

Nine hundred eighth- and ninth-graders attend Shaler Area Intermediate School in Glenshaw, Pennsylvania, a community bordering on Pittsburgh. On a cold and snowy day this past January, we unpacked the Picturing America posters, oohed and aahed, and made John J. Audubon's American Flamingo the unofficial mascot of our school library. Since then, the Picturing America grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities has truly enriched our lives.

The Picturing America posters dovetail perfectly with the scope and sequence of our district's Social Studies curriculum. In our American Cultures courses, eighth-graders study the Colonial Period through the Civil war; ninth-graders learn about the Westward Movement through the Cold War and take a one-term history course on the Sixties through the present day. This semester we have used the poster images in research projects on topics such as the Industrial Revolution, Pennsylvania Folk Art, and the Jazz Age, as well as for a display in our library during February for Black History Month.

Art teachers have also used the Picturing America posters to highlight the American art in our district curriculum, especially those artists with a regional connection, such as Mary Cassatt and Frank Lloyd Wright. In addition, they plan to use the posters to supplement the teaching of various media, such as acrylic and oil painting, collage, pottery and sculpture, and stained glass. Several of the posters, such as Copley's *Paul Revere* and Lange's *Migrant Mother*, may be used to complement lessons on portraiture.

Both the Picturing America web site and the teachers resource book have been described by our staff as "visually and logically organized, allowing quick access to background information, activities, and meaningful questions." As the school librarian, I frequently have used both supplemental resources in making cross-curricular connections as I plan lessons with my colleagues.

In the coming year, we hope to promote the Picturing America program beyond our school. Our students' parents will be able to view a month-long display of the posters in our school district's administrative offices. We also plan, as an outreach to our community this November, to invite veterans who are honored at an annual celebration at our school to visit the Picturing America exhibit and speak with students who will volunteer as "experts" about the images on display.

Valuable as the Picturing America posters are to teaching our curriculum, however, perhaps their greatest worth is their limitless potential to teach us all--students, staff and parents--about ourselves. Yes, the posters may be checked out of the library and used to broaden students' knowledge of a particular place and time, but even when they are displayed on an easel, for no reason other than their power as works of art, they change our lives.

An Industrial Arts teacher, looking at the desolation of Edward Hopper's "House by the Railroad," asks me, "Don't you *know* this place?"

A lanky fourteen-year-old eighth-grade boy does a double-take when he walks past the photo of Frank Lloyd Wright's inventive "Fallingwater." He asks, "How do you *do* that?"

Last week I pulled out the poster of Karales' "Selma-to-Montgomery March for Voting Rights in 1965" for a friend teaching a novel set during the Civil Rights movement. I looked at that storm cloud, real and metaphorical, printed the accompanying description from the Picturing America website, and read about those who "face human and natural obstacles that stand in the way of heroic action."

Before I carried the poster up the hall, I was compelled to ask of myself, as my colleague did, "Don't you *know* this place?" And to ask of myself, as my student did, "How do you *do* that?" And finally, these many years after the march to Montgomery, I was compelled to ask of myself, "Are you someone who would walk with them?"

Norman Cousins said, "A library should be the delivery room for the birth of ideas - a place where history comes to life." The Picturing America grant makes it possible for history to come to life at Shaler Area Intermediate School, in our classrooms and in our library, and for its lessons to come to life in our hearts.