

Unit 4

THE SPIRIT OF NATIONALISM

Declaring Independence, 1710–1850

Authors and Works

Featured in the Video:

Benjamin Franklin, “The Way to Wealth,” “Rules by Which a Great Empire May Be Reduced to a Small One,” “Information to Those Who Would Remove to America,” “Remarks Concerning the Savages of North America” (essays); *The Autobiography* (autobiography)

Ralph Waldo Emerson, from *Nature* (philosophy); “The American Scholar,” “The Divinity School Address,” “Last of the Anti-Slavery Lectures,” “Thoreau” (lectures and addresses); “Self-Reliance,” “The Poet,” “Experience,” “Fate” (essays)

Discussed in This Unit:

Jonathan Edwards, “Personal Narrative” (conversion narrative); “A Divine and Supernatural Light,” “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” (sermons); “Letter to Rev. Dr. Benjamin Colman” (letter); from *Images or Shadows of Divine Things* (notebook entries, philosophy)

J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, from *Letters from an American Farmer* (letters composed in voice of fictional persona)

Thomas Jefferson, Declaration of Independence (political document), from *Notes on the State of Virginia* (natural history, study of political and social structures)

Phillis Wheatley, “To the University of Cambridge, in New England,” “On the Death of the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield,” “To His Excellency General Washington” (poetry)

Royall Tyler, *The Contrast* (play)

Susanna Rowson, *Charlotte Temple: A Tale of Truth* (novel)

William Apess, “An Indian’s Looking-Glass for the White Man” (essay)

Margaret Fuller, “The Great Lawsuit” (essay), “Autobiographical Romance” (short autobiography)

Overview Questions

■ To whom was the ethos of individualism available? How did this exclusivity change over time?

■ What literary strategies did American writers develop to distinguish themselves from British writers? How successful were they?

■ What virtues and values emerged as foundational to the American character? How did they change over time?

■ Why did fictional genres such as the novel and drama seem morally questionable to so many Americans? How did early national novels and plays attempt to make themselves seem wholesome and productive of national virtues?

■ How does “auto-American-biography” enable writers to construct themselves as ideal American citizens?

■ What different spiritual beliefs influenced eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American writing? How did Americans’ spiritual beliefs change over time?

■ What is Transcendentalism? Who took part in the Transcendentalist movement and how did they influence later generations of writers and thinkers?

■ What relationship to nature did the Transcendentalists promote? How did they see the landscape as a resource for spiritual transformation?

■ Why and how did natural history come to be linked to national identity?

■ How did the aesthetic of the “sublime” shape American representations of and relations to nature?

■ What is neoclassicism? How did this aesthetic movement influence American art and literature?

■ What is Romantic Individualism?

■ What did early national writers and artists mean when they conceived of America as a “new Rome”?

■ What is the “self-made man”? Were opportuni-

ties for self-making open to all Americans equally? How did the limits of self-making change over time?

■ Why did Americans represent their nation through the allegorical figure of “Columbia”? What values and beliefs informed portraits of Columbia?

Learning Objectives

After students have viewed the video, read the headnotes and literary selections in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, and explored related archival materials on the *American Passages* Web site, they should be able to

1. explain the meaning of the term “individualism” and discuss the way ideals of individualism changed over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries;
2. discuss the importance of race and gender in negotiations of American political and cultural independence;
3. explain the relationship between eighteenth-century Enlightenment ideals and nineteenth-century Romanticism;
4. discuss transformations in American spiritual beliefs between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, from the Great Awakening to Deism to more Romantic conceptions of divinity.

Instructor Overview

In his answer to the difficult question “What is an American?” Farmer James, the narrator of J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur’s *Letters from an American Farmer*, claims that Americans are characterized by their lack of distinction between rich and poor, by a “pleasing uniformity of decent competence,” and by their respect for the “silken bands of mild government.” As his letters continue, however, James’s idyllic picture of American life becomes increasingly troubled. A horrifying encounter with a tortured African American slave in South Carolina, doubts about the morality and civilization of Americans living in backwoods settlements, and intense distress brought about by the violence of the Revolution leave the narrator uncertain about exactly what—

and who—is an American. The ambiguities and tensions surrounding this question characterized much of the literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As the young nation struggled to define its values and beliefs, debates raged about what America should stand for and what it should be. Unit 4, “The Spirit of Nationalism: Declaring Independence, 1710–1850,” examines the work of a wide variety of writers who participated in these debates, including Jonathan Edwards, Benjamin Franklin, J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, Thomas Jefferson, Phillis Wheatley, Royall Tyler, Susanna Rowson, William Apess, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Margaret Fuller. The unit provides contextual background and classroom materials designed to explore the role these texts have played in the formation of American values and in the creation of enduring myths about America.

The video for Unit 4 focuses on Benjamin Franklin and Ralph Waldo Emerson, two influential writers who articulated American ideals and celebrated the potential of the American individual. Franklin helped shape the foundational myth of the “American dream” by narrating his own rise from obscurity through hard work and virtue. His *Autobiography* served as a model that inspired many later Americans and helped define the autobiographical genre. Forty years later, Emerson built on Franklin’s practical ideas of self-improvement and made them more personal and spiritual. He encouraged Americans to look inward, trust their intuition, and develop their own principles. His spiritual philosophy of the correspondence among nature, the individual soul, and God was influential both in his own time and for subsequent generations. Emerson’s optimistic belief in the potential of all individuals had far-reaching implications and repercussions. Although Emerson was not especially active in social reform movements, he articulated ideas that inspired individuals to make America a more inclusive and equal society.

In its coverage of Franklin’s and Emerson’s development of American ideals, the video introduces students to the complexities and evolution of ideas about individualism and the national character. What makes an American? To whom is the ethos of individualism available? How did ideas about the rights and potential of the individual change over time? How were American ideals influenced by people’s relationship to the natural world? How did

changing spiritual beliefs shape national ideals? Unit 4 helps to answer these questions by situating Franklin and Emerson within their cultural contexts, as well as connecting them to other units in the series and to other key writers of the era. The curriculum materials fill in the video's introduction to the spirit of nationalism by exploring writers who represented other, diverse experiences, such as Phillis Wheatley (an African American slave who composed and published poetry), Susanna Rowson (an English-born novelist whose best-selling book portrayed the social consequences of the sexual double standard), and William Apess (a Pequot Indian who became a Methodist minister and champion of Native American rights).

The video, the archive, and the curriculum materials locate the writers featured in Unit 4 within several of the historical contexts and artistic movements that shaped their texts: (1) ideas about individualism, from the Enlightenment through the beginnings of Romantic Individualism; (2) the early national interest in classical Greece and Rome and the aesthetic of neoclassicism; (3) the symbolic connection between American natural history and the American nation; (4) the aesthetic of the sublime; and (5) the representation of America as the female allegorical figure Columbia.

The archive and curriculum materials suggest how the authors and texts featured in Unit 4 relate to those covered in other *American Passages* units: How have ideas of individualism changed over time? How have they influenced the genre of the autobiography and the slave narrative? How did later nineteenth- and twentieth-century American writers challenge and expand the definition of who should be considered an American? What is the place of nature and the wilderness in American philosophy and in American society?

Student Overview

In his answer to the difficult question “What is an American?” Farmer James, the narrator of J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur’s *Letters from an American Farmer*, claims that Americans are characterized by their lack of distinction between rich and poor, by a “pleasing uniformity of decent competence,” and by their respect for the “silken bands of mild government.” As his letters continue, however, James’s idyllic picture of American life becomes increasingly troubled. A horrifying encounter with a tortured African American slave in South Carolina, doubts about the morality and civilization of Americans living in backwoods settlements, and intense distress brought about by the violence of the Revolution leave the narrator uncertain about exactly what—and who—is American. The ambiguities and tensions surrounding this question characterized much of the literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As the young nation struggled to define its values and beliefs, debates raged about what America should stand for and what it should be.

Unit 4, “Declaring Independence: The Spirit of Nationalism, 1710–1850,” explores the struggle over who and what should be considered American. As the video makes clear, writers like Benjamin Franklin and Ralph Waldo Emerson provided foundational American ideals in their celebrations of individual potential. Franklin helped shape the myth of the “American dream” by narrating his own rise from obscurity through hard work and virtue. His *Autobiography* served as a model that inspired many later Americans and helped define the autobiographical genre. Forty years later, Emerson built on Franklin’s practical ideas of self-improvement and made them more personal and spiritual. He encouraged Americans to look inward, trust their intuition, and develop their own principles. His spiritual philosophy of the correspondence among nature, the individual soul, and God was influential both in his own time and for subsequent generations. Franklin’s and Emerson’s belief in the potential of the individual inspired other writers and thinkers to push the boundaries of who and what are considered American.

Video Overview

- **Authors covered:** Benjamin Franklin, Ralph Waldo Emerson
- **Who's interviewed:** Michael J. Colacurcio, professor of American literary and intellectual history to 1900 (University of California, Los Angeles); Bruce Michelson, professor of English (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign); Carla Mulford, associate professor of English (Pennsylvania State University); Dana Nelson, professor of American literature (University of Kentucky); John Carlos Rowe, professor of English and comparative literature (University of California, Irvine); Rafia Zafar, director of African and Afro-American studies (Washington University, St. Louis)
- **Points covered:**
 - In the wake of the political revolution that separated them from the Old World, Americans became determined to liberate themselves culturally as well. A new belief in the power and importance of the individual shaped what became a uniquely American philosophy and literary style.
 - Benjamin Franklin helped shape the foundational myth of America and the "American dream." Relying on his own cleverness and hard work to rise from his station as a poor indentured apprentice and become a successful businessman, writer, philosopher, and politician, Franklin served as a model of the "self-made man." His witty, endearing representation of himself and his life in his *Autobiography* set a new standard for the autobiographical genre in America. In Franklin's time, prejudice and oppression limited the definition of who counted as an American, but Franklin's work inspired men and women of subsequent generations to strive to expand those boundaries.
 - Forty years later, Ralph Waldo Emerson built on Franklin's practical ideals of self-improvement and virtue and made them more personal and spiritual. Emerson encouraged Americans to look inward and find power and inspiration within themselves. He turned to nature as a spiritual resource that could energize the nation politically and elevate it morally. His Transcendental ideas about the unity of nature, the individual soul, and God profoundly influenced his peers as well as subsequent generations of American writers and thinkers. His ideas about self-reliance, in particular, inspired such writers as Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, and Anzia Yezierska. In a difficult historical period, Emerson was a prophet of hope and unbounded optimism. His ceaseless efforts on behalf of the individual generated important ideas

about social reforms that would make America a more inclusive and equal society.

- Both Franklin and Emerson championed the rights and potential of the individual and called for independent thought. Through their own works, they gave new power to the genres of the autobiography and the moral essay. By writing about their experiences and offering their own lives as examples, they encouraged other Americans to examine themselves and trust in their own principles and beliefs.

PREVIEW

- **Preview the video:** In the wake of the Revolution that severed America's colonial ties to Great Britain, the new nation struggled to liberate itself culturally from the Old World values and aesthetics that structured life and art in Europe. Many Americans turned to the Enlightenment ideals of self-determination and individualism as the basis for the new culture they were in the process of forming. Benjamin Franklin, often called the "first American," helped shape the national ideal of the "self-made man" in his *Autobiography*, a book that traced his rise to prominence through hard work and virtue. Forty years later, Ralph Waldo Emerson also celebrated individualism, but in a more Romantic and spiritual context. Issuing a clarion call to Americans to break free of European traditions, Emerson encouraged individuals to use their intuition and intellect to cultivate spiritual power within themselves. He looked to nature both as a source of inspiration for the individual and as an expression of the correspondence among humans, God, and the material world. Although their understanding of individualism and their vision of national culture were profoundly different, both Franklin and Emerson committed themselves to championing independent thought and individual development.
- **Tying the video to the unit content:** Unit 4 expands on the video's introduction to Franklin's and Emerson's development of an American literature tied to an ethos of individualism. The curriculum materials offer background on a variety of other eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writers who modified or rejected English models and developed uniquely American literary styles and themes. Unit 4 examines genres not covered in the video—such as plays, novels, and poetry—and pays attention to the ways female, black, and Native American authors built on and transformed Franklin's and Emerson's ideas. The unit also offers contextual background to expand on the video's introduction to the political issues, historical events, and literary and aesthetic styles that shaped the development of a "spirit of nationalism."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR THE VIDEO

	<i>What is an American? How does literature create conceptions of the American experience and identity?</i>	<i>What is American literature? What are its distinctive voices and styles? How do social and political issues influence the American canon?</i>	<i>What characteristics of a literary work have made it influential over time?</i>
Compre- hension Questions	Who was excluded from the ideals of individualism and the “self-made man” that structured Franklin’s beliefs?	What is Transcendentalism?	According to Emerson, what kind of relationship exists between individuals and nature? What is “nature” for Emerson?
Context Questions	How did Franklin construct his own life as a model for others to follow in his <i>Autobiography</i> ? To what extent did Emerson share with Franklin a desire to serve as a model to his fellow Americans? How were Emerson’s ideas about the importance of individual experience different from Franklin’s?	When he embarked on his project to arrive at “moral perfection,” what did Franklin stress as the most important virtues to cultivate? How do Franklin’s “thirteen virtues” compare to the kinds of virtues Emerson seems to espouse?	How did Franklin organize his own time? How did Franklin’s advocacy of schedules and efficiency influence the way Americans think about and structure industry and labor? How did Emerson challenge the assumptions behind Franklin’s ideas about efficiency and industry?
Exploration Questions	How do Franklin’s ideal of success and his notion of the “self-made man” conflict with or grow out of Puritan theology? How have Franklin’s ideals influenced later American writers? How did later Americans challenge and transform the model of the “self-made man”?	How did Franklin’s <i>Autobiography</i> influence later writers of autobiography? How did his book transform the autobiographical genre in America?	Emerson is often described as the writer with whom every other American writer has had to come to terms. What impact did Emerson’s philosophy and transcendental ideals have on writers like Fuller, Thoreau, Whitman, or Dickinson? How did Emerson change ideas about individualism and about the artist’s role in American society?

TIMELINE

	Texts	Contexts
1730s	Benjamin Franklin, <i>Poor Richard's Almanac</i> (1733)	Clergyman Jonathan Edwards preaches "The Great Awakening," fueling religious revival in New England (1733)
1740s	Jonathan Edwards, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" (1741)	King George's War between British and French colonies (1744–48)
1750s	Jonathan Edwards, <i>Freedom of the Will</i> (1754)	First American Masonic Hall inaugurated in Philadelphia (1755) Seven Years War (French and Indian War) (1756–63)
1760s	Jonathan Edwards, "Personal Narrative" (1765)	First American medical school established at the College of Philadelphia (1765) British parliament enacts Stamp Act, prompting anti-tax protests in the colonies (1765) British parliament passes Townshend Acts requiring colonists to pay duties on tea and other imports (1767)
1770s	Benjamin Franklin, <i>Autobiography: Part One</i> (written 1771) Phillis Wheatley, <i>Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral</i> (1773) Thomas Jefferson, Declaration of Independence (1776)	Boston Massacre (1770) Boston Tea Party (1773) First Continental Congress meets in Philadelphia (1774) American Revolution (1775–83) Declaration of Independence (1776) Thomas Paine writes pamphlet, <i>Common Sense</i> , in support of independence from England (1776)
1780s	J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, <i>Letters from an American Farmer</i> (1782) Benjamin Franklin, <i>Autobiography: Part Two</i> (written 1784) Thomas Jefferson, <i>Notes on the State of Virginia</i> (1787) Royall Tyler, <i>The Contrast</i> (1787)	Shays's Rebellion, a revolt by debt-ridden Massachusetts farmers, suppressed by government forces (1786–87) United States Constitution ratified (1789) George Washington serves as first president of the United States (1789–97)
1790s	Susanna Rowson, <i>Charlotte Temple: A Tale of Truth</i> (1794)	Bill of Rights adopted (1791) Fugitive Slave Act passed, making it illegal to aid runaway slaves (1793)
1800s		Washington, D.C., replaces Philadelphia as the national capital (1800) Louisiana Purchase (1803) Lewis and Clark expedition (1804–06)

TIMELINE *(continued)*

Texts		Contexts
1810s		War of 1812 (1812–15) Spain cedes Florida to United States (1819)
1820s	William Apess, <i>A Son of the Forest</i> (1829)	Missouri Compromise (1820) Democratic Party formed (1828)
1830s	William Apess, “An Indian’s Looking-Glass for the White Man” (1833), “Eulogy on King Philip” (1836) Ralph Waldo Emerson, <i>Nature</i> (1836), “The American Scholar” (1837), “The Divinity School Address” (1838)	Indian Removal Act (1830) Texas gains independence from Mexico (1836) Samuel Morse develops the electric telegraph (1837) U.S. troops force the removal of Cherokee Indians westward from Georgia (1838)
1840s	Ralph Waldo Emerson, <i>Essays</i> (1841), <i>Essays: Second Series</i> (1844) Margaret Fuller, “The Great Lawsuit: MAN versus MEN, WOMAN versus WOMEN” (1843), <i>Summer on the Lakes</i> (1844), <i>Woman in the Nineteenth Century</i> (1845)	Migration over the Oregon Trail begins (1843) U.S.-Mexican War; annexations include California (1846–48) California Gold Rush begins (1849)

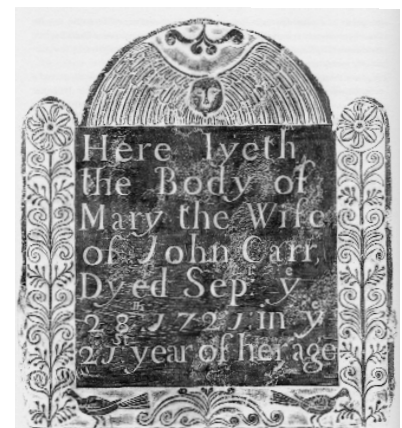
AUTHOR/TEXT REVIEW

Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758)

Jonathan Edwards's writings articulate a complex synthesis of traditional Puritan piety, **Enlightenment** beliefs in the potential of the human will, and an almost mystical appreciation of natural beauty. Intrigued by his unique combination of scientific rationalism and ecstatic faith, scholars continue to debate whether Edwards should be understood as the last great Puritan or the first American Romantic. Born just after the turn of the century, Edwards is the quintessential transitional figure between seventeenth-century Puritan culture and eighteenth-century Enlightenment ideals. Descended from a long line of ministers, including the influential Solomon Stoddard, Edwards seemed destined for a life in the church. He showed remarkable promise as a child, entering Yale—at that time, a bastion of conservative religious training—when he was thirteen and graduating as valedictorian. While in college, Edwards complemented his traditional theological education by studying the Enlightenment philosophy of John Locke and Isaac Newton. He also developed a scientific interest in the natural world: his earliest known writings are scientific examinations of such natural phenomena as atoms, rainbows, and spiders. As a young man, Edwards adopted a regimen of intense study and meditation (he rose at four in the morning and would read for up to thirteen hours a day) that he would continue for the rest of his life.

After spending a short time in New York and then receiving his master's degree in theology at Yale, Edwards accepted a call to assist his grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, at his church in Northampton, Massachusetts. There he married Sarah Pierrepont, a woman renowned for her devotion to spiritual matters, and started what would become a family of eleven children. When Stoddard died in 1729, Edwards was made the sole pastor of the Northampton church. Throughout the following decades, Edwards had remarkable success in revitalizing religious commitment among his flock. The forceful language and vivid imagery of his sermons had a powerful effect on many of his parishioners, touching off an unprecedented wave of conversions within the church. This revival Edwards witnessed in Massachusetts found a corollary in the mass conversions effected by itinerant preachers like George Whitefield and Gilbert Tennent at the large camp meetings they held throughout the American southern and middle colonies.

The revitalization of spirituality and religious enthusiasm that swept through the American colonies from 1734 until around 1750 is referred to as the **Great Awakening**. Great Awakening preachers were united in their desire to promote what they called a “religion of the heart,” through which converts would move beyond mere adherence to moral duties into an ecstatic experience of spiritual grace. Some of Edwards's parishioners were so moved by their conversions that they could not stop themselves from crying out or fainting. Converts at Tennent's and Whitefield's camp meetings had even more extreme physical reactions, including shouting, shaking, groveling on the



[6871] John Stevens, *The Mary Carr Stone* (1721), courtesy of Wesleyan University Press.

ground, and even falling unconscious. Although Edwards worried that the excessive enthusiasm and emotionalism that prevailed at camp meetings could be delusions rather than true conversions, he used some of the itinerant ministers' rhetorical strategies in his own sermons.

Despite his enormous successes in the 1730s and 1740s, Edwards was unable to sustain his popularity with his congregation. In his desire to purify the church, he attempted to abolish the practice of giving communion to anyone who had only been baptized; instead, he required a formal, public profession of conversion of all full church members. He also began to use the pulpit to chastise prominent church members for immorality. Although some of Edwards's followers continued to support his efforts, many felt that he had gone too far and turned bitterly against him. In 1750, the Northampton church voted to dismiss its pastor.

Although Edwards received many offers to serve as pastor at other churches both in America and abroad, he accepted a calling to Stockbridge, near Northampton, where he served as a missionary to the Housatonnuck Indians. His new position afforded him freedom to set his own schedule and allowed him to focus on his writings and philosophical inquiries. In 1754, he published *Freedom of the Will*, a work that was widely heralded as an important contribution to theological debates. In 1757, he received an offer from the College of New Jersey (known today as Princeton) to serve as its president. He was reluctant to accept, citing his own inadequacy and his fear that the new post would distract him from his writing. When the college offered him a reduced workload, Edwards agreed to take the position. Upon arriving, Edwards instituted and participated in what was at the time a controversial inoculation program against smallpox. He had a reaction to the vaccine, became ill, and died at the age of fifty-five.

TEACHING TIPS

■ Students have different responses to the vivid imagery Edwards employs in “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God”: some may find it surprising, others frightening, and still others are amused. Sometimes students will associate the “fire and brimstone” nature of the text with contemporary televangelism or TV talk shows and believe that Edwards was something of a religious huckster. You should stress to them that Edwards distrusted extreme enthusiasm and reportedly delivered his sermons in a sober monotone rather than ranting or shouting. Most of Edwards's sermons are characterized by a desire to make salvation emotionally and aesthetically appealing to his listeners, and the sternness and anger in “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” is somewhat anomalous for him. It is also important that students realize that Edwards actually managed to live in accordance with his strict beliefs: his devotion to his family, rigorous dedication to study, and lifelong focus on God testify to the conviction that underlay his rhetoric.

■ Ask students to outline the structure and argument of one of Edwards's sermons ("A Divine and Supernatural Light" or "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" would work well). Have them pay attention to the way Edwards begins with a quotation from Scripture, elucidates the doctrine it contains, and elaborates on its applications in the lives of his listeners. Ask them to analyze the kinds of arguments and appeals Edwards relies upon to make his sermon meaningful and potent to his listeners. A careful analysis of Edwards's systematic, logically organized arguments should help students appreciate the way his intellect worked and the power his sermons had over his listeners.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: What language does Edwards use to describe his experience of grace in his "Personal Narrative"? What kinds of difficulties does he seem to have articulating his experience? What imagery and metaphors does he employ?

Comprehension: What was the Great Awakening?

Context: Both Edwards and Emerson were profoundly affected by the beauty of the natural world and understood it to be an expression of God's glory. Compare Edwards's descriptions of his experiences in nature in the "Personal Narrative" with Emerson's descriptions in *Nature*. How are they similar? How are they different? How does Edwards use natural imagery in his sermons?

Exploration: During the Great Awakening preachers and clerics had a tremendous influence on American culture: they captivated audiences with their powerful messages and transformed people's beliefs and the way they lived their everyday lives. What charismatic figures seem to exert this kind of influence over American culture today?

Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790)

Benjamin Franklin's extraordinary energy and varied talents made him successful as a writer, humorist, statesman, diplomat, businessman, and scientist. The tale of his rise from humble beginnings through hard work and virtue has become a familiar lesson in the American dream. So exemplary is Franklin's story that his *Autobiography* is often considered, in literary critic Sacvan Bercovitch's term, an **auto-American-biography**. That is, it functions as a narrative that constructs a kind of ideal American citizen, even conflating Franklin's personal history with the founding of the nation.

Born the youngest son in a family of fifteen, Franklin rebelled at an early age against the narrow constraints of life in Puritan Boston. As a teenager, he rejected his family's pious Puritanism in favor of **Deism**, a persuasion that privileges reason over faith and rejects traditional religious tenets in favor of a general belief in a benevolent creator. He also rebelled against his lengthy apprenticeship in his brother's Boston print shop. After mastering the printing trade, Franklin violated his

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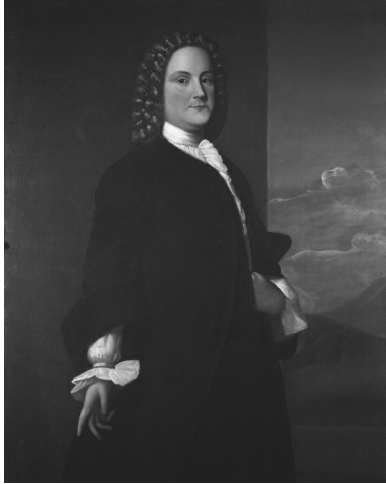
[3169] Jonathan Edwards, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* (1741), courtesy of the New York Public Library. Edwards delivered this sermon on July 8, 1741, in Enfield, Connecticut.

Edwards's preaching helped fan the flames of religious revival at the dawn of the first Great Awakening.

[4475] Anonymous, *Old Ship Church, 88 Main St., Hingham, Plymouth County, MA Interior* (1681), courtesy of the Library of Congress [HABS, MASS,12-HING,5-]. The Old Ship Church is the oldest meetinghouse in continuous ecclesiastical use in the United States. Puritan meetinghouses were square in shape, unadorned, and lacked altars, reflecting the plain-style aesthetic and a congregational emphasis.

[6871] John Stevens, *The Mary Carr Stone* (1721), courtesy of Wesleyan University Press. The Mary Carr Stone rests in Old Common Burying-ground in Newport, Rhode Island. It reads, "Here lyeth the Body of Mary the Wife of John Carr, Dyed Sepr; ye 28th: 1721: in ye 21st: year of her age." The carving was made at the John Stevens Shop by the elder Stevens, a carver known for the quality and innovativeness of his work. Its imagery emphasizes rebirth. The sides and bottom house show leaf patterns, pilasters, rosettes: flowers and leaves were associated with life (Job 14) and fecundity. At the top is a cherub with wings, and at the base is a pair of peacocks, symbols of immortality.

[8811] Emory Elliot, Interview: "Puritan Impact" (2001), courtesy of Annenberg Media. Elliott, professor of English at the University of California, Riverside, discusses the impact of Puritan thought and ideology on American culture.



[3143] Robert Feke, *Benjamin Franklin* (c. 1746), courtesy of Harvard University.

contract of indenture to his brother and ran away to Philadelphia, where he found another position as a printer's assistant. On his own in a new city, Franklin learned to look out for his own best interests, though he also was taken advantage of on occasion. Notably, he found himself stranded in England after gullibly accepting a spurious offer of assistance. Always one to turn adversity to his advantage, Franklin soon found work in England and acquired new printing skills.

Franklin returned to Philadelphia in 1726, convinced that virtue and hard work were the keys to success. Crucially, for Franklin, an *appearance* of virtue and industry was almost as important as actually possessing these qualities. He took pains to cultivate a reputation for hard work, carrying his own paper through the streets in a wheelbarrow and keeping his light burning late to ensure that others would notice his dedication to his business. Franklin prospered following this formula, and by 1732 he was operating his own print shop, publishing the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, and composing the best-selling *Poor Richard's Almanac*. As his wealth and stature increased, Franklin involved himself in a variety of benevolent social projects, including the formation of the first American lending library and the first American fire department. In the mid-1740s he began serious work on the scientific experiments that would win him international acclaim. Building on ideals of Enlightenment rationalism in his scientific inquiries, Franklin discovered the theory of electricity that still serves as the basis for our use of electric energy.

Franklin devoted the remaining years of his life primarily to politics, diplomacy, and writing. As a leading member of the Pennsylvania Assembly, he was sent to England in 1757 to articulate the colony's grievances against the Crown. Despite his best diplomatic efforts, he eventually resigned himself to the idea that American independence from British rule was necessary. In 1771, Franklin began composing his *Autobiography*, only to put the project on hold when the Revolution necessitated his return to America. He was selected as a Pennsylvania delegate to the Second Continental Congress and served on the committee that helped Thomas Jefferson draft the Declaration of Independence. Franklin then spent much of the war as America's minister to France, using his charm and charisma to ensure French support and eventually reach a peace accord with Great Britain. His last official public duty was his service at the Constitutional Convention of 1787.

TEACHING TIPS

■ Using Franklin's model, have students devise and follow their own "bold and arduous Project for arriving at moral Perfection" (being sure to point out the tongue-in-cheek nature of Franklin's pretensions to eradicating all of his faults). Ask your students to make a list of at least five qualities that they value—they need not choose Franklin's thirteen virtues—and to use a notebook to keep track of their adherence to them over the course of one week. At the end of the week, ask them to report on their experiences. Did their record keeping change

their behavior during the week? What was most difficult about keeping this kind of record? Do they agree with Franklin that they were “by the endeavor made a better and happier man than I otherwise should have been, if I had not attempted it”?

■ Franklin composed his *Autobiography* during three different periods and died before it could be completed. The first part of the memoir (composed in 1771) is explicitly addressed to his son, William, while the second part (composed in 1784) was written ostensibly in response to the solicitous letters from Abel James and Benjamin Vaughan which Franklin includes at the beginning of Part Two. Critics have speculated that Franklin’s strained relationship with his son—William remained a Loyalist during the Revolution—led Franklin to reject him as the designated audience for his memoir. Ask students to think about the shift in Franklin’s intended audience between the first and second sections of the *Autobiography*. How does his relationship with his son inform the first part? (You might point out that the tradition of addressing a memoir or guidebook to one’s son was something of a rhetorical convention in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Puritan Thomas Sheperd also addressed his autobiography to his son a century earlier.) What kind of reader does Franklin seem to envision for the second part? Why does he include the letters from James and Vaughan? Franklin casually observes that the “Revolution occasioned the interruption” between his writing of the first and second part. How does the Revolution seem to have changed Franklin’s narrative tone and/or purpose?

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: To what does Franklin attribute his success? What kind of advice does he offer to readers who want to model their life on his?

Comprehension: What is an “erratum”? Why does Franklin adopt this term?

Context: Benjamin Franklin and Jonathan Edwards were born within three years of each other, but, despite their similar ages, the two men had radically different perspectives and beliefs. Compare Franklin’s *Autobiography* with Edwards’s “Personal Narrative.” How are these writers’ views on morality, personal responsibility, human nature, and/or the limits of human knowledge similar? How are they different? How does Franklin both draw from and reject the Puritan tradition that was so important to Edwards?

Context: Examine the paintings and sculptures of Franklin featured in the archive. What different images of Franklin do these representations provide? If Franklin were choosing among them for an image for the cover of his *Autobiography*, which of the representations of himself do you think he would choose? Why?

Exploration: How did Franklin’s *Autobiography* influence subsequent American autobiographies? How were his values translated and reinterpreted by writers like Frederick Douglass or Zitkala Ša?

FRANKLIN WEB ARCHIVE

[2151] Jean Valade, *Portrait of Benjamin Franklin* (c. 1786), courtesy of Monticello/Thomas Jefferson Foundation, Inc. Franklin, a founding father, the discoverer of electricity, and the inventor of bifocals, rose from humble beginnings and marked himself in his *Autobiography* as an exemplar of the “American dream.”

[2910] H. B. Hall, *Benjamin Franklin* (1868), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-25564]. Franklin’s presentation of himself as the ideal American individual was widely accepted. While he lived in France, he was celebrated as the embodiment of the naturalism and simplicity that supposedly characterized the New World—an image he carefully maintained by shunning French fashion and dressing plainly.

[3143] Robert Feke, *Benjamin Franklin* (c. 1746), courtesy of Harvard University. Born in 1706 into a family of fifteen, Franklin early rebelled against life in Puritan Boston. Often considered the first American philosopher, Franklin was also a soldier, scientist, politician, and outspoken advocate of liberty and democracy.

[3608] Benjamin Franklin, Title page for *The Private Life of the Late Benjamin Franklin LL.D.* [The *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*] (1793), courtesy of Archiving Early America. Franklin’s *Autobiography* is often understood as an “auto-American-biography,” meaning an autobiographical text in which the narrator self-consciously foregrounds his narrative construction of himself as an ideal American citizen.

[4858] Benjamin Franklin, *Benjamin Franklin’s Chart*, (1790), courtesy of W. W. Norton & Company. With this chart, Franklin designates how he will use every hour of the day. Franklin is famous for his observation that being perceived as industrious is as important as actually being so.

[7214] Charles Brothers, *The Reception of Benjamin Franklin in France* (c. 1882), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZC4-3804]. Ambassador Franklin became something of a cult figure in France, where people began to emulate his style of dress.

J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur (1735–1813)

Although his writings evince a reverence for pastoral, quiet farm life, J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur led a restless existence marred by war, instability, and tragedy. Born in France to a privileged family, Crèvecoeur left for England as a young man and eventually traveled on to Canada. He worked as a surveyor in the French army during the French and Indian War and was wounded at the battle of Québec. In 1759, Crèvecoeur immigrated to rural New York, where he found employment as a surveyor, trader, and farmer. He married an American woman and became a naturalized citizen, adding the names

“Hector” and “St. John” to his given name, perhaps in an attempt to seem more English. The outbreak of the American Revolution marred Crèvecoeur’s idyllic farm life. Suspected of harboring Loyalist sympathies, he was persecuted and threatened by his neighbors. He tried to sail for France to escape harassment and to secure his children’s inheritance, but both the English authorities and the Revolutionaries found him suspicious and made his departure difficult. After being imprisoned by the English, he was finally allowed to leave for France in 1780.

Once he had arrived safely in Europe, Crèvecoeur published a manuscript he had produced while in America. His book, *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782), was an account of rural life and travels through America told in the voice of a naïve, rustic narrator. These letters of “Farmer James” became popular in France and England and, trading on the book’s success, Crèvecoeur became a minor celebrity. He was appointed a French consul to America

and returned to New York in 1783. Tragically, he found his farm destroyed, his wife dead, and his children resettled in Boston. In 1790 he returned to France, where revolution and war once again tormented him. He lived obscurely in rural France until his death.

Although *Letters from an American Farmer* was initially read as a celebration of American culture and the American character, later generations of literary critics have puzzled over the exact nature of Crèvecoeur’s attitude toward his adopted country. While his description of northern farm life is in some ways idyllic, later letters in the book engage the horrors of slaveholding in the South, the barbarity of the unsettled wilderness, and the terrors of revolution. A complex and ambivalent representation of American life, *Letters from an American Farmer* continues to challenge readers with its portrait of both the utopian and the dystopian possibilities of the nation.

TEACHING TIPS

■ Students tend to assume that the book’s narrator, James, corresponds to Crèvecoeur himself and that *Letters from an American*



[1889] Paul Revere, *The Bloody Massacre Perpetrated in Kings Street Boston on March 5th 1770 by a Party of the 29th Regt.* (1770), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZC4-4600].

Farmer is an essentially autobiographical work. Be sure to make it clear to your class that James is an invented persona, and that Crèvecoeur sometimes uses the distance between himself and his narrator to produce ironic effects. You might focus on the horrific description of James's encounter with the tortured slave in Letter IX to make this point. How does the narrator react to the spectacle of the dying slave in the cage? Why doesn't he take any action to help the man? What are we to make of the line informing us that the narrator "mustered strength enough to walk away"? How does he interact with the owners of the slave when he eats dinner with them later that evening?

■ *Letters from an American Farmer* does not fall easily into a particular genre; it has been read as a travel narrative, an epistolary novel, an autobiography, a work of natural history, and a satire. To explore this question of genre and audience, ask students to imagine that they are Crèvecoeur's publisher and are responsible for marketing his book to eighteenth-century readers. Ask them to think about how they would describe and promote the book, and what readers they would hope to reach. Would the book be more interesting to Europeans or to Americans? How would they summarize the book for marketing purposes? Where would they shelve the book in a bookstore?

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: What kinds of problems does Crèvecoeur's narrator face in Letter XII, "Distresses of a Frontier Man"? How does this letter compare to the narrator's earlier descriptions of his life in America? What has caused the change in his tone?

Context: What answers does Crèvecoeur offer to the question he poses in the title of Letter III, "What Is an American"? What economic, social, religious, and racial qualities characterize an American in Crèvecoeur's view? How does his description of the American character compare to those offered by other authors in Unit 4 (Tyler, Franklin, or Emerson, for example)?

Context: How does Crèvecoeur describe Native Americans in *Letters from an American Farmer*? How do they fit into his ideas about who should be considered a true American? Why does his narrator contemplate living among the Indians in Letter XII? How does Crèvecoeur's description of Native American life compare to William Apess's account?

Exploration: For a text written before the nineteenth-century abolitionist movement, Letter IX contains an unusually graphic description of the shocking and terrifying abuses committed under the slave system. Why does Crèvecoeur include this description? What are readers supposed to make of his narrator's rather apathetic response to the horrible scene he encounters? How does Crèvecoeur's portrait of slavery compare to later, nineteenth-century accounts of slave abuse (texts by Frederick Douglass, Harriet Jacobs, or Harriet Beecher Stowe might make good comparisons)?

CRÈVECOEUR WEB ARCHIVE

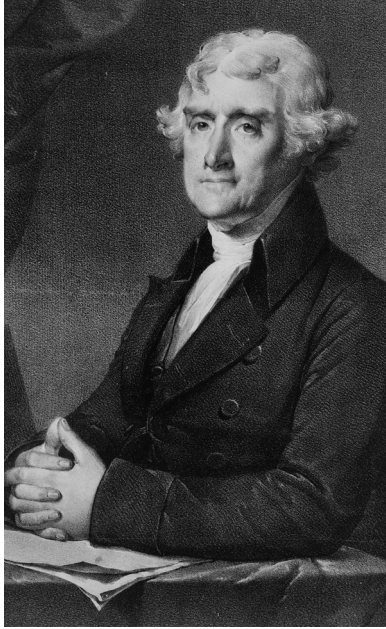
[1209] William Bradford, Title page for *The American Magazine and Monthly Chronicle for the British Colonies*, Vol. 1, No. VI, for March 1758, courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZC4-5309]. Title page illustration for the *American Magazine* showing a Frenchman and an Englishman competing for the loyalty of a native man standing between them, leaning on a rifle. Crèvecoeur worked as a surveyor in the French and Indian War.

[1889] Paul Revere, *The Bloody Massacre Perpetrated in Kings Street Boston on March 5th 1770 by a Party of the 29th Regt.* (1770), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZC4-4600]. Paul Revere, silversmith and political figure of the American Revolution, depicted the "arbitrary" murder of civilians by British troops in what would be called the Boston Massacre, a rallying point against the King's military presence in the colonies.

[2622] Junius Brutus Stearns, *Life of George Washington—the Farmer* (1853), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZC4-723]. Like Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer*, this painting of George Washington standing with other white farmers while slaves work presents a contrast between bucolic farm life and the injustices of slavery.

[2642] John Heaten, *Van Bergen Overmantel* (c. 1730–45), courtesy of the New York State Historical Association. This vibrant depiction of colonial life in New York emphasizes the area's Dutch roots. Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* was in part inspired by time spent in areas like the one shown here.

[7243] Currier & Ives, *Washington's Head-Quarters 1780: At Newburgh, on the Hudson* (1856), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZC2-3161]. Painting of stone farmhouse and bucolic surroundings alongside the Hudson River. General George Washington, his wife, officers, slaves, and servants occupied the modest house during the Revolutionary War. Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* explores the pastoral lifestyle of such early Americans.



[1196] Pendleton's Lithography, Thomas Jefferson, Third President of the United States (c. 1828), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-117117].

Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826)

President John F. Kennedy paid tribute to Thomas Jefferson's many accomplishments when he told a group of Nobel Prize winners that they were "the most extraordinary collection of talent, of human knowledge, that has ever been gathered together at the White House, with the possible exception of when Thomas Jefferson dined alone." Indeed, Jefferson's intellectual talents extended to a wide range of subjects and pursuits. He made important contributions to American culture as a writer, politician, farmer, horticulturist, inventor, book collector, art curator, architect, and scientist. His commitment to and eloquent articulation of ideals of liberty and justice (most famously in the Declaration of Independence) have made him a hero to many, while his ownership of slaves and sometimes disingenuous political rhetoric have disappointed others. As historian Joseph J. Ellis puts it, "The best and worst of American history are inextricably tangled together in Jefferson."

Jefferson was born into a prominent family in Albermarle County, Virginia. After his father's death in 1757 he was sent to the College of William and Mary, where he received an education in the classics as well as in eighteenth-century philosophy. Jefferson chose to pursue law as a career and studied with the influential legal scholar George Wythe. After setting up a successful law practice, he was elected to the Virginia legislature in 1769, thus embarking on his lengthy career in American politics. Jefferson soon became embroiled in the Revolutionary cause and published a fiery pamphlet on American rights. He also attended the Second Continental Congress as a strong advocate of independence. Jefferson was well known for his literary abilities, so he was a natural choice to serve on the committee selected to draft the Declaration of Independence. He accepted suggestions and editorial changes made by the committee and by the Congress (nervous congressional delegates removed his strong condemnation of slavery), but in essence the document is the product of Jefferson's pen.

After 1776, Jefferson returned to Virginia, where he was elected governor. While serving his term, he received a request for information about the land and culture of Virginia from François Marbois, a French diplomat. Jefferson composed the only full-length book of his career, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, in response. A comprehensive study of natural history, politics, and social customs, Jefferson's work attempts to make a scientific argument for America's potential as a land of freedom and prosperity. *Notes on the State of Virginia* contains insightful analysis of the natural world, intriguing political and social commentary, and some problematic racial stereotypes.

In 1784 Jefferson was appointed minister to France, and the years he spent abroad proved foundational to both his politics and his sense of aesthetics (he became enamored of French art and architecture). When he returned to the United States in 1789, he served as the first secretary of state under George Washington and later as vice president under John Adams. Jefferson's disagreements with Adams over the role of government in the new nation led to the formation of the first American political parties: Adams's Federalists and Jefferson's

Republicans. In what is sometimes termed the “Revolution of 1800,” Jefferson defeated Adams and the Federalist Party to become the third president of the United States. He was the first president inaugurated in the new city of Washington, D.C., and during his term in office he oversaw the Louisiana Purchase and Lewis and Clark’s expedition to the Pacific.

After the conclusion of his second term as president, Jefferson returned to Monticello, the elegant plantation he had built on his family lands in Virginia. In his final years, he helped found the University of Virginia and maintained an extensive correspondence with friends, acquaintances, and admirers in Europe and America. His productive retirement was troubled, however, by his enormous financial debts and his consciousness of the discrepancy between his professed political commitments and his position as a slaveowner. He died a few hours before John Adams on July 4, 1826, the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

TEACHING TIPS

■ Students tend to view the Declaration of Independence as a kind of sacred document, forgetting that it was argued over and revised by the Second Continental Congress. Ask your class to examine the editorial changes to Jefferson’s original draft indicated by the underlining and marginal notations featured in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. How did the Congress change Jefferson’s original words? In what places did they tone down his language? Where did they make it stronger? In particular, you might focus on the removal of the passage condemning slavery (where Jefferson advances the unconvincing argument that the King set up the institution of slavery in America against the will of the white colonists) and the changes to Jefferson’s indictment of “our British brethren.”

■ Some background on Jefferson’s vexed relationship with the question of slavery could enliven class discussion: Now that DNA tests have proven that he had children with his slave Sally Hemings, and that he held those children in slavery for most of his life, the discrepancy between Jefferson’s belief that “all men are created equal” and the reality of his life as a plantation owner seems even more problematic. You should make it clear to students that Jefferson was by no means untroubled by the question of slavery—he sponsored unsuccessful political action to weaken or end slavery on several occasions and he devised elaborate architectural tricks at Monticello to disguise the slave labor that was foundational to its operations. But despite his discomfort with slavery, he never brought himself to free his slaves, nor did he free them after his death.

■ Ask one of your students to read aloud the speech that Jefferson attributes to the Native American chief Logan in Query VI of *Notes on the State of Virginia*. Jefferson (himself a notoriously poor speaker) once claimed that within the “whole orations of Demosthenes and Cicero and indeed in all of European oratory” one could not “produce a single passage superior to the speech of Logan.” Ask students what

JEFFERSON WEB ARCHIVE

[1196] Pendleton’s Lithography, *Thomas Jefferson, Third President of the United States* (c. 1828), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-117117].

When the founding fathers affirmed their commitment to the inalienable rights of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” in 1776, they opted not to struggle with the troubling question of how slavery fit into this ideal. This engraving is from an original painting by Gilbert Stuart.

[1309] Anonymous, *Photo of Monticello* (1943), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USW361-758]. Thomas Jefferson constructed underground passageways so that visitors to Monticello would not see slaves at work—others placed slave quarters in prominent locations as a display of their wealth and power.

[1401] Thomas Jefferson, *Letter from Thomas Jefferson to Eli Whitney*, Nov. 16, 1793 (1793), courtesy of the Library of Congress. Eli Whitney, a northerner, conceived of his invention, the cotton gin, as one that would help end slavery by taking over much of the work done by slaves. In effect, however, the cotton gin helped ensure the continuation of slavery by making the cotton industry much more lucrative.

[1646] Anonymous, *The Providential Detection* (c. 1800), courtesy of Library Company of Philadelphia. Because Thomas Jefferson's beliefs were in accord with the religion and politics of the French Revolution, many Federalists believed him incapable of leadership as illustrated in this cartoon: the eye of God commanding the American Eagle to snatch away the Constitution of the United States.

[3679] Anonymous, *Daguerreotype photograph of Isaac Jefferson* (1847), courtesy of Special Collections, University of Virginia Library. Although he spoke out against the institution of slavery, Jefferson ran a large plantation through slave labor; recent DNA tests have provided conclusive evidence that Jefferson fathered children by his slave Sally Hemings.

[7781] Anonymous, *University of Virginia* (n.d.), courtesy of the National Park Service. Although Monticello is justly celebrated as an expression of Thomas Jefferson's aesthetic values, his true masterpiece is the design for the University of Virginia. Conceived of as an "academica village," the central campus of the university is composed of five neoclassical pavilions that housed five different branches of learning.

[9044] A. C. Brechin & Son, *Rotunda and Lawn, University of Virginia* (1911), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-124456]. This early-twentieth-century shot shows the rotunda and lawn at the University of Virginia. Thomas Jefferson designed the university.

[9045] Anonymous, *University of Virginia, Pavilion VI* (after 1933), courtesy of the Library of Congress [HABS, VA,2-CHAR,1-O-]. This map shows the University of Virginia, Pavilion VI, East Lawn. A closeup can be seen at [9046].

[9047] Haines Photo Company, *Natural Bridge, VA* (1909), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZ62-110212]. Sometimes dubbed one of the "Seven Wonders of the Natural World," Natural Bridge in Virginia has long attracted visitors. In his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Thomas Jefferson called it "the most sublime of Nature's works."

kind of response they had when they listened to the speech. Why might Jefferson have chosen this as a model of oratory? What values does the speech uphold? What image of Native American culture does it provide? You might give students a summary of historian Hayden White's argument that the construction of the "Noble Savage" in America had more to do with debunking the idea of the superiority of hereditary aristocracies than with elevating "savages." Ask your students whether they think this theory illuminates Jefferson's discussion of Logan and whether it fits in with the rest of Jefferson's ideology.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: What grievances against British rule are outlined in the Declaration of Independence?

Context: Examine the diagrams and photographs featured in the archive of the campus Jefferson designed for the University of Virginia. Why might Jefferson have chosen this design for his ideal "academical village," as he called it? What kind of educational space does the campus construct for its students? What values are reflected in its design? With these questions in mind, think about the design of your own campus or school. What do you think the architects of your campus had in mind when they planned it? How might their goals have been similar to or different from Jefferson's?

Context: Read the contextual material in "The Awful Truth: The Aesthetic of the Sublime" featured in this unit. Examine Jefferson's description of the Natural Bridge in Query V of *Notes on the State of Virginia* and then look at the image of the Natural Bridge featured in the archive. How does Jefferson describe the Natural Bridge? What effect does it have on him when he visits it? Why does he shift to the second person when he describes the Bridge's effects? Why does he view it as "the most sublime of Nature's works"? How does the Bridge compare to other natural or human-made wonders you may have visited (the Grand Canyon, the Rocky Mountains, the Empire State Building, the Hoover Dam, or Niagara Falls, for example)?

Exploration: The Puritans' Mayflower Compact, John Winthrop's "Model of Christian Charity," and the Declaration of Independence all function as early American articulations of shared values. How do these documents compare to one another? How did American values change over the course of 150 years? What does the Declaration, an eighteenth-century text, have in common with the Puritan documents?

Exploration: Sentences and phrases from the Declaration of Independence are often recycled in American political and cultural documents. Think of some instances when you may have heard the Declaration quoted. Which sections are quoted most often? Why? How do you think interpretations and uses of the language of the Declaration have changed since Jefferson's time?

Phillis Wheatley (c. 1753–1784)

One of the best known and most highly regarded pre-nineteenth-century American poets, Phillis Wheatley achieved poetic fame despite her status as an African American slave. Wheatley was kidnapped from West Africa (probably Senegal or Gambia) when she was six or seven years old, transported to America on a slave ship, and sold in Boston to the wealthy Wheatley family in 1761. Her mistress, Susannah Wheatley, soon recognized that her young slave was a remarkably intelligent, talented child and, apparently motivated by an unusual compassion and leniency, undertook the highly irregular project of providing her slave with an education. Phillis's domestic duties were curtailed and she quickly learned to read and write. Her exposure to Latin texts, and especially to English poets such as John Milton and Alexander Pope, provided her with models that profoundly influenced her subsequent work. The Wheatley family also instilled in Phillis a background in the Bible and in Christian tradition. Throughout her career, Phillis's evangelical Christianity was one of the most important forces in her thought and poetry.

In 1767, at the age of thirteen or fourteen, Phillis Wheatley published her first poem in *The Mercury*, a Newport, Rhode Island, newspaper. Three years later she composed an elegy on the death of the Reverend George Whitefield, the popular itinerant minister who had spread evangelical Christianity throughout the colonies. Published first in *The Massachusetts Spy* and eventually appearing in broadside and pamphlet form in New York, Philadelphia, Newport, and London, Wheatley's elegy for Whitefield brought her international recognition. Because her poetry was published as the work of "a Servant Girl . . . Belonging to Mr. J. Wheatley of Boston: And has been but 9 Years in this Country from Africa," Phillis's readers knew that she was an African American slave. By 1772, she had compiled a collection of twenty-eight poems that she hoped to publish as a book. Unfortunately, Wheatley's advertisements in the Boston newspapers seeking subscribers to help finance her proposed book yielded few patrons. With the help of Susannah Wheatley and the patronage of the Countess of Huntingdon, she then traveled to England, where her book, *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*, was published by a British press in 1773. Though she was treated with great respect in London—important figures such as Benjamin Franklin, the Earl of Dartmouth, and the Lord Mayor of London hosted her during her stay—Phillis had to cut her trip short and return to Boston when she learned that Susannah Wheatley was gravely ill. Before her death in 1774 Susannah Wheatley granted Phillis her freedom.

Now independent of the Wheatley family, Phillis married John Peters, a free black man about whom little information is known. It is clear that the couple faced serious financial problems, forcing Phillis to work as a scullery maid in order to help support the family. Although she placed advertisements in an effort to fund a second volume of poetry and letters, she was never able to generate enough support to publish more of her work. She died in poverty.

Wheatley's poetry is characterized by a strict adherence to the con-



[7388] Scipio Moorhead, *Phillis Wheatley, Negro Servant to Mr. John Wheatley of Boston* (1773), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZC4-5316].

WHEATLEY WEB ARCHIVE

[1235] Ezekial Russell, *Poem by Phillis, A Negro Girl [of] Boston, on the Death of the Reverend George Whitefield* (1770), courtesy of the Library of Congress. Woodcut from the frontispiece of Wheatley's poem. An evangelical Christian, Phillis Wheatley drew heavily on religious themes for her work.

[1239] Phillis Wheatley, *Frontispiece to Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* (1773), courtesy of the Library of Congress. Wheatley was a respected poet in the late eighteenth century. Her work was resurrected by abolitionists just before the Civil War.

[1240] Phillis Wheatley, *To the Rev. Mr. Pitkin, on the Death of His Lady. [Signed] Phillis Wheatley, Boston, June 16th, 1772*, courtesy of the Library of Congress. Wheatley was greatly influenced by English poets such as John Milton and Alexander Pope. Her ability to master some of the conventions of their difficult styles was itself a form of protest against slavery.

[1241] Phillis Wheatley, *A Letter from Phillis Wheatley to Dear Obour. Dated Boston, March 21, 1774*, courtesy of the Library of Congress. Although Wheatley received great acclaim for her poetry, she was not able to find funding for her work after the death of her mistress, and she died in poverty.

[2734] David Bustill Bowser, *Rather Die Freeman than Live to Be Slaves—3rd United States Colored Troops* (c. 1865), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-23098]. This regimental flag shows an African American soldier standing next to Columbia. Due to pressure on both the War Department and President Lincoln, black soldiers began serving in the Union Army beginning in 1863.

[6551] Kenyon Cox, *Columbia & Cuba—Magazine cover—Nude Study* (1898), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZ62-68463]. An allegorical cover of an 1898 magazine, exemplifying the openness toward the human body of the late-nineteenth-century realists. The names of the women, "Columbia" and "Cuba," refer

ventions of neoclassical verse—that is, a reliance on carefully controlled iambic pentameter couplets and a focus on public, impersonal themes rather than personal self-expression. Some literary critics have understood the restraint and conventionality of her poetry as an indication that Wheatley lacked racial consciousness or was uninterested in protesting slavery. Recently, however, scholars have begun to find evidence that Wheatley actively addressed sociopolitical concerns and brought racial issues to the forefront in her work. Furthermore, since slaves were considered subhuman, Wheatley's ability to "master" the sophisticated style of neoclassicism itself functioned as a protest of slavery. Many of her poems contain pointed reminders to her audience that she is an African, and her celebrations of American ideals of liberty both implicitly and explicitly condemn African American slavery.

TEACHING TIPS

■ Ask students to read some passages from poems by Alexander Pope, the English poet who served as one of Wheatley's most important literary models (stanzas from *An Essay on Man* or *Imitations of Horace* would work well). Help them to analyze the construction of the heroic couplets Pope employed—that is, two sequential, rhymed lines in iambic pentameter—and ask them to pay attention to his ability to achieve rhythmic variety even while strictly adhering to this rigid metrical form. Have them then turn to Wheatley's poetry. Ask them to consider to what extent her work was influenced by Pope. How do the meter, rhythm, and thematic concerns of Wheatley's poetry both derive from and differ from Pope's model?

■ Wheatley made two revisions to her poem "To the University of Cambridge, in New England." Originally, the fourth line described Africa as "The sable land of error's darkest night," referring to what Wheatley perceived as the continent's paganism. The poem then went on to request the students at Harvard to "suppress the sable monster in its growth." In her revisions for the 1773 volume, Wheatley deleted the word "sable" from both lines, changing line 4 to "The land of errors, and Egyptian gloom," and altering line 28 to read "Suppress the deadly serpent in its egg." Provide students with a handout that delineates the revisions Wheatley made to her poem and ask them to think about the significance of her deletion of the word "sable." You might have them look up the etymology of the word in the Oxford English Dictionary in order to provide them with a clearer understanding of the connotations that "sable" would have held for eighteenth-century readers.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: Examine the engraving of Phillis Wheatley that appeared in the 1773 edition of her *Poems* (reproduced in the archive). How does the portrait depict Wheatley? Why do you think

her British publishers would have printed this picture of Wheatley, along with the caption describing her as the “negro servant of Mr. John Wheatley, of Boston” in the first edition of her book?

Context: In “To His Excellency General Washington,” Wheatley refers to America as “Columbia”—a feminized personification of the “land Columbus found.” While this designation of America as “Columbia” became commonplace in the years following the Revolution, Wheatley’s use of the term marks its first-known appearance in print. Why might Wheatley have been interested in coining this description of America? How does she describe “Columbia” in her poem? What does the ideal of “Columbia” seem to signify for her? How does Wheatley’s depiction of America as “Columbia” compare to other textual and visual representations of “Columbia”?

Context: In his efforts to support his arguments for the racial inferiority of black people in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Thomas Jefferson famously dismissed the artistic merit of Wheatley’s poetry: “Religion indeed has produced a Phyllis Whately [sic]; but it could not produce a poet. The compositions published under her name are below the dignity of criticism.” Why do you think Jefferson felt compelled to denounce Wheatley in this way? What is at stake in his refusal to “dignify” her poetry with his criticism?

Exploration: Literary and cultural critic Henry Louis Gates Jr. has argued that Phillis Wheatley’s poetry is enormously significant in that it “launched two traditions at once—the black American literary tradition *and* the black woman’s literary tradition.” How did Wheatley’s poetry influence subsequent African American poets and writers, such as nineteenth-century writers of slave narratives or the poets of the Harlem Renaissance? How does her work deal with issues of gender? How do we reconcile Gates’s claims for her status as a founder with the fact that Wheatley’s work was largely forgotten after her death until abolitionists republished some of her poems in the mid-nineteenth century?

Royall Tyler (1757–1826)

Born into a wealthy Boston family, Royall Tyler would grow up to become the author of the first successful and widely performed American play. He entered Harvard at the age of fifteen and proved such a brilliant student that he earned baccalaureate degrees from both Harvard and Yale. After graduation, Tyler enlisted with the Boston Independent Company and fought intermittently in the American Revolution, eventually rising to the rank of major. When the focus of the war shifted to the South, Tyler’s military duties abated and he turned his attention from the army to the law. He passed the Massachusetts bar in 1780 and soon established himself in a successful legal practice. He became engaged to Abigail Adams, the daughter of John Adams, but failed to impress the future president as a suitable match for his daughter. Adams apparently feared that Tyler’s taste for

to the relationship of the nations during the Spanish-American War.

[7388] Scipio Moorhead, *Phillis Wheatley, Negro Servant to Mr. John Wheatley of Boston* (1773), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC USZC4-5316]. Engraving of Wheatley seated at a desk, which appeared as an illustration in the 1773 edition of *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*. By the age of fourteen, Wheatley had already published her first poem and was well on her way to publishing *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*, which she traveled to Europe to promote.

[9019] Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Man* (1733), courtesy of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Seventh Edition. The first stanza of Pope’s *Essay on Man*. Phillis Wheatley emulated Pope’s neoclassical style. Her mastery of this difficult meter was a form of protest against slavery.

[9020] Alexander Pope, *Imitations of Horace*, from *The Complete Poetical Works of Alexander Pope. With Life*. (c. 1886), courtesy of T. Y. Crowell & Co. The first two stanzas from Pope’s “Imitations of Horace.” Phillis Wheatley drew heavily on Pope’s prosody, including his use of heroic couplets.

[9048] Deacon George Thomas, *Figurehead of America* (2002), courtesy of Claire Dennerlein and Paul Manson. Plaque on side of statue reads: “This figurehead is from the clipper ship ‘America’ built in 1874 at Quincy, Massachusetts, by Deacon George Thomas. In 1887 she was put on the Pacific coasting trade and was wrecked on San Juan Island in 1914.” Seattle businessman and former mayor Robert Moran erected the figurehead at his resort in 1916 to commemorate the dying era of great shipbuilding in America.

literature and conversation indicated that the young man was “not devoted entirely to Study and to Business—to honour & virtue.” Acquiescing to her father’s wishes, Abigail Adams broke her engagement to Tyler and married her father’s secretary instead.

In 1787, Tyler was recalled into military service, this time to help quell Shays’s Rebellion, an insurrection of back-country farmers in Massachusetts who were resisting the government’s economic policies, prosecution of debtors, and high taxes. After suppressing the rebellion Tyler was sent to New York City on official business. There



[4423] Anonymous, *The First Step* [*Godey’s Lady’s Book*] (1858), courtesy of Hope Greenberg, University of Vermont.

he attended the theater for the first time and developed what would become a consuming passion for plays. Inspired by the New York production of English playwright Richard Brinsley Sheridan’s *The School for Scandal*, Tyler decided to write his own play, and, just over a month later, *The Contrast* was staged at the John Street Theater. Tyler’s effort met with a warm response; the play received generally favorable reviews and was soon performed in other American cities. *The Contrast* is an important milestone in American literature because it was the first widely performed play that featured American characters and self-consciously promoted republican values and American patriotism. In early America, plays were often perceived as a morally question-

able genre: Congress had banned theater during the Revolutionary War because it was “extravagant and dissipating,” and in postwar society the stage continued to be dogged by its associations with dubious morality and hated British culture. Tyler met these criticisms head-on in his play, making his subject the “contrast” between virtuous, homespun American values (represented by the characters of Manly, Maria, and Jonathan) and foppish, insincere, European pretensions (represented by Dimple, Charlotte, and Jessamy).

Over the course of his long life, Tyler composed several more plays, as well as a number of essays and a novel. Literature was not a lucrative profession in the early nation, however, and he continued to support himself and his family by practicing law. He settled in Vermont in 1791, married in 1794, and rose to prominence as a professor of law at the University of Vermont and eventually as the chief justice of the state Supreme Court.

TEACHING TIPS

■ Have students read the review of *The Contrast* that appeared in *The New York Daily Advertiser* in 1787 (the text of the review is featured in archive). The review, with its commentary on the acting and staging of the first New York production of Tyler’s play, should help students recognize that eighteenth-century audiences experienced *The Contrast* as a performed spectacle rather than as a written text. Ask students to think about what the reviewer praised and what he criti-

cized. Why does he critique Maria and Manly's soliloquies? What values inform his claim that soliloquies "wound probability"?

■ Ask your students to assume parts and act out a scene from the play (the end of Act II, Scene 1 with Charlotte, Letitia, and Manly would work well, as would the concluding scene, Act V, Scene 2, which involves all of the main characters). Be sure that students have read through the play and the accompanying footnotes on their own before acting it out—the language and allusions can be obscure so you want to be certain that they understand the action and characters before performing the script. Ask students to think about which characters are the most enjoyable to play and which lines are the easiest to deliver. Is the play still funny? Why or why not? What are its most comedic aspects?

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: What is being "contrasted" in *The Contrast*? What values and characteristics mark some characters as more authentically "American" than others? What is "American-ness" being contrasted with in the play?

Comprehension: What does Maria's father Van Rough mean when he talks about "minding the main chance"? What does he seem to value in a son-in-law? How does his attitude toward marriage compare to Maria's and Manly's? Whose values win out in the conclusion of the play?

Context: The first reviewer of *The Contrast* declared that Tyler's characters "are drawn with spirit, particularly Charlotte's," but was disturbed by the "suddenness" of Maria's affections and by her "misplaced" song and soliloquy. What ideals of womanhood and femininity do Maria and Charlotte represent? Which of these women do you think best occupies the position of "heroine" in this play? Why do you think the reviewer found Charlotte such an appealing character? What are her faults? What are her virtues? How does she change over the course of the play? How do Charlotte and Maria relate to women portrayed in sentimental novels, such as the suffering Charlotte Temple or the evil Madame LaRue in Susanna Rowson's novel?

Context: Many literary critics have claimed that Colonel Manly is meant to be understood as a kind of George Washington figure. What characteristics relate him to George Washington? What kind of relationship to the military and to the Revolution does he have? What kind of relationship does he have with his sister? Why does Charlotte tease and make fun of Manly? What do you make of the fact that some of the humor of the play comes at Manly's expense? Why do you think Tyler named this character "Manly"?

Exploration: The character of the rustic, dialect-speaking Jonathan started a vogue in American literature for homespun "Yankee" types. Plays and novels from the early nineteenth century often feature naïve rural characters indebted to Tyler's portrait of the simple, sincere country bumpkin. Can you think of characters in nine-

TYLER WEB ARCHIVE

[3147] James Brown Marston, *The Old State House [Boston]* (1801), courtesy of the Massachusetts Historical Society. In this rare painting by the otherwise relatively unknown Marston, we see commerce at work in Boston's traditional center, only a few years after the seat of government had moved to the New State House on Beacon Hill. Royall Tyler hailed from the Boston of this era.

[4423] Anonymous, *The First Step [Godey's Lady's Book]* (1858), courtesy of Hope Greenberg, University of Vermont. These homespun Americans are similar to the characters in Royall Tyler's *The Contrast*, the first American comedy played in public by professional actors.

[5046] Gilbert Stuart, *George Washington* [Photograph of a painting] (1900), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-D416-29910]. The figure of Washington quickly became central to the new nation's understanding of itself. Colonel Manly in Royall Tyler's *The Contrast* may have been modeled after Washington.

[8565] Bruce Michelson, Interview: "Old World Ties" (2001), courtesy of Annenberg Media. Bruce Michelson, professor of English at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, discusses the relationship of the Old World to America, a theme that underlies Royall Tyler's *The Contrast*.

[9053] Candour, Review of *The Contrast*, from the *New York Daily Advertiser* (1787). This contemporary review of Royall Tyler's *The Contrast* was published in the *New York Daily Advertiser* in 1787.

teenth- and twentieth-century American literature, art, or film that bear a relationship to Jonathan? How have portraits of rural Americans changed over time?

Susanna Rowson (c. 1762–1824)

Susanna Rowson's colorful life story in some ways resembles one of the melodramatic plots of her popular novels and plays. Born in Portsmouth, England, Rowson was raised by her father and her aunt when her mother died shortly after childbirth. Her father, a lieutenant in the Royal Navy, received a commission in the American colonies and brought his daughter to live there in 1766. Rowson never forgot the physical discomfort of the harrowing ocean voyage that brought her to America (the ship was blown off course by a hurricane and then foundered in an ice storm off Boston Harbor). Settling in Nantasket, Massachusetts, the family enjoyed a comfortable life in the colonies until the Revolutionary War disrupted their situation. Because of her father's affiliation with English armed forces and his Loyalist sympathies, Rowson and her family became prisoners of war and were held under guard for three years until finally being sent back to England in a prisoner exchange. All of their property was confiscated by American officials.

Back in England, Rowson helped support her now destitute family by working as a governess and publishing novels and poetry. In 1786, she married William Rowson, a hardware merchant, actor, and trumpet player whose heavy drinking made it difficult for him to hold a job. When his hardware business failed, the couple decided to join a Scottish theater company and attempt to earn a living by acting. In 1793, believing they would find greater opportunities on the American stage, the Rowsons immigrated to the United States to appear with Thomas Wignell's theater company in Philadelphia. While William seemed to have difficulty holding down parts, Susanna played more than fifty-seven roles in two theatrical seasons and wrote several songs and plays for the company.

Rowson also contributed to the family's finances by arranging for the republication in 1794 of *Charlotte Temple: A Tale of Truth*, one of the novels she had originally published in England. (The novel first appeared in 1791 as *Charlotte: A Tale of Truth*.) The sentimental story of a naive English girl lured to America, seduced, made pregnant, and then abandoned there to die, *Charlotte Temple* struck a chord with American audiences and became the biggest best-seller in the nation's history until Harriet Beecher Stowe published *Uncle Tom's Cabin* over half a century later. As literary critics have

noted, the book's power lies in its accessibility and appeal to a broad spectrum of readers; scholarship on inscriptions and marginalia found in extant eighteenth- and nineteenth-century copies of the book reveals that *Charlotte Temple* was owned by men as well as women and



[9059] William Waud, *Civilians Entering a Theater* (c. 1858–59), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-15679].

by both wealthy and poor Americans. Although the tale is a rather formulaic example of a **seduction novel**—a popular genre characterized by its focus on a pathetic woman who has been seduced, abandoned, and left to die—*Charlotte Temple* touched its American readers profoundly. Many readers were so moved by Rowson's story and its purported status as a "tale of truth" that they refused to view it as a work of fiction. Thousands made pilgrimages to visit a gravestone in New York's Trinity Churchyard that was rumored to be Charlotte Temple's burial place.

Rowson did not own the American copyright to her enormously popular novel, so she made very little money off its best-seller status. In an effort to improve their financial situation, the Rowsons moved to Boston in 1796, where Susanna performed in the newly opened Federal Street Theater. In 1797 she retired from acting to start the Young Ladies' Academy of Boston, a prestigious school for girls. Dissatisfied with traditional textbooks used for girls' education, Rowson compiled her own spellers, geographies, and histories for her female pupils. Her school was unique in its progressive curriculum and commitment to providing young women with a serious and thorough education. The academy emphasized not only traditional female subjects such as music, drawing, and domestic economy but also subjects usually taught only to men, like mathematics and science.

Literary critics today disagree about the nature and extent of Rowson's feminist sympathies. While *Charlotte Temple* certainly evinces a tendency to view women as weak, helpless, and in need of male protection—its heroine is passive and dies after she is abandoned by the men in her life—the novel has also been read as subtly protesting women's tenuous position in society. Whatever the politics of her fiction, Rowson's own life was characterized by a resourcefulness that testifies to the possibilities for women's independent thought and action in eighteenth-century America.

TEACHING TIPS

■ In his book *Prodigals and Pilgrims*, cultural critic Jay Fliegelman argues that the cultural obsession with tales of female seduction in late-eighteenth-century America reflects the nation's anxiety about its own claims to virtue in its recent revolution against the "patriarchal authority" of England. Ask students what they think of this thesis and how it might apply to *Charlotte Temple*. You might explain that the figure of the seduced and abandoned woman became central to American fiction after the Revolution and that seduction stories usually ended formulaically with the tragic death of the long-suffering victim of seduction. Ask students to think about what this interest in female virtue and chastity might have signified in the new nation. How might a woman's "fall" from virtue be read as an allegory of the political and social conditions in the new nation?

■ Rowson frequently breaks into her narration of *Charlotte Temple* to address her readers directly, offering insights and defenses designed for the "sober matrons," "wise gentlemen," and "dear girls" she imag-

ROWSON WEB ARCHIVE

[3464] Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* book cover (1853), courtesy of the Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities, University of Virginia. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* outstripped Rowson's *Charlotte Temple* as the best-selling book of the nineteenth century. Both were sentimental novels, a genre that has traditionally been written by women.

[3472] Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, cover (1892), courtesy of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Riverside Paper Series, No. 43), Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1892. This cover of the classic *Uncle Tom's Cabin* shows a young African American boy holding a sign, which gives the title, subtitle, and author of the work.

[4060] Anonymous, *Led Astray* (1874), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Music Division. Illustration for sheet music, words by George Cooper, music by Violetta. Plots of seduction and abandonment and redemption of young women were a staple of sentimental fiction and were used as a quiet justification for women reformers.

[6749] Anonymous, *The New England Primer* (1807), courtesy of the Gettysburg College Special Collections. *The New England Primer* (first published in Boston in 1690) was a popular Puritan textbook designed to promote children's literacy and religious training. Dissatisfied with such traditional primers for her female students, Susanna Rowson developed her own textbooks.

[8934] Rafia Zafar, Interview: "Sentimental Novel" (2002), courtesy of Annenberg Media. Zafar, director of African and Afro-American studies at Washington University, St. Louis, discusses the conventions of the sentimental novel, with reference to Harriet Jacobs.

[9059] William Waud, *Civilians Entering a Theater* (c. 1858–59), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-15679]. Susanna Rowson was a playwright and actress in Philadelphia and London and at the Federal Street Theater in Boston. She also wrote *Charlotte Temple*, which was the best-selling American novel until Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

ines make up her audience. Ask your students what effect these breaks in the narration have on their experience as readers of the novel. How does Rowson use her authorial voice to forestall criticism, heighten dramatic tension, and manage readers' reactions to her tale? You might have a student read Rowson's *Preface* aloud and then ask the class to analyze what kind of authorial voice she is presenting. What claims is she making for her story? What effect does she hope her novel will have? What tone does she adopt to address her readers?

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: How is Charlotte seduced away from her school? According to Rowson's narration, what decisions and personal qualities lead to Charlotte's downfall? What lessons does Rowson hope her readers will learn from her novel?

Context: Compare Charlotte Temple to Charlotte Manly in *The Contrast*. What ideals or stereotypes about womanhood do these characters exemplify? How do their relationships with "rakish" men turn out differently? What effect do you think the genre of each text has on its portrayal of these "fallen women" characters?

Context: In eighteenth-century America, many arbiters of taste condemned novel reading as a trivial or even dangerous occupation for young ladies to engage in. Thomas Jefferson, for instance, viewed novels as a "poison" that could "infect the mind" and warned that "a great obstacle to good education is the inordinate passion prevalent for novels, and the time lost in that reading which should be instructively employed." How does Rowson foresee and deflect this kind of criticism in *Charlotte Temple*? Do you think someone like Jefferson would have been convinced that Rowson's novel was in fact "wholesome" reading for young American women?

Exploration: *Charlotte Temple* was the first "best-seller" in American history; it had sold over 50,000 copies by 1812 and has gone through over two hundred editions in the course of its publishing history. The only other pre-twentieth-century American novel to circulate so widely was Harriet Beecher Stowe's enormously influential *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). Why do you think these sentimental novels achieved such phenomenal popularity? What similarities of plot and narrative link *Charlotte Temple* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*? To what kinds of people were these books designed to appeal?

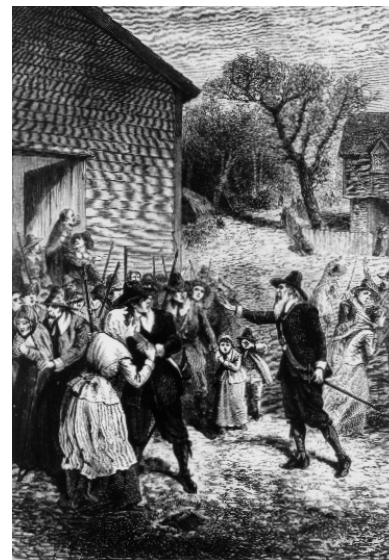
William Apess (1798–1839)

William Apess composed the first published autobiography by a Native American. Born in Massachusetts, Apess was part of the Pequot tribe and claimed to count Metacomet, the Wampanoag leader known of the English as "King Philip," among his ancestors. Metacomet's courageous but unsuccessful resistance of the English settlers during King Philip's War (1675–78) probably made him an appealing historical figure to Apess, who devoted his own life to asserting and defending Indian rights.

Few details of Apess's life are known beyond those recorded in his 1829 autobiography, *A Son of the Forest*. Left by his parents to be raised by alcoholic and abusive grandparents, he was bound out as an indentured servant when he was very young. Apess lived with a series of white masters, but a combination of their unreasonable expectations and his own rebelliousness ensured that he never found a tenable situation as an apprentice or laborer. At the age of fifteen, Apess was converted to Methodism, an evangelical and radically egalitarian strain of the Protestant religion. Religious studies scholars have speculated that Methodism appealed to Native American communities not only because of its emphasis on equality, but also because its enthusiastic style and theology were more in keeping with Native American religions. Methodism was a controversial movement among European Americans, and Apess's involvement in ecstatic religious meetings did not sit well with his master. Encountering "persecution and affliction and sorrow" in his master's home, Apess ran away. He then enlisted in the army and served during an invasion of Canada in the War of 1812. In 1817, he returned to the Pequot community, where he soon began serving as a lay preacher. By 1829, the Methodist society had ordained him as a regular minister.

A Son of the Forest was published in 1830 in the midst of the national controversy over the Indian Removal Bill, the congressional act that legalized the federal government's decision to force Native Americans off their traditional homelands east of the Mississippi River. Apess's memoir implicitly challenges this injustice toward Native Americans by asserting Indians' humanity, worth, and potential, using his own life as an example. Conforming to some of the conventions of a spiritual conversion narrative, Apess's text situates his experiences within a Christian tradition and demonstrates his dedication to Christian values.

After the publication of *A Son of the Forest*, Apess became an increasingly outspoken critic of the wrongs white society perpetrated against Native Americans. In 1833 he published "An Indian's Looking-Glass for the White Man," an impassioned exposé of the disjunction between the rhetoric of white Christianity and the reality of whites' harsh treatment of Native Americans. In the mid-1830s, Apess also became involved in the Mashpee Indians' struggle for self-government and control over their own land and resources. (The Mashpee are one branch of Wampanoag Indians living in Massachusetts.) His efforts to publicize their case and to articulate their grievances helped them eventually win the right of self-governance from the Massachusetts State Legislature. Apess's final published work, the text of a lecture on King Philip that he delivered to a Boston audience in 1836, is a moving study of the history of white-Indian relations in early New England from the perspective of a Native American. Apparently exhausted by his efforts to fight for Indian rights, Apess stopped writing and publishing. Obituaries in New York newspapers report that he died of alcoholism.



[2121] Anonymous, *Goffe Rallying the Men of Hadley [in Defense of Indian Attack during King Philip's War, Hadley, Mass., 1675–76]* (1883), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-75122].

APESS WEB ARCHIVE

[1236] John Eliot, *The Holy Bible Containing the Old Testament and the New. Translated into the Indian Language* (1663), courtesy of Annenberg Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Pennsylvania. Commonly known as "The Eliot Bible," this was the first Bible published in New England and appeared over one hundred years before the first complete English edition of the Bible was published in the American colonies. It is written in the language of the Massachuset and Wampanoag Indians. John Eliot, the "Apostle to the Indians," composed his text to serve the cause of Native American conversion to Puritan Christianity, putting his faith in Native American redemption through their direct exposure to God's word.

[2121] Anonymous, *Goffe Rallying the Men of Hadley [in Defense of Indian Attack During King Philip's War, Hadley, Mass., 1675–76]* (1883), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-75122]. Villages in western Massachusetts were subject to attack by Indians during King Philip's War, an event that challenged the viability of English settlement in New England and led many to question why they had fallen so far from God's favor and to wonder at the potential coming of the apocalypse.

[2469] John Foster, Woodcut map of New England (1677), courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society. This map is from William Hubbard's *The Present State of New-England, Being a Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians*, printed and published by Foster in Boston in 1677.

[8688] Arch C. Gerlach, editor, *Map of Early Indian Tribes, Culture Areas, and Linguistic Stocks*, from *The National Atlas of the United States*, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Geological Survey (1970), courtesy of the General Libraries, the University of Texas at Austin. The Cherokee Nation originally lived in the southeastern part of what is now the United States, but after the unsuccessful petitions of the Cherokee Memorials, they were removed to present-day Oklahoma.

[9024] Samuel Occom, *A Sermon Preached at the Execution of Moses Paul, an Indian* (1772), courtesy of T. & S. Green. This was the first text written and published by a Native American in English. It went through ten editions in the ten years after it was published.

[9039] William Apess, *Eulogy on King Philip* (1837), courtesy of the Reed College Library. This eulogy defied the traditional white interpretation of King Philip and sought to highlight the wrongs perpetrated by the Pilgrims.

[9040] Anonymous, *Philip [sic] Alias Metacomet of the Pokanoket* (between 1850 and 1900), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-96234]. This full-length portrait of Metacomet shows him holding a rifle, with other Indians and mountains in the background.

TEACHING TIPS

■ Review the history of King Philip's War with your students (the author biography of Mary Rowlandson and the context on "English Settlers' Views of Native Americans" in Unit 3 contain background on this topic). Ask them to consider why Apess might have been invested in claiming Metacomet as an ancestor. What qualities in Metacomet's history probably appealed to Apess? Why? How would Apess's perceptions of King Philip's War differ from white histories of the same event?

■ Ask students to pay attention to Apess's use of scripture in "An Indian's Looking-Glass." You might point out that he does not employ biblical quotations in the first half of his essay. Why does Apess use the Bible when he does? How does he use scripture to back up his arguments? What kinds of passages does he choose?

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: In "An Indian's Looking-Glass for the White Man"

Apess claims that the Indians of New England are "the most mean, abject, miserable race of beings in the world." Why, according to Apess, has Native American society reached such a low point? What reasons does he give for the Indians' abjection?

Context: In the opening paragraphs of his "Eulogy on King Philip,"

Apess twice compares Metacomet to George Washington. Why do you think Apess would have been interested in likening his Native American ancestor to Washington? How does he compare the respective "American Revolutions" led by each man? What associations and sentiments might Apess have been trying to generate in his Boston audience?

Context: How does Apess's use of Christian values and biblical quotations in "An Indian's Looking-Glass" compare to Phillis Wheatley's use of Christian imagery and language in her poetry?

Exploration: Like Samson Occom, Apess trained as a minister and adopted white Christian values only to become frustrated by the disparity between Christian teachings and the harsh realities of white treatment of Native Americans. How does Apess's "An Indian's Looking-Glass" compare to Samson Occom's "A Short Narrative of My Life"? What experiences do they have in common? Do they use similar strategies to protest unfair treatment of Native Americans? How are their protests different? How do they characterize white prejudice?

Exploration: Apess was greatly influenced by the early Cherokee writers and the Cherokee struggle for their lands and for autonomy. Compare Apess's polemical works to the Cherokee Memorials. What rhetorical strategies do they share? What is the purpose of each work?

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882)

Ralph Waldo Emerson was the preeminent philosopher, writer, and thinker of his day, best known for articulating the **Transcendentalist** ideals of creative intuition, self-reliance, and the individual's unlimited potential. In contrast to the optimism that characterized his writings and philosophy, Emerson's own personal life was pervaded by tragedy. His father died in 1811, when Emerson was only eight years old, leaving his mother to struggle to support her five sons. After graduating from Harvard, Emerson suffered from serious eye strain and debilitating respiratory ailments. Later, he would live through the deaths of his beloved first wife, two of his brothers, and his eldest son.

Emerson also experienced career difficulties. He was unhappy in his first position as a schoolteacher, claiming that he was “hopeless” in the classroom. Leaving teaching to study theology, he was ordained in 1829, following nine generations of his ancestors into the ministry. As a Unitarian pastor, Emerson was part of a liberal New England religious movement which stressed the inherent goodness of humanity, the importance of reason and conscience over ritual, and the equality of all people before God. Eventually Emerson's role as a minister became a source of anxiety for him as he began to question church doctrine and to feel increasingly skeptical of revealed religion. In 1832 he resigned from the church and took a tour of Europe. There, he read widely and met with important intellectual and literary figures such as Coleridge, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Dickens, and Carlyle. Upon his return to the United States in 1834, Emerson used the legacy bequeathed to him by his deceased wife to embark on a new career as a writer and public lecturer. He settled in the quiet town of Concord, Massachusetts, where he lived with his second wife and received visits from a wide circle of friends and admirers.

Emerson's first book, *Nature* (1836), initially reached a relatively small audience, but the philosophy it articulated of the unity of souls, nature, and divinity functioned as a kind of manifesto for the group of intellectuals who came to be known as the Transcendental Club. Although the club was small and existed for only four years, it had an enormous impact on the development of American letters. It influenced such writers as Henry David Thoreau, Margaret Fuller, and Bronson Alcott, and it articulated ideas that inspired luminaries like Walt Whitman. As the leading figure in the Transcendentalist group, Emerson began to attract attention from a wider audience, especially after the publication of his *Essays* (1841) and *Essays: Second Series* (1844). “The American Scholar” and “The Divinity School Address,” both lectures which were delivered at Harvard and subsequently published as pamphlets, brought him fame and some notoriety—“The Divinity School Address,” in particular, was denounced for its outspoken criticisms of traditional religious educa-



[1029] Wilfred A. French, *The Old Manse* (n.d.), from F. B. Sanborn, *Emerson and His Friends in Concord* (1890), courtesy of Cornell University Library, *Making of America* Digital Collection.

EMERSON WEB ARCHIVE

[1029] Wilfred A. French, *The Old Manse* (n.d.), from F. B. Sanborn, *Emerson and His Friends in Concord* (1890), courtesy of Cornell University Library, *Making of America* Digital Collection. Ralph Waldo Emerson loaned his home at the Old Manse to Nathaniel Hawthorne for three years. This was one of his many efforts to encourage fellow authors.

[1030] Ralph Waldo Emerson, Letter, *Ralph Waldo Emerson to Walt Whitman* (1855), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-MSS-18630-5]. When this letter was written, Emerson was a well-known lecturer, and Whitman a young, aspiring poet. This is an example of Emerson's eagerness to support and encourage fellow writers.

[3662] Allen & Rowell Studio, *Ralph Waldo Emerson, Reading* (n.d.), courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. Emerson was a prominent writer who articulated American ideals and celebrated the potential of the American individual. He supported the endeavors of such contemporaries as Hawthorne, Thoreau, and Whitman.

[3694] Thomas Cole, *The Falls of the Kaaterskill* (1826), courtesy of the Warner Collection of the Gulf States Paper Corporation. Cole was one of the first American landscape artists and a founder of the Hudson River School of painting. Romantic depictions of wilderness became popular as the United States continued its westward expansion.

[9037] Detroit Publishing Company, *Emerson House, Concord, Mass.* (1905), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-D4-11360 DLC]. Photo of Ralph Waldo Emerson's house in Concord, Massachusetts. Emerson moved here at the age of twenty-five and lived here for the rest of his life.

[9041] Christopher Cranch, *Transparent Eyeball* (n.d.), courtesy of Virginia Commonwealth University. Christopher Pearse Cranch was a contributor to such Transcendentalist publications as the *Dial* and the *Harbinger*, and he enjoyed drawing caricatures, such as this one, which satirizes Emerson's essay *Nature*.

tion, which Emerson found dogmatic. Despite the controversies provoked by some of his work, Emerson's impassioned calls for Americans to reject their deference to old, European traditions and to embrace experimentation were received with enthusiasm by a generation of writers, artists, and thinkers who strove to embody his ideals of American art.

Emerson continued writing to the end of his life, using his fame and influence to promote his own work as well as to support other writers. His endorsement of Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (though he intended that endorsement to be private), his support for Thoreau's *Walden* project (Emerson allowed Thoreau to live on his land near Walden pond), and his loan of his home at the Old Manse to Hawthorne for three years were only the most famous of his many efforts to encourage fellow authors. Despite his activism on behalf of writers, Emerson was reluctant to become involved in any of the various social causes and reforms that enlisted his support. He eventually spoke and wrote on behalf of abolitionism, but his efforts came far too late to have much impact. He died in Concord, leaving a legacy of innovative thought and work that has had a lasting influence on the character of American letters.

TEACHING TIPS

■ Students sometimes find Emerson's work frustrating, overly abstract, and difficult to penetrate. You should reassure them that confusion is not an unusual response—one of the earliest reviews of *Nature* pronounced the book incomprehensible: "the effort of perusal is often painful, the thoughts excited are frequently bewildering, and the results to which they lead us, uncertain and obscure. The reader feels as in a disturbed dream." To help students overcome their confusion, you might read the "Introduction" to *Nature* with them, paying particular attention to Emerson's formulation of nature as the "Not Me." By dividing the universe into nature and the soul, Emerson was not claiming that these two essences have nothing to do with one another; rather, his point was that each particle of the universe is a microcosm of the whole. Be sure your students understand the concept of the microcosm. The key to Emerson's philosophy in *Nature* lies in his fundamental belief that everything in nature and in the soul is united in correspondence, that a universal divinity has traced its likeness on every object in nature, on every soul, and thus on every human production.

■ In order to help your students make connections and understand the important theological differences between various early American religious movements, provide them with copies of the chart below, or work on filling it out as a class on a chalkboard, overhead, or PowerPoint slide:

Theological Principle	Puritans	Quakers	Deists	Transcendentalists
God is . . .				
Christ is . . .				
Man is . . .				
The Bible is . . .				
Man gets knowledge from . . .				
Man will be saved/will actualize his highest potential by . . .				

■ Divide your class into groups and ask each group to put together a collection of their favorite aphorisms from Emerson's writings. Ask them why they chose certain statements and what they found particularly meaningful or illuminating about them. What kind of difficulties did they encounter in selecting aphorisms? Did members of the group disagree about which aphorisms to include? Is there a particular theme linking the collection of thoughts that they have put together? You might tell the class that literary critics have long debated how best to characterize Emerson's most basic "unit of thought." Ask them to weigh in on this question. How does Emerson organize texts? Does he develop his thoughts in sections, paragraphs, sentences, analogies? What kinds of insights do their collections of aphorisms provide into this question?

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: According to Emerson, what is "nature"?

Comprehension: Examine Christopher Cranch's caricature of the "Transparent Eyeball" featured in the archive. What passage from *Nature* is Cranch satirizing? What point do you think he is trying to make about Emerson's writing?

Comprehension: Emerson wrote, "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do" ("Self-Reliance"). Why should great minds not overvalue consistency? Where in his own work does Emerson appear to be inconsistent?

[9049] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Divinity School Address* (1838), courtesy of rwe.org, The Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Emerson delivered this lecture to the senior class of the Divinity College of Cambridge. Emerson was himself a Unitarian minister for a period.

[9050] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The American Scholar* (1837), courtesy of rwe.org, The Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Emerson addressed "The American Scholar" to the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Cambridge and stressed the importance of lived experience, especially for a scholar.

[9051] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature*, Introduction and Chapter 1 (1836), courtesy of Project Gutenberg. The writing of *Nature* was interrupted by the death of Emerson's brother. Emerson's grief comes through in the essay with such thoughts as "nature is not always tricked in holiday attire, but the same scene which yesterday breathed perfume and glittered as for the frolic of the nymphs, is overspread with melancholy today."

Context: What kinds of cultural changes does Emerson call for in “The American Scholar”? How does his vision of American virtues and potential compare to Franklin’s? To Jefferson’s?

Context: Emerson opens Chapter 1 of *Nature* by pointing out that the stars afford humans insight into “the perpetual presence of the sublime.” Review the explanation of the “sublime” featured in the context “The Awful Truth: The Aesthetic of the Sublime,” and think about Emerson’s relationship to this aesthetic movement. Why does Emerson open his book by invoking the idea of “sublimity”? What effect does he believe visions of sublime natural beauty have on viewers?

Exploration: By the end of his career, Emerson was undeniably a “public intellectual”—that is, his writings and lectures appealed to a general audience and not simply to professors or philosophers. Why do you think Emerson’s work was appealing to a wide range of people? Can you think of current American thinkers and writers whom you would characterize as public intellectuals? What role do public intellectuals play in contemporary American society?

Exploration: What relationship does Transcendentalism have to traditional religious beliefs? Would you characterize Transcendentalism as a secular movement? Does it have anything in common with New England Puritanism? With Quaker doctrine? With Deism? (You can refer to the chart provided in Teaching Tips to work through these questions with students.)



[7129] Anonymous, *Margaret Fuller* (1840), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-47039].

Margaret Fuller (1810–1850)

Margaret Fuller ranked among the most celebrated public intellectuals in her own day, an accomplishment that is especially remarkable given the social strictures and limitations women faced in the early nineteenth century. The foundation of her extraordinary career can be traced to the rigorous education she received from her father: under his tutelage she sometimes put in eighteen-hour days reading literary and philosophical texts in four languages. As her account of her early life in the “Autobiographical Romance” makes clear, Fuller developed into a prodigy but suffered emotionally in the absence of a normal childhood.

By her early twenties, Fuller had become integrally involved in the Transcendentalist movement, forming lasting intellectual and emotional relationships with men like Henry David Thoreau, Bronson Alcott, Theodore Parker, and, most importantly, Ralph Waldo Emerson. She was also involved in Brook Farm and can be found not too far below the surface of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s character Zenobia in *The Blithedale Romance*. At Emerson’s urging, she served as the editor of the Transcendentalist journal *The Dial* during its first two years of publication, overseeing submissions and sometimes writing the majority of its content herself. Because *The Dial* did not make money, Fuller supported herself during this time by leading “Conversations” for an elite group of educated Boston women. Fuller, frustrated that women were “not taught to think,” designed her Conversations as dis-

cussion groups to encourage women to probe difficult questions and systematize their thinking in a supportive atmosphere. Fuller's charisma and her ability to draw out her students made the Conversations an enormous success.

The Conversations helped Fuller clarify her feminist ideas about the need to reform women's education and social status. In 1843, she articulated these ideas in a powerful essay for *The Dial* entitled "The Great Lawsuit: MAN *versus* MEN, WOMAN *versus* WOMEN." Arguing that women should be afforded the freedom "as a nature to grow, as an intellect to discern, as a soul to live freely," Fuller asserted that neither sex should be circumscribed by rigid boundaries or social expectations. She later expanded and revised the essay into the book-length study *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845). The book was Fuller's most important and influential work, and, despite its unorthodox subject matter, it sold out its first edition.

In 1844, Fuller published her first travel account, *Summer on the Lakes*, a collection of essays about a trip to the Midwest. The book attracted the attention of Horace Greeley, who promptly hired Fuller as a paid columnist and literary critic for his newspaper, *The New York Daily Tribune*. Fuller spent two years living in New York, where she wrote nearly 250 reviews and essays for the newspaper. She produced astute critiques of literature and art, as well as reports on social issues such as poverty, prostitution, prison conditions, abolition, and the treatment of the insane. Fuller's growing interest in exposing contemporary social problems and suggesting practical, institutional reforms separated her from many members of the Transcendentalists, who tended to focus most of their energy on abstract theories or personal experience.

Fuller carried her interest in reform to Europe in 1846, when the *Tribune* sent her there as one of America's first foreign correspondents. Traveling through England, France, and Italy, Fuller met important writers, artists, philosophers and politicians of the day and sent her impressions back in her reports for the *Tribune*. She was deeply moved by Giuseppe Mazzini, the exiled Italian revolutionary who was working to unite his country under a republican government, and she traveled to Italy to report first-hand on the political instability in Rome. While in Italy, Fuller became romantically involved with Giovanni Ossoli, a Roman aristocrat much younger than herself. She gave birth to their son in 1848 while keeping their relationship secret from her friends and family. In the midst of this personal turmoil, Fuller managed to write regular reports of the Italian revolution for the *Tribune*, urging Americans to embrace the cause of Italian nationhood. She also became actively involved in the revolution, serving as a nurse during the siege of Rome. After the failure of the revolution, Fuller and Ossoli found their political and financial situation in Italy untenable and departed by ship for America with their infant son. Tragically, their ship foundered off the coast of Fire Island, New York. The entire family drowned.

The romantic story of Fuller's life and the accounts of her personal magnetism have tended to overshadow the importance of her written

work. Generations of biographers, historians, and literary critics have frequently claimed that Fuller's dynamic personality and extraordinary experiences merit more interest than any of the texts she composed. Only recently have scholars begun to appreciate the stylistic sophistication and forward-thinking reformist agendas in her writing.

TEACHING TIPS

■ Ask students to consider why Fuller would have titled her essay "The Great Lawsuit." What kind of case is she pleading? Who are the principals involved in the "suit"? You might have the class read the first footnote to this essay in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature* to gain insight into what Fuller intended with the title. Ask your students whether they think they could stage this lawsuit as a mock court case. How might one try this case? Would it benefit from being performed? What would have to be changed or omitted from Fuller's original text?

■ Fuller was famous for her ability as a speaker and an interlocutor, a skill she marketed in the popular "Conversations" she ran for women in Boston. A student recalled her talent for facilitating discussion: "Whatever was said, Margaret knew how to seize the good meaning of it with hospitality, and to make the speaker feel glad, and not sorry, that she had spoken." Eventually the Conversations attracted so much attention that Fuller admitted men to the group. According to all in attendance, however, the inclusion of men disrupted the informal, hospitable atmosphere of the Conversations. As Emerson put it, the men apparently felt that they "must assert and dogmatize," and their more formal style of rhetorical debate silenced many of the female participants. After you provide students with this background information, ask them to think about Fuller's style of composition and argumentation in "The Great Lawsuit." How does she go about persuading readers to share her views? What kind of resolution does she seem to expect for her "lawsuit"? How does Fuller's model of argumentation differ from the masculine tradition that Emerson characterized as "asserting and dogmatizing"?

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: How does Fuller describe her relationship with her father in her "Autobiographical Romance"? How does she feel about the rigorous education she received?

Context: In Chapter 1 of *Summer on the Lakes* (included in the archive), Fuller describes her experience at Niagara Falls, a popular tourist destination in the nineteenth century. How does her initial emotional response to the Falls—"I felt nothing but a quiet satisfaction . . . everything looked as I thought it would"—relate to contemporary cultural ideals of the "sublime"? What kinds of expectations mediate her experience of the Falls? Why does she envy the "first discoverers of Niagara"? Does she ever come to feel the "sublimity" that she hoped to find in the scene? How?

Context: “The Great Lawsuit” echoes and builds on many of the ideas and values first articulated in Ralph Waldo Emerson’s writings. How does Fuller’s essay compare to some of Emerson’s essays which also call for social and intellectual change among Americans (“The American Scholar” or “Self-Reliance,” for example)? What ideals does Fuller have in common with Emerson? How is Emerson invoked in Fuller’s writing style? How does Fuller extend Transcendentalist ideals in her discussion of the role of women in American society?

Exploration: How does Fuller’s “Autobiographical Romance” relate to earlier traditions of American autobiography, such as Benjamin Franklin’s or Frederick Douglass’s narratives of their own lives? Does Fuller describe her development as a process of self-making in the same way that Franklin and Douglass do? How does her attitude toward literacy and education compare to Franklin’s and Douglass’s?

Exploration: George P. Landow, professor of English and art history at Brown University, argues that the sublime is “an aesthetic of power.” For Landow, “the spectator of natural sublimity always experiences a situation of being overpowered by the size or energy of the sublime phenomenon, an endless desert, majestic mountain, raging ocean, or thundering waterfall: In the terms of descriptions of proper gender relations of the period, the enjoyer of the sublime, who is often described as being ‘ravished’ by the experience, takes an essentially feminine role. Under the influence of Edmund Burke who contrasted the bracing sublimity of masculine power to the relaxing effects of feminine beauty, sublimity became an explicitly gendered aesthetic category. Nonetheless, both men and women experienced it in the same way.” Test Professor Landow’s argument that men and women experience the sublime in the same way by comparing Fuller’s experience of Niagara Falls in the first chapter of *Summer on the Lakes* with that of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s male narrator in “My Visit to Niagara.”

FULLER WEB ARCHIVE

[7129] Anonymous, *Margaret Fuller* (1840), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-47039]. Fuller was an extremely influential nineteenth-century thinker and writer. She was the first female overseas news correspondent and covered such major events as the Italian revolution.

[9022] Nathaniel Hawthorne, *My Visit to Niagara* (1835), courtesy of the *New-England Magazine*. Hawthorne published this sketch anonymously in the *New-England Magazine*; it shows the nineteenth-century fascination with Niagara Falls.

[9026] George Barker, *Niagara Falls, N.Y., Close-Up View from Below* (1886), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-97270]. Nineteenth-century photograph of the popular tourist attraction Niagara Falls. Fuller and others commented on the sublimity of the falls.

[9038] Margaret Fuller, Chapter 1 of *Summer on the Lakes* (1844), courtesy of the University of Washington. In this chapter from *Summer on the Lakes*, Fuller describes visiting Niagara Falls. After the book’s publication, Horace Greeley hired Fuller as a columnist and critic for *The New York Daily Tribune*.

Suggested Author Pairings

JONATHAN EDWARDS AND BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Born just three years apart at the beginning of the eighteenth century, Jonathan Edwards and Benjamin Franklin in some ways seem to inhabit different eras. Certainly Edwards’s commitment to the Puritan beliefs of his ancestors and his passion for exploring his own spiritual nature is at odds with Franklin’s secularism and practical drive for financial success and community standing. Nonetheless, both relied on and divergently engaged with their Puritan inheritance. For all his secularism, Franklin’s commitment to virtue, thrift, and industriousness can be traced to Puritan values, while Edwards’s brand of piety—though it is clearly based on strict Puritan models—is inflected with an almost Romantic interest in self-discovery. It might be useful to ask students to compare Edwards’s “Personal Narrative” with Franklin’s

Autobiography. While both men were interested in keeping track of their faults and cultivating their virtues, they take very different approaches to this project.

**THOMAS JEFFERSON AND
J. HECTOR ST. JOHN DE CRÈVECOEUR**

Both Jefferson and Crèvecoeur grappled with the difficult question of what it meant to be an American at the end of the eighteenth century. Jefferson wrote a manifesto of American values in the Declaration of Independence, while Crèvecoeur laid out an answer to the broad question “What is an American?” in his *Letters from an American Farmer*. Crèvecoeur and Jefferson idealized agrarian life as the best expression of American values, though their cosmopolitanism and aristocratic tastes made both of them rather ironic spokesmen for agrarian simplicity. You might ask students to compare Jefferson’s attempt to deal with the issue of slavery in his original draft of the Declaration with Crèvecoeur’s narrator’s problematic account of his meeting with a tortured slave in South Carolina.

ROYALL TYLER AND SUSANNA ROWSON

As writers of plays and novels, both Tyler and Rowson were targeted for participating in what were often considered trivial, immoral, and even dangerous genres. Ask students to think about how these two writers dealt with readers’ and viewers’ hostility toward their projects. Rowson frequently interrupts her narrative to address readers directly, while Tyler prefaces his play with a direct appeal to his viewers and includes a number of soliloquies in which characters address the audience. Both Tyler and Rowson take on the national obsession with female chastity—though their two Charlottes meet very different fates.

PHILLIS WHEATLEY AND WILLIAM APRESS

As members of minority groups in the young nation, Wheatley and Apress offer poignant challenges to dominant views of who qualifies as an American. Wheatley’s patriotic celebrations of American ideals in her poems are underlain with subtle critiques of the injustice of slavery and the difficulties of her own situation as an African American. Apress is much less subtle in his attacks on European American society—his “Indian’s Looking-Glass for the White Man” is an openly angry protest against racial prejudice. Both Wheatley and Apress occupied difficult liminal positions in their respective societies. As a highly educated and cultivated woman, Wheatley lived a very different existence from other African American women and spent much of her early life among whites. As an ordained Methodist minister, Apress also found himself pulled between white culture and his own Native American community. Both Wheatley and Apress were profoundly religious and may have found Christianity appealing because of its potential to afford them equal status with European Americans as spiritual

brethren in the eyes of God. They both draw attention in their work to the discrepancy between whites' professed beliefs about Christianity and the unfair treatment of racial minorities.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON AND MARGARET FULLER

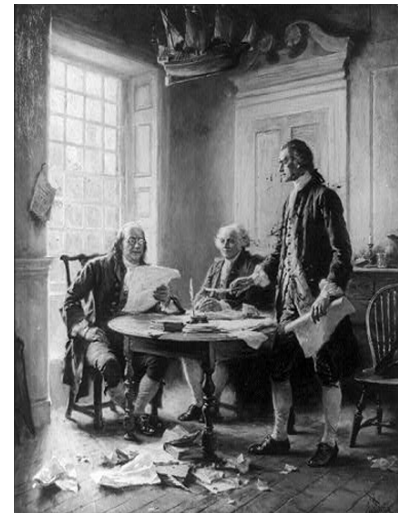
Emerson and Fuller, good friends and lifelong supporters of one another's work, make an obvious pairing. They were both active in the Transcendentalist movement and frequently met to share ideas, discuss philosophy, and critique each other's work. But despite the fact that they shared important core beliefs about the power and potential of the individual, their writings have very different implications. In her eloquent case for the equality of the sexes, Fuller pushes Emerson's views in directions he never dared to go. Fuller's journalistic background and commitment to forwarding practical reforms also separate her from Emerson's more abstract and philosophical approach to the problems of American society.

CORE CONTEXTS

Every Man for Himself: American Individualism

Although the term "individualism" was not in general use until the 1820s, the foundational principles behind the concept were established by the mid-eighteenth century. Enlightenment philosophers like Newton and Locke argued that the universe is arranged in an orderly system, and that by the application of reason and intellect, human beings are capable of apprehending that system. This philosophy represented a radical shift from earlier notions that the world is ordered by a stern, inscrutable God whose plans are beyond human understanding and whose will can only be known through religious revelation. Enlightenment philosophy encouraged thinkers like Franklin and Jefferson to turn to Deism, a religion that privileges reason over faith and rejects traditional religious tenets in favor of a general belief in a benevolent creator. By privileging human understanding and the capacity of the individual, these new ideas reordered the way people thought about government, society, and rights.

The Declaration of Independence is emblematic of the eighteenth-century regard for the interests of the individual. Taking as unquestionably "self evident" the idea that "all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with inherent and inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," the Declaration makes the rights and potential of the individual the cornerstone of American values. The fact that these lines from the Declaration are among the most quoted in all of American letters testifies to the power and resonance of this commitment to individual freedom in American culture. The Second Continental Congress affirmed the Declaration's privileging of the individual by making the signing of



[7259] Jean Leon Gerome Ferris, *Benjamin Franklin Reading Draft of Declaration of Independence, John Adams Seated, and Thomas Jefferson Standing and Holding Feather Pen and Paper, around Table* (1921), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-96219].



[7065] Augustine de St. Aubin, *Benjamin Franklin, Né à Boston, dans la Nouvelle Angleterre le 17. Janvier 1706* (n.d.), courtesy of the Edgar Fahs Smith Collection, Annenberg Rare Book & Manuscript Library, University of Pennsylvania.



[1495] John Neagle, *Pat Lyon at the Iron Forge* (1826), courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Reproduced with permission. © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. *Pat Lyon at the Forge*, 1826–27; John Neagle, American (1796–1865). Oil on canvas; 93 3/4 x 68 in. (238.1 x 172.7 cm). Henry H. and Zoe Oliver Sherman Fund, 1975.806.

the document an important occasion. That is, by using the representatives' signatures as the means of validating this public document, they attested to the importance of individual identity and individual consent to government. John Hancock's famously large signature is thus a graphic emblem of the revolutionaries' commitment to individualism. Of course, the Declaration's assertion that "all men are created equal" conspicuously left out women and did not even seem to include "all men": when America achieved independence, many individuals found that their right to liberty was not considered self-evident. For African American slaves, Native Americans, and many others, the new nation's commitment to individual rights was mere rhetoric rather than reality.

But even though slavery and systemic inequality were an inescapable reality for many Americans, the nation nevertheless embraced the myth of the "self-made man" as representative of its national character. According to this myth, America's protection of individual freedom enabled anyone, no matter how humble his beginnings, to triumph through hard work and talent. One of the earliest and most influential expressions of this version of the "American dream" is Benjamin Franklin's narrative of his own rise from modest beginnings to a position of influence and wealth. So exemplary is Franklin's story that his *Autobiography* is often considered, in literary critic Sacvan Bercovitch's term, an "auto-American-biography." In other words, Franklin self-consciously uses the autobiographical form to foreground his narrative self-construction as an ideal American citizen. He repeatedly plays on the potential for self-making that print and authorship offer the individual, likening his own life to a book that can be edited, amended, and corrected for "errata." As he puts it in the opening lines of the *Autobiography*, "I should have no objection to a repetition of the same life from its beginning, only asking the advantage authors have in a second edition to correct some faults of the first." Franklin's conception of self thus hinges on the idea that the individual is the author of his own life, with full power to construct it as he wills. Franklin's presentation of himself as the ideal American individual was widely accepted. While he lived in France, he was celebrated as the embodiment of the virtue, naturalism, and simplicity that supposedly characterized the New World—an image he carefully maintained by shunning French fashion to dress plainly and wearing a primitive fur hat around Paris. So effective was Franklin's physical self-presentation that he became a kind of cult figure in France. Paintings, prints, busts, medallions, clocks, vases, plates, handkerchiefs, and even snuffboxes were manufactured emblazoned with Franklin's portrait. His American individualism had become a popular commodity.

By the nineteenth century, many Americans were more radical in their commitment to individualism. A growing concern over the people left out of the American dream fueled reform movements designed to extend individual rights to the historically disenfranchised and oppressed. Calls for the abolition of slavery, Native American rights, women's rights, prison reform, and help for the impoverished challenged American society to make good on its proclamation that all

people are created equal. The industrialism that was transforming the American workplace became increasingly troubling to reformers, who felt that factories were stifling individual creativity and self-expression. As social critic Albert Brisbane put it in 1840, “Monotony, uniformity, intellectual inaction, and torpor reign . . . society is spiritually a desert.” Ralph Waldo Emerson agreed, warning that “society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members . . . the virtue in most request is conformity.”

Emerson’s remedy for this stifling conformity was a radical call for self-reliance. His essay on this subject, “Self-Reliance,” is a manifesto of what has come to be called **Romantic Individualism**. More radical and more mystical than Enlightenment ideas about individualism, Romantic Individualism asserts that every individual is endowed with not only reason but also an intuition that allows him to receive and interpret spiritual truths. Individuals thus have a responsibility to throw off the shackles of traditions and inherited conventions in order to live creatively according to their unique perception of truth. Emerson’s intoxicating ideas about the power of the individual captivated many of his contemporaries, giving rise to the Transcendentalist movement (the group believed that only by *transcending* the limits of rationalism and received tradition could the individual fully realize his or her potential). Writers and thinkers like Margaret Fuller, Bronson Alcott, Theodore Parker, and Henry David Thoreau heeded Emerson’s call and built on his ideas. Fuller pushed Romantic Individualism in the direction of women’s rights, while Thoreau (Unit 12) embarked on a personal project to practice self-reliance by living alone in the woods at Walden Pond, free from the suffocating influences of modern commercial and industrial life.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: According to the Declaration of Independence, what human rights are self-evident? What beliefs underlie Jefferson’s use of the term “self evident”?

Comprehension: How was Emerson’s philosophy of individualism different from Enlightenment ideas about individualism?

Comprehension: What is Transcendentalism?

Context: How do texts by Phillis Wheatley and William Apess respond to and challenge traditional ideas of individualism? Are the same modes of autobiographical self-making that Franklin exploited available to them? Why or why not?

Context: Emerson claimed that, in stifling individualism, “society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members.” What, for Emerson, does “manhood” have to do with individuality and nonconformity? How might you read Margaret Fuller’s “The Great Lawsuit” essay as a response to this comment?

Context: Although Jefferson was clearly indebted to John Locke for much of the philosophy behind the Declaration of Independence, he did not borrow the Lockean ideal of “life, liberty, and property”

“EVERY MAN FOR HIMSELF” WEB ARCHIVE

[1026] A. W. Elson and Company, *Ralph Waldo Emerson* (1901), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-9034]. Emerson encouraged Americans to look inward, trust their intuition, and develop their own principles. His spiritual philosophy of the correspondence between nature, the individual soul, and God was influential both in his own time and to subsequent generations.

[1433] Washington’s Personal Copy of the Declaration of Independence (1776), courtesy of the Library of Congress, George Washington Papers. The Declaration’s republican Enlightenment ideals have shaped American identity. Its claim that human equality is a self-evident truth has inspired struggles to make that equality a reality, by slaves, women, and immigrants.

[1495] John Neagle, *Pat Lyon at the Iron Forge* (1826), courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Reproduced with permission. © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. *Pat Lyon at the Forge*, 1826–27; John Neagle, American (1796–1865). Oil on canvas; 93 3/4 x 68 in. (238.1 x 172.7 cm). Henry H. and Zoe Oliver Sherman Fund, 1975.806. After being wrongfully accused of bank robbery and held in the Walnut Street Jail (which can be seen through the window in this painting), blacksmith Pat Lyon successfully sued the government for redress in one of the first landmark civil liberties cases.

[2221] Garrick Palmer, *Early Ahab* (1974), courtesy of the Folio Society. The story of the monomaniacal, fiercely self-reliant Ahab is in many ways representative of what Melville saw as some of the problems with Emersonian-type individualism.

[7065] Augustine de St. Aubin, *Benjamin Franklin, Ne a Boston, Dans la Nouvelle Angleterre le 17. Janvier 1706* (n.d.), courtesy of Edgar Fahs Smith Collection, Annenberg Rare Book & Manuscript Library, University of Pennsylvania. This engraving is based on a portrait of Benjamin Franklin, printer, author, and inventor, who was a seminal political figure throughout the Revolutionary era.

[7259] Jean Leon Gerome Ferris, *Benjamin Franklin Reading Draft of Declaration of Independence, John Adams Seated, and Thomas Jefferson Standing and Holding Feather Pen and Paper, around Table* (1921), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-96219]. This print gives a mythic depiction of Franklin reading the Declaration of Independence along with Thomas Jefferson, the document's primary author, and John Adams, a political leader from Massachusetts. Franklin's opinions carried great weight in the political discussions of the day.

but instead substituted “the pursuit of happiness” for “property.” What do you think Jefferson meant by “the pursuit of happiness”? Why did he use this phrase?

Exploration: What rights are or should be guaranteed to an individual in American society? Is the government ever justified in curtailing those rights? Why or why not?

Exploration: Can you think of examples in contemporary American culture that testify to the persistence of the myth of the self-made man (or woman)? How do news programs, novels, television shows, and movies perpetuate the contemporary ideal of the self-made individual? What do current figures of the self-made American have in common with Franklin? In what ways are they different?

Exploration: Compare the Declaration of Independence with the Plymouth colonists' Mayflower Compact and Winthrop's “Model of Christian Charity.” How does the Declaration's vision of the role of the individual within American society compare to these Puritan documents' assumptions about the place of the individual in America?

A New Rome: Neoclassicism in the New Nation

In Act III of Royall Tyler's *The Contrast*, the model American character, Colonel Manly, delivers an impassioned soliloquy: “When the Grecian states knew no other tools than the axe and the saw, the Grecians were a great, a free, and a happy people. . . . They exhibited to the world a noble spectacle—a number of independent states united by a similarity of language, sentiment, manners, common interest, and common consent.” Manly's speech may sound strange to modern readers since his disquisition on ancient Greece seems to have little to do with the play's setting in eighteenth-century New York. Indeed, even the first reviewer of Tyler's play complained that the soliloquy seemed out of place: “A man can never be supposed in conversation with himself, to point out examples of imitation to his countrymen.” Yet Tyler's seemingly unmotivated inclusion of comments on ancient Greece in his play was perfectly in keeping with the fascination with classical antiquity that characterized the early national period. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the United States, in search of foundational models to replace its former reliance on Great Britain, turned to examples from the ancient world, particularly the Roman republic, and, to a lesser extent, ancient Greece. Americans associated classical Greece and Rome with the virtuous, anti-aristocratic political and cultural ideals they hoped would prevail in the United States. Ancient Romans founded the first **republic**—a representational government in which power is held by the people and representatives are charged with the common welfare of all the people in the country—and Americans were anxious to emulate this model. Their growing interest in the art and culture of the ancient world was part of an aesthetic movement known as **neoclassicism**. The American neoclassical ideal did not entail a lavish imitation of ancient forms but

rather demanded a modern interpretation and revitalization of old forms.

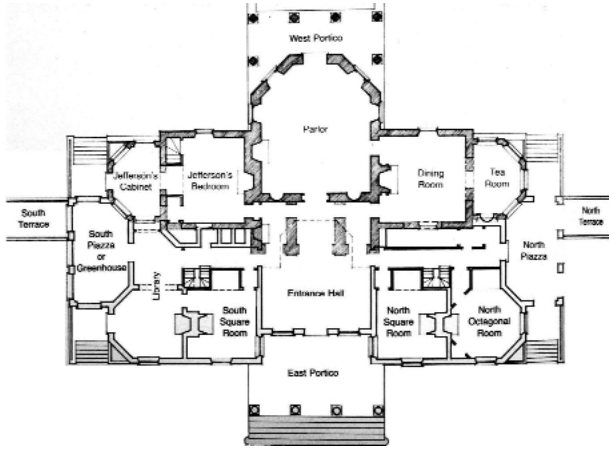
Neoclassicism may have found its most congenial home in the political climate of the new United States, but it did not originate there. The neoclassical aesthetic arose in Europe around the middle of the eighteenth century, an irony that many Americans, who wished to believe they were rejecting European examples, chose to ignore. In any case, classical models caught on quickly in the early republic. By the end of the eighteenth century, American newspapers and almanacs regularly quoted lines from Horace and Virgil. Correspondents to these periodicals often signed their pieces with Roman pseudonyms. (The authors of the *Federalist Papers*—Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison—famously adopted the pen name “Publius” in honor of one of the founders and consuls of republican Rome.) George Washington was so fascinated by the self-sacrificing Roman patriot Cato that he had a play about him staged at Valley Forge to entertain and educate the American troops. After the Revolution, American army officers formed an honorary society named after the Roman hero Cincinnati. Even the names of some of the branches of government—“Senate” and “Congress,” for example—hearkened back to the ancient Roman republic.

Neoclassical ideals also permeated American art and architecture. Artists eagerly adopted Roman models, creating statues of political and military leaders like George Washington wearing togas and crowned with laurel wreaths. Influenced by archaeological discoveries in Greece, Rome, and Egypt, furniture makers like Charles Honore Lannuier and Duncan Phyfe created pieces that incorporated classical motifs and design. But it was in architecture that the American neoclassical aesthetic achieved its best expression, a fact that was largely the result of Thomas Jefferson’s commitment to infusing American buildings with classical principles of order and reason. Jefferson’s passion for architecture was reinforced by his experiences in Paris, where he lived as the American minister to France from 1785 until 1789. Impressed both by the beautiful new houses built in Paris in the late eighteenth century and by ancient structures such as the *Maison Carée* (a Roman temple in Nîmes), Jefferson was anxious to reproduce and translate the French neoclassical aesthetic into American buildings.

When the Virginia legislature called upon him to find a designer for the Virginia State House, Jefferson decided to design the building himself. He created a neoclassical temple based on the model of the *Maison Carée*, thus symbolically infusing the site of the Virginia state government with ancient republican values of harmony and simplicity. Jefferson also modeled his own gracefully proportioned home, Monticello, on classical principles. A record of Jefferson’s varied architectural ideas, Monticello was designed and redesigned many times in accord with its owner’s ever-changing interests. In its final form, the house was built to resemble a single-story dwelling, even though it has two floors, and was divided into public and private areas arranged around a central parlor. Situated on an immense hill, Monticello commands an expansive view of the surrounding landscape, its central



[1639] Charles St. Memin, *George Washington* (1800), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZC4-4619].



[1331] Thomas Jefferson, *Monticello Floor Plan* (n.d.), courtesy of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation.

"A NEW ROME" WEB ARCHIVE

[1186] Christopher Pearse Cranch, *U.S. Capitol* (c. 1841), courtesy of the Architect of the Capitol. Washington, DC, was conceived of as a grand neoclassical city composed of orderly avenues and imposing government buildings. The White House and the Capitol were the first to be designed and constructed, though each took longer to complete than expected and neither is a true example of neoclassicism.

[1331] Thomas Jefferson, *Monticello Floor Plan* (n.d.), courtesy of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation. A record of Jefferson's varied architectural ideas, Monticello was designed and redesigned many times in accord with its owner's changing interests. In its final form, the house resembled a single-story dwelling, even though it has two floors, and was divided into public and private areas arranged around a central parlor.

[1639] Charles St. Meunier, *George Washington* (1800), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZC4-4619]. Painting of Washington crowned by a laurel wreath, modeled after portraits of such classical Roman leaders as Julius Caesar.

[3700] John Plumbe, *Capitol's East End before Extension* (1846), courtesy of the

dome acting as a sort of symbolic eye asserting control and mastery over the countryside beneath it. Although Monticello is justly celebrated as an expression of Jefferson's aesthetic values, his true masterpiece is the design for the University of Virginia. Conceived of as an "academical village," the central campus of the university is composed of five neoclassical pavilions which housed five different branches of learning, along with a central domed "temple of learning" (based on the Pantheon in Rome) which housed the main library. Jefferson intended teachers and students to live together in this complex, working and residing in an integrated expression of the educational mission of the uni-

versity. Jefferson also had an important hand in the design of Washington, D.C., the new federal city created as the site of the national government. Because the city was built from scratch on a rural landscape, Jefferson and the other planners were able to plan it as a carefully designed exercise in neoclassical order and harmony. Although bureaucratic disorganization, a lack of funding, and land use problems prevented the project from ever living up to its designers' visions, Washington, D.C., was conceived of as a grand neoclassical city made up of orderly avenues and imposing government buildings. The White House and the Capitol Building were the first to be designed and constructed, though each took longer to complete than expected and neither is a true example of neoclassicism. Noted neoclassical architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe, however, used his influence to add an American neoclassical touch to the Capitol once he was appointed Surveyor of Public Buildings in 1803. When he designed columns for the Senate wing and Senate rotunda, Latrobe Americanized the classical forms by substituting cornstalks and tobacco leaves for the traditional Corinthian acanthus decorations on the capitals of the columns. Latrobe's celebrated "corncob and tobacco capitals" exemplify the ideals behind American neoclassicism: they borrow from classical sources with originality and freedom, combining the stateliness of a traditional form with a tribute to American agriculture and natural productions. Although Latrobe certainly did not intend it, the agricultural decorations on the Senate building also serve to remind viewers that, just as Greece was a city-state whose economy was indebted to the institution of slavery, so was America's economy built on the slave labor that produced tobacco, cotton, rice, and sugar crops.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: Why did so many Americans celebrate classical Greek and Roman traditions and aesthetics? What characteristics of ancient Greece and Rome made them appealing models to the young nation?

Comprehension: What is neoclassicism?

Comprehension: Examine the photographs and design plans for

Monticello and the University of Virginia featured in the archive. What do Jefferson's architectural projects have in common? What ideals inform the design of the campus? What kind of educational environment was Jefferson trying to construct at the university? How might the ideals that structure the buildings he designed be reflected in the Declaration of Independence, which is, in a sense, an "architectural plan" for the government of the new nation?

Context: Phillis Wheatley's poetry is often categorized as "neoclassical." What literary characteristics might make her work analogous to the neoclassical artifacts featured in the archive?

Context: The early American republic, like Greek democracy, was based on "equality," but for both communities equality could mean either (a) *isotes*: "proportionate equality or harmony," or (b) *isonomia*: "equal participation, the order of equality." For those who believed in *isotes*, one's rights and privileges were proportional to one's merits, rather than distributed in common shares to all members of society. Which of the writers in this unit believe in which kind of equality? What reasoning is behind their beliefs, and how do you know? Which of these values are reflected in neoclassical buildings such as Monticello and the University of Virginia? To what extent is our contemporary society based on either *isotes* or *isonomia*?

Context: Examine the original plans for Washington, D.C., featured in the archive. How does the design of the city uphold neoclassical ideals? Now examine the photographs and maps of present-day Washington, D.C. To what extent does the contemporary city live up to the plans of its designers? How does it diverge from them?

Exploration: Think about the designs and constructions for some contemporary American public buildings and/or monuments that you have seen (the Vietnam memorial, urban museums and skyscrapers, or government buildings, for example). What values do these examples of twentieth- and twenty-first-century public architecture reflect? How do these structures compare to eighteenth-century neoclassical structures?

Exploration: While the Puritans believed that they were constructing a "new Israel" or a "new Jerusalem" in America, many Revolutionary-era leaders believed they were constructing a "new Rome." How do these models differ from each other? What values are inherent in structuring a society as a rebuilding of Jerusalem? Of Rome? Can you think of any other historical periods or cities that have served as models for the American nation?

Mammoth Nation: Natural History and National Ideals

When Benjamin Franklin was abroad in England as a young man, he discovered that Europeans were fascinated by some of the natural "curiosities" he had brought over from the New World. Indeed, his "asbestos purse"—a clump of fibrous material that was impervious to fire—so interested a wealthy nobleman that it procured Franklin an

Library of Congress [LC-USZC4-3595]. Photograph of the U.S. Capitol Building, showing classical columns and frieze.

[6821] Robert King, *A Map of the City of Washington in the District of Columbia* (1818), courtesy of the Library of Congress. The city that L'Enfant had originally conceived of as "Washingtonople" had undergone many changes by the year that this map was drawn, including repairs made necessary by the War of 1812.

[7378] John Collier, *Monticello, Home of Thomas Jefferson*. Charlottesville, VA (1943), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USW36-756]. Monticello, which means "little mountain" in Italian, was a lifelong passion for Jefferson. The house is an excellent example of Roman neoclassicism, with its columned porticoes and classical central dome.

[7772] John Trumbull, *General George Washington Resigning His Commission* (c. 1823), courtesy of the U.S. Capitol Rotunda, Architect of the Capitol. On December 23, 1783, Washington resigned as commander-in-chief, and thereby established civilian, rather than military, leadership of the government.

[7781] Anonymous, *University of Virginia* (n.d.), courtesy of the National Park Service. Although Monticello is justly celebrated as an expression of Jefferson's aesthetic values, his true masterpiece is the University of Virginia.

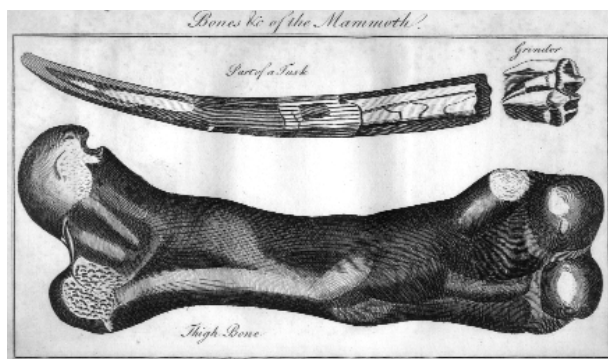
[9025] E. Sachse & Company, *View of the University of Virginia, Charlottesville & Monticello, Taken from Lewis Mountain* (1856), courtesy of the Library of Congress [G3884.C4:2U5A35 1856.E2 Vault]. This panoramic view of the University of Virginia and its surroundings emphasizes Jefferson's classically influenced architectural style.

[9033] Peter Charles L'Enfant, *Plan of the City Intended for the Permanent Seat of the Government of the United States* (1791), courtesy of the Library of Congress [G3850 1791.L4 1887]. L'Enfant claimed that his plan for the capital city was "whol[ly] new"; it incorporated radiating avenues to connect significant focal points with open spaces and a grid of streets to be oriented north, south, east, and west.

invitation to the aristocrat's home and a substantial monetary reward. Similarly, Farmer James, the character who narrates Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer*, is asked to give an account of American natural and agricultural history as well as American social customs in his correspondence with Mr. F. B., a European nobleman. It seemed that the national flora and fauna could afford a kind of cultural prestige, proving to Europeans, as well as to Americans themselves, the importance and worth of the very land upon which the new nation was situated. Eventually, many Americans came to tie their national pride to the landscape and wilderness, believing that a correlation existed between the strength and vigor of American nature and the strength and vigor of American society.

Thomas Jefferson illustrates the symbolic connection between American nature and the American nation in his "Query VI: Productions Mineral, Vegetable, and Animal" from *Notes on the State of Virginia*. Here he discusses American "natural productions" in order to refute the claims of French naturalist and writer Georges de Buffon, who had argued in his *Natural History of the Earth* that American plants, animals, and even people were inferior to European natural specimens. According to Buffon, "nature is less active, less energetic on one side of the globe than she is on the other," and American nature was weaker, smaller, less diverse, and more prone to degeneration than European nature. Outraged by this insult to America's worth and potential, Jefferson set out to prove, through long lists of statistics and scientific observation, that American natural productions were not simply equal to their European equivalents but actually superior to them. Jefferson includes detailed tables of all of the useful minerals, plants, and trees that exist in America and the relative weights of various animals and birds found in Europe and America. Not content to apply his hypothesis "to brute animals only," he goes on to dismiss Buffon's claim that the "savages" of North America were feeble and mentally inferior by arguing for the vigor and creativity of Indians. Although Jefferson intended to defend Native Americans from

Buffon's slanders, his analysis participates in the Eurocentric assumption that Indians were "uncivilized." By categorizing Native Americans as "natural productions" on par with the animals and plants that he exhaustively lists and describes, Jefferson treats them as a homogeneous group waiting to be classified by white scientists. Later in the essay, Jefferson also addresses Buffon's claim that Europeans who relocate to America degenerate in their mental and artistic abilities, insisting that the American climate has "given hopeful proofs of genius."



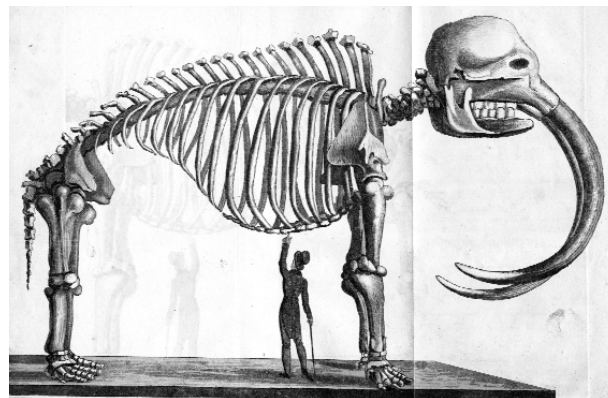
[7342] William Winterbotham, *Bones of the Mammoth* (1795), courtesy of Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

But Jefferson finds his most compelling evidence for the superiority of the American environment in the existence of the "mammoth" or "mastodon," a giant quadruped six times the size of an elephant, whose bones had been found in some fossil pits. Insisting that the

mammoth was not extinct and still roamed in the western territories (when he sent the Lewis and Clark expedition to the Pacific in 1804, Jefferson believed they would locate a live mammoth), Jefferson saw the existence of this enormous animal as proof of American superiority and uniqueness. Although the mastodon eventually proved to be an extinct, herbivorous creature, eighteenth-century Americans, in awe of the enormous teeth found on the fossilized mammoth jawbones, assumed that it had been a formidable carnivore. This investment in the fierceness and power of the mastodon testifies to the American desire to showcase an impressive, even frightening, natural specimen that would be superior in size and power to any creature found in Europe.

In 1801, Jefferson's hopes for further evidence of the mastodon were fulfilled when a pit of fossilized mammoth bones was discovered on a farm in upstate New York. His friend, the painter, inventor, naturalist, museum curator, and businessman Charles Willson Peale, immediately set out to exhume the bones and assemble a complete mastodon skeleton. Peale hired more than twenty-five men to help him with the labor of digging out the bones, transported the skeleton to Philadelphia, enlisted sculptor William Rush to create wooden models of missing bones, and finally assembled a complete skeleton. Considered a "wonder" and a "curiosity," the mastodon skeleton attracted a great deal of attention both in America and in Europe. Peale traveled with it, sold tickets to view it, and even auctioned off opportunities to eat dinner within the skeleton. He eventually brought it back to Philadelphia and made it the centerpiece of his museum of natural history there.

Peale's museum, housed for a time in Independence Hall, was itself an expression of the conjunction of national ideals and natural history. Intended to be a "world in miniature," Peale's collection of preserved natural specimens was carefully arranged to instruct spectators in the harmonious structure of nature. The museum did its best to reflect the diversity of the natural world: it housed 1824 birds, 250 quadrupeds, and 650 fish, all preserved through Peale's special taxidermy technique and all displayed against painted backdrops designed to evoke their natural environments. Tickets to the museum urged visitors to "explore the wondrous work!" presumably alluding both to the divine creation of the natural world represented in the museum and to Peale's labor in collecting and organizing the objects on display. Significantly, the walls of the museum were surmounted by a large collection of portraits of American politicians and leaders. (Peale had originally hoped to display mummified corpses of important men as specimens of the "highest order of nature," but when this proved impossible he settled for painted images.) The museum was meant to visually reinforce the idea that the world is organized by a "great chain of being," a universal hierarchy in which all existence is arranged from



[7343] Thomas Ashe, *Skeleton of the Young Mammoth in the Museum at Philadelphia* (1806), courtesy of Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

"MAMMOTH NATION" WEB ARCHIVE

[1051] George Catlin, *Catlin and His Indian Guide Approaching Buffalo under White Wolf Skins* (c.1846), courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution, American Art Museum. Prairie wolves often followed buffalo herds, preying on sick and weak animals. Native Americans donned wolf skins in order to approach within arrow range of a buffalo herd.

[7342] William Winterbotham, *Bones of the Mammoth* (1795), courtesy of the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library. Like many of his contemporaries, Thomas Jefferson was excited by the bones of mammoths found in the New World. He believed that mammoths still roamed the lands to the west and hoped that Lewis and Clark would find them on their expedition.

[7343] Thomas Ashe, *Skeleton of the Young Mammoth in the Museum at Philadelphia* (1806), courtesy of the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library. Charles Peale's Philadelphia museum embodied the Jeffersonian conviction in the interconnectedness of American ideals and American natural history.

[9029] T. W. Ingersoll, *U.S. Smithsonian Institute—Interior View* (1888), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-95631]. Photograph of a dinosaur skeleton and various stuffed animals in the Museum of Natural History.

[9030] Thomas Jefferson, Query VI, from *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785), courtesy of XRoads Virginia. This Query describes the animals and people native to North America and defends against the charge that North American natural resources were inferior to those of Europe.

[9031] Anonymous, *Captain Lewis & Clark Holding a Council with the Indians* (1810), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-17372]. This etching shows Lewis and Clark standing over a council of Native Americans; it originally appeared in an 1810 book entitled *A Journal of the Voyages and Travels of a Corps of Discovery*.

[9042] Laura Arnold, "The Great Chain of Being" (2003), courtesy of Laura Arnold. From the beginning of the

the lowest rung (minerals and plants) to the highest and most perfect (humans, and, ultimately, God). The paintings of American leaders ringing the tops of the galleries' walls visually asserted the dominance of human beings—and of the American political structure—over nature.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: What was the nature of Jefferson's argument with Buffon?

Comprehension: Why were Americans so interested in mammoth bones in the late eighteenth century?

Context: How might eighteenth-century Americans' fascination with the mammoth bones relate to ideas of the sublime? Can fossilized bones be considered sublime objects?

Context: Read Jefferson's discussion of Native Americans in Query VI (the complete text is featured in the archive). What qualities and characteristics does he attribute to Native Americans? How does William Apress's account of Native American life complicate Jefferson's analysis?

Exploration: Dinosaurs and dinosaur bones continue to fascinate Americans. The assembled bones of a *Tyrannosaurus Rex* nicknamed "Sue" caused a sensation in the late 1990s, and contemporary films such as *Jurassic Park* and *Land Before Time* celebrate the power and size of prehistoric creatures. Does contemporary American interest in dinosaurs have anything in common with the eighteenth-century interest in the mammoth bones? Why are we as a nation so fascinated by dinosaurs?

Exploration: Compare Peale's museum to a contemporary science or history museum you have visited. How do twenty-first-century museums differ in their organization and mission from Peale's museum? What do they have in common?

Exploration: What values and assumptions underwrite contemporary discussions of the American wilderness and its place in national society? You might consider debates over the Alaskan Wildlife Refuge, Pacific Northwest old-growth forests, and the use of national parks and forests.

EXTENDED CONTEXTS

The Awful Truth: The Aesthetic of the Sublime

In Jefferson's famous description of the "Natural Bridge" rock formation in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, he declares that the bridge is a perfect example of a **sublime** view: "It is impossible for the emotions, arising from the sublime, to be felt beyond what they are here: so beautiful an arch, so elevated, so light, and springing, as it were, up to heaven, the rapture of the Spectator is really indescribable!" Despite

his claim that the scene and the feelings it inspires are beyond description, Jefferson characteristically goes on to describe the Natural Bridge and his response to it in eloquent detail and in doing so provides a useful statement of the eighteenth-century aesthetic of the sublime in the process. While Jefferson clearly sees the scenery as thrillingly spectacular, he is also uncomfortably overwhelmed by it. He warns the reader that upon looking over the edge of the bridge “you involuntarily fall on your hands and feet, and creep to the parapet and peep over it. Looking down from this height . . . gave me a violent headache.” Jefferson makes the effect of this “involuntary” and even “violent” physical response even more vivid for his reader by employing the second-person “you” and thus implicating the reader in these intense feelings. For Jefferson, the powerful effects the bridge has on its spectators are just as important to narrate as the conventional details of its size, measurements, and geological characteristics.

Jefferson’s analysis of the Natural Bridge’s sublimity is indebted to the aesthetic ideas formulated by Englishman Edmund Burke earlier in the eighteenth century. Burke was interested in categorizing aesthetic responses and distinguished the “sublime” from the “beautiful.” While the beautiful is calm and harmonious, the sublime is majestic, wild, even savage. While viewers are soothed by the beautiful, they are overwhelmed, awe-struck, and sometimes terrified by the sublime. Often associated with huge, overpowering natural phenomena like mountains, waterfalls, or thunderstorms, the “delightful terror” inspired by sublime visions was supposed both to remind viewers of their own insignificance in the face of nature and divinity and to inspire them with a sense of transcendence. Thus Jefferson’s seemingly paradoxical response of falling to a crouch, developing a headache, and then claiming that the “sensation becomes delightful in the extreme” is in fact a standard response to the sublime.

The idea of the sublime exerted an enormous influence over American art in the early nineteenth century. Hudson River School painters like Thomas Cole, Frederic Church, and Albert Bierstadt (featured in Unit 5) sought to capture the grandeur they found in the American wilderness as an expression of the greatness of the young nation. So ubiquitous was this aesthetic interest in the sublime that by mid-century, when Margaret Fuller visited Niagara Falls (a mecca for seekers of sublime views), she was disappointed to realize that her experience was inescapably mediated by other writers’ and artists’ descriptions of the scene’s sublimity. She was left to lament, “When I arrived in sight of [the falls] I merely felt, ‘ah, yes, here is the fall, just as I have seen it in pictures.’ . . . I expected to be overwhelmed, to retire trembling from this giddy eminence, and gaze with unlimited wonder and awe upon the immense mass rolling on and on, but, somehow or other, I thought only of comparing the effect on my mind with what I had read and heard. . . . Happy were the first discoverers of Niagara, those who

Middle Ages through the start of the nineteenth century, “educated” Europeans conceived of the universe in terms of a hierarchical Great Chain of Being, with God at its apex. The roots of this vertical hierarchy are still pervasive in Western theology and thought and stand in opposition to Native American and other belief systems that view the human and the spiritual as coexisting on a horizontal plane.



[5932] Thomas Doughty, *In the Catskills* (1835), courtesy of Reynolda House, Museum of American Art.



[1181] Albert Bierstadt, *Valley of the Yosemite* (1864), courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Reproduced with permission. © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Valley of the Yosemite, 1864; Albert Bierstadt, American (born in Germany) (1830–1902). Oil on paper-board; 11 7/8 x 19 1/4 in. (30.2 x 48.9 cm). Gift of Martha C. Karolik for the M. and M. Karolik Collection of American Paintings, 1815–1865, 47.1236.

"THE AWFUL TRUTH" WEB ARCHIVE

[1181] Albert Bierstadt, *Valley of the Yosemite* (1864), courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Reproduced with permission. © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Valley of the Yosemite, 1864; Albert Bierstadt, American (born in Germany) (1830–1902). Oil on paper-board; 11 7/8 x 19 1/4 in. (30.2 x 48.9 cm). Gift of Marth C. Karolik for the M. and M. Karolik Collection of American Paintings, 1815–1865, 47.1236. The romantic grandeur and luminism of Albert Bierstadt's western landscapes reflect Hudson River School influences. Realist writers like Bret Harte sought to imbue the same landscapes with the gritty realities of frontier life.

[3694] Thomas Cole, *The Falls of the Kaaterskill* (1826), courtesy of the Warner Collection of the Gulf States Paper Corporation. Cole was one of the first American landscape artists and a founder of the Hudson River School of

could come unawares upon this view and upon that, whose feelings were entirely their own." However overused the visual and linguistic vocabulary of the sublime had become by the mid-nineteenth century, it was nonetheless an important category through which Americans conceived of and organized their aesthetic experiences.

As European Americans moved west, they encountered more natural phenomena that fit within their view of the sublime. The Rocky Mountains, the Grand Canyon, and the geysers at Yellowstone, for example, were all described by early visitors in

terms of their sublimity. Americans eventually came to ascribe sublime characteristics to humanmade objects as well: Whitman's description of the power of steam locomotives and Edward Weston's early-twentieth-century photographs of industrial architecture participate in the foundation of an aesthetic of the "technological sublime."

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: According to eighteenth-century aesthetic theory, what is the difference between the "beautiful" and the "sublime"? Give an example of each, either from literature or from your own experience.

Context: In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America, the idea of the sublime was usually applied only to natural objects (and sometimes to encounters with Native Americans, who were perceived as "primitive" and more in touch with the natural world than whites). But sometimes the vocabulary of the sublime was used to describe other experiences. Do you think some individuals might have discussed their conversion experiences during the Great Awakening in terms of the sublime? How might listening to Jonathan Edwards's "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" compare to the experience of looking off the Natural Bridge or viewing Thomas Cole's painting *The Falls of the Kaaterskill*?

Exploration: Does a sense of the sublime still infuse contemporary American culture? Can you think of a late-twentieth-century novel, film, or painting that seems to participate in the aesthetic of the sublime?

Miss America: The Image of Columbia

In 1775, the African American poet Phillis Wheatley opened the poem she addressed to George Washington with the lines "Celestial choir! enthroned in realms of light, / Columbia's scenes of glorious toils I write." She goes on to describe the goddess Columbia as "divinely fair," with olive and laurel branches in her "golden hair." With these lines, Wheatley became the first writer to personify the new nation as the goddess "Columbia"—a feminized reference to Columbus, who was

widely recognized as the “father” of America. Wheatley’s use of the Columbia image is interesting both for its insistence on the goddess’s Caucasian looks and for the profound influence it had on American culture. By the end of the Revolution, the figure of Columbia was everywhere. Popular songs and poems celebrated her; towns and cities were named for her (most notably the new seat of the federal government, the District of Columbia); and King’s College in New York was renamed Columbia University. The adjective “Columbian” came to function as a kind of shorthand for patriotic allegiance to national ideals.

Although the image of Columbia was new when Wheatley developed it in 1775, iconographic representations of America as a woman had existed since the sixteenth century. The name “America,” after all, is a feminization of explorer Amerigo Vespucci’s Christian name. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century drawings almost always represented the New World as a woman, and usually as a Native American. Pictured half-clothed in primitive garb, America in these representations is sometimes a savage cannibal woman and sometimes a regal Indian queen offering to share her natural bounty. British political cartoons produced during the Revolutionary War continued to portray America as a Native American woman, often picturing her as a rebellious Indian princess at war with her European mother, Britain.

As they fought to assert their independence, Americans apparently began to desire a new allegorical image to represent their nation. Scholar John Higham has suggested that Native American imagery may have become problematic because “white Americans were too close to real Indians in the eighteenth century to feel comfortable about identifying with any such personifications, no matter how idealized.” In any case, Wheatley’s Caucasian Roman goddess struck a chord. Her association with classical antiquity and the values of the Roman republic must have made her appealing to a nation that liked to conceive of itself as “a new Rome.” Columbia was usually represented dressed in a white, toga-like gown, wearing a helmet, and carrying a liberty cap on a pole. She was often accompanied by the flag, the eagle, and documents like the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. She appeared in paintings, statuary, and even on most of the coins produced by the United States Mint through the nineteenth century. Fearful that profiles of presidents or leaders would smack of imperialism and aristocracy, the young nation instead featured Columbia’s profile on its money, accompanied by the word “Liberty.”

Ironically, this celebration of the female figure as emblematic of American virtue and national character did not result in political gains for actual American women. Afforded only a symbolic and decorative position, they could not vote and were not considered citizens. In fact, the veneration of the feminized figure of Columbia in some ways displaces and obscures the important contributions that real women made to

painting. Romantic depictions of wilderness became popular as the United States continued its westward expansion.

[5932] Thomas Doughty, *In the Catskills* (1835), courtesy of Reynolda House, Museum of American Art. Landscape painting of river and boulders framed by trees in the foreground. An artist of the Hudson River School, Doughty painted the same American landscapes that writers such as Washington Irving described.

[9026] George Barker, *Niagara Falls, N.Y., Close-up View from Below* (1886), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-97270]. Nineteenth-century photograph of the popular tourist attraction. Margaret Fuller and others commented on the sublimity of the Falls.

[9028] Thomas Moran, *The Tower of Tower Falls, Yellowstone* (1875), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZC4-3250]. It was in part by Moran’s paintings that Congress was inspired to create Yellowstone National Park. Before color photography, painting captured an important dimension of the western landscape.



[5565] Kimmel and Foster, *The End of the Rebellion in the United States, 1865* (1866), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-12764].

"MISS AMERICA" WEB ARCHIVE

[3215] John Gast, *American Progress* (1872), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZC4-668]. Manifest Destiny is personified in the figure of America, who here leads a wave of civilization (settlers, railroads, and technology) across the continent. Symbols of the wilderness (Indians and animals) flee before her "progressive" influence.

[5565] Kimmel and Foster, *The End of the Rebellion in the United States, 1865* (1866), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-12764]. The figure of Columbia, shown here in the turmoil of disunion surrounding the Civil War, was a prominent symbol of the classical republican virtues that framers of the new nation wished to emulate.

[6551] Kenyon Cox, *Columbia & Cuba—Magazine Cover—Nude Study* (1898), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZ62-68463]. Cover of an 1898 magazine, exemplifying the openness toward the human body of the late-nineteenth-century realists. The names of the women, "Columbia" and "Cuba," refer to an imagined relationship between the nations during the Spanish-American War.

[6552] Washington Peale, *Three Days of May 1844, Columbia Mourns Her Citizens Slain* (1844), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-46533]. This painting serves as a memorial to casualties of the "Bible Riots" that took place in May 1844 between Protestants and Irish Catholics in Kensington, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Philadelphia. The figure of Columbia places a wreath on a broken column and holds an American flag.

[6555] Thomas Nast, *A Belle Savage [Columbia Receiving Congratulations from All Parts of the World]* (1876), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-105127]. This engraving dates from the nation's first centennial and shows Columbia holding congratulatory papers from such foreign leaders as William Von Bismarck and Alexander II.

[6556] Vincent Aderente, *Columbia Calls* (1916), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZC4-8315].

American society. The creation of the image of Columbia was probably not what Abigail Adams had in mind when she enjoined her husband, future president John Adams, to "remember the ladies."

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: Examine the representations of America as female featured in the archive. How did the depiction of America change over time? How is the Columbia in the eighteenth-century print by Edward Savage different from the Columbia featured on the World War I recruitment poster?

Context: How might the ideal of Columbia have influenced the depiction of female characters in eighteenth-century American texts? Consider Royall Tyler's *The Contrast* or Susanna Rowson's *Charlotte Temple*, for example.

Exploration: The U.S. Mint recently released a dollar coin emblazoned with an image of Sacajawea, the Native American woman who assisted the Lewis and Clark party on their journey to the Pacific. Purchase one of these coins at your local bank. How is Sacajawea portrayed on the coin? How does the representation of her compare to earlier representations of America as an Indian woman? How does she compare to images of Columbia? Why do you think the Mint decided to feature Sacajawea on this new coin? Your reason need not be the same as the Mint's "official" reason.

ASSIGNMENTS

Personal and Creative Responses

1. *Journal:* Think of an object or view you have seen or a phenomenon you have experienced that could be considered "sublime." Taking Margaret Fuller's description of Niagara Falls and Thomas Jefferson's account of the Natural Bridge as your model, write a description of your experience. How did the sight you viewed make you feel? What physical sensations did you experience? After you compose your account, think about the difficulties you encountered in translating your sublime experience into language. Does your written description effectively capture and explain your experience? If not, can you articulate what is missing from your account?
2. *Correspondence:* Imagine that you have been asked to compose a series of *Letters from an American Student*. Write a letter to your foreign correspondent in which you address the question "What is an American?" Be sure to include specific examples of values and behaviors that you see as representative of an American and an explanation of who qualifies as an American.
3. *Artist's Workshop:* Design or draw a figure that can function as a personification of contemporary America. How does your figure compare to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century images of

Columbia? What difficulties did you experience when trying to create a representative image?

4. **Multimedia:** In his lecture “The American Scholar,” Ralph Waldo Emerson proclaimed, “the world is nothing, the man is all.” Using Emerson’s celebration of individualism as your inspiration, create a multimedia presentation that visually explores the importance of the individual within American culture. Include captions that explain and interpret the images you choose as exemplary of American individualism.

Problem-Based Learning Projects

1. You are a member of Jonathan Edwards’s congregation at Northampton in 1750 when the church is debating about whether to dismiss Edwards from his position as pastor. Take a position on the debate and construct an argument to deliver to the congregation. What reasons will you give for your claim that Edwards should be removed or retained? What services has Edwards rendered to the church? What problems has he caused? What obligations and duties should pastors be responsible for performing? How has Edwards met or failed to meet his obligations? Would Edwards’s time be better spent teaching the nearby Indians? Why or why not?
2. Both novels and plays were attacked in late-eighteenth-century America as frivolous, extravagant, and morally bankrupt. Cultural leaders like Thomas Jefferson proclaimed that novels were a “great obstacle to education” and insisted that Americans should spend their time in other pursuits. During the Revolutionary War, theater was seen as so dangerous that Congress declared it illegal. Imagine that you have been hired to produce a public relations campaign to promote either Susanna Rowson’s novel *Charlotte Temple* or Royall Tyler’s play *The Contrast*. How will you assure eighteenth-century Americans that the novel or play is worth their time and that it in fact produces good morals?
3. Imagine that Phillis Wheatley has asked you to be her literary agent. Given the racial prejudice that Wheatley faced in her attempts to publish her work, design a plan for marketing her poetry to an American publisher. What qualities of her work will you emphasize? What ethical questions are raised in making your choices? Be sure to anticipate the objections that you might hear from a white eighteenth-century publisher.

Propaganda poster calling for Americans to enlist to fight in World War I. The war encouraged disillusionment with, and distrust of, modernization and technology in both European and American writers.

[6908] Edward Savage, *Liberty* [in the form of the Goddess of Youth; Giving Support to the Bald Eagle] (1796), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-15369]. This engraving shows Liberty, in the form of the goddess Hebe, making an offering to an eagle while she tramples on chains, a scepter, and other symbols of tyranny. At lower right is the city of Boston.

[9048] Deacon George Thomas, *Figurehead of “America”* (2002), courtesy of Claire Dennerlein and Paul Manson. Plaque on side of statue reads: “This figurehead is from the clipper ship ‘America’ built in 1874 at Quincy, Massachusetts, by Deacon George Thomas. In 1887 she was put on the Pacific coasting trade and was wrecked on San Juan Island in 1914.” Seattle businessman and former mayor Robert Moran erected the figurehead at his resort in 1916 to commemorate the dying era of great ship building in America.

GLOSSARY

auto-American-biography A term coined by literary critic Sacvan Bercovitch for an autobiographical text in which the narrator self-consciously foregrounds his narrative construction of himself as

an ideal American citizen. Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* is often understood as an auto-American-biography.

Deism Eighteenth-century religious belief that privileges reason over faith and rejects traditional religious tenets in favor of a general belief in a benevolent creator. Deists do not believe in original sin and instead assume that human beings are basically good.

Enlightenment Philosophy developed by thinkers such as Isaac Newton and John Locke, who argued that the universe is arranged in an orderly system, and that by the application of reason and intellect, human beings are capable of apprehending that system. Their philosophy represented a radical shift from earlier notions that the world is ordered by a stern, inscrutable God whose plans are beyond human understanding and whose will can only be known through religious revelation.

Great Awakening The revitalization of spirituality and religious enthusiasm that swept through the American colonies from 1734 until around 1750. Ministers like Jonathan Edwards and the itinerant preachers George Whitefield and Gilbert Tennent promoted what they called a "religion of the heart," through which converts would move beyond mere adherence to moral duties into an ecstatic experience of spiritual grace. Great Awakening conversions were often characterized by physical reactions such as shouting, shaking, fainting, or even falling to the ground.

neoclassicism Aesthetic movement characterized by interest in the art and culture of ancient Greece and Rome. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the United States, in search of foundational models to replace its former reliance on Great Britain, turned to examples from the ancient world, particularly the Roman republic, and, to a lesser extent, ancient Greece. Americans associated classical Greece and Rome with the virtuous, anti-aristocratic political and cultural ideals they hoped would prevail in the United States. The American neoclassical ideal did not entail a lavish imitation of ancient forms but rather demanded modern interpretations and revitalization of old forms.

republic A government in which power is held by the people, government is representational, and representatives are charged with the common welfare of all the people in the country. Because the first republic was in ancient Rome, many eighteenth-century Americans were anxious to imitate Roman history and culture.

Romantic Individualism The belief that individuals are endowed with not only reason but also an intuition that allows them to receive and interpret spiritual truths. Individuals thus have a responsibility to throw off the shackles of traditions and inherited conventions in order to live creatively according to their own unique perception of truth. Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Self-Reliance" is often considered to be a manifesto of Romantic Individualism.

seduction novel A popular genre usually focusing on a pathetic, naïve female character who is seduced away from her protective family, made pregnant, and left to die by an unfaithful lover. Some literary critics have argued that the cultural obsession with tales of female

seduction in late-eighteenth-century America reflects the nation's anxiety about its own claims to virtue in its recent revolution against the "patriarchal authority" of England. Susanna Rowson's *Charlotte Temple* is an example of a seduction novel.

sublime An aesthetic ideal formulated by British philosopher Edmund Burke in the eighteenth century. Burke was interested in categorizing aesthetic responses and distinguished the "sublime" from the "beautiful." While the beautiful is calm and harmonious, the sublime is majestic, wild, even savage. While viewers are soothed by the beautiful, they are overwhelmed, awe-struck, and sometimes terrified by the sublime. Often associated with huge, overpowering natural phenomena like mountains, waterfalls, or thunderstorms, the "delightful terror" inspired by sublime visions was supposed both to remind viewers of their own insignificance in the face of nature and divinity and to inspire them with a sense of transcendence.

Transcendentalism A nineteenth-century group of American writers and thinkers who believed that only by *transcending* the limits of rationalism and received tradition could the individual fully realize his or her potential. Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, and Henry David Thoreau are among the most influential Transcendentalists.

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