). He even wrote about Hawaii and other areas. His *Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, although politically incorrect today, accurately reflect the social milieu at the time.

**Social Novels and Pioneers:** Henry James wrote novels including *The Golden Bowl* having to do with the class structure and the cultural values of the elite. Similarly, Edith Wharton critiqued the life of the American aristocracy (which she experienced first-hand) in novels such as *The House of Mirth* and *The Age of Innocence*. Authors who wrote novels having to do with pioneers included Willa Cather’s *My Antonia* and William Fenimore Cooper’s *The Deerslayer*.

## Discussions / Questions

### Literature:

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Romanticism and Transcendentalism took human potential in very different directions. One suggested infinite potential and opportunities for self-actualization and transformation. The other suggested the impossibility of self-transformation or achievement of the American Dream, not only due to economic and class barriers, but also due to dark forces of greed, lust, and secret inability to adhere to strict norms. Discuss some of the works that seem to illustrate such diametrical oppositions and discuss what they suggest about the American experience in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### Readings

#### Literature:

Franklin, Wayne, and Philip F. Gura, Jerome Klinkowitz, Arnold Krupat, Mary Loeffelholz. (2011) Norton Anthology of American Literature, 8<sup>th</sup> edition. NY: Norton.

Fiedler, Leslie. (1960) Love and Death in the American Novel.

Trilling, Lionel (1950) The Liberal Imagination. London: Secker and Warburg.

### **Language**

**English:** English expanded and continued to be the dominant (and unifying) language the United States and the territories. However, very distinct local dialects emerged, hardened, as it were, by political group affiliations and isolation (as in the case of Appalachian or barrier island dialects). Southern American English emerged as a regional dialect, as did New England “Yankee” English and “New Yorker,” ideolects.

**French:** The French spoken in North America continued to speciate or evolve. The French of Quebec and northern Vermont was full of neologisms and a unique way of speaking which broke down the discourse of respect (the formal “you” was eliminated), making it more egalitarian and reflective of the democratic social structure of Quebec. The Creole of the Mississippi Delta, esp. New Orleans, had a blend of English and African, making it not so much democratic as syncretic, fusing African beliefs, rituals, rites and enchantments with a more formal French. The result was often unsettling to French visitors.

**Spanish:** In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Spanish spoken in North America north of the Rio Grande changed, due to the influx of Mexicans who established ranches and businesses in what is now Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and Colorado. They spoke the Mexican dialect of Spanish while those who lived in the former New Spain capital of Santa Fe, New Mexico, and in isolated mountain communities continued to speak the Spanish of 16<sup>th</sup>-century Spain, the language of the conquistadores.

**German:** Two types of German emerged during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There were the Pennsylvania Dutch (Deutsch) Amish, who spoke High German of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and also the German immigrants to Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas who were wheat farmers and ranchers. Their German was more akin to the 19<sup>th</sup>-century German of Europe.

**Scandinavian languages:** The influx of Swedish and Norwegian immigrants to Minnesota, North Dakota, and Wisconsin resulted in pockets of native Scandinavian speakers, as well as a pronounced regional accent and the use of Swedish and Norwegian words in everyday talk.

**Italian:** Italian immigrants flocked to New York in order to escape political and economic hardship. They established ethnic enclaves in cities where they influenced the local culture in very profound ways; not only with the language and customs, but also with religion (Roman Catholic) and cuisine.

**Creole:** Creole emerged in Louisiana as a blend of French and English, and it was often associated with voodoo and other occult practices. The individuals who spoke Creole tended to be of mixed heritage, and their families had generally been in New Orleans for generations.

**Cherokee:** The survivors of the brutal relocation march, the “Trail of Tears,” established their new tribal governance and lands in what is now eastern Oklahoma. Sequoyah, a distinguished leader and scholar, helped the Cherokees develop their own written language in order to preserve the language itself, and to avoid having to use the alphabet / writing systems of the oppressors.

#### Discussions / Questions

Language:

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, waves of immigration introduced new languages into the “melting pot.” Describe the groups, the languages they spoke, and comment on the relationship between their native languages, English, and striving to achieve the American Dream.

#### Readings

Language:

Algeo, John (2001) The Cambridge History of the English Language, Vol. 6: English in North America (Volume 6 )Cambridge University Press; 1st Edition edition (November 12, 2001)

Gray, Edward. (2014) New World Babel: Languages and Nations in Early America. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP.

Van der Sijs. (2009) Cookies, Coleslaw, and Stoops: The Influence of Dutch on the North American Languages. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

<http://www.doabooks.org/doab?func=fulltext&rid=12627>

Mithun, Marian. (2001) The Languages of Native North America. Cambridge, England: Cambridge UP.

#### **Script**

**Newspapers:** Writing was not just about the stories themselves. Instead newspaper writing was about the unique form of the layout which communicated a great deal about the relative importance of a story. The juxtaposition of stories and images also led to a new way of interpreting facts and forming meanings. Interestingly enough, the juxtapositions that we see in the newspapers of the 19th century are echoed in the film techniques used in the early 20th century, in which by virtue of the juxtaposition certain meanings are assumed and impugned.

**Lending libraries:** Writing took a new direction with the advent of lending libraries, as novels were issued in three separate volumes, with a specific tradition as to the number of illustrative plates and the length of the chapters, most of which appeared first as serialized features in newspapers. It was not too surprising to see that the most successful of these were "sensation" novels, which dealt with secrets, mysteries, and suppressed passion, all of which appealed to the 19th century audience.

**Dime novels:** Typically printed with a mustard-yellow cover, the "Dime Novels" sold for 10 cents. They were not actually a full novel, but more accurately speaking, a novella designed to be devoured in the dull commute on a train going from the suburbs to downtown. The "dime novel" was an engineered production with just the right amount of text, balanced with engraved plates each 20 or 30 pages, and then bound in a recognizable color and design, as to assure the reader that it the purchase would assure hours of escapist pleasure. The Dime Novels were almost always rooted in the Wild West, which was the convenient "exotic" for city-dwellers tired of their fetid, crowded apartment buildings and hard, dark factories.

#### Discussions / Questions

Script / Writing:

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the writing styles and forms reflected the impact of new technologies. For example, the “dime novels” were inexpensive and were intended to be purchased by people taking a train who

wanted something to amuse them during their journeys. Describe the kinds of writing you might find in a dime novel and explore the importance of including illustrations and developing an appealing book design. Also describe the newspaper layout and what the organization and design of the newspaper meant to the reader.

### Readings

Script / Writing:

Lalumier, Claude (2017) A Short History of American Comic Books.  
<https://www.januarymagazine.com/features/comix.html>

Navajopeople.org (2016) Navajo Sandpaintings. <http://navajopeople.org/navajo-sand-painting.htm>

Oppenheimer, Stephen. (2011) Clovis First: Shaking the Orthodoxy.  
[http://www.bradshawfoundation.com/america/clovis\\_first/index.php](http://www.bradshawfoundation.com/america/clovis_first/index.php)

Pope, Anne-Marie (2011) American Dime Novels 1860 - 1915. Historical Association.  
<https://www.history.org.uk/student/resource/4512/american-dime-novels-1860-1915>

### **Mythology**

**Frontier myths and heroes:** The overwhelming depiction of the American West, which was reinforced by American artists Charles Marion Russell, George Catlin, Albert Bierstadt, and Thomas Moran, shows a paradise, a new Eden of mountains, deep canyons, and a transcendentalist vision of unity between earth, the heavens, and humanity. God was in nature and nature was God – and all who entered would be transformed. They were compelling advertisements and created an important motivation for making the difficult journey in wagon train, with an unknowably high mortality rate in transit.

**Johnny Appleseed:** The presence of apple trees throughout central, eastern, and northeastern United states. Supposedly, he roamed about barefoot, with a tin pot hat, and a sack of apples. Johnny Appleseed was not an itinerant vagabond, but in fact, a very calculating horticulturist who took advantage of the law stating he could lay claim to land if he planted 50 apple trees. Chapman would plant seeds in key locations, primarily in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Illinois. Not only did he gain title to more than a thousand acres of land, he was able to sell the orchards to newcomers at a dramatic profit. The apple trees he planted were hardy and produced tiny, tart apples used in the production of cider.

**Daniel Boone:** While Daniel Boone was in fact an important explorer and settler who established much of what is now Kentucky, and he was captured by Indians, he did not wear a coonskin cap, nor did he even stay in Kentucky. He left the United States entirely, fleeing debtors, and resettled in the Spanish territory in the Mississippi River valley west of St. Louis, Missouri in "Upper Louisiana." He later lost all his claims to the land when the land was ceded to France, and then later was obtained by the United States in the Louisiana Purchase. The government granted Boone 850 acres, but he quickly lost that, as his debtors found out about it and insisted upon collecting what was owed.

**Battle of the Alamo:** Whether the Alamo was a glorious triumph for Texans or a humiliating example of dark, treasonous behavior on the part of a corrupt and incompetent Mexican General is a matter of perspective. The Alamo was a mission established by Franciscans in what is now San Antonio, Texas, near the San Antonio River. It was an important trading hub and the German and English settlers wanted to claim it and take it from the newly independent Mexico. In a bloody battle, the Texans won, and Texas became its own sovereign nation. The battle became of such importance in the shaping of Texas identity that the silhouette of the mission has been used as an important logo, decorative motif, and architectural design throughout Texas.

### Discussions / Questions

Mythology:

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, myths existed to reinforce American values and sense of self. Select three main myths and explain how there might be both a positive and a negative side to the myth. For example, Johnny Appleseed was transformed into a kind of plebian “everyman” fertility god of the harvest when in fact he was something of cross between a scientist and a shrewd businessman. What are the pros and cons of believing the myth over the reality? In the case of Johnny Appleseed, how was the myth useful? How would the reality have been more effective? Or, why might have been useful to downplay the self-interest of Johnny Appleseed in favor of a more philanthropic persona?

### Readings

#### Mythology:

Botkin, B. A. (2016) *A Treasury of American Folklore: Stories, Ballads, and Traditions of the People*. Globe Pequot Press.

Donovan, James. (2013). *The Blood of Heroes: The 13-Day Struggle for the Alamo and the Sacrifice that Forged a Nation*. Boston: Back Bay Books.

Library of Congress. (2015) *The American Dream*.

<https://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/american-dream/students/thedream.html>

Lowenstein, Tom. (2011). *Native American Myths and Beliefs*. New York: Rosen Pub Group.

Murray, Charles. (2013). *American Exceptionalism: An Experiment in History (Values and Capitalism)*. Chicago: AEI Press.

#### Folklore

**Ghost stories:** Ghost stories continued to proliferate, and there were many stories that were told in different regions, usually having to do with doomed lovers, terrible accidents, revenge, and lost treasure. All towns had at least one haunted house, and the resident ghost was often one who had met a violent end, or was stricken with love.

**Indian tales:** Stories of great Indian warriors abounded, and they took on almost mythical aspects. Perhaps the most renowned was Geronimo, who was famed for leading uprisings. The oral narratives perpetuated stereotypes and helped justify often brutal policies and behaviors.

**Alamo / Texas Origin narratives:** Myths of origin are important in the development of an identity, and perhaps one of the most superlative examples of a regional identity is that of Texas. Texas was its own Republic for a period of time after it broke away from Mexico, and the defining moment occurred at the Battle of the Alamo. Ironically, many of the elements of the story of the battle are not factual, but it is a case in which the desired narrative overtakes the reality. Today in Texas, the shape of the Alamo is a dominant motif, so that the oral narrative is also reinforced by a visual one.

**Slave narratives:** Harriet Jacobs and Frederick Douglass were just two of several former slaves who, against all odds, learned to read and write, and then they wrote the stories of their lives. In addition to writing about the conditions of slavery, writers such as Harriet Tubman wrote about her missions to rescue slaves and to lead them to freedom through the Underground Railroad.

**Gold Rush narratives:** When gold was discovered in Sutter Creek in 1848 a tremendous gold rush ensued which led to the despoliation of John Augustus Sutter’s agricultural experiment, New Helvetia, which consisted of 50,000 acres in the Sacramento Valley which had been granted to him by the Mexican government. Sutter, a Swiss immigrant who became a Mexican citizen, constructed an entire community using the management principles of the Jesuit missions. None of that mattered, however, when gold was discovered. The “gold bug” that infected people was powerful, and the settlers who were thinking of long-term investments in farms were no match for the “get rich quick” mindset and the boomtowns that sprang up.

**Tall Tales:** Oral narratives tend to have trickster and hero figures, and North American tales told by the settlers were no exception. Paul Bunyan was perhaps the most well-known, and there were others who were not only in story form but also as folk songs.

**African American folk tales:** The stories of Br'er Rabbit evolved from the trickster tales of the African slaves who came to America. In fact, there are many similarities between the Br'er Rabbit character (which Br'er Fox and Uncle Remus) and the African jackal stories. They were captured by Joel Chandler Harris, but were in reality a part of a rich folk narrative tradition. In the Br'er Rabbit stories, the weaker, disempowered rabbit had to use his wits against the stronger, oppressive dominant culture or power structure.

#### Discussions / Questions

Oral Narrative / Folklore:

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, stories abounded that reflected the almost mythical conception of the American West. Identify three or four oral narratives that reflect underlying beliefs, hopes, and dreams about the American West and what it could do for individuals.

#### Readings

Oral Narrative / Folklore:

Foner, Eric and Lisa McGirr, eds. *American History Now*. Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 2011.

Hansen, Arthur A. "A Riot of Voices: Racial and Ethnic Variables in Interactive Oral History Interviewing." *Interactive Oral History Interviewing*, edited by Eva M. McMahan and

Harrin, Paul. *Black Rage Confronts the Law*. Critical America. New York: New York University Press, 1997.

Jacobs, Harriet. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl Written by Herself*, edited by Jean Fagan Yellin. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987.

## VISUAL ARTS

### Painting

**Early Republic:** Portraiture and scenes of early life. Rembrandt Peale, *Rubens Peale with a Geranium*, 1801. Myth-making and heroic visual narratives. Thomas Sully, *Passage of the Delaware*, 1819.

**Antebellum Era:** Exploration of American ways of life. George Caleb Bingham, *Fur Traders Descending the Missouri*, 1845. George Catlin, *An Indian Ball-Play*, 1846 – 1850. Colors are vivid and there is a focus on ethnographic authenticity.

**Hudson River School:** Albert Bierstadt, *The Rocky Mountains, Lander's Peak*, 1863. Thomas Cole, *Gelyna (View near Ticonderoga)*, 1826-1828. Frederic Edwin Church, Thomas Doughty, an Edenic vision of nature, with dramatic use of light and color, with a sense of divine illumination.

**American Barbizon School:** Most of the painters in this school were trained in Europe and influenced by the French Barbizon School artists such as Jean-Francois Millet, and then later by the impressionists. Mary Cassatt was influenced by European Impressionists while Childe Hassam's landscapes and depictions of wildflowers create a sense of motion and sunlight. Examples include Childe Hassam's *Celia Thaxter's Garden* (1890) and Horatio Walker's *Watching the Turkeys*. Other artists include Winslow Homer, William Morris Hunt, George Inness.

**Photography:** In the last half of the nineteenth century, technical improvements made it possible to take photographs of historical situations, landscapes, and portraits. Mathew B. Brady documented the Civil War and is known as the father of photojournalism. Ansel Easton Adams photographed the American

West, and George Grantham Bain was known for his photography of the Mexican Revolution, celebrities, parades, and more.

**Portraits:** James McNeill Whistler – portraiture; John Singer Sargent – contrasts of colors, light and shadow, brush strokes and texture demonstrate Impressionist influence, and informal poses capture a sense of spontaneity. Some of the painters were untrained such as Ammi Phillips, while others trained in the European tradition, which include Thomas Sully, G. P. A. Healy. The work of Thomas Eakins evokes images from everyday life, and an emphasis on texture. Henry Ossawa Tanner was the first African-American acclaimed portrait painter.

**Realism:** Raphael Peale was well-known for his realistic still-life and trompe-l'oeil. Examples include *Cheese with three crackers* (1813), *Melons and Morning Glories* (1813), and *Venus Rising from the Sea – A Deception* (1822).

#### Discussions / Questions

Painting:

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, American artists truly embraced the notion of American identity, American exceptionalism, and utopian visions. They did so not only with their landscapes but also with portraiture and still life. Please describe 5 or more works that exemplify how artists sought to use painting to depict America as a unique place with its own identity.

#### Readings

Painting:

Doss, Erika. (2002) *Twentieth-Century American Art*. Oxford: Oxford UP.

Groseclose, Barbara. (2000) *Nineteenth-Century American Art*. Oxford: Oxford UP.

Hughes, Robert. (1991) *The Shock of the New: The Hundred-Year History of Modern Art – Its Rise, Its Dazzling Achievement, Its Fall*. New York: Knopf.

Wright, Tricia. (2007) *Smithsonian Q&A: American Art and Artists: The Ultimate Question and Answer Book*. New York: Harper.

#### **Sculpture**

**Italian Period:** The influence of Classical and Neo-Classical sculpture continued in the first part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, as state and federal governments sought to communicate the values and vision of what was considered a grand, new experiment through concrete, visual form. Many of the pieces were an integral part of buildings associated with the government. Additional sculptors included Randolph Rogers and Chauncey Ives.

**American women sculptors:** Despite the deep anxiety generated by educated women, and also women artists, there were many women sculptors working in America during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Most worked during the Italian period, and they produced works that are now icons of American identity, including Vinnie Ream's famous sculpture of Abraham Lincoln. Sculptors included Harriet Hosmer, Vinnie Reams, Anne Whitney, Edmonia Lewis, and Emma Stebbins. Of this group, Edmonia Lewis deserves special note. Edmonia was African-American, born in Greenbush (now Rensselaer, near Albany), of an Ojibwe-African-American mother and an Afro-Haitian father. Both parents died before Edmonia was 10 years of age, and so Edmonia lived with her Ojibwe relatives near Niagara Falls, going by the name, Wildfire. Edmonia had the good fortune to have access to education, and when she was 15, she enrolled in Oberlin College, where she changed her name to Mary Edmonia Lewis, and studied art. Perhaps her most popular work is a white marble sculpture she completed in 1867 entitled *Forever Free*, which depicts a man with broken shackles on his wrists, and a woman kneeling, face uplifted in prayer and gratitude. Not surprisingly, Edmonia had a very interesting and challenging life; the biographical details cause one to stop, pause, and reflect on society, art, and human dignity.

**Paris Years:** The last half of the nineteenth century signified a dramatic shift in influence. Instead of the NeoClassical models that were admired by sculptors of the Italian period, the emphasis was on naturalism and the dramatic style epitomized by Parisian sculptors such as Rodin and Carpeaux. The American sculptors found deep and lasting success, not only for sculpting monuments to engender reverence for American leaders and institutions, but also for their engravings which appeared on coins. Examples include Augustus Saint-Gaudens (Adams Memorial, plus \$20 gold coin), Frederick MacMonnies (Princeton Battle Monument) , Daniel Chester French (Lincoln in a chair – Lincoln Memorial), and Jose De Creef.

**America trained / outsider:** Americans began to train themselves and to embrace a naturalistic style which captured the values of American expansionism and the frontier. Examples include Frederic Remington (super-energized cowboys and horses in action), Solon Borglum, and Cyrus Dallin ("Appeal to the Great Spirit" has become an icon of the West. These were highly romantic and romanticized sculptures, and they were often smaller in size and cast in bronze. Frederic Remington's work was popular in that it depicted the Western frontier with almost journalistic attention to capturing the "meaningful moment" and the historical context and values.

**Wildlife sculptors (Animaliers):** The idea of American West, and the idea of finding and capturing profound truths about the essence of existence was highly appealing to painters, photographers, and sculptors. The sculptors often depicted animals in the throes of a life-or-death struggle, or in poses that related symbolically to an identity narrative of the Americans who were exploring and developing the Great Plains, Rocky Mountains, Sierras, and the deserts, salt lakes, and other unexpected natural beauties. The artists included Antoine Barye, Charles Russell, Labert Laessle, and Edward Kemeys. In Canada, beavers and moose were often juxtaposed with lions to signify the incorporation of British rule while asserting Canadian identity.

**Public monuments and Carving mountains:** The idea of the grand spectacle, and the sculpture that would communicate a compelling message "writ large" was not just interesting, but financially underwritten, by those who supported an expanding, expansionist America, not just geographically, but also economically. The underpinning driver was innovation, which translated into two different phases of Industrial Revolution, along with the discovery and exploitation of natural resources. Mount Rushmore by Gutzon Borglum is the most well-known. Others include Stone Mountain (Georgia) and the Crazy Horse Memorial.

#### Discussions / Questions

##### Sculpture:

The first Europeans in North America creates sculptures that had to do with religious ceremonies and the continuity / emotional assurance of religious beliefs and values. Please compare and contrast the use of sculptures in the early Catholic missions versus the low-relief carvings on marble tombstones in New England.

#### Readings

##### Sculpture:

Optiz, Glenn B., ed. Dictionary of American Sculptors: 18th Century to the Present. Poughkeepsie, N.Y.: Apollo Book, 1984.

Optiz, Glenn B., ed. Mantle Fielding's Dictionary of American Painters, Sculptors, and Engravers. Poughkeepsie, N.Y.: Apollo Book, 1983.

#### **Architecture**

**Neoclassical: Federal Style:** The new nation was eager to use architecture to express its idealistic vision. Used primarily for government buildings, the Neoclassical Federal Style suggested planning,

symmetry, and grandeur of vision. The connection to the Greek and Roman foundations of Western civilization were expressed in form that communicated the idealistic visions expressed in Plato's Republic and Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics. Charles Bullfinch and William Thornton designed many of the buildings in Washington, D.C., most notably the U.S. Capitol Building and the Massachusetts State House. In addition to symmetrical buildings, they also contributed to the design of the streets, drainage systems, and thoroughfares of the nation's capitol.

**Neoclassical: Greek Revival:** Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Latrobe were advocates of the Greek Revival Neoclassical style which liberally adopted many of the artistic elements of the temples and buildings of ancient Greece. Most notable were domes, pillars, and the proportions of the rooms, doors, and windows. Monticello is an example of the Greek Revival style.

**Carpenter Gothic:** Taking advantage of lumber and the abundance of skilled labor, along with a prevailing philosophy that used decoration and adornments to communicate an optimistic view of life, and the celebrate one's personal achievements and material success, architects developed a uniquely American style, the Carpenter Gothic. Highly stylized wooden ornamentation took the form of "gingerbread" (wood filigree) which was created using the "scroll saw." The design is considered a naïve style which incorporated some of what people believed to be characteristics of Gothic style, including elaborate trim, turrets, spires, and pointed arches.



Carpenter Gothic

**Late Gothic Revival:** Revivals of older styles are often a response to modernity and a pulling back from some of the more disturbing aspects of industrialization. The Gothic Revival in architecture celebrates prosperity and the ability to achieve self-expression. Yet, at the same time, it represents the desire to establish continuity with a Romantic, medieval, mysterious time (as opposed to the positivistic rationalism of the new nation (reflected in Federalist Neoclassicism). Gothic is romantic, expressive, irrational, and asymmetrical. Hallmarks of the style include diamond panes, oriel windows, steep roofs, Gothic decorative motifs (cusps, arches, trefoils), and an abundance of "gingerbread."



Gothic Revival

<https://architecturestyles.org/gothic-revival/>

**Second Empire:** Popular during the middle part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, “Second Empire” adopted French architectural details such as the mansard roof. The message communicated by the design was that of a connection to the cultural values of the French, and an assumed sophistication. In addition to the use of mansard roofs and rounded windows, there was a great deal of wrought iron.



Sharon House, Davenport, Iowa

[http://www.livingplaces.com/architecturalstyles/li/Second\\_Empire-540x405.jpg](http://www.livingplaces.com/architecturalstyles/li/Second_Empire-540x405.jpg)

**Frontier Architecture:** The Homestead Act, which deeded 160 acres to people who constructed a home on the property, resulted in a boom in functional homes that would serve as shelter, and which took full use of local building materials, which ranged from field stone to adobe and logs. Frontier designs were principally functional, but they also made the gesture to communicate the goal of claiming as their own the American frontier. Thus, it was often the case that buildings were designed to look many times their actual size by means of false fronts. Perhaps the most important building in the frontier towns (besides

the jail) was the train station, which was positioned in the middle of the country's vascular system through which the life blood of commerce flowed.

### Discussions / Questions

Architecture:

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, industrialization was simultaneously embraced and feared. Describe examples of architecture that embraced the Industrial Revolution by incorporating materials and design elements. Then, identify examples of architecture that romanticized the past, particularly medieval times, by incorporating elements from castles, cathedrals, etc.

### Readings

Architecture:

McAlester, Virginia & Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1994.

Poppeliers, John and S. Allen Chambers and Nancy B. Schwartz. *What Style Is It?*. Washington, DC: 1977.

Raymond, Eleanor. *Early Domestic Architecture of Pennsylvania*. Princeton, NJ: Pyne Press, 1973.

Richman, Irwin. *Pennsylvania's Architecture*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania Historical Association, 1969.

Wiffen, Marcus. *American Architecture Since 1780, A Guide to the Styles*. Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1969.

## PERFORMING ARTS

### Dance

**Folk Dancing:** Dances were brought to North America by European settlers, who modified the dances to fit the musical instruments, locations, and personal tastes. French traditions resulted in the Cajun jib, while the Northeast, Eastern Seaboard, and Appalachia were homes to the contra dance, a kind of line dancing that originated in Scotland. Clogging, an Irish tradition, was embraced in Irish communities in the Northeast, and evolved into different dance forms such as tap (formal) and stomp (informal).

**Social Dances:** Immigrants from Europe brought a number of dances that were adopted and modified to align with American tastes. For example, the country dances such as the Scotch Reel was transformed into the Virginia Reel. The Waltz came reluctantly to a still-Puritan America, while the German and Bohemian immigrants to Texas and the Great Plains brought the Polka and the Mazurka. Eventually, the variety of dances faded, and most social occasions had either the Waltz or the Two-Step. They were taught to all young people and the ability to dance well was considered a necessity for social acceptance.

**Religious Dance:** The Shakers were a religious sect whose main tenets were celibacy and a firm belief in the imminent return of Christ. They were called the "Shakers" because of their religious services that included dance forms. Contemporary witnesses reported that they were ecstatically shaking in their ceremonies. However, recent recordings of current ceremonies of the surviving members show a very sedate and clearly planned choreography. It was no longer exciting.

**African Dances:** The slaves brought dance traditions from West Africa that tied dances everyday life and also special occasions such as births, marriages, or holidays. In the mid-19th century, Minstrel shows began to emerge which included comedic routines that both parodied and celebrated African-American traditions. Some of the dances included the Juba, which includes slapping the legs, chest, and cheeks to keep time, as well as stomping. There were several variations, such as the Hambone (slapping the thigh). The dancers would perform several different types of dance moves, including the Yaller Cat, Pigeon Wing, Blow that Candle Out, and The Long Dog Scratch.

**Native American Dance Spectacles in Wild West Shows:** The settling of the American West and the rise of penny novels romanticized the life of settlers, the cattle ranchers (and especially cattle drives), and they also exoticized the Native Americans. To capitalize on the fascination, fanned on by the penny novels sold to urban city-dwellers, enterprising "cousins" of P. T. Barnum (traveling circus inventor) such as Buffalo Bill and Pawnee Bill invented the traveling "Wild West Show." The shows traveled by rail, and when they set up in a town, they fascinated everyone with their spectacles of horseback riding, sharp-shooting, mock Indian raids, roping and rope tricks, and above all, the Indian Dance. What emerged was a very colorful combination of stomp dance, and Fancy Dance, with Indians wearing very brightly colored costumes and enormous feather headdresses. The dances were a pastiche of different traditions, invented to elicit the maximum impact. The dances were very popular, and as is the case with shiny imitations, they quickly supplanted the real and the authentic.

**Victorian "Interpretive" Dancing:** Informal varieties of ballet came to be known as "interpretive" dancing in the nineteenth century. They were a bit scandalous, since the women wore what was considered to be very daring, revealing clothing.

#### Discussions / Questions

##### Dance:

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the traveling show (circuses, Wild West shows, carnivals), traveled along the railroad lines and brought their bright, action-filled, and exotic spectacles to towns of all sizes. What inflamed the imagination most was its emphasis of the "exotic" and the way they brought scenes to life that had previously only been described in words in the dime novels. The dances that were included were a very important part. Describe the aspects of the dances in the Wild West shows that would have most intrigued the audiences. Explain how the desire to please audiences may have led to compromised authenticity.

##### Dance:

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##### Music

**Folk Music:** Secular folk music used typically American instruments that were portable, and included keyboard (hammer dulcimer), clarinet, trumpet, fife, drum and fiddle. Much of the regional folk music in the U.S. was developed in Appalachia, where bluegrass, old time gospel, and jug bands thrived. They played the music for gatherings and it often involved dancing (clog dancing, square dancing, and more). However, in the American West, cowboy music became very popular, usually involving a single guitar and a singer (or chorus of singers). Cajun music blended French dance music and folk music to develop zydeco. Roots music, primarily that developed by the African American slaves involves field hollers, gospel music, spirituals, and even songs developed for dance halls and "honky tonks." Work songs were another important source of folk music, and different groups developed their own characteristic songs, often with humorous or nostalgic lyrics. They include sea shanties, railroad worker songs, cowboy songs, and union organizer songs. It is worth noting that many of the worker songs developed in fields that required people to travel together in small groups for long periods of time.

**Classical Music:** Music composed for public events, church, and theatre for use in cultural settings. It was considered the music of the wealthier Americans, and for that reason, most classical music played in the U.S. was imported from Europe. There were, however, exceptions.

**Louis Moreau Gottschalk (1829–1869):** Born in New Orleans, Gottschalk wrote a number of virtuoso piano compositions which were in the Romantic school. He spent much time in the Caribbean islands as well as in the American South. His piano compositions evoke a romantic, even exotic sensibility, as they incorporate Latin American and Creole folk rhythms and themes. His music for piano include compositions such as Deuxieme Banjo, Solitude, Souvenir de la Havane, Manchega, and La Savane (a Creole ballad for the piano).

**Edward MacDowell (1860 – 1908):** MacDowell was classically trained in New York, Paris, and Frankfurt. The enterprise of his life was to develop a uniquely American musical idiom for the piano which reflected and incorporated European Romantic forms, and placed them within a “miniaturist” framework of small tone poems which evoked the American landscape. His most popular and recognizable pieces are from *Woodland Sketches* (with the famous “To a Wild Rose”), *Sea Pieces*, and *New England Idylls*. Something terrible happened in his private life which is still not known, and MacDowell suffered an emotional collapse, resulting in his living out his days in a mental institution. In appreciation for his idyllic, soothing and uniquely American compositions, his wife dedicated funds to establish the “MacDowell Colony” in Peterborough, New Hampshire, where American composers and writers could spend the summer dedicated to writing compositions.

**John Philip Sousa (1854-1931):** Often associated with American nationalism and patriotism, Sousa's preferred ensemble was that of brass instruments, leading to its popular use with military functions. Considered the king of military marches, Sousa's compositions are widely used even today, especially *The Stars and Stripes Forever* (1897) and *Semper Fidelis* (1888). His compositions are played at graduations, Fourth of July events, the Marine Corps birthday, and in military gatherings.

**Stephen Foster (1826-1864):** A prolific composer of extremely popular minstrel songs and sentimental ballads, Stephen Foster's compositions were ubiquitous in nineteenth-century American life. Despite the extreme popularity of “Oh! Susanna,” “Old Folks at Home” (*Swanee River*), “Camptown Races,” “My Old Kentucky Home,” “Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair,” and “Beautiful Dreamer,” Foster, a terrible money-manager and negotiator, died in poverty and alone after his wife left him due to financial difficulties.

#### Discussions / Questions

##### Music:

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, American music started to take on its own shape and form which differentiated it from other regions of the world. For example, the African American slaves and freedmen developed their own forms of music which incorporated some African elements and fused them with others. Please describe the kinds of music developed by African Americans in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and discuss how they served social purposes.

#### Readings

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## Theatre

**Walnut Street Theater, Philadelphia:** It was perhaps the first formal theatre in the new republic. Established in 1809, with plays by Sheridan, Goldsmith, Shakespeare and later, adaptations of novels, such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the Walnut Street Theatre bridged the culture of Europe and America.

**Minstrel Show:** Featured white actors in blackface, performing comic skits, buffoon / clownish skits and slapstick. There were a number of racist themes. These were performed in theatres and also on Mississippi steamboats in "showboat theater."

**Victorian Burlesque:** Entertaining spectacles featuring dancing, music, and scantily dressed women. "Polite society" considered them rouee and immoral even though they were very popular, and tended to be the first kind of theatre to establish themselves in gold mining camps, Western frontier towns, and river towns.

**Melodramas and Farces:** They were perhaps the most popular theatrical form in the young nation, and they provided playwrights an opportunity to see their work performed, and to earn a living. The most popular of the plays included James Nelson Barker's *Superstition; or, the Fanatic Father*, Anna Cora Mowatt's *Fashion; or, Life in New York*, Nathaniel Bannister's Putnam, the *Iron Son of '76*, Dion Boucicault's *The Octoroon; or, Life in Louisiana*, and Cornelius Mathews's *Witchcraft; or, the Martyrs of Salem*. Late 19<sup>th</sup> century playwrights include David Belasco, Steele MacKaye, William Dean Howells, Dion Boucicault, and Clyde Fitch.

### Discussions / Questions

#### Theatre:

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, theatre bifurcated into two separate paths: popular "low" culture and entertainment, and the "high" culture of European-influenced theatrical productions. Name examples of each and explain their similarities, differences, and purposes that they served.

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## WORLDVIEW

### Religion

**Protestantism:** Protestantism continued its rapid growth in the new United States, where it was often the cultural and social glue that held communities together. New types of Protestantism flourished, because it was possible to start a new religious domination very easily, usually by means of a charismatic preacher who would travel a circuit where he would organize tent revivals, which would inspire converts who would then set up their local congregations. It was in that way that the Baptists, Southern Baptists, Methodists, Pentacostals, and many other church denominations flowered and flourished. They were especially important in the frontier areas where the church was often the only social safety net, and also gave people a chance to connect and form a community with shared values, vision, and social goals. In the

case of immigrants from Germany, Scandinavia, Greece, Russia and other locations, the church served as a way to preserve cultural identity.

**Catholicism:** All Roman Catholic churches had in common a unifying relationship with the overall structure, which was a clear and rigidly maintained hierarchy, with the Pope at the head of the church, and resources administered through Rome and later through regions, reflecting in many ways the structure of the Roman Empire. Depending on the origins of the community, the local Catholic church would emphasize certain saints over others. For example, in the Desert Southwest, the Virgin of Guadalupe was important, while in the areas predominantly Irish, Saint Patrick figured prominently.

**Utopian Religious Movements:** Despite their insistence that all they really wanted was to be able to interpret the Bible in their own way, sing the songs they wanted to sing, and to live in harmony with each other, what really united most of the utopian religious experiments of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was sexual freedom. It is not the kind of “free love” one might expect from a century later (the 1960s), but it sought a way to break away from the rigid behavioral constraints of the Puritans and Protestant groups that soaked up the idea of sexual relations as something to be hidden and punished. The Shakers were nominally celibate, which allowed men and women to freely interact and go into what seem to have been orgiastic sublimations of sexual energy, called “dancing.” Humphrey Noyes’s Oneida Community tried to implement a system of free love called “complex marriage” where everyone was married to everyone else, and one could have relationships with everyone else, no jealousy allowed. No complaining by women was allowed, either. The patriarchs of the cult got to “teach” or “introduce” young women to sex, and the patriarchs decided which men could have which women. The population of women went into a precipitous decline (women ran away), until Humphrey fled to Canada after being charged with statutory rape and his son, Theodore, an agnostic and unwilling leader, assumed the chief role. The community rejected “complex marriage” and reformed as a joint-stock company and entered into traditional marriage with their true loves. The joint stock company was extremely successful and well known for its Oneida flatware, knives, and other housewares.

**Mormons:** The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints was one of the most colorful of the utopian experiments and cults of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They were immediately very compelling for settlers feeling somehow disenfranchised and without opportunity. The Mormons (as they came to be known, as devotees of the Angel Mormon) were extremely well organized as well as entrepreneurial, resulting in the fact that they generally were rather well-heeled and able to afford to move west and to set up agricultural settlements. Because they believed in polygamy and had other “outree” beliefs, traditional communities saw them as destabilizing. Eventually the Mormons made a mass exodus and established communities in what is now Utah. They were also very prominent in Hawaii, where they established an early community in the east side of Oahu.

#### Discussions / Questions

Religion:

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the United States exploded with utopian experiments, many with religion as their foundation. It was a time of “do it yourself” religion and a tremendous opportunity to express oneself by means of creating a perfect world. Religion was also used to create the social glue to knit together nascent settlements. How were some of those worlds constructed? What made them succeed? Or, what made them collapse?

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### **Philosophy**

**Ralph Waldo Emerson:** One of the founders of American Transcendentalism, Emerson's essays, which included "Self-Reliance," "Circles," "The Over-Soul," and "Nature," were a blend of German Romanticism, Asian mysticism, and American pragmatism. They resulted in a passionate stance toward freedom of expression and human dignity which connected with the abolitionist movement and also the founding of universities.

**Margaret Fuller:** An amazing woman who was a bona fide reporter for a newspaper, Fuller's **Woman in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century** broke ground in calling for better treatment of women on ethical grounds. She advocated education, the right to own property, and the right to vote.

**Henry David Thoreau:** An advocate of free-thinking and simple living, Thoreau was opposed to slavery and he believed in "civil disobedience" to bring about positive change. He was extremely influential as an apologist for preserving nature and establishing a government that upholds human dignity and allows for social justice and equality.

**William James:** With writings that explored both mysticism and psychology, James's writings explored the inner anxieties and preoccupations of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. His philosophy focused on the relationship between humanity and God as it related to a development of identity and self, and as "varieties of religious experience" are explorations into beingness, ontology, and a notion of what it means to be human.

### Discussions / Questions

#### Philosophy:

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Industrial Revolution, Westward Expansion, Civil War, and dramatic leaps in literacy and communication resulted in a country hungry for a philosophy that assured the potential transformation of the human being, and the potential to achieve one's dreams. Explain how Transcendentalist philosophies encouraged the development of the American Dream.

### Readings

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## Science

**First Industrial Revolution:** If we look objectively at the dramatic changes that occurred in North America, we can see that many had as their foundation a few breakthroughs in the understanding of materials, thermodynamics, and electricity, which made it possible to invent the components that went into some of the main mechanical breakthroughs. They were the steam engine, electrical generation, the Bessemer process (steel) and the use of hydropower. With those scientific breakthroughs, the following transformative innovations were possible in the first part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**Oliver Evans (automatic flour mill):** Automated the mill process by incorporating bucket elevators, screw conveyors, and a hopper to spread, cools, and dry the ground grain meal.

**Robert Fulton:** The steamboat made transportation of people and products along the large river systems of the U.S., primarily the Mississippi, Missouri, and Ohio rivers.

**Samuel Morse:** Using electricity, the telegraph (incorporating Morse code), made it possible to communicate rapidly and thus foster new levels of commercial and social engagement.

**Eli Whitney (cotton gin):** Without the cotton gin, the plantation system of the South would not have been profitable because cotton seeds were notoriously difficult to separate from the cotton boll. Whitney's invention, together with steam-powered farm equipment transformed the American South.

**Tabitha Babbitt (circular saw):** First developed for use in a saw mill, Tabitha Babbitt envisioned a round sawblade that would rotate in one place, effectively sawing logs or boards. It made it possible for anyone to saw wood, no matter what their physical characteristic.

**Cyrus McCormick:** One of the steam-powered agricultural equipment inventions, the reaper made it possible to harvest fields without armies of individuals. It made it possible develop a farming economy that did not rely on massive amounts of labor.

**Hiram Moore:** This combine harvester was even more effective because it combined functions in harvesting grains, corn, sorghum, and other crops.

**Elias Moore:** Complementing the cotton gin and the cloth-making textile mills (powered by hydropower), Moore's sewing machine helped create a garment industry in the Northeast and also the South of the United States.

**Second Industrial Revolution:** Characterized by breakthroughs in transportation, communication, medicine, and public health, the Second Industrial Revolution was based on new scientific understanding in the areas of electricity, chemistry, physics, material science, botany, and medicine. The new technology in the area of transportation (the automobile, the bicycle, the airplane, motorcycle, etc.) allowed more mobility than ever. More profoundly, it changed the texture of American life, as infrastructure was designed and constructed, and which actually became the focal point not only of commerce, but also culture.

**Thomas Alva Edison:** Credited for inventing the lightbulb, phonograph, and much more, it is perhaps not fair to give Edison the credit for all the inventions since he actually hired scientists and inventors to work for him, in what was, in essence, a patent farm. He was a brilliant marketer as well as an astute judge of quality.

**Charles Edgar Duryea:** Responsible for the very first combustion engine to be used in a car, Duryea's automobile was an immediate point of fascination and anxiety about the future. His car, which used the internal combustion engine, was very popular, but not mass-produced.

**Nikola Tesla:** Tesla, an immigrant, invented the alternating current (AC), induction motor, polyphase systems for generating electrical power.

Discussions / Questions

Science:

There were two distinct Industrial Revolutions in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first one took place in the first part of the century and encompassed a bit of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The second took place toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and spilled into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Please describe each, and then compare and contrast them. How did the scientific discoveries, applied science, and technological innovations transform the country?

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