



Picturing America

AMERICA'S HISTORY THROUGH OUR NATION'S ART

THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES PICTURING AMERICA

THE STORY OF AMERICA — THROUGH WORKS OF ART.

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) has developed the *Picturing America*SM initiative as part of the We the People program, which since 2002 has reinvigorated the teaching, study, and understanding of our country's history and culture. *Picturing America* provides an innovative way for people of all ages to learn about our nation's heritage through some of our greatest works of art.

Picturing America starts with forty carefully selected masterpieces spanning several centuries. The featured artists range from early American Indian artisans to painters, like Mary Cassatt and Thomas Hart Benton; from photographers, including Walker Evans and Dorothea Lange, to architects, such as Frank Lloyd Wright.

In partnership with the American Library Association, the NEH is distributing large, high-quality reproductions of these works to schools and libraries nationwide, along with materials and lesson plans for use by teachers. These materials are specifically designed to show that the works can be used to study not only art, but also American history, social studies, language arts, literature, and civics. *Picturing America* encourages interdisciplinary partnerships among librarians, art teachers, classroom instructors, and other educators. To provide the greatest impact, each institution that participates in the program receives a comprehensive package of materials that includes:

- Forty large, high-quality, color reproductions of the selected masterpieces (24"x36");
- A comprehensive teacher's guide to provide educators with a wide range of ideas and background information for using the works of art in core subjects; and
- Additional resources available through the National Endowment for the Humanities Web site and through lesson plans at the Endowment's award-winning EDSITEment—an extensive online resource for educators.



Norman Rockwell, *Freedom of Speech*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, February 22, 1943 cover, ©1943 SEPS, The Norman Rockwell Museum, Stockbridge, MA

“All of us who turn
our eyes away from
what we have are
missing life.”

- Norman Rockwell

EXPERIENCING THE DRAMA OF AMERICAN HISTORY.

Picturing America provides creative ways to explore our nation's history and ideals. What better way to see the courage of our nation's founders than through Emanuel Leutze's famous painting, *Washington Crossing the Delaware*? Or to experience the power of every individual's voice than through Norman Rockwell's *Freedom of Speech*?

Each work of art in *Picturing America* opens the viewer's eyes to America's rich history and culture. An architectural landmark like the *Chrysler Building* conveys Americans' sense of optimism and innovation. Other works, such as Bierstadt's *Looking Down Yosemite Valley*, display our nation's fascination with wilderness and the frontier. Images ranging from the "Sans Arc Lakota" *Ledger Book* to panels from Amish quilts represent diverse artistic traditions and demonstrate new forms and styles that American artists have pioneered.

Each of the forty images can be viewed and explored individually. Yet studying the works in combinations also reveals fascinating continuities and contrasts. For instance, James Karales's iconic photograph of civil rights workers marching from Selma to Montgomery in 1965 shows striking parallels in its composition and theme—the struggle for freedom—with Leutze's painting of Washington and his men crossing the Delaware.

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

“Freedom is from within.”
– Frank Lloyd Wright



William Van Alen, *Chrysler Building*, New York, 1928-30

WHAT BETTER TIME FOR PICTURING AMERICA?

In an era of unprecedented challenge, Americans have turned to our past as a source of wisdom and inspiration. At the same time, we have learned that many Americans, especially young people, know too little of our country's fascinating history and cultural legacy.

Through the *Picturing America* initiative, the National Endowment for the Humanities strives to create a bridge between the history of our art and the story of our nation. 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.



Black Hawk, "Sans Arc Lakota" Ledger Book (plate no.18), 1880-1881. Thaw Collection, Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, NY
 Photograph© 1998 by John Bigelow Taylor, NY

A MUSEUM IN EVERY AMERICAN HOMETOWN.

Picturing America brings American art and history directly to curious minds of all generations, wherever they live. Through schools, libraries, and public programs, the initiative provides access 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. In fact, it is designed to appeal to all, not just to students. The images are appropriate for children and adults of all ages, and the narrative qualities of the selected works of art allow them to resonate in 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.

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

-Kristina McGlaun, Librarian,
 Jackson Creek Middle School, Bloomington, Indiana



“Our nation is not bound by common ties of blood, race, or religion; instead, we are united by our devotion to shared ideals. Great American art can help us ensure these ideals are studied, passed on, and remembered.”

- National Endowment for the Humanities
Chairman Bruce Cole

Photo © 2007 DavidHills.net.



James Karales, *Selma-to-Montgomery March for Voting Rights in 1965, 1965*, Duke University, Durham, NC

A WINDOW TO THE AMERICAN CHARACTER.

Can you picture a nation? Can images tell a tale that sweeps across centuries? Can works of art convey the shared heritage of many millions? Can brushstrokes and photographs convey the ideas and ideals that unite a diverse people? [At the National Endowment for the Humanities](#), we believe the answer to all these questions is “yes.”

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

- Edward Hopper



Alexander Gardner, *Abraham Lincoln*, 1865, Library of Congress

PICTURING AMERICA. AN OVERVIEW.

BRINGING ICONIC AMERICAN ART INTO PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS, LIBRARIES, AND COMMUNITIES OFFERS AMERICANS EVERYWHERE 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 SAMPLING 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 TO ADD THEIR OWN CHAPTERS TO OUR NATION'S ONGOING STORY.

“The Arts and Sciences essential to the prosperity of the State and 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



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
HUMANITIES

www.neh.gov

ALA American
Library
Association

IMAGE CITATIONS:

“Sans Arc Lakota” Ledger Book
Black Hawk
(plate no. 18)
1880-1881
Thaw Collection
Fenimore Art Museum
Cooperstown, NY
Photograph © 1998
by John Bigelow Taylor, NY

Abraham Lincoln
Alexander Gardner
Library of Congress, Washington, DC
Photo No. LC-USZ61-1938

The Chrysler Building
William Van Alen
photo:
NYC1
Steven Allan
istockphoto file number 4058283
istockphoto.com

Freedom of Speech
Curtis Publishing
Joan SerVaas, President/CEO
1000 Waterway Blvd.
Indianapolis, IN 46202
www.curtispublishing.com

Norman Rockwell Museum
9 Glendale Road
Stockbridge, MA 01262

*Selma-to-Montgomery March
for Voting Rights in 1965*
James Karales Collection
Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collection Library
Duke University, Durham, NC
Photograph © Estate of James Karales

Cover Image:

Washington Crossing the Delaware, 1851
Emanuel Leutze
The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Gift of John Stewart Kennedy, 1897 (97.34)
Image ©The Metropolitan Museum of Art