



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
HUMANITIES

PRESS RELEASE

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PICTURING AMERICA PROGRAM UNVEILED AT THE WHITE HOUSE

National Endowment for the Humanities Announces Free Education Initiative, Bringing Great American Art Directly to Classrooms and Libraries Across the Country

February 27, 2008 – (Washington, DC) – Tuesday afternoon at the White House, the National Endowment for the Humanities launched Picturing AmericaSM, an innovative program that helps teach American history and provides students with a gateway to the broader world of the humanities.

“At their best, the arts and humanities express the ideals that define our nation,” said President George W. Bush. “The United States is a country defined not by bloodline, race, or creed, but by our character and convictions. We are united by an unyielding principle, and that is, all men are created equal. We firmly believe that each man and woman has the right to make the most of their God-given talents. And we believe that all are endowed with the divine gift of freedom.

“Today I’m pleased to unveil a new project under this program – the “Picturing America” Initiative,” continued the President. “This Initiative will educate children about the great people and places and moments in our history using American art and masterpieces that depict them.”

“Thousands of schools, and millions of people, will have the chance to view this collection in their own communities,” said First Lady Laura Bush. “Schools and community libraries that apply now – between now and April 15, 2008, will receive this collection. Today we invite all schools and libraries to apply for this collection – and that means public, private, parochial and charter schools, home school consortia, and community libraries.

“I think this would be really, really fun to teach,” continued Mrs. Bush. “As a teacher myself, I’d love to have this set in my classroom.”

Picturing America is composed of forty, carefully selected works of art spanning several centuries — all by American painters, sculptors, photographers, and architects. The NEH will distribute large, high-quality reproductions of these images, along with a teachers resource book, lesson plans, and materials, to schools and libraries nationwide. Including the newly unveiled Web site, PicturingAmerica.neh.gov, Picturing America’s resources unlock the potential in each work of art to enhance the study of American history, social studies, language arts, literature, and civics.

“Our goal is eventually to have Picturing America in every school and public library in the United States,” said NEH Chairman Bruce Cole. “We are especially delighted to have the support of the President and First Lady in this historic initiative and believe their leadership will move us closer to reaching this goal.

“Picturing America helps us understand our democracy by bringing us face to face with the people, places, and events that have shaped our country. It provides an innovative way to experience America’s history through our nation’s art,” continued Chairman Cole.

Feedback from educators participating in a pilot program has been tremendous.

“That box of posters is such a treasure trove! I have so many ideas, and the companion book with lesson suggestions has been a valuable asset,” said art teacher Jan Kolesar from Captain Samuel Douglass Academy in Brookline, New Hampshire. “It has been fantastic to see how the students react to the posters with awe and many questions. I am really excited to begin using all of the posters with other lessons.”

In addition to schools and libraries, through an interagency agreement, NEH and the Administration for Children and Families within the Department of Health and Human Services will work together to make Picturing America available to the 20,000 Head Start centers around the nation. This partnership will provide for the development of materials to supplement Picturing America and ensure that the program will enhance early childhood development and family literacy.

The National Endowment for the Humanities wishes to thank the following: the American Library Association, Institute of Museum and Library Services, Head Start, Mr. and Mrs. Robert H. Smith, the Honorable William D. Rollnick, the Honorable Nancy Ellison, the National Park Service, The History Channel, and the National Trust for the Humanities.

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About Picturing America

Public, private, parochial, and charter and home school consortia (K-12), as well as public libraries in the United States and its territories, are eligible to receive Picturing America materials. Interested schools and public libraries can apply through the NEH, with an application deadline of April 15, 2008, for receipt in the fall. Detailed instructions for submitting an application can be found in the ‘Apply Now’ section of the Picturing America Web site, PicturingAmerica.neh.gov.

Picturing America comes with a comprehensive package of materials that includes:

- Forty large, high-quality color reproductions of the selected masterpieces (24” x 36”)
- A comprehensive teachers resource book providing a wide range of ideas and background information to support educators using the works of art in core subject areas
- Additional resources and lesson plans available through the Picturing America Web site, PicturingAmerica.neh.gov

About the National Endowment for the Humanities

The National Endowment for the Humanities is an independent grant-making agency of the United States government dedicated to supporting research, education, preservation, and public programs in the humanities. The study of the humanities — history, literature, philosophy, and the arts — helps us explore what it means to be human. The humanities enable us to understand the world and our place in it.

Because “democracy demands wisdom,” NEH serves and strengthens our Republic through promoting excellence in the humanities and conveying the lessons of history to all Americans. Through its programs, NEH provides opportunities for all citizens to embrace the humanities and benefit from their wisdom. For more information about NEH, visit www.neh.gov.

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