

American Culture
8th Grade U.S. History
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In the years following the American Revolution, the United States began to develop its own unique culture. Even in the early stage America was a hodgepodge of cultures; during this time American began to blend all of the cultures together to create its own. A nation's culture is expressed in its literature and artwork.

In this assignment you will answer questions about 6 works of art or literature. At the end you will use the information gathered from the previous questions to answer the following essay question.

Describe how art and literature portray the development of an distinct American Culture. You must you 3 examples of art or literature, one must be a literary source.

Document A:

The following selection is from the short story "Rip Van Winkle" written by Washington Irving. Read the selection and then answer the questions that follow.

Rip Van Winkle, however, was one of those happy mortals, of foolish, well-oiled dispositions, who take the world easy, eat white bread or brown, whichever can be got with least thought or trouble, and would rather starve on a penny than work for a pound. If left to himself, he would have whistled life away in perfect contentment; but his wife kept continually dinning in his ears about his idleness, his carelessness, and the ruin he was bringing on his family. Morning, noon, and night, her tongue was incessantly going, and everything he said or did was sure to produce a torrent of household eloquence. Rip had but one way of replying to all lectures of the kind, and that, by frequent use, had grown into a habit. He shrugged his shoulders, shook his head, cast up his eyes, but said nothing. This, however, always provoked a fresh volley from his wife; so that he was fain to draw off his forces, and take to the outside of the house—the only side which, in truth, belongs to a hen-pecked husband.

1. Choose three words from the passage that best describe Rip Van Winkle?

2. How does Irving describe Rip's wife?

3. Based on this paragraph, what lesson is Irving trying to teach the readers of his short story?

Document B:

The following selection is from *The Last of the Mohicans*, by James Fenimore Cooper.

Within reach of his arm was the brawny shoulder of a gigantic Indian, whose deep and authoritative voice appeared to give directions to the proceedings of his fellows. Beyond him again, Duncan could look into the vault opposite, which was filled with savages, overturning and rifling the humble furniture of the scout. The wound of David had dyed the leaves of sassafras with a color that the native well knew as anticipating the season. Over this sign of their success, they sent up a howl, like an opening from so many hounds who had recovered a lost trail. After this yell of victory, they tore up the fragrant bed of the cavern, and bore the branches into the chasm, scattering the boughs, as if they suspected them of concealing the person of the man they had so long hated and feared. One fierce and wild-looking warrior approached the chief, bearing a load of the brush, and pointing exultingly to the deep red stains with which it was sprinkled, uttered his joy in Indian yells, whose meaning Heyward was only enabled to comprehend by the frequent repetition of the name La Longue Carabine! When his triumph had ceased, he cast the brush on the slight heap Duncan had made before the entrance of the second cavern, and closed the view. His example was followed by others, who, as they drew the branches from the cave of the scout, threw them into one pile, adding, unconsciously, to the security of those they sought. The very slightness of the defense was its chief merit, for no one thought of disturbing a mass of brush, which all of them believed, in that moment of hurry and confusion, had been accidentally raised by the hands of their own party.

4. What is happening in this passage?
5. What image of Native Americans does this passage portray?

Document C:

The passage below is an excerpt from Catherine Marie Sedgwick's novel, *Married or Single?*.

So that marriage becomes not only their heaven, but an escape from -- , the word is not for 'ears polite,' dear Emma; and women go to the altar, and vow love, honor, and obedience, and priests require this vow, of impossible performance by the mere volition of the maker. 'Obey' we may the sternest, most unreasonable commands; but the love and honor depend upon the partner in this portentous partnership. There is no anguish, Emma -- I speak from experience -- I am sure there can be none in any state of penal misery, to surpass that inflicted by severe dis-parities in married life; and, with my own still open wounds, I say sincerely that I believe there is no felicity exceeding that of happy married love. You can not wonder that the marriage of any one I love fills me with dread. I can not help it. Memory has killed hope. I remember how I rushed into the paradise of my imagination. How soon the flowers were blighted, and trailing in the dust! How soon the fruit was blasted!

6. How does the speaker in the passage feel about marriage?
7. What fills the speaker with dread?

8. In a time period when women are expected to get married, why is Sedgwick writing this novel?

Document D:



The painting above, named *The Death of Major Pearson*, is the work of John Singleton Copley. The style of Copley's painting is much like the English style. This work was created before America began to develop its own sense of culture. Answer the following questions with this in mind.

9. What is happening the painting?
10. What is the first thing you notice when you look at the painting?
11. What is most interesting about this painting?

Document E:

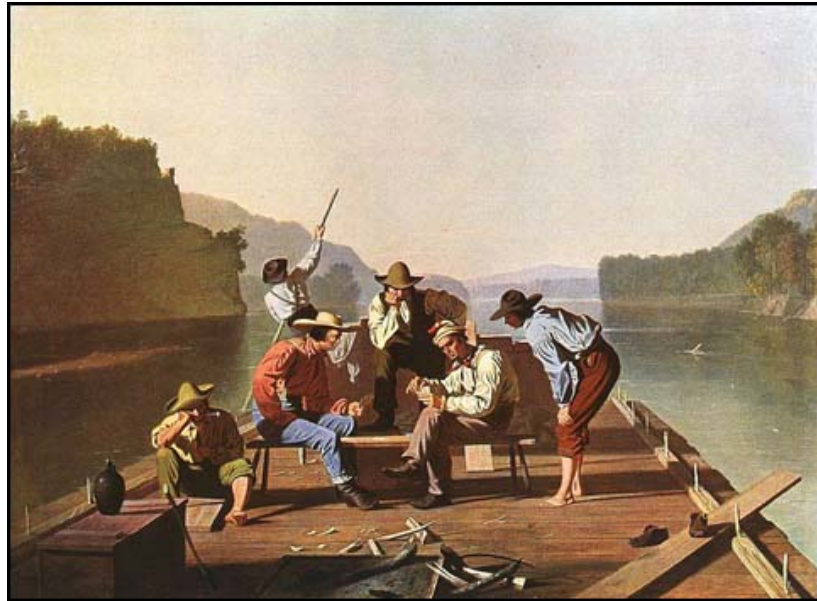
This painting, *The Falls of the Katerskills*, by Thomas Cole is an example of American artwork.



12. What is the first thing you notice in this painting?
13. What is most interesting in the painting?
14. How is Cole's painting different than Copley's painting?
15. How does this difference show the developing American culture?

Document F:

Raftsmen playing cards, by George Caleb Bingham. In all of Bingham's paintings he tried to portray real life.



16. What is going on in this painting?
17. What is the first thing you notice in this painting?
18. What is most interesting in this painting?
19. What are the similarities in Bingham and Cole's paintings?
20. What differences are there in Bingham and Copley's paintings?

Use your answers above to answer the following essay question. Your essay should consist of 5 paragraphs: an introduction, 3 body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Be sure to use examples from the reading selections and paintings.

Describe how art and literature portray the development of a distinct American Culture. You must use 3 examples of art or literature, one must be a literary source.

Question Numbers	Points Value	Total Points
“Rip Van Winkle”— 3 questions	2 points each	6
<i>The Last of the Mohicans</i>— 2 questions	2 points each	4
<i>Married or Single?</i>— 3 questions	2 points each	6
Copley Painting— 3 questions	2 points each	6
Cole Painting— 4 questions	2 points each	8
Bingham Painting— 5 questions	2 points each	10
Total		40

Essay Requirements	Points Value
Answers question thoroughly	20 points
Provides at least 3 examples from sources	15 points
Correct sentence structure, punctuation, spelling, grammar, etc.	10 points
Total	45

Total DBQ	Points Value
Source Questions	40
Essay	45
Total	95