

Library of Congress and National Archives

- [Map Collections: 1500 – 2003](#)—Library of Congress (LoC): *American Memory* online exhibit divided into 7 thematic categories including: Discovery and Exploration; Cities and Towns; and Military Battles and Campaigns.
- [Louisiana Purchase Treaty](#)—*100 Milestone Documents in American History*, National Archives (NARA): Online exhibit that displays not only documents and transcripts of the Louisiana Purchase Treaty (1803), but also from the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

Historical Sources

- “[Act Establishing Yellowstone National Park](#)” (1872)
- Mary Church Terrell, “[What It Means to be Colored in the Capital of the U.S.](#)” (1906)

Law

- [Missouri Compromise](#) (1820) [Compromise of 1850](#) (1850)
- [Homestead Act](#) (1862)
- [Executive Order 9066 \(Resulting in Internment of Japanese-Americans\)](#) (1942)

General Fiction and Non-Fiction

- William Bartram, *Bartram’s Travels* (1791)
- Kate Chopin, *Storm* (1898; pub. 1969)
- Willa Cather, *My Antonia* (1918)
- Sinclair Lewis, *Main Street* (1920)
- Anzia Yezierska, *Bread Givers* (1925)
- Carlos Bulosan, *America is in the Heart* (1943)
- John Steinbeck, *Cannery Row* (1945)
- John McPhee, *Coming into the Country* (1977)
- William Least Heat Moon, *Blue Highways* (1984)
- Stephen Ambrose, *Undaunted Courage* (1996)
- Junot Diaz, *Drown* (1997)

Poetry : Carl Sandburg, “Chicago”

Children’s Literature

Laura Ingalls Wilder, *The Little House* series (1932 – 1943)

Young Adult Literature

Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun* (1957)
Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street* (1984)

Web Resources

- [Surveying and Geodesy Collection](#)—Smithsonian Museum of American History: Photos of the instruments that helped “turn the American landscape into property.”
- [Lower East Side Tenement Museum, NYC—Virtual Tour](#)
Explore the homes and lives of families who made this tenement building home in the 19th and 20th centuries.
- [Cliff Dwellings—Virtual Tour](#) Mesa Verde National Park:
Explore homes Americans created up to 1,600 years ago.

Mass Moments is an online compendium of stories from Massachusetts history, including the following ones that touch on the topic of *Where Is America?*

[Puritans Leave for Massachusetts: On April 7, 1630](#), the last well-wishers stepped off the ship Arbella and returned to shore. More than a week later, the winds were finally favorable and the ship weighed anchor and sailed for New England with John Winthrop and approximately 300 English Puritans on board.

[Lowell Women Sign On to Teach in the West: On January 26, 1864](#), Asa Mercer from Seattle explained to his largely female Lowell audience that there was a great scarcity of teachers in Washington Territory. He was looking for a “shipload” of women.

[Shoppers’ World Launches Mall Era: On October 5, 1951](#), Shoppers' World in Framingham opened for business. The first suburban shopping mall in the Northeast, and only the second in the country, the complex was a revolutionary design.

Mass Moments are presented by Mass Humanities.

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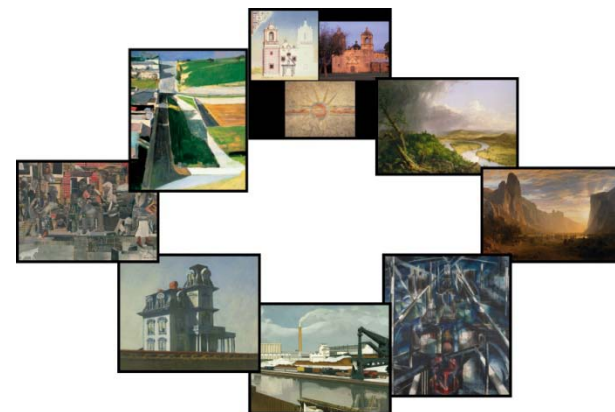


For use online, this brochure is available at
www.masshumanities.org.

Written by Elizabeth Duclos-Orsello.

Picturing America

II. WHERE IS AMERICA?



Clockwise from top:

Mission Concepción, San Antonio, Texas, 1775 ([1-B](#))

Thomas Cole, *View From Mt Holyoke-The Oxbow*, 1836 ([5-A](#))

Albert Bierstadt, *Looking Down Yosemite Valley*, California, 1865
([8-A](#))

Joseph Stella, *Brooklyn Bridge*, c. 1919 – 1920 ([14-B](#))

Charles Sheeler, *American Landscape*, 1930 ([15-A](#))

Edward Hopper, *House by the Railroad*, 1925 ([16-A](#))

Romare Bearden, *The Dove*, 1964 ([17-B](#))

Richard Diebenkorn, *Cityscape I*, 1964 ([20-A](#))

Picturing America, a program of the National Endowment for the Humanities and the American Library Association, brings high quality reproductions of masterpieces of American art into classrooms and libraries nationwide. This brochure was produced by

II. WHERE IS AMERICA?

Some ways to define the *where* of “America” are:

- 1) Within the political boundaries of the United States;
- 2) Where “American” or “U.S.” culture is found; or
- 3) Any place in the Western Hemisphere.

Therefore, when American artists interpret locales, landscapes, and icons that they believe represent America or tell the viewer something about the “essence” of the United States, the New World, or its citizens, they shape ideas about where America is and what it looks like. The images in this grouping represent a range of styles and a diversity of ideas about the location and feel of America.

Taking Inventory

What kind of places are depicted here, and *how* are they portrayed (accessible, confusing, scary, welcoming, foreboding, desirable, other adjectives)? What feelings do they evoke? Calm, busy, full of energy, sadness, joy? How do the artists create those effects? Think about point of view, brush strokes, color, and placement of objects or figures in the composition.

What do you see in your mind’s eye when you think of an “American” place?

- Which of these images match your ideas? How and why?
- Which images seem very different from your ideas? How so?
- There are no interiors depicted in this group. Can individual, interior places be “American” places?

What kinds of geographic diversity do these images represent?

- Notice that some of these represent urban places (cities), and others rural or suburban places. How can you tell which is which? Is there a certain element in the art that distinguishes one type of place from another? Notice the color palettes used in each image.
- Can you find any images that are hard to put into a single category?

Mission Concepción was built before Texas was part of the United States (in fact, before there was a “United States”).

- Is it an “American” place? Why?
- Are there other places outside the political or historic boundaries of the US that can be considered “American” places? What makes them so? How would you depict them artistically?

A Closer Look

One tradition in of American landscape painting shows the continent as open space desirable and destined to be part of an expanding American nation. This tradition was particularly strong from the 1820s through the 1880s.

- With what painterly techniques does Bierstadt get this point of view across to viewers in *Looking Down Yosemite Valley* (1865)?
- Consider *Oxbow*, *Cityscape I* and *American Landscape*. Which gives you a similar sense of grandeur and promise of America? Which evokes a different feeling? How?
- Bierstadt was a German immigrant who grew up in New Bedford, MA. How might Yosemite Valley have been depicted by indigenous people living in the area at this time?
- What additional place or places would you add to this set of American places? How would you depict it/them? What medium (painting, sculpture, photography etc.) would you use to represent your favorite American place?

Children’s Activity

1. Finding Pairs

To the right is a list of categories you can use to organize these works of art into pairs or sets. See if you can fit at least two images into each category. You may add your own categories to this list.

Same colors used: _____

Same types of locations: _____
(For example, “city,” “country,” “suburb.”)

Same perspective: _____
(Are you looking from above or below, or from the side, or from the inside or outside?)

Same feeling you get: _____

2. Think about YOUR favorite American place.

- How does it make you feel?
- How would you paint or draw it to get that feeling across to other people?