



## Art and National Identity: Analyzing Painting and Literature from the Era of Manifest Destiny

Curriculum Unit 04.03.04  
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### Introduction

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The courses I teach cover World History and this seminar is primarily on American culture, but I feel that the unit produced will transcend cultures and political boundaries. This unit will enable students to understand national identity, then analyze the role national identity played in the art of the period. This idea of art and identity could be used to teach any historical culture or epoch, so the topic I apply this unit to will be *manifest destiny* and the American West. Although this unit will enable students to understand American national identity in the 19th century, its primary focus won't be the content exclusively.

Through writing critically about their analyses and interpretations of both art and history the students will become better overall writers, benefiting them in all later classes. Writing skills are not a unique demand of the English teacher, but for some reason teaching writing has become a unique responsibility of that teacher. I am certain that many English teachers would agree with the idea that students need to learn writing in all the major disciplines and not just in their English or Literature classes.

Improvements in the students' writing and the ability to express and support an opinion are two aspects of this unit that will help the student prepare for the CAPT. It is essential that the art selected for this unit be rich and captivating enough to easily facilitate thoughtful responses from the students. As trends in education are shifting towards ideas such as standardized testing, exit exams, and the linking of those test scores to school funding, it is of ultimate importance that the methods and content used to enrich student performance are appealing and fascinating enough to produce the best test scores. This is in no way "teaching to the test," it is teaching to the skill.

In *A Short Guide to Writing about Art*, Sylvan Barnet reminds us that when students are to write critically they "often think that they are writing for the teacher, but this is a misconception: when you write, you are the teacher."<sup>1</sup> Hopefully, this unit will prove to be especially effective because of the teaching method chosen. The analysis of works of art will enable the student to actually "do" history - *they* will make interpretations based on *their* observations.

## Unit Purpose

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My unit has two *purposes*, or umbrella objectives, that will be relevant to each lesson in the unit, and although the first is the development of a skill and the second is based on absorbing content, they are not mutually exclusive, nor should the unit be thought of or taught as two separate components. It will be my responsibility, as author of this curriculum (and of any subsequent teachers who choose to apply this curriculum to their classrooms), to search for the richest content that helps set up the growth of skills.

The content I expect my students to understand is American history, specifically examining art produced during the period of 19th century continental expansion and its relationship to the national identity of that time. The focus is on American 19th century expansion and art, but the role of art as it relates to national identity could certainly be explored in other nations as well. Could the sentiments of politicians and orators be found in the paintings of the time? How did the artists represent such sentiment? These are examples of the types of questions I will apply to the selected pieces of art discussed below.

I hope my students develop the skills of comparison, interpretation, and analysis all higher level thinking skills. Essentially, the student should learn how to communicate better; to understand and then convert that understanding into words. This fundamental ability transcends the importance of any state-driven test.

The idea of art and identity could be used to teach any historical culture or epoch, so the reader of this unit is encouraged to apply the format and the skills taught to any topic he or she may be teaching in class. In fact, this unit could be taught in a variety of subject areas. The teacher would have to choose the specific art samples related to such an extension unit. Once the ideal pieces of art were selected, the teacher could apply the skills emphasized below to that extension material.

## Overview

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### Art Analysis

The analysis of anything is the act of separating the whole into parts in order to ultimately better understand the whole. When analyzing a work of art, in this case a painting, one should ask some fundamental questions about those parts in order to gain an understanding of the piece. Some basic questions that can be applied to almost any work of art are:

- What was my initial reaction to the piece?
- Who is the artist?
- What is the title?
- When and where was the work made?
- What purpose did it serve?

Sculpting, photography, and graphic design are all very unique fields but each of the above questions could be applied to these area of study. Each area of the arts also prompts its own set of unique questions, however. When studying a painting, one wants to explore the following elements (I will stick to the suggestions that pertain to landscape or frontier painting, more or less):

- *Subject* - What is the topic? What is happening in the painting? What does the theme suggest or remind the viewer of? Are there humans in the painting? Are they at ease, fearful, or dwarfed by nature? What is their relation to the horizon and the sky? Is the sky clouded, stormy? Clear, bright? Is that forest inviting and nurturing or dark and threatening? Are there artificial objects in the scene?
- *Style* - What is the style of painting and what does that style suggest about the artists point of view or place in time?
- *Color* - What mood do the colors evoke? What do certain colors traditionally represent? Are the colors imitative or expressive?
- *Line* - Are the lines definitive and hard or are they irregular and indistinct? Do the objects blend in with their background or do they stand out off the canvas?
- *Light* - What is the effect of light in the painting? Does it illuminate a scene or character in the painting, or does it shadow? Does the light (dark) unite or divide the a painting?
- *Angle* - In what direction is the artist trying to direct your gaze by use of posture or light?
- *Matching* - What colors, poses, or objects appear to be aligned with one another on the page? Objects - are they harmonious with one another or at odds? Do the objects equally share the viewers attention?

Some other elements to consider that make up the composition of a painting include depth/space, medium, shape, size, and scale

## **Historical Background**

Nineteenth century American leaders firmly believed that it was their duty (and certainly their right) to expand and conquer in order to reach the Pacific. After the expansion and conquest these leaders projected the ideal: settlers were to come, and then the entire continent from sea to shining sea would be securely in possession of the nation state. In western America, the settlers would find that the climates and conditions of these newly conquered lands were rough, extreme, and unpredictable. Artists of the time presented their interpretations of this duty of expansion and conquest as well as these lands, and hoped that the American citizens would perceive the West as they did. Art was used to glorify and promote, and to criticize and condemn.

### *Manifest Destiny*

In the first decades of the nineteenth century the United States simultaneously experienced a very high birthrate and increased immigration. Data reveals that America grew from a population of five million in the beginning of the century to about twenty five million by the halfway point. As the original thirteen colonies grew, they also suffered occasional economic depressions (1818, 1839). Both of these factors (and competition with Spain) drove many Americans and their leaders to look westward past the Appalachian mountains into what was then considered the frontier.

Conveniently, in the 1840's there emerged a term that would renew a sense of national identity, addressing these economic and national demands. In 1845, editor John L. O'Sullivan wrote a powerful and influential essay that presented a defense and inspiration for the seizure of western lands. The movement he describes was not discussed in terms of economic gain or advantage though. He wrote:

.... the right of our manifest destiny to over spread and to possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and federative development of self government entrusted to us. It is a right such as that of the tree to the space of air and the earth suitable for the full expansion of its principle and destiny of growth.<sup>2</sup>

*Manifest destiny* was the insistence that it was the "mission" of Americans to expand the boundaries of freedom (and Christianity) across the continent and impart their idealism and values on those capable of self government.<sup>3</sup> This movement would capitalize on the already held notion of a restless American people with unclear borders, and would foster a identity of expansion.

### *Art, Literature, and National Identity*

Whether the idea of *manifest destiny* was originally a genuine belief or simply a justification for confiscating Native American and Mexican lands can be explored in another unit, but the frontier itself eventually became the genuine symbol for American national identity. In addition, the passion behind national identity would be intensified for Americans, as opposed to Europeans, compensating in part for their lack of historical tradition. The lack of historical tradition not only impacted nationalism and politics but also art. The American landscape painters of the 19th century were faced with the challenge of portraying a "new world" with no European markers or historical equivalents. This challenge was seen as appealing opportunity by some artists, who were at the front end of expansion into the West.

These landscape artists were there to capture the essence of the land before it was threatened and consumed by civilization. One of the earliest painters to capture this essence was Thomas Cole (1801-1848), later to be known as the "father of the Hudson River landscape tradition." Cole hoped to create paintings that would inspire a heroic national identity. In his art, he represented an identity that was defined as liberty from history, from feudal Europe, and from old art<sup>4</sup>. The western frontier provided Cole, other artists from his Hudson River School and many later painters with the perfect subject to represent the new nation. In the works of these frontier artists, the untouched landscape of the West suggests the spiritual purity of the nation.

### *Further Westward Expansion*

The quickening pace of westward expansion and the increasing demand for property stimulated the interests of both artists and writers in this new terrain (knowingly or not, they hastened the confiscation of land from its

native inhabitants).<sup>5</sup> Some of the artists, like the pioneers, would leave the comforts of home or studio to brave the journey westward into the wilderness to confront nature on its own terms. George Catlin (1796-1872) became as much of an explorer as Daniel Boone, or Lewis and Clark, as did other frontier artists. When they headed into the far West, they transferred the idea of nature as the divine presence from the Catskills to the great plains and beyond Rocky Mountain Transcendentalism. While artists like Catlin aimed to portray Native Americans<sup>6</sup>, other artists' objectives were to glorify, and hence secure the American presence in this sanctimonious, pure, and promised land. One of these artists was Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze.

Leutze, most famous for his *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, was born in Germany and moved to the U.S. in 1831 at the age of fifteen. When he returned to Germany in the early 1840's to study at the Dusseldorf Art Academy, he saw himself as an American. He, and many German idealists (and future immigrants to this country), saw America as the universal fatherland of liberty. In the paintings Leutze made at the academy, he glorified American history with great passion, uplifting the heroic spirit of the nation.

In *Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way (Westward Ho!)*, Leutze captures the apparent unavoidable push by (white) Americans westward. This work "articulated the belief of Americans since the 16th century that they had a Christian duty and an inalienable right to expand their territory and their influence."<sup>7</sup> Leutze viewed the West as not just the frontier for America, but the universal final frontier for all of civilization.

### *Analysis & Comparison*

A good starting off point for an analysis of this painting would be a discussion about its name. Inherent in its title is the direction of expansion (*Westward*). It also suggests a feel of conviction in the growth of this empire (*takes its way*), like the phrase "having your way with someone," and a definite enthusiasm for the conquest (*Westward Ho!*). A thorough conversation about the title should lead to the conclusion that the painter viewed westward expansion favorably, at the least, and probably that he was a firm believer in the idea of *manifest destiny*. The difficult task in leading a discussion like this is maintaining a balance between offering information to expand students' thinking versus using questioning and offering very little information, and that line varies for every painting. One of the reasons I chose this particular painting is because the title (and the content) clearly illustrate the way the artist perceives westward expansion. A topic for further discussion at this point, before viewing the painting, would be the artist's origins. How does the fact that Leutze was a immigrant from "the old world" impact your ideas on the artist's point of view?

Upon first look at the painting, the viewer can not help but immediately feel the sense of forward motion progress. Of course there are many other elements to this work that will catch the viewer's eye, like the calm horizon in the distance ahead or the shadowy and frozen mountains in the recent past, but it is the sense of determination and effort seen in the pioneers coming up through the pass that best captures the essence of the title..

Exactly what about the humans that captures the title's essence needs to be explained in order for the statement to have any validity in a critical discussion or paper, however. First, the body language of the three men in the lead, aligned with each other along what is the literal and metaphorical horizon, can be described as encouraging and enthusiastic. They turn to their fellow pioneers and assure them that they have made it out of the darkness. One of the men in Daniel Boone attire kneels beside a woman and child and gestures to the heavenly calmness before them, inviting them to rise and continue their journey. To me, they represent the continuation of Christian life even in those unknown lands and the determination of American pioneers who chose to brave the struggles of the wilderness. Other men in the foreground march with their heads down along the horses and wagons, together they create a sense of engine gears or the wheels on a train. Both

these machines will trudge almost continuously if fueled and cared for, like the pioneer. Drawing the reader's attention to these finer aspects of this one part of the whole supports my suggestion that the pioneer's resolve is the essence behind the title, and also begins to build an understanding of the essence of the painting itself.

Students will be able to break the whole into its many clearly defined parts. I've mentioned the role of some of the humans, but there are others that can be examined as well. The men cutting down trees and clearing the land ahead of the pioneers and those still struggling through the pass are further examples. What do the dark, snowy mountains in the background suggest? What role do light and color play? Based on the items carried, what can we say Leutze valued? These are the types of questions you should present to your class to facilitate effective analytical discussion.

Based on what the class has discovered by the painting's parts, the students should have established a good sense of the whole. Taking a comparative look at some other works of art and literature would enrich the lesson by allowing students to see how this painting fits into the whole of Leutze's career, frontier painting, and national identity.

Earlier in his career, Leutze painted *Departure of Columbus from Palos in 1492* (1855). It should be made known that Columbus went on his journey with the blessing of the pope and the Catholic rulers of Spain. He literally represented the Catholic church. This is the type of information you would want to disclose to your students in order for them to fully appreciate the historical context of the painting. At the center stands a determined Columbus about to lead his ships and their crews out of Spain and westward, into the unknown. With his head above the horizon and arm stretched pointing to the sea, he looks back over the crew confidently. Now that students are armed with some background knowledge, and after seeing Columbus' position and posture, what does the composite of that say about Leutze's pioneers in *Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way*? That is for the student to determine.

Further comparisons could be made to Frederic Church's *Hooker and Company Journeying through the Wilderness in 1636 from Plymouth to Hartford* (1846). Although not the west, in 1636 Hartford was a frontier, and the painting being set in Connecticut would be meaningful for our students. Additionally the students will have had experience viewing this painting in a class prior to this one (in a different context), so this study will enrich and deepen their understanding of it. The ways in which the position of the objects and scale of this painting differ from the previous works could become a lively discussion providing the students with an opportunity to use analysis. The people are engulfed and dwarfed by the forest that lies *ahead* of them. How is that different from what we have observed about the other paintings, and what does it suggest about the experience of these pioneers?

Two other paintings I would suggest using to further reinforce the idea of westward expansion and art are William Jewett's *The Promised Land-the Grayson Family* (1850) and George Caleb Bingham's *Daniel Boone Escorting Settlers Through the Cumberland Gap* (1851).

Each painting in this unit was carefully chosen to compliment or support the others in one way or another. At this point students would benefit from a review of the past few paintings to establish what themes we find consistently among them. Divine right and duty, American will, nature as God's grace, and the clear and unobstructed path to American expansion westward are common themes found in all of these works of art. Introducing an artist and a painting that offer a very different interpretation at this stage in the unit expands the students ability to think critically encourages them to use a variety of resources when building knowledge. An excellent painting to contrast the notion of divine right and peaceful conquest is Charles Deas' *The Death*

*Struggle (1845)* . In it, a U.S. hunter or soldier is involved in an intense life-and-death struggle with both a Native American and nature itself. Still on their horses, both men have fought their way off a cliff as a second Native American watches. There does not seem to be much hope for the horses, but the white man has grabbed hold of a branch, and despite their adversarial relationship, the Native American now clutches onto his waist in hopes of surviving. It is worth pointing out the ironic nature of the current state of the relationship of the elements compared to their original intent and purpose. The painting shows the struggle between two civilizations, both destroying each other but for the moment depending on each other. Deas' message is a dire warning to anyone who thinks that the journey West will always lead to paradise.

### *Whitman's Pioneers*

Poetry too can be analyzed in relation to *manifest destiny* . An excellent poem to teach how the life on the frontier was presented in art is Walt Whitman's *Pioneers!*, *O Pioneers!* In it, Whitman address the "youthful, sinewy...tan faced children" and announces:

Follow well in order, get your weapons ready;  
Have you your pistols? Have you your sharp edged axes? Pioneers! O pioneers!  
For we cannot tarry here,  
We must march my darlings, we must bear the brunt of danger,  
We, the youthful sinewy races, all the rest on us depend, Pioneers! O pioneers!

Whitman certainly lacks the idealism and righteousness of a O'Sullivan or a Leutze, but he is very clear that it is the mission of this generation of Americans to "take up the task" "leav(ing) the past behind" in order to "seize" a "newer, mightier world, varied world."

This celebrated poem is full of adventures that the students will be able to imagine, feeling the exhilaration of westward expansion. As classrooms become more diverse in terms of learning styles, this poem can be used to reach more types of learners. The colorfulness of the poem provides the artistic students in class with an opportunity to recreate some or all of Whitman's images in paintings of their own.

The student should be able to analyze the relationship between this poem and the paintings discussed earlier. Does the poem support or refute the mission of the pioneers as seen by the painters studied? What is Whitman saying about *manifest destiny* and westward expansion?

### *Conclusion / Writing critically*

After first establishing an understanding of the history and art behind the unit, the students should be prepared at this point in the unit to write in order to explain their reactions to the works of art before them. The students will write critically, but they shouldn't confuse the idea of pointing out faults with the idea of bringing attention to something they feel deserves attention. That is what the critical essay should be. The



student should use the art terms listed above to describe a composite of the work of art, drawing our attention to the finer points of the painting, and then possibly compare how that painting relates to others from the set of study.

The critical essay should be well organized, and contain an evaluation and analysis. The writer passes judgment on the art, deciding what is or is not worth discussing (evaluation) and then the writer will separate the whole into its parts (analysis) and attempt to persuade the reader that what he or she sees in the painting are important elements (opinion). Using the parts of a work of art to explain one's position on the whole correlates perfectly with the CAPT driven objective of using information from historical sources to support one's stance on an issue. Writing persuasively is an essential skill for success at the high school level.

## **Conclusion / Assessment**

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I will leave assessing student comprehension of the historical issues surrounding U.S. History and Geography to the individual teacher. The true goal of this unit's assessment piece is to determine if students are able to effectively explore the world of art and use art to enrich learning in other subjects. I also hope that they have a better appreciation of the role of the artist in American history and artist's contributions to American culture. As this unit concludes, the students should be assessed on their acquisition of the skills of art analysis and writing critically. Later in the Lesson Plans portion of the unit I will explain the writing assessment.

## **Academic Setting & Approach**

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My unit will be taught in "Modern World History" at Wilbur Cross High School. It is a history elective for tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade students who have a desire to go beyond the minimal history requirements for the school. The students in this class tend to be curious, motivated, and eager to explore the modern world. The class covers the "Short Twentieth Century" 1914-1991, but begins with a look at the four ideas that shaped our modern world: The Enlightenment, Industrialization, Nationalism, and Imperialism. This unit can be used first in the period of Nationalism or Empire.

The nature of our "Representations of American Culture through Art and Literature" seminar fit the needs of a block-scheduled teacher. The seminar has improved my teaching by increasing my knowledge of the use of art as a learning tool. Also, and most importantly, it will empower my students with the skill of being able to analyze art from the point of view of history and geography.

The format of this unit can really be used in any social studies class at any grade level. I will use it in my Early World History class also, for example. Although the course "Early World History" is taught as a thematic survey of the past three thousand years, I often try to teach the material through a geographic perspective. The artwork of past eras is often all we have for a visual representation of the landscape. The skills taught in this unit could easily be applied to studying regional geography and history. The analysis of a specific time and place on earth or the human condition, using riveting pieces of art as a prompt, could produce great writing from students in an English or creative writing class. This is another example of where this unit could



be used.

The unit is designed to match our current class schedule. Classes run forty-five minutes on Monday, Thursday, and Friday. On Tuesday and Wednesday we teach a block period of ninety minutes. The course is designed for students who are advanced or on-level readers and on their way to college. The class does not rely heavily on a textbook, but focuses more on primary and secondary sources. This unit will utilize the arts to teach the human experience, specifically art, literature, and some film. An entrancing painting, the powerful language of an author, or a masterful scene from a film can stick with a student for a lifetime, unlike anything in a textbook. Multiple sources and diversification help the teacher in a block schedule maintain effectiveness. As a school that uses block scheduling, Cross encourages its teachers to diversify their approaches.

As more and more special education and learning-disabled students become mainstreamed into our classrooms, New Haven teachers are having to modify their lessons to the new range of skills in their classrooms. One modification I suggest when viewing a work of art is to try to segregate the content you want the student to focus on. Sometimes a painting can be very busy and full of detail. This can be distracting for some students. Folding the painting in half or isolating portions on the overhead are two good ways to help students focus.

Some students cannot read as well as others, and some are visual learners. This modified approach allows all students in the class to appreciate the material. A diversified approach also provides the on-level reader or non-disabled student a new, different, and enriched perspective on the subject. Images can be, and often are, more powerful than the pen.

This unit meets many of the standards established by the New Haven Public School System. Common Performance Standards such as gathering historical data from secondary sources, identifying the main idea in a source of historical information, and writing short statements presenting historical ideas are met. The unit also meets content standards in the high school subjects of history, geography, and diversity. Further below is a specific and detailed list of those standards.

## Objectives

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- identify the causes and effects of U.S. westward expansions
- explain the idea of *manifest destiny*
- gather historical data from secondary sources
- connect 19th century U.S expansion to the greater concepts of nationalism and empire
- define key terms to art analysis
- critically analyze and discuss a painting
- identify unique qualities of landscape painting
- compare the representation of historical themes in poetry and painting
- identify the main idea in a source of historical information
- analyze, compare, and write critically about connected works of art

## Lesson Plans

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### Lesson One

*Title: Westward Expansion & Manifest Destiny*

*Purpose :* To introduce and analyze the American concept of Manifest Destiny

*Materials :* Maps, primary documents, text,

*Duration :* 45 mins

*Objectives /*Students will be able to:

- identify the causes and effects of U.S. westward expansions
- explain the idea of *manifest destiny*
- connect 19th century U.S expansion to the greater concepts of nationalism and empire

Warm Up:

Students will walk in and see the word destiny on the board. Students will take out their notebooks and write a thoughtful definition of the word. Students will then share their definitions. After this discussion, I will write the word *manifest* on the board before destiny. What does *manifest* mean? Webster defines manifest as “obvious, readily perceived.” Put *manifest destiny* together and what ideas can we come up with?

*Activity :*

Putting the term manifest destiny aside for a moment, students will analyze two sets of data from the early 19th century: birthrates and immigration. This data will reveal that America grew from a population of five million in the beginning of the century to about twenty five million by the halfway point.

With such a boom in population, what do the students predict the solution will be? To help illustrate the point, students should also be directed to a world map, and reminded that Americans came from London to the Atlantic coast (westward) and then expanded from the coast to the Appalachians (westward). Remember the Louisiana Purchase? Lewis and Clark?

After reading a passage from O’Sullivan’s essay (above), class will address the question: what is *manifest destiny* and how does it connect to the earlier sets of data? As the map activity (below) is passed out, teacher will point out the Spanish claims in the new world. What impact could the location of the Spanish Empire have in the movement of *manifest destiny* ?

*Closure :*

Map activity about the stages of westward expansions, and the annihilation of the native peoples of North

America

*Assignment :*

Under their earlier, separate definitions of the two words, students will write in their notebooks a comprehensive definition of the historical concept of *manifest destiny* . They will also explain the more material (political and economic) reasons that drove this movement in American history.

## **Lesson Two**

*Title : Art 101*

*Purpose :* To introduce fundamental skills of art analysis and writing critically

*Materials:* Notes on art analysis, Church's *Hooker and Company Journeying through the Wilderness in 1636 from Plymouth to Hartford*

*Duration :* 45 mins

Objectives/Students will be able to:

- define key terms to art analysis
- critically analyze and discuss a painting
- identify unique qualities of landscape painting

*Warm Up :*

What do we look at when we look at a work of art? Class will list and discuss the many elements of a work of art - subject, style, color, line, form, angle, medium, matching, light, the objects, depth, shape, size, scale, purpose, etc. As any of these various layers to a painting are listed by the students, they should be encouraged to define the term using their own words. Do any classmates have anything to add to the definition, modifications? Hopefully after a brief discussion, the class will have a solid understanding of the term. The teacher may need to clarify or solidify the definition. Writing the definition down on the board afterwards will be helpful for more visual learners.

*Activity :*

After the introductory discussion that will establish the key art terms for the lessons, the class will take notes on Thomas Cole and the Hudson River School painters. In their notebooks, they will respond to the prompt: What are some of the unique elements in landscape art? What types of questions could you ask about this type of piece using those terms? Some possible questions/observations could be: Are there humans in the painting? Are they at ease, fearful, or dwarfed by nature? What is their relation to the horizon and the sky? Is the sky clouded, stormy? Clear, bright? Is that forest inviting and nurturing or dark and threatening. Are there artificial objects in the scene? After observing a piece of art in this way, the next step is to interpret it what

statement is the artist making by painting this scene and by including the elements he chose to include??

*Closure :*

Place Frederic Church's *Hooker and Company Journeying through the Wilderness in 1636 from Plymouth to Hartford* ( 1846) on the overhead for the students to view. Allow a minute or two for them to look long and hard at the painting. Accurately using the terms just discussed in class, students will describe what they see and then record their initial response to the work in their history journals.

Assignment:

Students will locate three works of art from home (an actual painting, a sculpture, a vase, plate, photograph, quilt, etc). They will write a paragraph on each piece describing it using the terms above in their journals. At least five of the terms above should be used on each piece.

### **Lesson Three**

*Title: Art, Literature, and American National Identity*

Purpose: To view the art of Westward Expansion

*Materials :* Whitman's *Pioneers! O Pioneers!* , Leutze's *Departure of Columbus from Palos in 1492* (1855), Leutze's *Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way (Westward Ho!)*, Church's *Hooker and Company Journeying through the Wilderness in 1636 from Plymouth to Hartford* ( 1846), Deas's *The Death Struggle* (1845)

*Duration :* 90 mins

*Objectives /*Students will be able to:

- gather historical data from secondary sources
- compare the representation of historical themes in poetry and painting
- identify the main idea in a source of historical information
- analyze, compare and write critically about connected works of art

Warm Up:

During the last class the students essentially described what they saw and their initial reactions, and today students will further analyze a work of art. Students will break down the title on the board - *Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way (Westward Ho!)*. What does the title suggest about the painter's perspective? Simply based on the title, what does the class imagine the painting to look like? Students would be encouraged to describe or sketch for a few minutes at their desks. Volunteers can get up and sketch a design for the class or describe their visions.

### Activity:

The painting should then be projected on to the whiteboard or screen as large as possible without degrading the image. The painting should be examined through the lens of *manifest destiny*. The question, “How does the artist portray the pioneers and their mission?” should prompt a long examination and discussion because there are so many details in the painting to interpret. In the narrative above I discuss at length some areas that deserve close attention and comparisons that further enrich this lesson. Please refer to that section for additional ideas about discussion prompts.

### Closure:

After thoroughly analyzing this work of art and making the appropriate comparisons, the students will read Walt Whitman’s *Pioneers! O Pioneers!* silently at their desks .

## Assessment

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In a 3-5 page critical essay, the students will explain the relationship between *manifest destiny* and art in the 19th century, using Leutze’s *Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way (Westward Ho!)* and Whitman’s *Pioneers! O Pioneers!* as their main art sources. They are encouraged to research other paintings for effective comparisons. Does the poem support or refute the mission of the pioneers as seen by the painters studied? What is Whitman saying about *manifest destiny* and westward expansion? In conclusion, the students should express their opinions about the role of the artists in society.

## Materials

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Whitman, W. (1865-1881) "Pioneers, O Pioneers" from "American Poetry and Prose". Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Co.

## **Suggestions for Teacher**

### Readings for the Teacher

- *Framing America*

Frances K Pohl's work is one of the leading textbooks on the social history of American Art.

- *A Short Guide to Writing about Art*

This timeless explanation on the finer points of analyzing and writing about art by Sylvan Barnet was incredibly helpful for me. As a novice to the study of art, I relied on it heavily concerning critical art essays.

- *American Painting of the 19th Century: Realism, Idealism and the American Experience*

This scholarly study of American Art that concentrates on some of the leading artists of the day. In addition to Barbara Novak's perceptive analysis, this book contains valuable resources such as many illustrations and a collection of brief biographies of dozens of painters.- The Iconography of Landscape, Cosgrove and Daniels (eds.)

This useful collection of essays can help the teacher gain a rich understanding of the use of icons in landscape art.

- *The Age of Empire*

Historian Eric Hobsbawm surveys the age of conquest and nationalism in this study of the world in the late nineteenth century. Reading this will help the teacher connect events taking place in the new world to those in the old.

## ***Suggested Website for the Teacher***

<http://www.artchive.com/> - This site is an incredibly comprehensive collection of world art available for research or downloading images.

## **Standards**

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Below are the New Haven Public Schools' performance and content specific standards that align with my unit. The topic and class this unit is designed for is for students of multiple grades, therefore the standards alignment ranges from grade 9 (World History) through grades 10 and 11 (U.S. I and U.S. II).

### **NHPS Social Studies Common Performance Standards**

Students will:

- Gather historical data from multiple primary and secondary sources.
- Identify the main idea in a source of historical information.
- Write short narratives and statements presenting historical ideas.
- Demonstrate understanding through written, verbal, visual, musical and/or technological formats.
- Formulate questions and hypotheses from multiple perspectives, using multiple sources.
- Research an issue of interest and be able to take and defend a position on that issue.

### **NHPS Social Studies Specific Content Standards**

*Grade Nine*

Content Standard 3.0 Geography

Students will:

- Read, view and listen to multiple sources concerning geography.
- Explore the geography of early civilizations and its effects on the development of the region.



*Grade Nine*

Content Standard 5.0 History

- Read, view and listen to multiple sources concerning history.

*Grade Ten*

Content Standard 1.0 Diversity

- Read, view and listen to multiple sources that reflect the diversity of culture.
- Assess the impact of other European settlements on Native Americans, including long-term effects of contact, cooperation, and conflict.

*Grade Ten*

Content Standard 3.0 Geography

- Discuss westward expansion, the concept of Manifest Destiny, sectionalism, and the market economy.

*Grade Eleven*

Content Standard 3.0 Geography

- Read, view and listen to multiple sources concerning geography.
- Explore the impact of geography on the Native American's cultures.
- Describe some of the natural obstacles faced in the building of the Transcontinental Railroad.
- Assess, in geographic terms, the results of American expansion

*Grade Eleven*

Content Standard 5.0 History

- Assess the effects of homesteading on the western movement.

## Notes

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1. Barnet 1

2. Brinkley, 352

3. One could argue that westward expansion has always been America's identity - from London to New England, into the coast. And the first post revolutionary story most school children learn is that of Lewis and Clark.

4. Andrews, 159

5. Pohl 153

6. Curry, 131

7. Pohl 168

8. Whitman, lines 2-6

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