



Picturing America

AMERICA'S HISTORY THROUGH OUR NATION'S ART

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

WELCOME TO PICTURING AMERICA

Can you picture a nation? Can works of art express the shared heritage of millions of people? Can brushstrokes and photographs convey the ideas and ideals that unite a diverse country? At the National Endowment for the Humanities, we believe the answer to all these questions is yes.

The desire to tell the story of America through its art inspired the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to develop Picturing AmericaSM. Our nation is united by our devotion to shared principles such as freedom, equality, and democracy. Great American art can help us ensure these ideals are studied, passed on, and remembered.

Picturing America is an innovative program that helps teach American history and provides students with a gateway to the entire universe of the humanities. It begins with carefully selected masterpieces spanning several centuries. The featured artists range from early American Indian artisans to painters Mary Cassatt and Thomas Hart Benton, from photographers Walker Evans and Dorothea Lange to architects Frank Lloyd Wright and William Van Alen.

In partnership with the American Library Association, the NEH is distributing large, high-quality reproductions of these works, free of charge, to schools and libraries nationwide, along with materials and lesson plans for use by educators. These materials unlock the potential of the works of art, enhancing the study of American history, social studies, language arts, literature, and civics.

Perpetuating democracy is difficult—and it has become more difficult in an increasingly fast-paced, global environment. Picturing America helps us understand our democracy by reintroducing us to our common heritage and ideals. It brings us face to face with the people, places, and events that have shaped our country and provides an innovative way to experience America's history through our nation's art.



BRUCE COLE, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities



THE MATERIALS

Each institution that participates in the program receives the following materials:

- Forty large, high-quality reproductions of the selected masterpieces (24" x 36")
- An in-depth teachers resource book to provide educators with a wide range of ideas and background information for using reproductions in core subjects
- A dynamic online resource providing access to images, lesson plans, and more detailed information on the masterpieces and artists, available at PicturingAmerica.neh.gov

“Thank you so much for this opportunity to share with our students these historical images. We are overwhelmed by how the size of the pictures conveys so much more information than one can get from a reproduction in a book.”

– ROSE CORY, teacher, Jane Addams Junior High School,
Schaumburg, Illinois

A WINDOW INTO THE AMERICAN CHARACTER

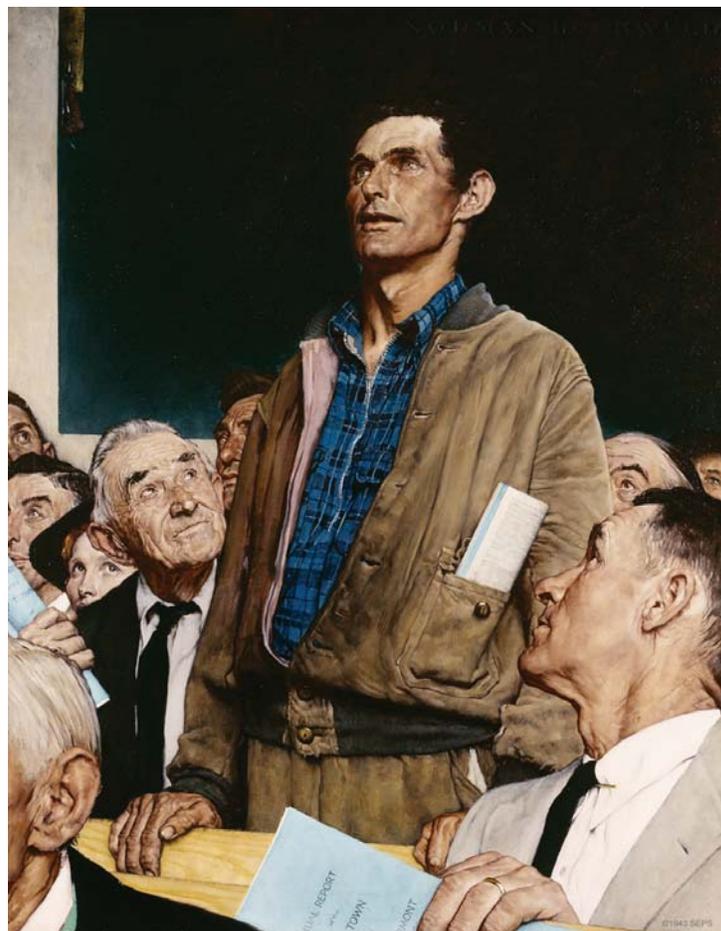
Picturing America provides creative ways to explore our nation's history and ideals. What better way to see the courage of a great leader than through Emanuel Leutze's *Washington Crossing the Delaware*? How better to appreciate the power of American democracy than through Norman Rockwell's *Freedom of Speech*? These masterpieces open the viewer's eyes to America's rich history and culture. Architectural landmarks like the Brooklyn Bridge and Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater convey our sense of optimism and ingenuity. American landscapes, such as Albert Bierstadt's *Looking Down Yosemite Valley*, display our nation's fascination with the West and the influence of the frontier.

Each of the works featured in Picturing America may be explored individually. Yet the collection also lends itself to the study of images in endless combinations that reveal enduring American themes. For instance, the composition of James Karales's iconic photograph of the 1965 Selma-to-Montgomery march echoes Leutze's portrayal of Washington crossing the Delaware—reminding us that every generation must make its own sacrifices for freedom. Martin Puryear's sculpture, *Ladder for Booker T. Washington*, further illustrates the continuing labors demanded by our nation's ongoing pursuit of equality.

Taken as a whole, the Picturing America collection offers a powerful depiction of many aspects of American history and culture. Displayed on a classroom wall or featured in a public library, these masterpieces enable viewers to transcend the present and witness the dramatic unfolding of our history.

WHAT BETTER TIME FOR PICTURING AMERICA?

Americans have always turned to people and events from our past for wisdom and inspiration. Yet many Americans today are unaware of our country's fascinating history and cultural legacy. Young people have unprecedented visual literacy but are often unfamiliar with the most lasting and beautiful images from our history.

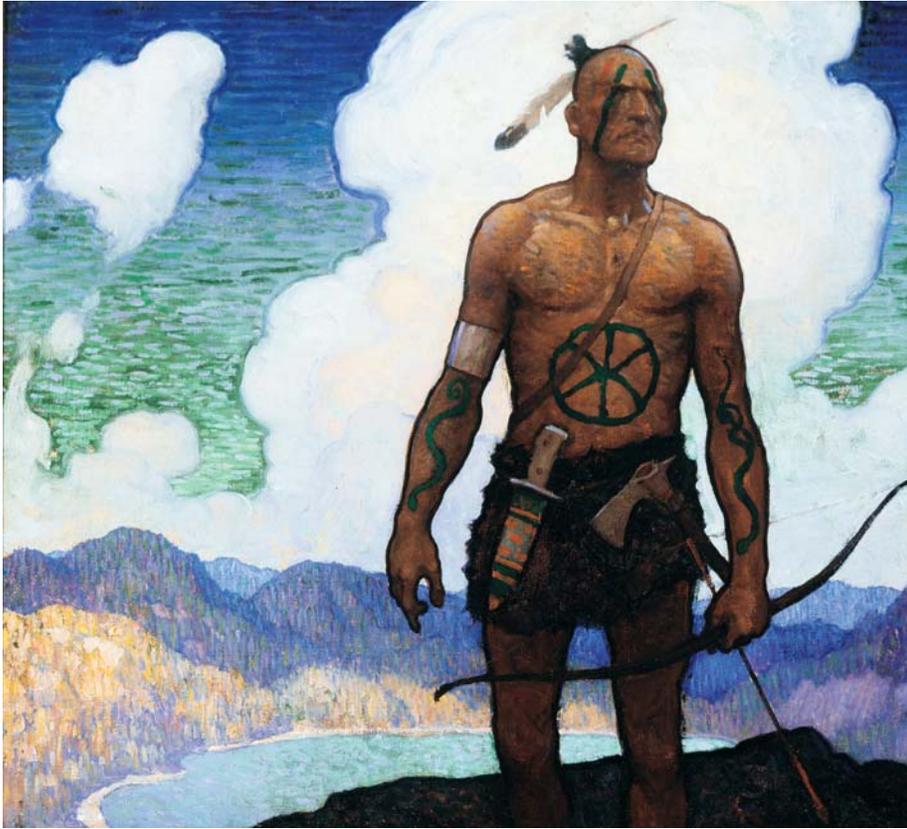


Freedom of Speech (*Saturday Evening Post* 1943), 1943, Norman Rockwell

“If you could say it in words, there would be no reason to paint.”

– EDWARD HOPPER

Through Picturing America, the NEH strives to create a bridge between the story of our nation and the history of our art. By bringing some of our country's finest works of art directly to classrooms and providing the educational context for these images, we can open more eyes to the legacy of our great country.



Last of the Mohicans, cover illustration, 1919, N. C. Wyeth

“A picture does indeed say more than words. Picturing America gives our students a wonderful opportunity to creatively explore history, culture, and life through compelling images.”

– KRISTINA MCGLAUN, librarian,
Jackson Creek Middle School,
Bloomington, Indiana

A MUSEUM IN EVERY HOMETOWN

Picturing America brings our nation’s art and history directly to curious minds of all ages, all over the country. Through schools, libraries, and public programs, the initiative provides access for all Americans to some of our most important works of art.

In that sense, the program itself is an example of democratic education. Neither income nor geography is an obstacle to participating in the program. And it is designed to appeal to everyone, not just to students. The images are appropriate for children and adults, and the narrative qualities of the selected works of art allow them to be appreciated by both skilled and untrained eyes. Picturing America gives students, parents, and teachers across the United States a chance to understand and appreciate the great depth and breadth of America’s cultural landscape.



Brooklyn Bridge, New York, 1929, Walker Evans



Selma-to-Montgomery March for Voting Rights in 1965, 1965, James Karales

PICTURING AMERICA: AN OVERVIEW

By bringing iconic American art into public and private schools, libraries, and communities, Picturing America offers Americans the opportunity to learn about our nation's history and culture in a fresh and engaging way. Picturing America uses art as a catalyst for the study of American history—the cultural, political, and historical threads woven into our nation's fabric over time.

The images selected for Picturing America are just a small sample of significant works from the whole body of American art. The goal is to give Americans a deeper appreciation for our country's history by introducing them to its great art. Ultimately, the National Endowment for the Humanities hopes that Picturing America will help prepare and inspire today's Americans as they add their own chapters to our nation's ongoing story.



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Abraham Lincoln, April 10, 1865, Alexander Gardner

“The Arts and Sciences essential to the...
ornament and happiness of human life
have a primary claim to the encouragement
of every lover of his country and mankind.”

– GEORGE WASHINGTON

Image Credits:

COVER:

Emanuel Leutze (American: 1816-1868), *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, 1851, Oil on canvas; 149 x 255 in. (378.5 x 647.7 cm): The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of John Stewart Kennedy, 1897 (97.34) Photograph © 1992 The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

RIGHT FLAP:

James Karales (1930-2002), *Selma-to-Montgomery March for Voting Rights in 1965*, 1965. Photographic print. Located in the James Karales Collection, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University. Photograph © Estate of James Karales.

INTERIOR:

Norman Rockwell (1894-1978), *Freedom of Speech*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, February 20, 1943. Oil on canvas, 45 3/4 x 35 1/2 in. (116.205 x 90.170 cm.). The Norman Rockwell Art Collection Trust, Norman Rockwell Museum, Stockbridge, Mass. www.nrm.org ©1943 SEPS: Licensed by Curtis Publishing, Indianapolis, Ind. All rights reserved. www.curtispublishing.com.

N. C. Wyeth (1882-1945). *Last of the Mohicans*, cover illustration, 1919. Oil on canvas. Collection of the Brandywine River Museum. Anonymous gift, 1981. Reprinted with the permission of Atheneum Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing Division from *Last of the Mohicans* by James Fenimore Cooper, illustrated by N. C. Wyeth. Illustrations © 1919 Charles Scribner's Sons; copyright renewed 1947 Carolyn B. Wyeth.

Walker Evans (American, 1903-1975), [Brooklyn Bridge, New York], 1929, printed ca. 1970, Gelatin silver print: 17.2 x 12.2 cm. (6 3/4 x 4 13/16 in.): The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Arnold H. Crane, 1972. (1972.742.3) © The Walker Evans Archive, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

BACK COVER:

Alexander Gardner (1821-1882), *Abraham Lincoln, Pres., U.S., 1809-1865. April 10, 1865*. Photographic print. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

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