

THE EXAMINED LIFE

Family, Community, Work in American Literature

Jim Wayne Miller

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Appalachian Consortium Press



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- Preserving the cultural heritage of Southern Appalachia
- Protecting the mountain environment
- Publishing manuscripts about the region
- Improving educational opportunities for area students and teachers
- Conducting scientific, social, and economic research
- Promoting a positive image of Appalachia
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THE EXAMINED LIFE:

*Family -
Community
- Work*

in American Literature

by Jim Wayne Miller, Institute Presenter

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The Appalachian Consortium was a non-profit educational organization composed of institutions and agencies located in Southern Appalachia. From 1973 to 2004, its members published pioneering works in Appalachian studies documenting the history and cultural heritage of the region. The Appalachian Consortium Press was the first publisher devoted solely to the region and many of the works it published remain seminal in the field to this day.

With funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities through the Humanities Open Book Program, Appalachian State University has published new paperback and open access digital editions of works from the Appalachian Consortium Press.

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Table of Contents

vii - viii	Preface— <i>Karen Lohr</i>	59	WORK
ix - xi	Introduction— <i>Jim Wayne Miller</i>	60 - 75	“A Busy Multitude”: Work in American Life and Literature— <i>Jim Wayne Miller</i>
1	FAMILY	76 - 78	Participant Reflections: Work
2 - 15	“The Oldest Unit in the World”: The Family in American Life and Literature — <i>Jim Wayne Miller</i>	79 - 84	Out of Work— <i>Louis H. Palmer, III</i>
16 - 18	Participant Reflections: Family	84 - 85	Bibliography of Supplemental Works
19 - 23	The Theme of Family in <i>Hamlet</i> and <i>The Sound and the Fury</i> — <i>Barbara Benson</i>	86	Further Readings
24 - 25	A Family in Crisis: A Unit of Study of James Agee’s <i>A Death in the Family</i> — <i>Patricia B. Chastain</i>	87 - 89	Critical Readings of American Thought
26 - 27	Bringing Characters to Life— <i>Stan Coss</i>	89	Acknowledgments
29	COMMUNITY		
30 - 49	“Members of Each Other”: Community in American Life and Literature — <i>Jim Wayne Miller</i>		
50 - 52	Participant Reflections: Community		
52 - 56	Explore Cultural Values in Your Own Community Through Literature!— <i>Jo Buckner</i>		
56 - 57	Community in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s Work — <i>Sherrie Hartsoe</i>		

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Preface

"We all have a stake in seeing to it that the humanities are properly taught and thoroughly learned in our schools. We all have a stake in making sure our children know the shape of the river they are traveling."

Lynne Cheney, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, in "American Memory" calls for a renewed commitment among those in higher education to strengthen humanities education in our nation's public schools. We at the Appalachian Consortium share this concern. In the Southern Highlands, where dropout rates are as high as 40 and 50 percent, ensuring that our young people are acquainted with history, literature, and the cultural values that have shaped our present society has emerged as a clear priority. Most of the states within our region have identified education as a foremost concern, even ahead of economic development. We recognize that the challenge of imparting cultural literacy to our youth most often falls on the shoulders of teachers in our public schools. The Appalachian Consortium is dedicated to assisting our teachers in providing students with a meaningful and stimulating encounter with the humanities, an encounter which is vital in transmitting an understanding of American values and culture.

Recognizing that public school teachers in the Southern Highlands were searching for resources to enliven and enrich their humanities programs, the Consortium, with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities, initiated the Southern Highlands Institute for Educators (SHIE). During the summer of 1984 programs were offered at four regional universities with over 120 teachers attending. Their response convinced Consortium members that the offering of quality summer institutes and the establishment of sustainable channels of communication among educators in our public schools and universities are perhaps the most significant and far-reaching contributions the organization will make to the future of public education in the

region we serve.

"Cultural Values In American Literature" has been a four-year SHIE program supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities. The 1986-88 summer institutes, led by Dr. Jim Wayne Miller, focused on a triad of concepts, "family, community, work," central to achieving a better understanding of our values, beliefs, and behavior. The words of participants in the 1986-88 Southern Highlands Institute for Educators best describe the benefits of programs which bring together educators and scholars in the humanities:

"I have found this institute to be vital, inspiring, and transformational. It has increased my knowledge of literature in ways that will be helpful and stimulating to my students. Too often teachers are treated like old books and put into a certain place to gather dust. We need to be taken down and at least thumbed through occasionally, and the typical district curriculum course is not quite the right kind of handling. We need more programs like this one."

One of the most successful components of the 1984 Southern Highlands Institute for Educators was the publication of a resource guide for teachers entitled *Reading, Writing, Region*, authored by Jim Wayne Miller. The publication provides a checklist, purchase guide, and directory for educators and school and community libraries in the region.

We are pleased to publish this companion volume, *The Examined Life: Family, Community, and Work in American Literature*. In this work Dr. Miller explores the cultural values which "affirm our humanity" (Cheney) and lead us to a richer understanding of ourselves, the community we live in, our nation, and our global community. Elements of culture given voice in literature, such as family, community, and work, become maps that help orient us in regard to place and time, thereby providing students with a means for self-explanation, self-

knowledge. Dr. Miller describes his consideration of the central cultural values as “an effort to make a whole out of parts.” Too often we limit our reflection on such values to the parameters of the discipline we are immersed in—history, literature, sciences. In this work Dr. Miller bridges the gaps between disciplines, thus providing a valuable resource for all involved in public education. He suggests, “We can guide our students to reflection on their heritage, to a perspective on human existence and a connection to permanent concerns by helping them, as others have helped us, to make a whole out of parts.”

The Examined Life is designed to provide a guide for humanities educators to resources helpful in integrating the three cultural themes into a broader curriculum. The introduction presented by Dr. Miller gives an orientation to the themes and the humanities approach which considers them in a cultural, historical, and literary context. The sections considering family, community, and work begin with Professor Miller’s in-depth discussion of each theme and the three major literary works examined in light of that theme. The historical framework he provides shows us how the theme develops through time and in relation to particular places and cultures. Thus we see family as a dynamic force rather than a static construct.

Complementing Dr. Miller’s discussion of the cultural values and their expression in the literary texts are excerpts from essays written by participating teachers. These passages provide unique insights to the themes and texts examined during the summer programs. Following these considerations of family, community, and work are curriculum units developed by teachers involved in the summer programs. This component of the guide offers specific examples of how the thematic content can be explored in the context of general curriculum objectives and requirements. These resource units with their exciting and imaginative exercises and methods will be especially useful for humanities educators.

Finally, the publication includes an annotated bibliography

of central and supplemental readings. Also presented is a bibliography of texts useful in gaining a general background in American history and the development of American culture and cultures. A listing of critical works and further supplemental texts is offered as well.

The Appalachian Consortium, with the support of the National Endowment for the Humanities, is pleased to make this valuable resource guide available to humanities teachers and public schools in the Southern Highlands. The foremost priority of the Appalachian Consortium in all our educational services is commitment to assisting public school teachers in providing a vital and enriching educational experience for our young people. We look to our teachers for suggestions and input on ways to meet this challenge.

Karen Lohr
Editor

Introduction

The works chosen as major texts to facilitate examination of the themes of family, community, and work have been selected for their intrinsic literary value; for the way in which they suggest the interrelatedness of the three themes; and for their usefulness in dramatizing and illuminating the themes as meanings, values, and systems of significance that inform people's lives.

In selecting texts, consideration has also been given to providing historical perspective on the American experience. Texts chosen represent a span of time from Colonial America to the 1950's—from Franklin's *Autobiography* to Harriette Arnow's *The Dollmaker* and James Agee's *A Death in the Family*. Geographically, the works deal with the deep South (*The Sound and the Fury*), New England (*The Scarlet Letter*, "Civil Disobedience" and *Walden*, *The Rise of Silas Lapham*), and also the Midwest (*Main Street*, *Giants in the Earth*).

Throughout the three summers during which these texts were studied, the controlling purpose of examination was to discover the ways in which cultural values common to all mankind have been cast in a distinctly American shape and reflected in literary works which are classics in the American literary tradition. The tension between the individual and those forms of existence which force him to interact with others (in the family, the community, and the workplace) informs each of the major texts selected. The working out of this tension (whether one labels it the clash between the ideal and the pragmatic, or between the individual and society) on American soil, by the American mind and spirit, is at the heart of each work selected for examination.

The Sound and the Fury, *A Death in the Family*, and *The Dollmaker* have been selected as major texts for study because of the ways in which they engage the theme of family as a cultural value; *The Scarlet Letter*, *Walden*, and "Civil Disobedience" for the way in which they illuminate the theme of community; and

Franklin's *Autobiography*, *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, and *Giants in the Earth* for their revealing confrontations with the theme of work.

A secondary consideration in the selection of these works was the way in which these texts afford an examination of the interpenetration of family, community, and work in an overall consideration of cultural values in American life. In *The Scarlet Letter*, Hester Prynne, the Reverend Mr. Dimmesdale, and their daughter Pearl constitute a family—a fact which is finally acknowledged in the revelation on the marketplace scaffold. Thoreau, in *Walden*, has insightful comments on work. *Main Street* engages the theme of family as well as work. Franklin's *Autobiography* relates how he was able to make himself useful, through industry and good habits, not only to himself but to his family and to his community. *The Rise of Silas Lapham* offers an instance of a hard-working, self-made man in relation to his family and to a larger community which does not fully share his assessment of himself. *Giants in the Earth* depicts the protagonist, Per Hansa, in his relationship to his family and to a community of settlers as he struggles to wrest a living from the earth. Roelvaag's novel also offers a parallel experience to that found in Arnow's *The Dollmaker*, for both works deal with the immigrant experience in America. Per Hansa and his family come to America from another country. Arnow's Southern Appalachians differ from Roelvaag's characters only in that they have become immigrants in the country of their birth. But like all immigrants, they must bear the memory of a homeland into a new place and out of that experience work to make a new life in a new community.

The irreducible cultural values found in the American experience, and which Americans hold with varying degrees of ambivalence, may be found in Franklin's utilitarianism and cheerful reasonableness, and in Thoreau's unbending individualism and uncompromising idealism. Interpretations and understandings of the themes of family, community, and work, as

reflected in all the texts to be studied, may vary according to whether they are seen from the standpoint of utilitarianism or idealism. Franklin's alertness to opportunity and his gregarious flexibility would certainly strike Thoreau, at times, as deplorable expedience. Thoreau would not be amused by Franklin's tongue-in-cheek observation: "So convenient a thing it is to be a *reasonable* Creature, since it enables one to find or make a Reason for every thing one has a mind to do." Thoreau would hardly approve Franklin's easy distinction between truth and utility, as when Franklin observes, regarding Deism: "...I began to suspect that this Doctrine tho' it might be true, was not very useful."

Thoreau's devotion to the supremacy of truth leads him beyond consideration of mere utility. He asserts that "any man more right than his neighbors constitutes a majority of one already." Whereas Franklin tends to consider the usefulness of a view, Thoreau is devoted to "Action from principle" [which] "changes things and relations; it is essentially revolutionary, and does not consist wholly with anything which was. It not only divides States and churches, it divides families; ay, it divides the *individual*, separating the diabolical in him from the divine."

Franklin and Thoreau differ fundamentally on the value and efficacy of group undertakings. Franklin's civic spirit manifests itself in the founding of the Junto, precursor of the American Philosophical Society; in his efforts to organize and establish a school, a hospital, a fire department. He believed one served God best by serving one's fellow man. He believed in the possibility of influencing people in the mass (and often did this by discussing public issues in his newspaper). He considered it worthwhile to undertake projects for the common good. And whereas Thoreau emphasizes action proceeding from principle, which "changes things and relations" and is discontinuous with what previously exists, Franklin stresses small improvements: "Human Felicity is produced not so much by great Pieces of good Fortune that seldom happen, as by little Advantages that occur every day." Franklin would gradually improve conditions for the sake of

everyone, for the entire community. Thoreau finds "little virtue in the action of masses of men." He recommends, rather, action which changes the *individual*. In the following passage from "Civil Disobedience" Thoreau might seem to be scoffing at the views and values of Franklin, whose life was characterized by altruistic and philanthropic undertakings, and by projects of mutual benefit to those involved:

The American has dwindled into an Odd Fellow—one who may be known by the development of his organ of gregariousness, and a manifest lack of intellect and cheerful self-reliance; whose first and chief concern, on coming into the world, is to see that the almshouses are in good repair; and, before yet he has lawfully donned the virile garb, to collect a fund for the support of widows and orphans that may be; who, in short, ventures to live only by the aid of the Mutual Insurance Company, which has promised to bury him decently.

(Thoreau's view here also contains an implicit judgment of Carol Kennicott and the community of Gopher Prairie which Carol attempts to reform.) Thoreau might number Franklin among those "men of a certain experience and discrimination" [who] "have no doubt invented ingenious and even useful systems, for which we sincerely thank them; but all their wit and usefulness lie within certain not very wide limits. They are wont to forget that the world is not governed by policy and expediency."

By dramatizing the difference between Franklin's utilitarianism and Thoreau's idealism, we may better examine these strains in American cultural values as they are reflected in other texts studied; for they can be seen to lie in the American experience, as Lewis expresses it in *Main Street*, "like enemies yoked." Seminar participants have examined how Thoreau himself manages the tension between the mundane, practical, and material world, and the domain of the spiritual and ideal in *Walden*, where he deals not only with "Economy" but also with

“Where I Lived, and What I Lived For,” with “Solitude” and with “Visitors,” with “Higher Laws” and with “Brute Neighbors.” Such considerations provide a perspective from which to examine not only other texts selected for study, but the contemporary American experience with respect to family, community, and work; a perspective from which to consider the possibilities for combining individualism and a sense of family and community; work with meaning in the context of individual, family, and community values.

In each instance the task, as Everett Carter defines it, is to identify those values which permeate the “American Idea,” to recognize the underlying tensions, and to examine the ways in which selected American writers either accept or reject or modify these values in the ordered world of their creations.

Jim Wayne Miller

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Family



John Hicks tells of an outsider trying to buy his land. It seems the man believed it was only a matter of price, and he could not understand John's refusals to sell. "Why, I couldn't sell that. My people lived there before the Revolution: they walked on it and worked on it all them years. And my people's buried up there."

Laura M. Hodges, "A Survey of the Relationship of Land and Character Development in Representative Southern Literature"

“The Oldest Unit in the World”: The Family in American Life and Literature

They were for an interval once more on the land, a unit together, the oldest unit in the world: a family.

Wilma Dykeman, *The Far Family*

Writers and thinkers, ancient and modern, view the family as our oldest and most important human institution. “God setteth the solitary in families,” we read in Psalm 68. Indeed, some descriptions of the family suggest through their imagery that the family is not an arrangement devised by human beings, but rather a part of creation, like trees and flowers. The Chinese philosopher Mencius, three centuries before Christ, sees the family as “the root of the state” (Bartlett, 89). The Romantic German poet Friedrich von Hardenberg (Novalis) agrees: “Marriage is to politics what the lever is to engineering. The state is not founded upon single individuals, but upon couples and groups” (Viking, 195). C. G. Jung also relates the family to the larger society; he considers the family to be a model for the larger society. The family stamps its character upon the child, who tends to see its earlier miniature world again in the larger adult world. The world, for each of us, is to varying degrees a parental image (Jung, 125). Robert Frost, who habitually questioned conventional wisdom (cf. his questioning of the platitude “Good fences make good neighbors,” in “Mending Wall”), never doubted the importance of the family. Frost writes, in “Build Soil” (325):

*Don't join too many gangs. Join few if any.
Join the United States and join the family—
But not much in between unless a college.*

If the family has long been considered the fundamental unit of human society, it has been viewed not as a static, but rather a dynamic structure. Some have been able to see a more or less constant evolution of the family in the western world; others

have predicted its demise, at least in one of its manifestations. Lewis Henry Morgan, the nineteenth-century American ethnologist, writes that the “monogamian family has improved greatly since the commencement of civilization,” and especially in the nineteenth century. Hence, it was not unreasonable to suppose that the family was capable of still further improvement “until the equality of the sexes is attained” (*The Great Thoughts*, 301). On the other hand, Karl Marx, Morgan’s contemporary, predicted that the bourgeois family would disappear along with the bourgeoisie as a class. Marx railed against “bourgeois clap-trap about the family and education, about the hallowed co-relation of parent and child,” which was contradicted by the situation of the family in industrial society where “all family ties among the proletariat are torn asunder, and their children transformed into simple articles of commerce and instruments of labor” (Elster, 263).

Something close to Marx’s view has become the conventional wisdom, even among those who are not Marxists in their social and economic views. The notion that the family (despite the abolition of child labor) has suffered in the modern world dominated by industry and technology is a common one. We imagine a pre-industrial West in which the family existed in something approaching an ideal state. In this regard, we are surely mistaken, for the modern era began long before the Industrial Revolution, which was only one of the modern era’s manifestations. In 1611, only four years after the first permanent English settlement in America was established at Jamestown (1607), and well before the establishment of the Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay Colonies in New England (1620 and 1628 respectively), John Donne complained, in “An Anatomie of the World: The First Anniversary” (191) of a breakdown of all traditional relationships and institutions, including the family:

*'Tis all in peeces, all cohaerence gone;
All just supply, and all Relation:
Prince, Subject, Father, Sonne, are things forgot,
For every man alone thinks he hath got*

*To be a Phoenix, and that then can bee
None of that kind, of which he is, but hee.*

If we are to believe these verses, the modern era, and the “breakdown” of the traditional family, begins with the Renaissance individualism to which Donne refers.

The meaning of the word “family” has shifted throughout its history in the English language, and it is to a felt shift in societal relations that Donne is responding in his “Anatomie of the World.” “Family” became established in English in the late 1300s and early 1400s, derived from the French *familia*, stemming from the Latin word meaning “household,” and ultimately from the Latin root word *famulus*, a servant. The Latin word denoted either a group of servants or blood-relations and servants living together in one household. In English the meaning of “family” was subsequently extended until, by the end of the fifteenth century, it was used to mean not a *household*, but a *house* in the sense of a lineage or kin-group, those descended from a common ancestor. “Family” in the Authorized (King James) Version of the Bible, which appeared in 1611, the same year as Donne’s “Anatomie of the World,” is used either in the sense of a large kin-group, often almost synonymously with *tribe*, or in the sense of lineage from a common ancestor.

Before the seventeenth century the word “family” is not used to refer to a small group of close blood relatives. (In the King James Bible the relationship between parents and children is denoted by the term *near kin*.) Yet between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries the meaning of the word shifted, and “family” came to mean a small group of close relatives, usually parents and children, living in one house. This shift has made necessary the twentieth century distinction between the *nuclear family* and the larger *extended family* (Williams, 108-11).

It is difficult to know the degree to which the contemporary family in the West has changed through the centuries, for our study of kinship and the family began only about one hundred years ago. But we do know that one of the early and extremely

influential sociologists, Frederic Le Play of France, idealized the pre-industrial “traditional” (extended) family when, in the 1870s, he contrasted it favorably with the post-industrial nuclear family consisting of parents and children. Much of what has been learned about the history of the family since Le Play wrote has amounted to a cumulative correction of Le Play’s views of the traditional family (Gies, 4-5).

Generally speaking, it is safe to say that we have, on the one hand, romanticized the past, and imagined the family as existing in some idyllic state; on the other, we have viewed the past as hopelessly benighted and brutish, with the family existing in only the most rudimentary form. Studies suggest that neither view is tenable. It has been a widely held view, for instance, that the notion of childhood as a distinct phase of life did not exist before the sixteenth century. But detailed studies of the Middle Ages provide evidence that children were at all times valued and held in great affection, and that parents in Medieval Europe did not lack a concept of childhood (Gies, 5, 12, 219).

Our study of the family over the past century further suggests that there never has been a single family type, but rather at least three historical types: the large “open lineage” family; the smaller “restricted patriarchal nuclear family”; and the “closed domesticated nuclear family” of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Gies, 8).

Family type, it has been discovered, varies with class distinction. For instance, the family based on lineage, important to the aristocracy, hardly existed among artisans, craftsmen, shopkeepers, and laborers in eleventh- and twelfth-century Genoa, Italy. The families of these people tended to consist of parents and children, under one roof, with, occasionally, an aged parent or parents or son-in-law or daughter-in-law. The larger group to which an artisan or craftsman belonged consisted not of kin, but of other members of his guild (Gies, 149).

Families varied not only according to type during the Medieval period (from about 500 AD to about 1500 AD), but they varied in

response to social and economic conditions. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, when the Black Death ravaged the populations of European towns at approximately ten-year intervals, studies show that survivors responded by marrying early and having more children (Gies, 233). When and where the power of government was weak, the family (understood to mean the clan or kindred) grew stronger and more influential; when and where the power of government was strong and effective, the importance of the family waned. And though we are prone to think that reductions in the function of the family have occurred only in the post-industrial period, studies reveal that between Roman times and the Reformation (approximately between 500 AD and 1500 AD), while the economic function tended to remain strong, other functions of the family were reduced to such a degree that both Romans and Germanic peoples who settled within the Empire would have found the European family of 1500 quite different from what they had known. The Christian Church took over religious functions; justice was a matter for secular and ecclesiastical courts to deal with; craft guilds, national governments, schools, and universities assumed other economic, social, and educational functions formerly performed by the family (Gies, 295-96).

What has been learned during the last one hundred years about the history of the family highlights its protean ability to assume different forms, its adaptability and resilience as an institution. But where the historical perspective is lacking, any change in the family's form or function, and any adaptation to altered circumstances is apt to be perceived with alarm.

The history of the American family shows a continuing flexibility, adaptability, and resilience in its form and function. Alexis de Tocqueville wrote, after visiting the United States in the 1830s, that the family, "in the Roman and aristocratic signification of the word," did not exist in America. But the family he observed in the United States in the first third of the nineteenth century had perhaps only carried forward trends observable in

Europe, where, as Tocqueville had already pointed out, "the several members of a family stand upon an entirely new footing towards each other . . . the distance which formerly separated a father and his sons has been lessened . . . paternal authority, if not destroyed, is at least impaired" (Tocqueville, v. 2: 229).

The colonial and frontier family in America was a blend of European heritage and new conditions. Harvey Wish, in his *Society and Thought in America*, describes the colonial and frontier family as a "strong patriarchal unit, strengthened by the economic role of both old and young, as well as by religious, biological, and social needs" (I:49). Rural families were closely knit by economic ties; yet, if these families were patriarchal, and they were, conditions on the frontier favoring equality were abetted by the Renaissance individualism which John Donne deplored in "An Anatomie of the World."

In accordance with both European heritage and the demands of the conditions in which they found themselves, American colonists and settlers of all social and economic groups tended to marry early and have large families. It was not uncommon for couples to have more than a dozen children. And while, as might be suspected, such large families often resulted in a high mortality rate among women, this was not inevitably the case. Records from New England towns and villages provide examples of women who bore ten, twelve, and even fifteen children and who lived to the ages of ninety-seven, ninety-three, and seventy-seven respectively (Wertenbaker, 183-4).

Families were, of economic necessity, close-knit. Wives and children shared in the work of clearing land and raising crops when, throughout the seventeenth century and much of the eighteenth, as much as ninety per cent of the population derived its livelihood from agriculture. Since economic factors were so dominant in determining the nature of the family, the family group, at least in some colonies, "tended to include legally the wards, apprentices, and servants as well as the children" (Adams, 11).

Yet family life was not always harmonious and idyllic. Our histories of the American Civil War have taught us that families were divided by issues over which the Civil War was fought—that fathers and sons and brothers often opposed each other on the field of battle; but we are less likely to know that colonial families were similarly divided by the Revolutionary War. While sons tended to be advocates of revolution, their fathers remaining loyal to the English crown, this was not always the case; occasionally, fathers were the revolutionists, while the sons were loyalists. Such was the case of Benjamin Franklin and his son William (Greene, 227).

Both before and after the Revolution, the family played an important role in immigration, first to the colonies and later to the new young nation. Often families, and sometimes entire communities (q.v.) immigrated together. It was also not uncommon for a man to establish himself in the colonies or in the new republic and then arrange for his family's passage to their new home. Later immigrants often had family connections in America; these relatives exercised a stabilizing influence as immigrants gained an economic footing in their new situation (Fish, 111). Bernard Bailyn's analysis of immigration from England, Scotland, and Ireland just prior to the Revolution leads him to conclude that there were two immigrations: one, consisting mainly of young unmarried males drawn from London and the southern parts of England; and another consisting largely of entire families from northern England, Scotland, and Protestant Northern Ireland (126-203). Immigration to America resulting from political unrest in Germany in 1848 also brought a conspicuously large number of entire families who attempted to re-establish their family and community groups in America (Fish, 117-18).

These German-speaking immigrants, the so-called Forty-Eighters, arrived in America at a time when technological innovation (the railroad, the steamship, the telegraph) were beginning to profoundly alter the American home, hence the family. Generally improved means of transportation and

communications, together with improved living conditions in urban areas (running water, sewage systems, indoor toilets and baths), conspired to make family life in the American city markedly different from that of small towns, villages, and rural areas (Fish, 330-32).

While rural family life would remain largely unaffected by these changes, in some areas until the rural electrification programs of the 1930s, American family life in urban areas, according to one authoritative historian, "lost much of its old privacy," as the word "home," which in England was freighted with emotion and intimacy, became almost synonymous with "house." "Americans lived in a new realm of uncertain boundaries, in an affable, communal world which . . . was neither public nor private: a world of first names, open doors, front porches, and front lawns, and naturally, too, of lunch counters, restaurants, and hotel lobbies. . . Casual acquaintances soon seemed 'members of the family' " (Boorstin, 144).

Compared to the European family of the same period, the American family of the nineteenth century was characterized by a casualness and laxness. According to Henry Steele Commager, "Parents were notoriously indulgent of their children and children notoriously disrespectful of parents, yet family life was on the whole happy, and most children grew up to be good parents and good citizens" (Commager, 19). The British are still fond of commenting on what is perceived as an absurd reversal of roles in the American family. King Edward VIII (1894-1972), who abdicated the throne in 1936 to marry an American, once remarked: "The thing that impresses me most about America is the way parents obey their children" (King Edward VIII, A-11).

But many thoughtful people were alarmed by the changes taking place in the American family during the mid-nineteenth century. To them, the family seemed in a process of disintegration. In 1858 the *New York Herald* commented editorially on runaway marriages. Matrimonial agencies sprang up. Marriages were entered into lightly, and when the marriage failed, people often

remarried without troubling to dissolve the first marriage. The selfishness and willfulness of the younger generation was universally deplored. Ralph Waldo Emerson cited a contemporary who lamented having been so unfortunate as to have been born in an age “when children were nothing and to have spent his mature life in an age when children were everything” (Cole, 169-70).

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, as more and more Americans lived in cities, differences between rural and urban families became increasingly apparent. Middle class city dwellers tended to marry later and, due to increasing use of birth control measures, had smaller families. Birth control, at first an unmentionable topic, came to be discussed publicly, and even commended by some medical authorities. Family size and overall rate of population increase (despite large numbers of European immigrants) fell throughout the last decades of the nineteenth century and first decades of the twentieth century. In one decade (1890-1900) the size of the average American household shrank so noticeably that President Theodore Roosevelt accused the “new woman” of abetting in “race suicide” and attempted to make large families once again popular—even as Mrs. Margaret Sanger began the formation of the American Birth Control League (Faulkner, 162-66).

Indeed, new conditions in the cities were producing a new American woman, whose different status had implications for the American family. Between 1900 and 1910 the number of female wage-earners increased dramatically (this increase was also relative to the total number of wage-earners). We must note, however, that the increase in women working outside the home was limited to what has come to be known as the relatively low-paying “service” sector of the economy. While a greater number of women went into teaching, in professions such as law and the clergy there were fewer women in 1910 than in 1900, and in medicine there was only a slight increase. Analysis of statistics suggests that women’s place in the work force was still secondary

to the home, and that the real labor unit was not the individual but the family. At this time it was determined that fully one-half the women in manufacturing and trade were under the age of twenty-five, and that many worked only until they were married. This temporary status impeded the progress of trade unionism among women. Consequently, women who depended solely on their wages for their own support, or for the support of their children or other family members, were trapped in low-paying jobs with little opportunity for advancement or increased compensation (Faulkner, 153-54).

Another consequence of urban dwelling was the decline, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, of the single-family house. In the larger cities rapidly increasing land values caused apartment houses, and even apartment hotels, to almost totally supplant the single-family house. The change was so rapid and dramatic that a writer in a popular magazine declared that the American home had been “lifted clean off the ground—yardless, cellarless, stairless, even kitchenless” (Faulkner, 155).

If it had not altogether disappeared, and it had not, the importance of the American kitchen, integral to the economic function of the family, had been significantly reduced by the availability of restaurants, delicatessens, and canned food. According to Rybczynski, not only the kitchen, but the entire home had by this time been feminized; the feminine idea of the home was dynamic, having to do not only with the masculine notion of ease (the home as a refuge from the larger world) but also with work—“which was why, when electricity entered the home, it was by the kitchen door” (160-61).

But when observers in the early twentieth century spoke out with alarm about the “breakdown” of the American home, they had in mind not the household “plant,” but the family group itself. While most observers believed the increasing incidence of divorce to be the greatest threat to the American family, a more thorough study of the situation concluded that the American

family, at least in "its extreme urban form," had lost six of its seven traditional functions. Whereas in the past the family had been held together by economic, religious, protective, educational, recreational, and affectional functions, and by a function having to do with social status, all had been greatly reduced or eliminated, except for the affectional function. This analysis explained, at least partly, the increase in divorce rates: when affection no longer held the family together, there was nothing else to prevent its dissolution (Slosson, 141-44).

The adaptability and resilience of the family was made clear again during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Many observers noted a definite strengthening of family ties as a result of the economic emergency and the increased importance of the family as an economic unit. Young men and women who had left the homes of their parents were forced, because they were unable to find or hold on to employment, to go back home, to the place, as Robert Frost put it, "where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in." These older children often contributed to family support and gained prestige as members of the family's "inner council." An observer noted that "many a family that has lost its car has found its soul." The president of Notre Dame University stated that "as a result of the Depression a great portion of the American public rediscovered fireside joys, rediscovered the things of the spirit" (Wecter, 29-33).

But the effects of the Great Depression on the American family were certainly not all positive. Closer studies showed that older children returning to the family fold, no longer susceptible to paternal authority, often created family tensions (Wecter, 29). The economic emergency, studies showed, strengthened some families but weakened others. And if both the birth rate and the divorce rate declined, the incidence of desertion by male heads of households increased (Wish, v. 2. 503). Unemployment and enforced idleness took their toll in the form of anxiety, insecurity, apathy, and a sense of worthlessness among members of American families (Wecter, 33).

The post-World War II reversal of the declining birth rate (which had characterized the Depression years), the result of millions of veterans returning home to marry and establish long-delayed domestic life, has been well-documented. The effects of this post-war "baby boom," itself a further evidence of the resilience and adaptability of the family as an institution, continue to ripple through American society, and to contribute to widespread concern about the contemporary American family.

Divorce, permissiveness in child-rearing (cause for alarm in earlier times in America), continue to be topics of concern, along with child abuse, child abandonment, and increasing incidence of drug use among the young. The carefree innocence of childhood can be destroyed by divorce, and children are, in some instances, subjected to painful conflicts as divorced parents compete for the affection of their offspring. A widely read psychiatrist comments wryly that "Permissiveness is the principle of treating children as if they were adults; and the tactic of making sure they never reach that stage" (Szasz, 336). Church-sponsored magazines feature articles about the tragedy of "the fractured family" (Graham, 3-6). The director of an agency which shelters runaway teenagers and abandoned children declares the 1980s "the era of the disposable child" (*Daily News*, September 20, 1988, 4-A).

Dr. Urie Bronfenbrenner, a professor of psychology, child development, and family relationships, believes parents are as eager and willing as ever to spend time with their children but find it difficult to do so simply because "conditions of life have changed." Parents still have the primary moral and legal responsibility for rearing their children, he writes, but (and here he echoes earlier findings about the erosion of family functions) many other aspects of child rearing that once were the responsibility of the family have shifted to other societal settings, where this responsibility is, however, not always accepted or even acknowledged. Bronfenbrenner points out that children typically grow up in contemporary America without coming into contact with people who represent a diversity of ages, incomes, and

educational attainments. Children rarely are able to watch adults work at their trades, vocations, and professions. He finds the world in which millions of children grow up to be sterile (Bronfenbrenner, 60-66).

Yet increasing concern over the well-being of the family as an institution seems to be equaled only by increasing certainty that the family is the crucial and primary social unit. Some psychiatrists are abandoning the view of the autonomous individual as the fundamental social unit in favor of "family systems theory," which views the family "an emotional unit and the individual as part of that unit rather than as an autonomous psychological entity" (Kerr, 35ff).

Thus, throughout decades when the family has been feared to be in a process of disintegration, Americans have become increasingly self-conscious about family. Family names have become longer, more frequently hyphenated and "double-barrelled" in the effort to preserve, display, or honor them. An historian notes that between Washington and Lincoln only three presidents had more than one Christian name, compared to five between Taft and Truman (Commager, 415).

Newspapers, popular magazines, pundits, and advice columnists offer up, by the day, week, and month, reams of commentary on the family, both alarming and reassuring. A medical ethics student sees sinister implications for the family in an invitation that urges guests to "bring your significant other and any associated children" (Memphis, A-9). Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan's 1985 Godkin Lectures at Harvard, published in paperback under the title *Family and Nation*, are discussed by one syndicated newspaper columnist (Broder, A-9), while another recommends "positive reinforcement" for the idea of monogamous life to counter the "gradual evanescence of the family" (Buckley, A-5). An entertainer asks on the cover of a magazine supplement to a Sunday newspaper, "What Is a Real Family, Anyway?" (Thomas, 4-6). Dr. Benjamin Spock's changing views are reported regularly (MacDonald, D—8-9). A curmudgeon writes to an

advice columnist to blame liberated women for broken marriages and shattered families (Landers, 4-B).

More reassuring, a weekly news magazine reports on a social psychologist's findings that disadvantaged children are often amazingly resilient: "The picture we have of disadvantaged youth is much more encouraging . . ." (Monmaney, 67). Another magazine supplement to a Sunday newspaper suggests the death of the family is an exaggeration (Rich, 16-19). A scholarly paper originally presented at a professional conference, then published in a book entitled *Passionate Attachments: Thinking About Love*, and then reprinted in a middle-brow magazine, asserts that the contemporary American family (excluding the poor black family) "is not, as is generally supposed, disintegrating because of the very high divorce rate . . . the median duration of marriage today is almost exactly the same as it was 100 years ago" (Stone, 32).

Facts, figures, and opinions regarding the family fly at us from every direction—some, like those overheard in passing ubiquitous radios and television sets, too fleeting to document more than partially:

- *We don't hand anything on from one generation to another. . . . The United States and South Africa are the only industrialized countries that don't have a national family policy* (Bill Moyers' World, PBS, October 1988).
- *The suburban nuclear family of the post-World War II period was a Cold War invention. When more women were either working or attending school, one would have expected less emphasis on family, not more. Home and family, during the McCarthy period, became a bulwark against the enemy within and without* (from a discussion of *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, by Elaine Tyler May, National Public Radio's "All Things Considered," September 26, 1988).

And during the most recent thaw in the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, the official Soviet news

agency Tass reported, in a dramatic reversal of longstanding policy favoring collectivized agriculture, that Russian farmers now “will be able to rent land from the state in a full-scale return to family farming . . .” (“Soviets reversing over a half-century of state-run farming,” Parks. 1ff).

Meanwhile, the debate goes on. Facts, figures, studies, and statistics do not resolve it, or quell the fears about the state of the American family. An historical perspective on the family, which includes not only sociological studies but considerations of the family as it has been depicted in imaginative literature, may result in the most balanced view. It may be that, as Flaubert observed, “Our ignorance of history makes us vilify our own age” (Viking, 237).

Historical perspective is provided by *Domestic Revolutions*, a social history of American family life based on scholarship that has emerged during the past two decades. The authors remind us that community leaders in the Massachusetts Bay Colony were deploring the decline of the family, enacting laws with respect to family discipline in the community, and, on the whole, sounding much like alarmed voices of the present. Yet the study provides evidence not so much of the decline of the family as it suggests the family’s stubborn adaptability and persistence (Mintz and Kellog, *et passim*).

The historical perspective suggests that while it may be accurate to say the traditional functions of the family have been either severely reduced or eradicated, it is also true that in some instances these traditional functions have been replaced by others. If the family is no longer a unit of production, it has become a unit of consumption. Businessmen and economists note that two-worker families have become a significant new market force. The family is still a residential unit, even if more mobile. While the educational and religious functions of the family have been reduced or eliminated, the family has become a more important cultural unit. Obviously, the family still performs its oldest and most constant function—bearing and caring for

children (Lerner, 550-52).

It is helpful, also, to go beyond consideration of the conventional family. Jane Howard distinguishes between two types, those we are born into and to which we are “connected by blood,” and those we join, which are “invented out of water” (2). In terms of the American experience, we might distinguish between families that look inward and backward and appear doomed to repeat the mistakes of the past (frequently instanced in our history as Southern) and frontier families that look outward and to the future. One authority distinguishes at least five different types of American families. The rural family, the “old family” unit of social and economic elites, the second- and third-generation immigrant family, the black family, and the middle class, urban, small-town, and suburban family (the dominant American form) are definable American family types, all of which, with the exception of the black family, can be considered “going concerns” (Lerner, 552-58).

It should not be surprising that the black family, with its heritage of slavery and caste in the South, and persisting racism in the country at large, should evidence a high desertion rate, low educational attainment, and low income status. And it is all the more ironic that apologists for slavery stressed the family as a model for the relationship of slave to master. One such apologist, Judge John Belton O’Neill, stated that the first law of slavery was “that of kindness from the master to the slave. . . slavery becomes a family relation, next in its attachments to that of parent and child” (Boorstin, 205).

Yet it is an understatement to say that chattel slavery did not encourage the family. The African immigrant to America, unlike most other immigrants, was a man or woman without a family. The practices of slave importers and plantation owners placed obstacles in the way of blacks attempting to form and maintain families. Husbands were separated from wives, wives from husbands, mothers from children. In fact, one of the most dehumanizing effects of slavery, Boorstin argues, was the

“obstruction and diversion of maternal affection.” He quotes E. Franklin Frazier, author of *The Negro Family in the United States*, who writes: “Where such limitations were placed upon the mother’s spontaneous emotional responses to the needs of her children and where even her suckling and fondling of them were restricted, it was not unnatural that she often showed little attachment to her offspring” (Boorstin, 191).

Lower-class and low-income families generally, whether black or white, tend to be less stable and effective. The romantic notion that lower-class families are close-knit and happy, while economically better-off middle class families are less so, does not comport with the facts. Careful studies reveal that lower-class families have higher divorce rates, while middle- and upper-class families have lower ones (Lerner, 558).

A further consideration, as one attempts to understand the many facts, figures, and statistics available, is that rising divorce rates in themselves are not necessarily an unambiguous indication of social conditions. Divorce, as Nevins points out, is a reflection “of higher independence and self-respect among women” and can be considered preferable to “a jangling and loveless marriage.” Furthermore, nations with low divorce rates are those in which “the domination of the husband overrules any incompatibility” (Nevins, 215-16).

High divorce rates, in themselves, are not evidence of the “breakdown” of the family. In the United States, the rate of remarriage after divorce is also high, and this can be taken as a reaffirmation of the value and viability of the family. Indeed, with so many of the traditional functions of the family eliminated or reduced, the supplanting of these traditional functions by new ones, combined with the high rate of remarriage and family formation after divorce, can be understood as a positive valuation of the family. As Lerner suggests, most Americans, despite all the

changes in the family and the family situation, continue to find “their deepest expressiveness in family life.” The family is closely bound up with the American notion of happiness, the pursuit of which “goes beyond sexual partnership itself and even beyond the marriage relation, finding its fulfillment in the pattern of children, home, community status, and warmth of human relationship which together form the family” (Lerner, 559).

Families broken by divorce, alcoholism, drug and child abuse; runaway youth; homeless people living in the streets of American cities—all are grim and undeniable realities. But historical perspective suggests that they are not unique to our time or place. During the Victorian era, a period well-known for the importance attached to home and family, the streets of London swarmed with more than 50,000 street folk, “scavengers, vagrants, prostitutes, bone-grubbers, rat-catchers, crossing-sweepers, rag-pickers, chimney-sweeps, pie men, and others—the dispossessed and desperate poor of the slums” (Share, A-15). As Dickens knew, the best of times and the worst of times may co-exist. As it was in his day, so it may be in ours.

While the family is beset by many problems, its historic adaptability and resilience should be taken into consideration, along with present-day evidences of its continuing viability. Such evidence may be found in recently reported figures indicating that a twenty-year trend has been reversed as, between 1986 and 1987, the number of family households grew faster than the number of non-family households (Waldrop, 22-26). Similar evidence may be found in the U.S. Census Bureau report entitled “Who’s Helping Out? Support Networks Among American Families,” which reveals that about \$19 billion is transferred annually in the United States as family members help one another. While most of this money is provided by adults maintaining dependent children, one-third of the amount involves

adults helping adults—children assisting elderly parents, parents helping adult children to start a household (“Families aid one another . . .,” A-12).

Such evidence suggests that the American family, despite all its problems, and of whatever type (nuclear, extended) remains a going concern. Our historical perspective suggests to us that some of what we consider to be recent family types, such as the “blended” family, are older than many people realize. Whereas today blended families are often the result of divorce and remarriage, in the past they resulted from the death of one of the parents (often the mother, during or as a consequence of childbirth) followed by remarriage of the surviving spouse and the blending of both spouses’ children into a single family. Today an older meaning of the word “family” (blood relatives plus servants living under one roof) may be paralleled in families that are communal, or composed of friends rather than relations.

“Nobody, who has not been in the interior of a family,” Jane Austen writes in *Emma* (132) “can say what the difficulties of any individual family may be.” One of the advantages of our literary selections is that they show us the interiors of individual families, and temper our generalizations with what we know of particular instances. We learn from her verses how Anne Bradstreet felt about her children and her husband. We hear Samuel Sewell telling his son (as Franklin would later write to his son) “something of the family of which you are.” We see Dreiser’s Carrie leaving her family, much as Sherwood Anderson’s George Willard leaves his family and community. We hear Ma Joad, in Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*, reflecting on the Joad family, past and present: “They was the time when we was on the lan’. They was a boundary to us then. Ol’ folks died off, an’ little fellas come, an’ we was always one thing—we was the fambly—kinda whole and clear. An’ now we ain’t clear no more. I can’t get it straight. They

ain’t nothin’ keeps us clear” (536). We can contrast the interior of this family with that of the Wapshots in John Cheever’s *The Wapshot Chronicle*, and contrast the sense of family and ancestry with that of Jules Greene in Joyce Carol Oates’ *them*, who is described as “a true American. His car was like a shell he could maneuver around, at impressive speeds; he was second generation to no one. He was his own ancestors” (357). We can compare the Appalachian families of Thomas Wolfe’s *Look Homeward, Angel* and James Still’s *River of Earth* (one small town, one rural) with those of James Agee’s *A Death in the Family*, Harriette Arnow’s *The Dollmaker*, Lee Smith’s *Oral History*, and all of these with the black family of Lorraine Hansberry’s *A Raisin in the Sun*. And as we are afforded perspectives into the interiors of these different families, we can remember the observation of Senator Phil Thurston, in Wilma Dykeman’s *The Far Family*: “If I can know my family, my folks here well enough, maybe I can understand people on the other side of the world, too” (333). For every family is a blend of uniqueness and universality.

The examination of three major works of American literature affords us three instances of blended uniqueness and universality, and views of the interiors of three families and their difficulties. The first of these texts, William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*, published in 1929, is a demanding work, no simple reflection of a cultural value reflected in literature. Instead, the novel illustrates Everett Carter’s idea that great art sometimes comes “out of the anguish of rejection of a society’s central beliefs” (10). *The Sound and the Fury* is just such an anguished rejection of one facet of the American idea—the belief in the family as a source of nourishment—and an attempt—as Carter states it—“to satisfy the basic requirement of men: to make order and meaning out of this universe” (30).

The Sound and the Fury

by William Faulkner

The Compson family's march to disintegration is relentless and inevitable. "Ise seed de first and de last," is Dilsey's summation of the family whose members' lives have been so tightly woven with her own. Far from being a source of nourishment and strength, the Compson family members inflict terrible pain on one another. When asked in a discussion at the University of Virginia, "What is the trouble with the Compsons?", Faulkner answered: "They are still living in the attitudes of 1859 or '60." The character most truly living in the past is Caroline Compson. Cleanth Brooks notes (334) that "The basic cause of the breakup of the Compson family . . . is the cold and self-centered mother, who is sensitive about the social status of the family, the Bascombs . . . Caroline Compson is not so much an actively wicked and evil person as a cold weight of negativity which paralyzes the normal family relationships."

If Caroline is the "weight of negativity" in the novel, Dilsey, the other mother, is the weight of positiveness. It is Dilsey who actually holds the family together and whom Faulkner calls "a good human being."

The breakdown of the family, as seen through the eyes of the three Compson brothers, Benjy, Quentin, and Jason—and, in a fourth section, through the eyes of the narrator—is an event which even Dilsey's presence is unable to alter. Brooks argues (341) that the breakdown of such a family takes on added poignancy and significance in a society which is "old-fashioned and in which the family is still at the center. Because the Compsons have been committed to old-fashioned ideals—close family loyalty, home care for defective children, and the virginity of unmarried daughters—the breakup of the family registers with greater impact." It is a dissolution which forces one to separate those past values which cripple and destroy (as exemplified by Caroline Compson) from those which strengthen and set free (as exemplified by Dilsey).

A Death in the Family

by James Agee

The second major work to be studied which deals with the family as a cultural value is James Agee's *A Death in the Family*. Published posthumously in 1957, and in incomplete form, the novel is an autobiographical reliving of events surrounding the death of Jay Follet, the father of six-year-old Rufus. The story is told predominantly in the third person by an author who is both Rufus, the child, and James Rufus Agee, the adult. The resulting tone is both childlike and mature, a compelling, bittersweet tone. The point of view shifts at times to focus more tightly on Jay or Mary, his wife, or Jay's weak, alcoholic brother Ralph. Yet the end effect of the work is of an experience seen through the eyes of a child, and it is this effect which speaks most directly to the theme of family as a cultural value. It is the family circle, "the simple relationship of father and son," which is, according to Peter Ohlin (204), "a defense against the onslaughts of the universe. The home, located in time and space, is itself an image of order and meaning projected on nothingness." And in each house on the same block, down the street, there is the same image of order and duplication—all the fathers water the lawn on a summer evening; all mothers wash the dishes; all children are sent to bed. It is only Death which abolishes the wonder of this order and security for Rufus.

The Follet family, unlike the Compsons, is a nourishing family. Mary is a loving, conscientious mother, Jay, a vigorous, strong, father. Rufus and his little sister Catherine variously tolerate and torment and support each other. What truly engages the reader of *A Death in the Family* is more the unsaid than the carefully detailed and "said" reality of this family. One knows clearly what the family members have been to each other before the death of the father. Whether such an environment of love can be maintained once the family is no longer a traditional unit is a question Agee skirts with only hints at an ominous future for "the deceived mother, the false son, the fatally wounded daughter."

In this work, as in *The Sound and the Fury*, the power—the sheer psychological power—of the family over its individual members is incontrovertible. It is an institution capable of immense devastation. Even though the idea of an American family as a positive force is more clearly supported in *A Death in the Family* than in *The Sound and the Fury*, the question of which qualities of family life sustain and which destroy is still present in Agee's work, though in an incomplete and only hinted-at form.

The Dollmaker

by Harriette Simpson Arnow

The final novel to be studied is also the work about which the least has been written. Yet it is one which Joyce Carol Oates (Afterword, 601) has called “our most unpretentious American masterpiece.” Harriette Arnow, born in 1908, published *The Dollmaker* in 1954. The novel draws upon Arnow's early years in the Kentucky hills and on her years in Detroit, Michigan after her marriage. It tells the story of Gertie Nevels' struggle to keep her family and her dreams intact during the period when she and her five children move from the woods and hills she so loves in Kentucky to be with her husband in Detroit, where he has found wartime work in a factory.

As is the case for the other two novels examined, basic cultural assumptions about the value of family life form a backdrop for *The Dollmaker*. Gertie's mother is horrified that Gertie would consider staying in Kentucky and buying a small farm while her husband works in Detroit, where “He ain't got nobody to cook him a decent bite a victuals.” And the Bible says: “Leave all else and cleave to thy husband.” What seems a good, solid family value becomes a weapon in the hands of Gertie's mean-spirited mother, and Gertie, conditioned to “honor thy father and thy mother,” is afraid. The events which occur from this point on are the results of an adherence to what seems a

worthy value—family unity—and yet is one which events and persons twist and corrupt until what should sustain in fact all but destroys.

Arnow examines the family uprooted, trapped by economic and social conditions, but also by a lack of understanding and communication. Gertie Nevels' ties to the land, her longing to be whole, her religious faith, her sensitivity to others in the community, her need to work, to create, are all themes which cross and overlap in these three works. But most important for the study at hand, the works each confront the family as an American institution and seek to identify those experiences which nourish the family, and separate them from those which destroy.

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Participant Reflections: Family

A Death in the Family concentrates on a middle-class family who lives in Knoxville, Tennessee in 1915. It tells, in meticulous detail, of the death of the father and the family members' attempts to understand and accept it. The novel opens with the narrator's reminiscence of his childhood; the summer evening where everything is peaceful and full of hope. The scene is one of idyllic blissfulness, and the reader perceives that the family is a happy one in a happy atmosphere. Yet even in the description of this perfect setting, there are undertones of tension and impending doom. For example, Agee describes the family members lying on a quilt, and the stillness of the bodies resting is a subtle hint of the repose of death (Moreau, p. 165).

Narisse A. Bravard, "The Effects of Death as seen in *A Death in the Family*"

The family shapes the values and beliefs of its members. It also provides individuals with a feeling of belonging to a wider group from which affection and security can be drawn in time of crisis. Very often it is here—within the family—that siblings learn to make decisions and assume responsibilities supported by the advice of close relatives.

James Agee has given us a sense of the tremendous role played by the Appalachian family and the importance of family traditions. The Sunday trip into the hills to visit the past inevitably gives Rufus and Catherine a true sense of identity that can only be found within the family. The first part of the book is devoted to establishing a feeling of what it is like to be a family member.

Patricia M. Collis, "The Follet Family As Portrayed in James Agee's *A Death in the Family*"

Rufus becomes very much aware of the reality of his father's death. Painfully he stands before his father's empty chair, smells it, runs his finger around the ash tray, licks the finger, and tastes the darkness, the blackness. He then begins to understand more of what his father's absence will really mean. This scene, when Rufus suffers such intense loneliness, is in sharp contrast to the much earlier scene in which he has felt so close to his father when they went to the movie, stopped at the bar, and then talked as they sat watching the sun go down.

Wilma G. Snyder, "Alienation of Children in *A Death in the Family* and *The Dollmaker*"

The idea of entrapment—women trapped in old roles, illusion, etc.—within the setting or context of the family are ideas that Lee Smith explores in three stories in *Cakewalk*—"Between the Lines," "Artists," and "Cakewalk"—and in the novel *Oral History*. In these stories Smith shows that art can "untrap" the artist if the proper balance between art and life is achieved—merging the traditional role with an artistic one without destroying either role.

Tammy Marshall, "The Artistic Woman in Lee Smith's Fictional Families"

Novelist Simone de Beauvoir once commented, "One is not born a woman. One becomes it by an ensemble of civilization." The "ensemble of civilization" acculturating the American black woman has had dramatic effects on her role today. She is both condemned and praised by sociologists and psychologists for creating and perpetuating a matriarchial stereotype.

The most important things in her life were her children. At one point Mama Younger said, "Seems like God didn't see fit to give the black man nothing but dreams—but he did give us

children to make the dreams worthwhile." Mama was willing to sacrifice anything for her family. She said to Walter, "When the world gets ugly enough—a woman will do anything for her family."

Leatrice Pearson, "The Role of the Matriarchal Figure as Reflected in *The Dollmaker*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, and *A Raisin in the Sun*"

What truths do Hamlet, a medieval prince of Denmark, and Quentin, a suicidal boy from a small Mississippi town, show to modern American teenagers? They show how painful and confusing it can be to confront the imperfect world without the support of loving parents; they show the deep agony one's misconceptions can cause; and finally, they reaffirm life by making one see the wastefulness of their deaths.

Quentin's orders to act as guardian of the Compson name are not as explicit as Hamlet's command from the ghost, but they are nevertheless, as urgent and undeniable to Quentin. Perhaps Quentin's ghost is not his father but his forefathers—those mythical adherents to the Southern Code of Honor. These men, or Quentin's notion of what these men were, compel him to try to be a man of honor to whom "disgrace alone is a sin." . . . Quentin must assume the role of champion of the Compson honor because his parents, who are physically present but emotionally as unavailable as Hamlet's, expect it.

Barbara P. Benson, "Hamlet and Quentin: Brothers in Our Human Family"

Mrs. Compson allows the chaotic elements of her life to enslave her. Her neurotic, whining response to everyone and everything while maintaining a superficial concern with the appearances of being a "lady" and being a good mother, reveals

a personality that "meets change and misfortunes with neither fortitude nor grace but with pretentious and self-indulgent dependence" on others. A victim of her own inner torture and exaggerated sense of responsibility that she refuses to shoulder, she projects a distorted Biblical image of herself as the suffering servant, with all family misfortune and judgment upon herself . . . while Dilsey achieves personal liberation and fulfillment through giving the best of herself, a life of love and sacrifice, to a family caught up in the throes of decay and destruction.

Elizabeth Watson, "And the Truth Shall Set You Free: A Look at the Religious Concepts of Gertie in *The Dollmaker*, Mary in *A Death in the Family*, and Mrs. Compson and Dilsey in *The Sound and the Fury*"

Harriette Arnow's *The Dollmaker* depicts a Kentucky family who leave their home and migrate to the industrial city of Detroit in the 1940s. Although the major portion of the novel deals with the problems faced by the Nevels family in Detroit, the first nine chapters convey the strong sense of place associated with the Appalachian family.

Gertie's identity is shaped not only by her immediate family, but also by her extended family—the community. In Southern fiction the nuclear family and the community often function collectively as kin. In *The Dollmaker* the community is represented by the women who come to the post office hoping to hear from their men who have gone to war. Although Aunt Kate and Uncle John are relatives of Gertie's, she feels a kinship with the others as well.

Carolyn C. Cahill, "The Function of Place in *The Dollmaker*"

Gertie's determination to make sense out of her life in a world that seems frustrating and incomprehensible to her, a world that threatens to destroy her family and the values that have held them together, requires strength and endurance beyond anything she has had to give before.

Gertie's sacrifice of her beloved carving at the end of *The Dollmaker* is not defeat for Gertie but affirmation of her endurance, representing a type of spiritual catharsis for her. This truly becomes for Gertie her finest hour. She realizes she must make a life for her family and herself in Detroit. Through this realization lies her hope, not a hope for dashed dreams of what might have been, but a hope for the here and now. The laughing face of Christ coming down from the hills of Kentucky becomes instead the face of Victor gently comforting her when Reuben ran away, the face of Max kneeling over her bed after Cassie's death, the face of Iva Dean's mother making Clytie a dress for graduation, the face of Mrs. Huffacre crying at Cassie's funeral. Christ finally comes alive for Gertie through her experiences with the people of Merry Hill and the sustaining force of human sharing, a here and now source of meaning and order for Gertie.

Elizabeth Watson, "And the Truth Shall Set You Free: A Look at the Religious Concepts of Gertie in *The Dollmaker*, Mary in *A Death in the Family*, and Mrs. Compson and Dilsey in *The Sound and the Fury*"

At one point she tells her children, "Jesus walks the earth, and we're goen to have us a little piece of heaven right here on earth." Gertie thinks she has realized her dream when she discovers she has finally saved enough money to buy the Tipton Place. When Gertie pays Uncle John for the land the author says of her, "Her foundation was not God, but what God had promised Moses—land." Unfortunately, Gertie's dream is never to be. Her husband, Clovis, gets a job in a war plant in Detroit. Gertie's mother more or less coerces her into moving to Detroit to be with him. This is seen as Gertie's duty to her husband, even though it means uprooting the entire family, three sons and two daughters. So Gertie packs up her children and takes them to Detroit, desperately hoping that when the war is over they may still return home and buy the land.

Patricia C. Ramsey, "Judas or Christ?—Gertie's Struggle to Believe in Harriette Arnow's *The Dollmaker*"

The Theme of Family in *Hamlet* and *The Sound and the Fury*

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One late April day as a class of average and above-average seniors discussed Quentin's section of William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, I looked up to see a girl in the middle row crying. Tears were streaming silently down her face. I was not sure what to do and since no one around her seemed to be taking notice, I continued with class. Several days later she came by to tell me that she was sorry she had lost control like that, but that during our discussion of Quentin's suicidal mind, she had suddenly understood her father's recent suicide in a new way. She had realized his loneliness and pain, which until that time, she had not seen because of her own anger at him for leaving her. The realism of Faulkner's Compson family members had brought her to a better grasp of her own troubled family. It had spoken to her in a very personal way, proving once again the greatness of Faulkner's novel and the value of great literature.

This incident and many others like it over my years of teaching high school English have convinced me that numerous difficult pieces of "classical" literature can be made accessible and meaningful to modern students if we can show them the humanity in the literature. One way to do this is to use the universal theme of family as a doorway through the complexities of style and character. Two companionable works which lend themselves to this method are William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*. I have taught these two works to average and above average high school juniors and seniors to rave reviews. The two pieces can be done together or separately with equal success, but the pairing of the works adds dimension to both.

These pieces both deal with what modern psychologists call dysfunctional families, the type of families in which many of our

young people today live. Even more significantly, both *Hamlet* and *The Sound and the Fury* are about how the children of these families cope with the problems existing in their homes. Very few of my students can fail to sympathize with Hamlet's despair and anger over his father's death, mother's apparent loose behavior, and new stepfather's assumption of the roles of father and king. They feel empathy with Hamlet's confusion and procrastination as he attempts to handle an adult situation for which he is obviously unprepared. Similarly, students understand the pain of Quentin Compson's embarrassment over his alcoholic father's failure to control the Compson family and the need Quentin has for his self-centered mother's notice, approval, and nurturing. They see that Quentin is like the "perfect" children of today who inexplicably commit violent acts aimed at others or themselves because they can no longer deal with the private hells they live in at home. These two works from different centuries and cultures are timeless because they deal with realistic characters in realistic families to which our teenagers can relate.

Approached through the theme of family, *Hamlet* and *The Sound and the Fury* are not as difficult stylistically, and therefore, are not impossible for adolescents to read and enjoy. Admittedly, the students do need to be made aware of the nature of the works—of Shakespeare's language and stage conventions, or Faulkner's experiments in stream of consciousness—but once they have some assistance, modern students will become immersed in the *people* living in these works and not be hampered by the methods of storytelling. Appalachian students in particular often find Shakespeare very easy to understand, for, as one student told me, "My Grandma talks like that sometimes." These young people have the tradition of the Appalachian dialect which goes back to Shakespeare's London, and the cadences and word choices in *Hamlet* are, at times, very familiar to them. Faulkner's novel, likewise, speaks with a Southern accent and the free-flowing style is easier for young people to master than for those of us over-schooled in "proper" narrative form. I have had

students who, after being given some significant dates and events from Benjy's section, read right through it with delight. One boy even told me he loved that section because he had a cousin who was retarded and had always wondered how his cousin thought. After seeing through Benjy's eyes, he believed he understood his cousin better. Such examples seem to say that we underestimate the flexibility and intellectual curiosity of our students by not offering them enough challenges which are not only demanding but very pertinent to their lives. They all live in families, and by opening that area of these complex works to them, we give the pieces a relevance that makes the academic difficulty of the authors' styles secondary and surmountable.

In addition to offering relevance, Shakespeare's play and Faulkner's novel fit easily into North Carolina's high school English curriculums. *Hamlet* is regularly taught in the British and Western literature courses offered to high school seniors. *The Sound and the Fury* is not often attempted in high school but could easily be worked into an upper level American literature course for high school juniors. If a school offers an Advanced Placement class for seniors, a unit pairing these two works would be very appropriate and offer enough challenge to help prepare students for the AP exam. Because students get personally involved in this unit, they have little difficulty discussing and writing about these works, giving numerous opportunities for students to have experience in speaking and writing. Using the video of the BBC production of *Hamlet* offers chances to develop

viewing as well as evaluation skills. In the past, I have had classes critique the video production, cast and block their own production, and present key scenes from *Hamlet*. In addition, *The Sound and the Fury* has a lot of potential for creative writing experiments. For example, students could write the story from Caddy's point of view, or add another section to tell what happened to the Compsons after 1928. They could also discuss this novel as a possible movie. A very inferior 1957 movie version of *The Sound and the Fury* exists. If this movie is available, a movie viewing and critique session would test the students' own views of how the book should "look" and explore the difficulty of moving a work like this to film. Obviously, this unit offers numerous ways to expand into areas that fulfill goals of the Basic Education Plan or follow student interest and expertise.

The human family is the first environment for all of us, and seeing it reflected in the literature they read strikes a deep chord of recognition for modern students dealing with changing and sometimes dysfunctional families of their own. They can understand *Hamlet* and *The Sound and the Fury* on a level which is so powerful that it goes beyond any structural difficulties in the individual works, and the issues raised by the content of these classics offer opportunities for very meaningful therapeutic classroom experiences. My students and I have found this approach to Shakespeare and Faulkner a wonderful adventure, well worth the struggles involved. One amazed seventeen-year-old once remarked as he left class, "This is really *awesome* stuff!"

**Unit for Average or Above Average High
School Juniors and Seniors:
The Theme of Family in *Hamlet*
and *The Sound and the Fury***

- I. Study of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*
 - A. Lecture on Elizabethan England, Elizabethan Theater, and William Shakespeare's life
 - B. Read *Hamlet* with discussion of each act focusing on Hamlet, the son, reacting to a difficult family situation
 1. The grieving for Hamlet's dead father
 2. The hasty marriage of Hamlet's mother
 3. The natural animosity Hamlet would feel toward his stepfather
 4. The lack of political motivation in Hamlet in a very politically dangerous situation
 5. The isolation and confusion Hamlet feels
 6. The natural inclination of Hamlet to deal with his problems in his own head
 - C. View all or part of the BBC production of *Hamlet* starring Derek Jacobi (I have found this video very useful after students read and discuss.)
 - D. Discuss major issues in the play in small groups
 - E. Write essay on the play
- II. Study of William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*
 - A. Lecture on the background of the novel's style
 1. Development of the psychological novel in the early twentieth century
 - a. Freud's theories on the workings of the mind
 - b. Henry James' experiments in shifting point of view in *The Turn of the Screw*
 2. Development of the style of writing called "stream of consciousness"
 - a. William James' definition of the term
 - b. James Joyce's experiments in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: indirect interior monologue
 - c. Virginia Woolf's experiments in the short story "The Mark on the Wall": direct interior monologue
 3. Conduct student writing experiments in how the human mind works
 - a. Free writing for two minutes for students to record all thoughts in that period of time, then brainstorming and listing their observations of how they think and the problems a writer would have creating the illusion of a mind working
 - b. Recording an early memory in three ways, then deciding which is better for the author, for the reader
 - 1) Students thinking back to their earliest memory, holding that image, then summing it up on paper with one word
 - 2) Students recording the same memory in three words
 - 3) Students recording the same memory in a complete sentence
 4. Discussing the implications of these descriptions of memory
 - a. For many, the single word will be the best because they can evoke the whole scene for themselves with that one word due to the fact that they may have been very limited in their

- verbal ability at the time of the experience
- b. The mind is able to store many sensations, thoughts, memories, and emotions with one key call word
 - c. These memories are very sensual
 - d. The mind flows quickly, often without obvious connections between ideas
- B. Background on Faulkner, and Yoknapatawpha County, and Compson Family
1. View film strip on Faulkner's life
 2. Read and discuss Appendix to 1946 edition of *The Sound and the Fury* to get a list of characters and a feel for Faulkner's Southern, oral-tradition style of storytelling
- C. Reading the novel (I have used study questions at times to help students see what we would discuss in the work.)
1. Benjy's section
 - a. Give information sheet with dates of major memory events for Benjy and time periods of caretakers
 - b. Discuss how these events and caretakers can clue a reader to time shifts in Benjy's section
 - c. Read the first few pages of Benjy's section aloud to class to illustrate how he will narrate
 - d. After students read the whole section, ask how they feel about characters and point out how
 - they are arriving at the judgments on a "gut" level based on Benjy's experiences
 - e. Discuss the central scene of the novel, Caddy up the pear tree, and how it illuminates the roles of the family members
 - f. Show Faulkner's use of juxtaposition with Benjy's memory of his grandmother's funeral and sister's wedding—two central family rituals
2. Quentin's section
- a. Explain the time, place, situation of this section
 - b. Discuss the differences in how Quentin's mind will operate as opposed to Benjy's
 - c. After students read, discuss the events in Quentin's day in chronological order
 - d. Point out the allusions and comparisons to Hamlet in this section
 - 1) Intelligent, educated character
 - 2) Oldest son trying to uphold family honor
 - 3) Isolation of character
 - 4) Absence or unavailability of parents as comforters
 - 5) Real or pretended madness
 - 6) Suicidal tendencies
3. Jason's section
- a. Read opening aloud, noting difference in style and personality from previous brothers

- b. After reading the section, list the activities of Jason's day in chronological order
 - c. Discuss his motives in an attempt to judge his actions
4. Dilsey's section
- a. Discuss the shift in point of view
 - b. After reading, discuss central scenes
 - 1) Dilsey in the kitchen fixing breakfast
 - 2) Dilsey at the Easter service
 - 3) Benjy's trip to the cemetery
 - c. Discuss the effect and meaning of the whole book in light of the four versions of the truth
5. Suggest re-reading of Benjy's section to clarify the novel, put the puzzle together
- a. Discuss the different views of Caddy and the family
 - b. Try to form a truth from all the evidence, almost like a family counselor
 - c. Discuss the whole novel in small groups

III. Culminating activities

- A. Using the classical notion of tragedy, discuss these two works as tragedies which contain universal situations
- B. Compare/contrast Hamlet, Quentin, Benjy, Jason, and Dilsey as possible tragic heroes
- C. Write an essay
- D. Unit test on the two works

List of Resources

- Faulkner, William. *The Sound and the Fury*. New York: Vintage Books, 1946.
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A Family in Crisis
A Unit of Study of James Agee's
A Death in the Family

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Many noted educators, including John Dewey, have stated that education for any student begins where that student is and then moves him or her forward to deeper understanding, greater insights, and fuller knowledge. This high and lofty goal that many of us accept as we try to “educate” the youth that come into our classroom presents a special challenge to those of us who teach literature. For many of us, our literature textbooks contain selections that “society” and textbook publishers have deemed appropriate for students throughout the nation, rather than admitting that America is a land of many regions and cultures.

So many times, these textbooks omit excellent selections that have regional significance. Someone out there has decided that these writings would not have universal appeal for the hypothetical “typical” student. Also, these same publishers are making culturally biased statements when they include certain pieces and exclude others. Such acts of exclusion short circuit the teacher’s primary goal of starting where the students are and leading them to a broader understanding of their culture and life.

A solution to these omissions is for teachers to find good pieces of regional literature that start with ideas, situations, and/or personalities with which the students can identify and that will, at the same time, acquaint the students with the basics of literature that may open doors to other books, poems, and drama.

One such regional work of literature is James Agee’s *A Death in the Family*. It is a novel, set in East Tennessee, that uses language familiar to Appalachian students. Agee’s autobiographical novel includes many elements that have made it a key to open the door of literature to our students.

Our students at Powell High School, located in a small community formerly known as Powell Station, Tennessee, can quickly identify with the novel. The road along which Agee’s father (Jay Follet in the novel) was driving when he was killed in an automobile accident runs near Powell and is one our students travel. There are, in fact, some people in the community who remember the accident involving Agee’s father. In addition to the highway, the novel refers to streets and landmarks in Knoxville, Tennessee, that are also familiar to Powell students.

Even more than the familiarity of locale, the situation of a family in crisis is one with which many students can relate. In Agee’s novel, the family’s crisis is due to a father’s death. Although not many of the students have faced such a loss, they have experienced or know the effect of the breaking up of a family.

The Follet family’s conflicts are real to twentieth-century students who find similar situations in their own homes. Mary Follet, Jay’s wife, thinks Jay drinks too much alcohol. She does not approve of his family from a rural county north of Knoxville. Jay himself is uncertain of his role as father and does not accept his wife’s religious beliefs.

Since *A Death in the Family* has a quality that appeals to students, I use it in my American literature classes, both college-bound and advanced placement. Personally, I prefer to discuss it with the students after they have read the entire novel; however, such discussions could be conducted after they have read specific sections of the novel. In class we discuss the elements of fiction that are present in the novel as well as its themes and subject matter. These are some of the subjects that have come up in discussion: conflicts between city folks and country folks, dissatisfaction with the role of father, and ways of dealing with grief. We have examined these concerns in relation to other works of literature and in relation to personal experience. We have also considered the role the editor plays in the final form of the literary work. Such consideration is particularly relevant in *A Death in the Family* because the final form of the novel is the

work of editors who assembled the novel after Agee's death.

James Agee's *A Death in the Family* has been well accepted by my students, not so much because it is a regional novel, but because it has touched realities with which they deal daily. In fact the term *regional literature* probably is not even a very valid term. No doubt, it may have been a term that was created by some publisher or critic who wanted to exclude a piece of literature that was not part of the canon of "established" works that are customarily taught to all students.

We teachers must not let unknown editors control the curriculum that we present to our classes. We must choose literature that both appeals to our students and conveys to them a sense of literary merit. Only when we present a broad spectrum of literature to our students are we likely to catch their attention and stimulate their interest. Then, perhaps, they will develop literary and artistic judgment with which to evaluate other literary works that they encounter.

Outline of Unit of Study

James Agee's *A Death in the Family*

Class discussions are as follows:

1. Background Information: Include biographical information on James Agee and the nature of the autobiographical novel. (1 day)
2. Structure of the Novel: Include the role of the editor. The concept of unity in the novel is included here. (1 day)
3. Character Analysis: Center on the question: "Does Jay Follet feel comfortable with the role of father?" The study of characters also looks at stereotypes within the narrative. (2-3 days)
4. Discussion of Conflict: Deal with internal and external conflicts and how these are affected by grief. (1-2 days)
5. Analysis of the Theme: Focus on themes of dealing with conflict and grief and emphasize the universal qualities of the novel. (1-2 days)
6. Watch the movie *A Death in the Family*. (2 days)

Suggested Composition Assignments

1. Using "Knoxville, 1915" as a model, describe your neighborhood as it is on a warm summer late afternoon and evening. Use a variety of descriptive words that appeal to all senses.
2. Write a character analysis of Jay Follet, addressing the question: "Does Jay like, enjoy, or feel comfortable with the role of father?"
3. Compare the unity and structure of *A Death in the Family* with the unity and structure of Wilder's *Our Town*.
4. Research the psychological ways of dealing with grief and discuss how these expressions are exhibited by the various family members in *A Death in the Family*.
5. *A Death in the Family* is an autobiographical novel. Research James Agee's life and compare it to the story he told in his novel.
6. Write an elegy to the death of Jay Follet.
7. In Chapter 15 of *A Death in the Family*, Aunt Hannah has difficulty explaining death to Rufus and Catherine. Write a story that could be a book for children that teaches about death.
8. Traditional ballads were created in response to a tragedy in the lives of common people. Write a traditional ballad about the death of Jay Follet.
9. Choose an event from your life before the age of 7 and write it as a story.

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Bringing Characters to Life

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For a special study of the family theme I will be suggesting not texts, but technique. The classroom itself is something of a family, and to most effectively use that environment calls for some special methods.

The traditional classroom is often inhibiting. There are expressive needs that discussion may not draw out due to a lack of spontaneity in some class members. There is, however, another method besides the deliberative essay or term paper for generating student response; one that may enhance individual participation and planning: enter the monologue.

Imagine if every child in a family, especially the smallest, had his or her own say. With no interruptions from more assertive and impulsive speakers, there would be a tremendous flow of feelings. Performing provides a magic touch of empathy and involvement. Normally reticent students, reluctant to speak their own character, may relish the chance to speak through another. Performance models can be found throughout literature, whether it is selected works of Robert Browning or Edgar Lee Masters' *Spoon River Anthology*, the soliloquies of Shakespeare or differing narrators in *The Sound and the Fury*. These may be utilized for practice, but for fullest empathy and involvement students can create their own scripts. Two basic possibilities are writing a story sequel and writing an alternative scene. If a student is writing a script for the ears of peers instead of the eyes of teachers, motivation and interest are increased.

Preparation is the key to confidence and one of the most important steps in studying the character of a story is to find specific characteristics. These are normally not explicit, but can be drawn from observing how other characters respond to this person or how he/she thinks and behaves. Faulkner sketched some notes in reference to Jason's future. Even without such

help, there are a number of colorful characters in the work who lend themselves to sequel portrayals. The following general traits can be focused on: 1) physical characteristics such as age, appearance, build, dress, and health; 2) the social aspects of occupation, hobbies, relations with family and friends, and wealth; 3) psychological qualities such as temperament, adjustment, and way of behaving; and 4) moral characteristics including values and desires and goals in life.

The monologue is a basic performing medium and could be a starting point for classroom exercises. It can be diversified to include dialogue and multiple parts. Students may combine their participation in a readers theater. The suggestions here are certainly not new. The point is that many students may be less frustrated and more challenged by taking on a stint as an actor, by acting out some of their own concerns with a voice they co-created.

The harsh ending of *The Dollmaker*, unlike the Fonda film version, demands an examination of values and judgments. Producing and performing a script could be a means of addressing these concerns. In an alternative scene or sequel, the student may explore the cutting up of the block of wood as an act to save the family or the soul or an act to lose one or both. The following excerpt is from a scene in which Mrs. Anderson is confronting her husband about Gertie's tragedy in an attempt to reach a new resolve in her own life.

Judas or Christ—A Logical Choice?

"Well!" said Mr. Anderson, hanging up his overcoat. "Did you pick up the little wooden dolls for the bazaar?"

"Yes, Homer. I'm afraid so," replied Mrs. Anderson, not looking up from her perch on the couch, secured behind a coffee table.

"What? Do you mean they were not up to standard?"

"Standard?" said Mrs. Anderson. "Oh, you needn't worry. The Nevels' production line would make your people at Flint very pleased."

William Leonard Eury
Appalachian Collection

"Glad to hear it, dear." Homer could tell his wife was far from being glad or pleased, and he preferred not to pursue it. He headed into the hallway.

Mrs. Anderson, catching herself just short of a scream, followed. "Well it's not so simple! Today I went to Gertie's, mostly because I was hoping the block of wood was finished. I'd seen it so elegant two weeks ago, only lacking the face. The body already posed, with hands gesturing like Judas. Now it turns out that I was the one paying the thirty pieces of silver!" Her face was buried in her hands.

"I'm not sure what this is all about," said Mr. Anderson, wide-eyed, his neck craned, peering around the hallway door. "But I'm sure it's nothing to get so worked up about."

"Maybe not," she stiffened, "but it is something critical to my, ah, my sense of relativity. That psychology book you had me read last week would recommend an observer's reaction. You're it."

"Now dear, I . . ."

"Sit, Homer! Please, sit."

As Homer shuffled uncomfortably over to the easy chair at the end of the couch, Mrs. Anderson pointedly thrust an object toward him. He reacted as though he were about to be stabbed and fell back into the chair.

Normally, such a slip would have stirred up at least a snicker, but this time Mrs. Anderson only frowned. "It won't hurt you, Homer."

"Oh, it's one of the little dolls," he sighed in relief. He tried earnestly to regain his dignity, with a serious stance, exaggerated even for him. "Its bright, simple features rather enhance its overall appeal, don't you agree?"

"Cute's the word," snapped Mrs. Anderson.

"It's nice enough," continued Homer in earnest, "though not as unique as her past work. Most people could probably come up with something similar, given ample time."

With strained sincerity, Mrs. Anderson responded, "But isn't that the wonder of mass production?"

"Yes! An object is simplified as much as possible and copies can be produced rapidly with a minimum of human effort."

"Just a thought . . ." added Mrs. Anderson. "Didn't you write that stereotypes are formed in much the same way? Could it be there is a link between rising industrialism and lessened individuality, dignity, artistry?"

"Now see here," said Mr. Anderson, rising sharply from his chair. "I've been set up!"

Mrs. Anderson remained on the couch, musing over the wooden doll. "I wanted only to set Gertie up comfortably . . . so she could have some work while Clovis was out on strike. The order for all the dolls, the payment, something overwhelmed her. Gertie had never taken the easy way. She'd always labored painstakingly over what she valued, especially on the block of wood. I asked her today if she'd been unable to find a face for it. She told me she could have found plenty of models good enough were it to be Christ. 'Millions of models,' she said, 'a regular assembly line.'"

"I get it. The block is where this doll comes from!" Mr. Anderson concluded. He sat with a smug grin. "It seems a logical choice."

This sort of creative project can explore values and relationships encountered through an assigned piece of literature or through a student's personal choice of a story. Questions to explore relating to the theme of family include: What influence does a parental character have in the main character's life? What sort of parent would the character make? What was this person like as a child? Are the relationships portrayed healthy or hindering? What has become of the family ten years later? The student can take such ideas and play them out as the character, bringing them to life.

Resources

- Galati, Frank and Charlotte Lee. *Oral Interpretation*. Atlanta: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1977.
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Community

Enemies Yoked

*Where are Hester, Arthur, Roger, Henry, Carol, and Will,
The village martyr, the weak-willed minister, the lonely
opportunist, the agrarian experimenter, the would-be
reformist, the practical, hometown doctor?*

*All, all are sleeping now,
Dust returned to dust,
Ashes to ashes.*

*One caught in shameful adultery,
One rankled by a tragic flaw,
One who sacrificed his soul to conquer another,
One who lived a simple life with nature,
One who determined to fulfill her vision,
One caught in the status quo,
All, all are sleeping now,
Peaceful in death if not in life.*

*One an enemy to conformity,
One an enemy to himself,
One an enemy to God's laws,
One an enemy to society's institutions,
One an enemy to ugliness and bigotry,
One an enemy to social upheaval,
Yoked to the community, to the land,
To ambitions both thwarted and fulfilled.
All, all are sleeping now.
Listen to the secrets of the soul.*

Elizabeth Watson

“Members of Each Other”: Community in American Life and Literature

For we must consider that we shall be a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us, so that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken, and so cause him to withdraw his present help from us, we shall be made a story and a byword throughout the world.

from “A Model of Christian Charity” (1630), a sermon by John Winthrop, Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, delivered aboard the *Arbella*

In the ninth book of Homer’s *Odyssey*, Odysseus tells King Alcinous of his adventures among the Cyclops, that race of giants with one huge eye in the center of their foreheads. The Cyclops’ physical features are not so astonishing to Odysseus as are their social arrangements. They have “neither gatherings for council nor oracles of law, but they dwell in hollow caves on the crests of high hills . . . and they reckon not one of another.” Without laws or deliberative gatherings, and without concern for one another, the Cyclops do not live as members of a community.

The Greeks found life outside a *polis*, or city-state, uncivilized. A person who lived to himself, like a Cyclops, unconcerned about his fellow man, uninvolved in things affecting the community, was simply ignorant, i.e. an *idiotes* (hence the English “idiot”). Aristotle in his *Politics* (Barnes, 1986) explains:

Every state is a community of some kind, and every community is established with a view to some good; for everyone always acts in order to obtain that which they think good. But, if all communities aim at some good, the state or political community, which is the highest of all, and which embraces all the rest, aims at good in a greater degree than any other, and at the highest good.

Implicit in Aristotle’s concept of the state as the highest form of

community, which subsumes all smaller and lower forms, is the concept of the common good—that which benefits all members of the polity. Francois N. Babeuf (Bartlett, 414-15), the French revolutionary activist, formed a Conspiracy of Equals aimed at “something more sublime and equitable—the common good, or the community of goods.”

Especially since the American and French revolutions of the late eighteenth century, leaders, social philosophers, economists, educational theorists, and others have been necessarily concerned with the relationship of the individual to the community, and with the rights and responsibilities of both. Freud (III.287) considered it the chief task of every individual, from the onset of puberty, to cease to be a child and to become a member of a social community. In the fourteenth chapter of *The Moon and Sixpence* the English novelist William Somerset Maugham defines conscience as “the guardian in the individual of the rules which the community has evolved for its preservation.” Maugham’s countryman Bertrand Russell (176) admits the “abstract right of the community to interfere with its members in order to secure the biological necessities to all,” but he does not think this right applies to such things as opinion and knowledge. “The fact that the majority of a community dislikes an opinion gives it no right to interfere with those who hold it.”

From the time of the founding fathers, American leaders, thinkers, and writers, in a tradition derived from our Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian heritage, have pondered the political, social, economic, and ecological aspects of community. John Quincy Adams viewed the community as an aggregation of individuals. “Individual liberty is individual power,” he wrote in a letter to James Lloyd on October 1, 1822, “and as the power of a community is a mass of individual powers, the nation which enjoys the most freedom must necessarily be in proportion to its numbers the most powerful nation.” In a speech delivered in 1910, Theodore Roosevelt (687) invoked the concept of the common good when he said: “Every man holds his property

subject to the general right of the community to regulate its use to whatever degree the public welfare may require it.” Reversing the assumption implicit in Theodore Roosevelt’s view of property rights, Aldo Leopold (x), the environmentalist, asks us to consider not only that land may belong to us, as property, individually and communally, but that we belong to the land. “We abuse land,” Leopold writes, “because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.” There are ecological and environmental implications to economist John Kenneth Galbraith’s observation, in chapter seventeen of *The Affluent Society*, that “Just as there must be a balance in what a community produces, so there must also be a balance in what the community consumes.” Judge Learned Hand (284) considered a healthy community as one capable of tolerating dissent, and maintained that a “community is already in the process of dissolution where each man begins to eye his neighbor as a possible enemy, where non-conformity with the accepted creed, political as well as religious, is a mark of disaffection . . . where orthodoxy chokes freedom of dissent . . .” And Franklin D. Roosevelt (781), in his fourth and final inaugural address in January 1945, emphasized the concept of community from the international perspective. “We have learned that we cannot live alone, at peace; that our well-being is dependent on the well-being of other nations, far away. We have learned that we must live as men, and not as ostriches, nor as dogs in the manger.” Alluding to the assertion of Socrates (who taught Aristotle’s teacher, Plato) that he was not an Athenian or a Greek, but a citizen of the world, Roosevelt concluded: “We have learned to be citizens of the world, members of the human community.”

The word “community” has been in the English language since the fourteenth century, and is understood in a number of senses. Deriving from the French *comunete*, and ultimately from the Latin *communis*, meaning “common,” the word from its earliest use referred to the common people as distinguished from

people of rank. Additionally, “community” denoted a state or organized society, especially a relatively small one. It further referred to the people of a district, as well as (from the sixteenth century on) the quality of holding something in common, as in expressions such as “community of interests,” “community of goods,” and a sense of common identity and characteristics. Since the nineteenth century, “community” has come to mean something more immediate and local than “society,” with which it was once almost synonymous. In the late nineteenth century the sociologist Toennies introduced two German terms to distinguish between “community” as something direct, immediate, and local—*Gemeinschaft*—and an entity felt to be larger and more inclusive, such as a nation state or society—*Gesellschaft* (Williams, 65-66).

But whether we understand community as something local and immediate, or all-embracing and abstract, we Americans, from our colonial beginnings onward, have been engaged in a series of experiments aimed at discovering a satisfactory accommodation between individual and community. American history is commonly interpreted as “a story of creative tension between two impulses, an insistence on a vast scope for individualism and a yearning for a sense of community” (Will, 62). These two impulses may be seen in the differing views of Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, as they emerge in the correspondence of these two men (Cappon, Vol. 2, 342-43). Jefferson is optimistic and confident of the ability of citizens to elect their leaders, to better themselves through education; Adams, on the other hand, is skeptical, not at all certain that human beings, by exercising their rational powers, are capable of determining those most capable of governing, or of bettering themselves through education. Jefferson’s views and those of Alexander Hamilton differed in a similarly sharp manner, with Jefferson essentially optimistic, and Hamilton pessimistic, dubious of the ability of the people to rule, as Judge Learned Hand (66ff) points out. These differing views of human nature and human capability result in different visions of appropriate government,

and therefore are to be associated with our two dominant political parties.

Many voices, expressing different visions, speak out of our history. Sometimes these voices stress our identity and our rights as individuals, sometimes our desire and need for community. Henry David Thoreau expresses the impulse to individualism when he writes in the conclusion to *Walden*: "If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer." Yet on the eve of the revolution that secured Thoreau's opportunity to march to a different drummer, Benjamin Franklin (348) stressed community when he said: "We must all hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately."

The earliest colonists came as members of religious communities, with the intention of perpetuating those communities. "From the beginning," Daniel Boorstin (65) writes, "*communities* existed here before there were governments to care for public needs or to enforce public duties." Before setting foot on land, the men who crossed on the Mayflower signed an agreement to create a body politic in which majority rule would decide all questions and issues. This Mayflower Compact can be seen as a prototype of later efforts by colonists. In 1630 John Winthrop's sermon, "A Model of Christian Charity," was preached on board ship before the members of the Massachusetts Bay Colony debarked, and implies a deliberate and self-conscious effort to establish a community.

Boorstin (1) asserts that "America grew in the search for community." New Englanders, more so than the people of the southern colonies, saw their communities as centers of change. Any idea for bettering the community was welcomed, and New England public life came to be characterized by an abundance of reform movements (43). In 1840 Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote to Thomas Carlyle about the many social experiments that had become fashionable in New England: "Not a reading man but has a draft of a new community in his waistcoat pocket," Emerson observed. "One man renounces the use of animal food; and

another of coin; and another of domestic hired service; and another of the State" (Shapiro, October 30 entry). Thoreau's efforts to wake his neighbors up took place in this ferment of New England reform movements and social experiments. Thoreau was a seeker of community no less than many of his fellow New Englanders and other fellow Americans. While his stay at Walden Pond might suggest that he wished to withdraw from any community, it must be stressed that Thoreau sought not the abolition of community, but a better community, one which was a means to greater fulfillment of the individual.

The continent was explored and settled not so much by individuals as by people moving communally. The settlement was carried out, in large part, by rootless people in search of community. Just as colonists crossed the ocean as a community, settlers crossed the continent in organized groups. As settlement progressed westward, group after group recapitulated the experience of the Mayflower pilgrims, and formed "a kind of Mayflower Compact" for the journey (Boorstin, 66). As towns sprang up, businessmen became community-makers and community leaders (115-16), the Benjamin Franklins of the West (123). Eventually communities competed with one another, for designation as the state capital, or (as they do today) for the location of a business or industry (Boorstin, 162). The colleges that were established in connection with this westward movement and settlement, Boorstin maintains, were actually neither public nor private, but a distinctly American *community* institution (160). Such was, according to Boorstin, the pattern of community-making everywhere in America except in the South. In New England, and later elsewhere in America, things as they were tended to be measured by how they ought to be; whereas in the South things as they ought to be tended increasingly to be identified with things as they were (212).

The difference between the dynamic communities of New England and the American West, and those of the South are explained not only by the South's "peculiar institution," slavery,

but by differences in topography and settlement patterns. A distinctive feature of New England life was the town and its meetinghouse, where people met as a community to deal with public affairs. The population of the South was, by comparison, dispersed across the land. People lived in the midst of fields they cultivated; the town meetinghouse was not a distinctive feature of the Southern landscape, as in New England (Wertenbaker, 85).

Yet this is not to say that no sense of community existed in the South. In the South and border South, where frontier conditions persisted longer than in New England and other parts of the country, people lived communally even when they resided at considerable distances from one another, and community mores and public opinion operated effectively.

The historian Everett Dick, in *The Dixie Frontier* (302-03), provides an illustration:

Such was the primitive simplicity [in frontier communities] that there were no locks. The first lock in one community was bought by a farmer and attached to the door of his corn-crib. This aroused such indignation among the whole neighborhood that a mass meeting compelled him to remove it. Public opinion held that his action was a reflection upon the honesty of the neighborhood, an insult to the whole community. It was freely acknowledged that he had a perfect right to lock things from his own children in his house, but to turn a key in the face of the whole community was an affront that would not be brooked.

In the stories we tell ourselves about the American frontier and settlement experience, the rugged individualist occupies center stage. Far more important than the lone frontiersmen, however, were “the obscure men and women who tilled the farms, founded homes, and built ordered communities” (Greene, 177). Our impulse to individualism has always existed, and has been pointed out, in tension with an antithetical impulse toward community. “For all his individualism,” Henry Steele Commager

(22) writes in *The American Mind*, “the American was much given [in the years between 1880 and 1950] to cooperative undertakings and to joining. . . A thousand organizations sprang up—organizations to do good, to prosper business, to influence politics, to recollect the past, to mold the future, to conquer culture. . . [These organizations were] an effort to give an appearance of stability to an unstable society, to create order out of disorder, to substitute new loyalties for those which had been dissipated and new conventions for those which had been lost, to enlarge horizons and inflate opportunities.” During these years, too, mainline American churches shifted from an emphasis on individual salvation to one of providing for the social needs of the community (170-71).

Yet all this evidence of community-building, as Commager suggests, presented an appearance that belied the reality upon which it was founded. Tocqueville (Vol. 2, 236) in his *Democracy in America*, shrewdly observed, in the first third of the nineteenth century, a difficulty with respect to democratic communities. “Democracy loosens social ties,” he wrote, “but it draws the ties of nature more tight; it brings kindred more closely together, whilst it places the various members of the community more widely apart.”

T. K. Whipple (32-33) in *Study Out the Land*, elaborates on what Tocqueville condenses into a single proposition. Americans were a nation of immigrants from other lands, Whipple reminds us, and he is interested in the psychology of people uprooted from old European communities and transplanted into the American reality. Such a man cannot possibly have the same bond with the soil that his ancestors had in the old community. Such a man’s life is necessarily “to some extent impoverished, even though he may be quite unconscious of the deprivation. . . He once had a close and vital tie with the world about him, and now he has little or none, except as a source of livelihood. His treatment of the soil, his ruthless exploitation of it, and his willingness to leave it and move on will be measures of his lack of feeling.”

Here Whipple describes the same rootlessness and mobility that Boorstin deals with in *The Americans: The National Experience*, but he is less sanguine about this feature of the American experience than is Boorstin—at the same time that he helps explain why Tocqueville thought democracy loosened social ties and placed members of the community “more widely apart.”

The transplanted alien, Whipple continues, may settle among other aliens, “aliens to each other as well as to him; and a number of strangers, however friendly and kindly, cannot soon coalesce into a close-knit community. The circumstances described in Roelvaag’s *Giants in the Earth* provide an example of just such a community. Even supposing a whole community migrates in a body—as often was the case, as we have seen—the communal life cannot go on as it had previously (Whipple, 33). And the history of such transplanted communities again and again shows that they inevitably and necessarily change as they adapt to new conditions and demands, and more often than not, dissolve. The community of New Plymouth was absorbed into Massachusetts in 1691, by which time the theocratic elements of the community had been drastically reduced. While the Pilgrims had pooled their resources to purchase the Mayflower, and began as communists, sharing land and labor, young men of the community soon began to object to working for other men’s families, resented their wives having to work for others, and the provident and industrious rankled at receiving no more reward than the shiftless. The communistic experiment collapsed, as did many that would follow it. The Plymouth Colony’s second governor William Bradford (120-21; cf. also Wish, 27-28) cited the failure of the experiment as proof that the arrangement was contrary to human nature.

As Whipple reminds us, the twin impulses of individualism and community, in combination with unrestricted freedom, abundant land and natural resources, has not led Americans to the New Jerusalem they set out to find. While statute books and the courts far into the nineteenth century reflected distrust of unregulated economic life, and while utopian experiments, mass

education, abolitionism, and trade unionism through the eras of Jackson and Lincoln also expressed a belief in cooperation in preference to untrammelled economic freedom, entrepreneurship, and root-hog-or-die competition (Wish, v. 1, 574-75), the actions of Americans fell conspicuously short of expressed ideals. We have too often been “Jeffersonian in talk, Hamiltonian in practice,” as some individuals have received a charter to exploit the public in the name of freedom of enterprise. Economic power has easily translated into political power. A way of life and a set of values “which seemed ideal to a set of loose rural communities . . . betrayed us in the conditions of a new age. . .” (Whipple, 119).

The process of change from a predominantly rural and agricultural to an urban and industrial society quickened in the post-Civil War period. According to Henry Steele Commager (44), from the mid-1880s to the Spanish War:

The new America came in as on flood tide. These years witnessed the passing of the old West, the disappearance of the frontier line and of good, cheap farm land, the decline of the cattle kingdom, the completion of the transcontinentals . . . They revealed a dangerous acceleration of the exploitation of natural resources; the seizure of the best forest, mineral, range, and farm land by corporations; and the beginnings of the conservation and reclamation movement. They were marked by a profound and prolonged agricultural malaise and the transfer of economic and political gravity from country to city.

The new America caused students of American life to re-examine the American character, values, and traditional community. Sherwood Anderson (247), in *Winesburg, Ohio*, a collection of interrelated stories subtitled “The Book of the Grotesque,” examined the dark underside of small-town American life. Representative of the thousands of young people who left rural areas and small towns for life in large cities during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Anderson’s protagonist

George Willard leaves Winesburg at the end of the book, and the community in which he has grown up becomes “but a background on which to paint the dreams of his manhood.” Edgar Lee Masters’ *Spoon River Anthology* (91), a sort of *Main Street* in verse, presents a gallery of village and small-town failures—disillusioned and broken lawyers, would-be artists and poets, druggists, dentists, doctors, farmers, housewives, bankers, village atheists, and dissenters—all stunted by the narrowness and mediocrity of their community, suffering under the community’s hypocrisy, racism, and injustice and anti-intellectualism and narrowness. Spoon River rarely proves nurturing and supportive of the promise and potential of the community’s individual members. More often it proves a dark cellar, as Mrs. Charles Bliss explains after she and her husband have been advised by the village preacher and judge to remain in a loveless marriage “for the sake of the children”:

*Now every gardener knows that plants grown in cellars
Or under stones are twisted and yellow and weak.
And no mother would let her baby suck
Diseased milk from her breast.
Yet preachers and judges advise the raising of souls
Where there is no sunlight, but only twilight,
No warmth, but only dampness and cold—
Preachers and judges!*

The critical examination of community and the American experience continues to this day. On the one hand we find expressions of discontent with narrow, stifling communities such as Winesburg, Ohio, and Spoon River, communities which oppress the individual. On the other hand, a widely held view is that values and attitudes suited to a former time, when the frontier was open and natural resources were apparently limitless, have persisted into a time when those conditions no longer apply. The result has been reckless and irresponsible behavior destructive of community and the common good. In the post-World War I

period F. Scott Fitzgerald (225-26) described Tom and Daisy Buchanan, the principle characters in *The Great Gatsby*, as “. . . careless people [who] smashed up things and creatures and then retreated to their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made.” Many students of American life saw these characters and their attitudes and actions as representatives of American attitudes and actions generally. They typified individual aims, goals, and desires operating to the detriment of the communal good.

The Great Depression of the 1930s forced a temporary return to emphasis on the common good. (In our survey of the family we have seen how American families became more closely knit during the Depression.) James Still (8-9), in his classic novel of the Appalachian South, *River of Earth*, depicts a family in the process of closing ranks in the face of economic setback. The mother says to her family: “We’ve got to live small. . . We’ve got to tie ourselves up in such a knot nobody else can get in.” During these years President Franklin D. Roosevelt succeeded in causing the entire nation, for the first time in its history, to think of itself as a single community with a common problem to overcome, and to pull together much as the family in Still’s *River of Earth* drew itself into a knot in a time of great need.

But the Great Depression also served to intensify the re-examination of the American character and American values set in motion by the new America, which came on like a flood tide in the 1880s. In 1950 Harry Riesman contributed to this re-examination—which continues to this day—with *The Lonely Crowd*, a book whose title suggested a felt absence of genuine community in America. In the 1980s Robert Bellah, in collaboration with five other authors, produced a study entitled *Habits of the Heart*, which stands, along with *The Lonely Crowd*, in a tradition going back to Alexis de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America*, from which the title *Habits of the the Heart* is derived.

Bellah and his co-authors identify four personalities that

have emerged during the course of American history; these personalities embody values and attitudes with profound implications for the concept of community in American life. Exemplified by the Puritan leader John Winthrop, by Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and the nineteenth-century poet Walt Whitman, these personalities represent, respectively, Biblical, republican, utilitarian individualist, and expressive individualist values. Bellah and his associates conclude that Biblical and republican personalities, and the concepts of the good life they embody (chief among them being civic virtue), live on in the American experience, but they have lost ground to the utilitarian individualism represented by Franklin and to the expressive individualism represented by the life and work of Whitman. These two individualisms, in combination with a growing psychotherapeutic approach to self, are not conducive to the growth and maintenance of community. Bellah, *et. al.* find that the utilitarian and expressive individualisms embraced by the majority of Americans prevent us from recognizing the complex interdependence our society now requires of us. Believing that the greatest good is either to win, to “make it” financially or professionally, or to develop our individual selves to the greatest degree possible, we have an undeveloped appreciation for community and the public good, and tend to behave collectively, much as do Tom and Daisy Buchanan, with a “vast carelessness” for the communal or public implications of our behavior. Too many Americans, Bellah and his colleagues believe, live like Homer’s race of Cyclops, who dwelt apart with little concern for one another.

The sense of community implicit in John Winthrop’s “city on a hill,” and the civic virtue, which is the essence of Jefferson’s social and political philosophy, are conspicuously absent in contemporary America, according to this critique, and in their place we have brands of individualism that tell us something is good if it works (utilitarian individualism), or if it feels right (expressive individualism), together with an attitude which

says, “These are my values, but they don’t have to be anyone else’s.” The authors of *Habits of the Heart* find that this attitude has so permeated American life that many newly formed “intentional” communities are nothing more than “lifestyle enclaves,” and even the most intimate human relationships, such as marriage, are thought of as contracts negotiated for the mutual benefit of autonomous individuals (Bellah, 85-86, 93-97, *et passim*; and the Glossary of Key Terms, which defines “Biblical tradition,” “community,” “community of memory,” “expressive individualism,” “republican tradition,” “lifestyle enclave,” “utilitarian tradition,” and other key terms used in the book).

Such a conclusion is suggested by Frances Fitzgerald’s *Cities on a Hill: A Journey Through Contemporary American Cultures*. Fitzgerald examines four contemporary efforts, in a tradition dating back to the Plymouth Colony, to establish and maintain communities dedicated to a single ideal or lifestyle. Two of these, the Castro in San Francisco, and the Rajneeshpuram commune in Oregon, grow out of the spirit of the 1960s, and were established on the ideas of the Gay Rights movement and New Age spirituality, respectively. A third, the Reverend Jerry Falwell’s Liberty Baptist Community, is seen as a reaction to the alternative lifestyle of the Castro. And a fourth community, the Sun City retirement village in Florida, was an entire town made up of older Americans who enjoyed good health, were affluent, and had made a conscious decision to live apart from their families.

All four communities can be seen as standing in an American utopian tradition, dating from the earliest colonists, in which people form into a group for the purpose either of escaping mainstream society or providing an example to that society, or both. And like earlier communities in this tradition, each of these has either failed, changed significantly from its original conception, or succeeded only to a modest degree. Like previous communities, these at first attempted to impose their vision on the larger society, then necessarily changed as the enthusiasms of the members waned, or as the communities’ ideals confronted the

realities of existing within the larger society. At first the Castro was idealistic and uninhibited. Then one of the community's most influential supporters, a member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, was assassinated, an event which fragmented the gay community; and soon thereafter the AIDS epidemic, closely associated with the gay community in San Francisco, began to attract the attention of the nation.

The Reverend Falwell's Liberty Baptist Community originally provided its members with a world apart from the society at large, but, especially after the community established Liberty University, it became increasingly clear that Bible-based truth alone was not adequate preparation for life in late twentieth-century America.

The Rajneeshpuram in Oregon at first was held together by the fervor of its members and by its charismatic leader the Bhagwan, but from the beginning the community was at odds with Oregonians living nearby. The leaders of the commune eventually betrayed one another (one disappeared with community funds, another testified against other community leaders during court proceedings), the Bhagwan was deported, and the community fell apart.

Sun City continues as a retirement village, but its members face a rather bleak and lonely future which falls far short of the community's original promise of happiness and companionship.

The four communities examined by Fitzgerald resemble the many similar experiments which have preceded them in American history not only in the way they fall short of their original expectations. They resemble earlier experiments also in that the very rootlessness of so many Americans now, as then, engenders the motivation to create community. And so community experiments of the past quarter century can be seen as the work of rootless people in search of community. As long as there are Americans who have made a break with the past, who have no strong attachments to kin or place, and who are free to move or start over, we may expect to see this strand of utopianism in the

collective American experience.

An analysis of the American experience and social reality which to some degree parallels that of Bellah and his co-authors is Robert Reich's (8-13) *Tales of a New America*. Reich identifies four American morality tales, stories rooted in the American experience, which we tell ourselves in the attempt to make sense of our lives. One story Reich calls "The Mob at the Gates," which conceives of America as "a beacon light of virtue in a world of darkness," a country "uniquely blessed, the proper model for other people's aspirations, the hope of the world's poor and oppressed." This view of America, foretold in John Winthrop's sermon, "A Model of Christian Charity," is an example of what Bellah refers to as the Biblical tradition in American life; it requires a sense of community, but it also contains the seeds of paranoia concerning those who are outside the gates.

The second story is that of "The Triumphant Individual" and is told, early on, in *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, which has become paradigmatic of the American success story. It is the story of the individual of humble beginnings who works, risks, and eventually wins wealth, fame, and honors. The story of the self-made man or woman, it suggests that anyone with a modicum of wit, grit, and determination can "make it." Recent versions of this story are *Rocky* and *Iacocca*.

Reich's third story is that of "The Benevolent Community." In this story American neighbors and friends roll up their sleeves, pitch in, and help one another. It is a story of self-sacrifice, community pride, and patriotism. This story helps explain the effort in the nineteenth century to emancipate slaves, to gain the vote for women, and in the 1960s to help American blacks and other minorities secure civil rights. With this story we associate New England meetings where issues affecting the whole community were debated; house- and barn-raising on the frontier, participated in by the whole community. This story accounts for Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, Truman's Fair Deal, and Johnson's Great Society, slogans summarizing

policies that asked Americans to think of the entire nation as a single community; which asked the many to pull together as one. With this story we tell ourselves that we are a generous people with concern for our neighbors and fellow citizens; that we work to make opportunity available to all; that we are all one big family, one large community.

Reich's fourth story is called "The Rot at the Top." This story is about evil elites, rich aristocrats, unscrupulous and greedy business leaders and government officials. It is a story about those who conspire to work against the common good. With this story we associate casting off the yoke of arbitrary power during the American Revolution; the formation of labor unions to offset concentrations of economic power in vested interests.

But, like all stories, these four stories rooted in the American experience are susceptible to different interpretations. In "The Mob at the Gates" we can congratulate ourselves with the interpretation that celebrates our "triumph over savages and evil abroad!" Or we can understand the story in such a way as to reveal the difference between our actions and ideals, and conclude: "The world is succumbing to tyranny, barbarism, and devastation, while we stand idly by!" "The Triumpahnt Individual" can mean: "Rejoice in the opportunity open to each of us to gain fame and fortune!" or "Hard work and merit are sabotaged by convention, chicanery, and prejudice!" "The Benevolent Community" can mean: "Admire our generosity and compassion!" or "We are selfish, narcissistic, racist, and indifferent—look at the poor and hungry in our midst!" "The Rot at the Top" can mean: "See how we have overcome vested privilege!" or "Our democracy is a sham, and everything important is controlled by a venal cabal at the top!"

A version of "The Rot at the Top" can be seen in a body of opinion which sees a powerful and greedy elite in the business and corporate world (built on a philosophical base of instrumental or utilitarian individualism) functioning in such a way as to harm family and community values. Charles Reich, the author of

The Greening of America, represents this considerable body of opinion when he asserts that economic growth often means "less of everything we really need, aside from material goods." One of the things we really need, Reich believes, is a sense of community. But "communities deteriorate when local companies want to make so much money that they leave the communities and go where labor is cheaper and where tax laws are more favorable" (52).

Richard John Neuhaus (37) in *The Naked Public Square* examines the loss of a sense of community in the religious sphere of American experience. He finds that a fundamentalist strain of Protestantism has separated public argument from private belief, with the result that religious beliefs cannot be submitted to public reason. Neuhaus finds (82) that religion "as a mediating structure—a community that generates and transmits moral values—is no longer available . . ." The individual's beliefs have become private and are valid for the individual, without reference to the beliefs of others; individual beliefs need not be submitted to the examination of other individuals or to the community. Neuhaus' findings corroborate in the religious sphere what Bellah and his associates find generally in American society.

David W. Brown in a discussion of "Civic Virtue in America" points to changed conditions of life in America as a cause for the felt diminution of community. More and more Americans have gained access to "the portable credentials of higher education" and now live and work cut off from "the local institutions in which they were raised." These Americans constitute a new class whose members "appear to be passionate consumers instead of active citizens—like lovely willow trees with shallow roots." In agreement with Bellah, and corroborating Tocqueville (v. 2, 257), who feared that Americans might end up "forming nothing but small coterie" instead of genuine communities, Brown finds members of this new class calculating and self-absorbed ("You owe it to yourself," "What's in it for me?"). The communities they join tend to be not genuine communities with a diversity of people, values, views, but communities of interest, enclaves composed of like-minded

people with similar backgrounds, incomes, and tastes. Brown wonders whether a “ ‘community’ of interest, if it has no geographical place, a neighborhood or a town, where friendship and obligation are practiced, can be sustained” (40).

Even members of this new class who genuinely desire it discover the circumstances of their lives working against commitment to local community. Thus Richard Fox (12), a professor of history and humanities at Reed College, admits:

It is difficult individually to enact both a professional disciplinary existence and a local neighborhood family existence. Family is an important community for me, as is a professional discipline. Local community is where I do not seem to spend any time. There may be an irreducible conflict here, and the best that we can hope for is emerging in some possible communities but not in all possible communities.

Indeed, there is little evidence that community can prosper apart from a particular place, a neighborhood, locale, or town. For the new class of highly mobile and highly educated people (a class to which Richard Fox belongs) it might seem that they could conceive of the nation as a community in which they might function and to which they could feel a commitment. But the sense of the entire nation as a single community seems to be capable of creation only in extraordinary circumstances, and for limited periods, as, for instance, during the Great Depression or during World War II. By the 1960s Lyndon Johnson was unable to evoke a similar sense of national community for the War on Poverty or the Vietnam War, and by the 1980s President Ronald Reagan repudiated Roosevelt’s vision of the country as a national community in favor of a view of the nation as a collection of local communities (Robert Reich, 170). (This view was echoed in President George Bush’s repeated references during the 1988 presidential campaign to “a thousand points of light.”)

By the late 1980s the meaning of neighborhood, and hence of

community, had changed. The small towns and ethnic sections of earlier times had given way to what Robert Reich calls “economic enclaves whose members had little in common with one another but their average incomes.” And in this context the story of “The Benevolent Community” had little applicability. Some observers saw the Reagan recommendation of local volunteerism and concern for neighborhood as a sham, for in contemporary America the idea of community and neighborhood offered a “way of enjoying the sentiment of benevolence without the burden of acting on it” (Robert Reich, 171).

This conflation of immediate neighborhood and community caused people to feel that responsibility ended at the borders of their own neighborhoods, and since most Americans could see that their neighborhoods were not suffering, little charity need be exercised. If there were needy people, in some other neighborhood, members of that other neighborhood, that other community, bore the responsibility for helping out. This view allowed the poor to cluster in their own neighborhoods, in large cities, isolated from affluent suburbs that ringed them. The Reagan-Bush approach to neighborhood and community amounted to hollow rhetoric, according to one analyst. “Pure volunteerism, as espoused by the Reagan-Bush administration, asks the private sector to fill gaps created by American capitalism and vacated by a retreating federal government; essentially, it leaves the war on poverty in the hands of the vigilantes” (Bennett, A-7).

According to these dour commentaries, genuine community is lacking both in the larger nation-community and in the smaller neighborhoods.

One looks in vain for a commentator on American life who can report a satisfactory sense of contemporary community. Liberal and conservative pundits alike deplore the lack of community, but disagree on how community is appropriately promoted or supported. Conservatives tend to see activism on the part of intellectuals in government, especially at the national level, as destructive of community, while liberals are more likely to see

“commitments to community . . . under constant attack, not by intellectuals or counter-cultures, as conservatives imagine, but by corporate capitalism. . . .” (Fox, 10).

A liberal observer, Bill Moyers wonders on a Public Broadcasting System program in the autumn of 1988 whether the automobile might not have made it possible for us to get around without getting together; whether automobiles have not allowed the prosperous to escape to suburbs, commute to work in the cities, and daily by-pass the poor in the inner cities. George Will, a generally conservative syndicated columnist who ordinarily stands four-square for the rights of the individual, suggests in a televised roundtable in the same season that we might have too much of even such a good thing as individual rights: we are forever asserting the rights of the individual, he opines, but we must remember that the community has rights, too.

What are we to make of these various analyses of the American character, these interpretations of American history, and these observations about contemporary American life? Are these different “personalities” with their visions of the good life jostling in disorderly fashion down through our history? Are different American morality tales being told simultaneously and discordantly generation after generation?

Perhaps these analyses may be subsumed under the interpretation set forth by Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. (*et passim*) in *The Cycles of American History*, in which he explains American history in terms of a tradition and a counter-tradition, both of which spring from the world-view and values of our colonial forebears. The people who established New Plymouth and the Massachusetts Bay Colony were both pessimistic and optimistic about human nature and life in this world; they were both pragmatic and idealistic. On the one hand they believed man was weak, limited, and fallen, and could be depended upon to err; on the other, they felt themselves to be an elect people with a mission to build the “city upon a hill” that would be a model for other people. This tradition and counter-tradition, according to

Schlesinger, correspond roughly to political and social conservatism and liberalism in the American experience, and have been in constant interplay and cyclical alternation throughout our history.

When the essentially liberal and optimistic tradition is in the ascendancy, the sense of community and social responsibility expands, and notions of freedom and equality flourish. As the tradition runs its cyclical course, it is supplanted by the counter-tradition, which brings in a period of retrenchment, an era devoted to emphasis on the individual and private interest. In such a period the sense of community contracts.

Schlesinger estimates the cycles of tradition and counter-tradition to be approximately thirty years in duration. The period encompassing the Great Depression and lasting until well into the 1960s constituted a cycle in which the liberal tradition was in the ascendancy. President John F. Kennedy in 1961 could still exhort Americans to ask not what their country could do for them, but what they could do for their country. During this time Americans responded positively to a vision of the entire nation as a single community. That period was followed by an assertion of the conservative counter-tradition and an emphasis on the individual and private interests.

The dire predictions of sociologists and journalists with regard to the erosion of community in America might well be considered in the context of this cyclical interpretation of American history, which, if it has validity, suggests that the idea of community in the American experience waxes and wanes, and that the darkest hour for community is always just before a brightening of prospects.

The voting habits of Americans lend support to Schlesinger’s interpretation of American history as a tradition and a counter-tradition, one essentially liberal and idealistic and favorable to the formation and maintenance of community; the other essentially pragmatic and conservative and tending to emphasize the individual. A syndicated columnist analyzing the results of the 1988 elections noted that twenty-two of the fifty states sent

divided delegations (one liberal, one conservative senator) to the U. S. Senate, and in four out of the past five elections the voters have put one party in charge of the White House and the other in charge of the Congress. The columnist took these data to mean that “Americans don’t want an energetic government,” and cited an elder statesman who considered such voting patterns irrational and tending to result in “divided and deadlocked government” (Kilpatrick, A-4).

It is also possible to view these voting patterns as evidence of both the tradition and counter-tradition Schlesinger posits; evidence of both pragmatic and idealist impulses in the American electorate, one essentially conservative, the other liberal; one favoring government which tends to be activist and focused on the community good, the other favoring a relatively passive government (especially in domestic affairs) which gives greater scope to the individual. The voting patterns may be interpreted to mean Americans understand that the impulses toward individualism and toward community are both legitimate; that both continuity and change, progress and stability are desirable. George Will (“Another Muddy Message,” 30) suggests that Americans are “ideologically conservative,” and therefore wary of big government, while at the same time “operationally liberal” and quite willing to tolerate government when we have faith that it is operating on our behalf. Our vote for president is an ideological and expressive act which affirms “what we are and want to be tomorrow.” Voting for president, we are ideologically conservative. When we vote for senators and representatives, and for state and local offices, our vote is more likely to be based on what we want right now, hence operationally liberal. Expressively we are against big government and governmental regulation of our lives; operationally we require government programs and big government capable of mounting such programs.

Perhaps the electorate instinctively understands, as Robert Bellah and his co-authors believe, that “communal commitment and individual fulfillment rise or fall together” (Fox, 10).

When we listen attentively to what contemporary Americans actually say, as has Studs Terkel (*et passim*) in *American Dreams: Lost and Found*, we find both the impulses to individualism and the urge for community, both Schlesinger’s tradition and counter-tradition, in microcosm. For Americans are pragmatic, but they are also idealistic; they are materialistic, but they also dream about and value things other than material and financial success. Americans are highly individualistic, but they also find great satisfaction in, and place value on, family, community, and work as things worthwhile in themselves.

The twin impulses toward individualism on the one hand and community on the other often manifest themselves as ambivalence, as in voting habits, or in the way we define “neighborhood” and “community” in word and deed. Constance Perin in *Belonging in America* argues that we are conspicuously equivocal not only about whom we call “neighbor,” but also about what we consider community. We may value community, yet we readily leave communities for better jobs or homes elsewhere. We aren’t sure where the boundaries of our neighborhoods are. We don’t necessarily consider the people next door, or on the same block, our neighbors. Yet Perin cites a California farmer who in 1986 sent hay to drought-stricken farmers in Georgia because “We’re ‘cross the United States, but we’re still a neighbor” (Fischer, 18).

Such statements are valuable, for we are usually least articulate about those things that matter most to us and which we therefore take most for granted. Thus, concepts like family, community, and work are so deeply imbedded in our consciousness, so value-laden and freighted with feeling, that our most revealing expressions of them are apt to be in off-hand remarks such as that of the California farmer, or in the oblique revelations of anecdotes, folk tales, customs, and patterns discerned in details of seemingly insignificant daily life.

Despite the changes that improved transportation and communications have brought, and despite our ambivalence about who our neighbors are and about the boundaries of our

communities, we may expect place to continue to play a vital role in our notion of community. The conventional wisdom has been that as various parts of the country are connected by railways, highways, and airline routes, and means of almost instantaneous electronic communications, regional differences would be diminished. But we have less and less reason to consider regions and regional variations to be isolated, archaic survivals in a standardizing country. On the contrary, not only in America, but all over the world, people are rediscovering their regions and provinces. Renewed interest in regions has been characterized as world-wide “local centripetalism” (Troike, 2). Throughout the 1970s, a journalist discovered, new realities of power and people were making the North American continent into nine different “nations” (Garreau, *et passim*).

New realities of power and people are causing us to experience, according to Harold Isaacs (1), “on a massively universal scale a convulsive ingathering of people in their numberless groupings in kinds—tribal, racial, linguistic, religious, national.” This world-wide assertion of group identity is in itself a search for community, and has implications for the kinds of community we may hope to create. Isaacs finds that the relative positions of the individual and the group have shifted in contemporary society, a fact which “touches the bedrock of the whole American system. . . .” Our system is based on the rights of the individual, yet individuals are coming to new perceptions of themselves as members of groups and claiming rights not as individuals, but as members of groups. This new relationship of the “one” to the “many” has implications for community and is not unrelated to considerations of place (212-13).

According to Rene Dubos (10), “we are beginning to witness a revival of regionalism that will complement the global point of view.” This revival is a reaction to a powerful trend toward uniformity; it comes not despite the world’s having grown smaller, but because it has done so. The likely result, Dubos believes, will be that the world of forty or fifty years from now will be One

World, but will include many local worlds within it. We need these local worlds because “human beings require more than health and economic security.” Human life is also made up of “emotional and spiritual satisfactions that have their origins in our contacts with our physical world and social surroundings.”

These local worlds are the immediate communities in which we live. They are made necessary, paradoxically, because nation-states, and the industrialized world everywhere, do not provide a sufficient sense of community. E. D. Hirsch (96) stresses this point in *Cultural Literacy* when he writes:

If our system had not encouraged localism and diversity, we would in any case have developed them. If our diversity had not arisen from immigration, local accident, and other historical causes, we would have evolved local differences anyway. Localism is constantly being reinvented all over the world, since the large, modern national state does not and cannot lend enough social glue or emotional meaning to satisfy the human desire for community.

Our communities are already, and in the future will increasingly be, what Bellah refers to in *Habits of the Heart* as “communities of memory,” places whose people are bound together by an understanding of a common past, a shared history and heritage. The markers for such communities will continue to be, to varying degrees, linguistic distinctiveness—regional speech and dialectical usage. For just as distinctive speech patterns constitute a boundary that excludes some people, the same boundary includes others and identifies them as members of a speech community. In the tenth canto of *The Divine Comedy* (40-44) Dante, escorted through a region of hell by Virgil, is overheard speaking in his Tuscan dialect by one of the souls enduring torture there, who calls out to Dante:

*O Tuscan! thou, who through the city of fire
Alive art passing, so discreet of speech:
Here, please thee, stay awhile. Thy utterance
Declares the place of thy nativity . . .*

The condemned soul is so charmed by the sound of his native speech that for a while at least he is able to forget the tortures of hell as he converses with Dante. Language, to a significant degree, defines, creates, and maintains a sense of community, as the unknown author of these doggerel lines on the expression “you-all” suggests: “You-all means a race or section,/ Family, party, tribe, or clan;/ You-all means the whole connection/ Of the individual man” (Bartlett, 922). Often we are strangely comforted and reassured by the familiar way a person speaks, even if we disagree with what is said. “Home in the twentieth century,” the journalist Dave Hickey observes, “is less where your heart is than where you understand the sons-of-bitches” (Garreau, vi).

By being sensitive to the linguistic communities and communities of memory that already exist, educators at every level can contribute to the creation and maintenance of community, and to its extension to include “the whole connection” of the individual man or woman. As Dewey advocated in *Experience and Education*, this sensitivity on the part of educators requires intimate acquaintance with the conditions of the local community in which one teaches, with its physical, historical, economic, and occupational conditions, in order to utilize the student’s immediate world as an educational resource (Selznick, 48).

There are encouraging signs that American educators are more favorably inclined to give serious consideration to local community than they have been within the past half century. In an essay entitled “The Rootless Professors,” Eric Zencey, a professor of history and philosophy at Goddard College, signals a changed attitude. For too long, Zencey writes, American college and university professors have fancied themselves as “citizens of some mythical ‘world city’ or *cosmopolis*” who “may be systematically blind to some of the crucial elements of an integrated life—the life that is one of the primary goals of a liberal arts education—and to the values of connectedness to place.” College and university professors have typically asked their students to “renounce citizenship in the political and biotic communities of

their home to embrace citizenship in the world city of ideas and culture that their education offers them”—without realizing that they are asking students to give up “real and immediate connections in favor of an abstraction.” Zencey challenges professors to overcome their “prejudice against the local and provincial”; to “take the trouble to include local content in courses”; to “take more seriously the regional branches of professional organizations in our various disciplines”; and to acquire “dual citizenship—in the world of ideas and also in the very real counties, states, regions, and ecosystems in which we find ourselves. . . .” Zencey calls for cosmopolitan educators who cultivate a sense of place and “exemplify . . . a successful resolution of the tension between the local and the universal” (72). (Zencey’s approach is being disregarded in the current rush to “universalize” college and university curricula) (Vasquez, A-48).

A model of such an educator might be Edwina Sheppard Pepper, who established the John A. Sheppard Ecological Reservation in West Virginia; who was also instrumental in founding the Big Laurel School of Learning for mountain children; and who was described by consumer advocate Ralph Nader as an “unsung heroine” for her imaginative and creative response to environmental problems of her community. “As more and more land has been stripped or deep mined,” Nader explained, “the inhabitants of these mountains have lost not only their homes, but also their sense of worth. Mrs. Pepper has tried to restore the feeling of community and resourcefulness the inhabitants’ forefathers knew” (Edwina Pepper, B-12).

In making community a more important consideration in the educational process, regional and local perspectives can be extremely useful. They can present academic disciplines as they interpenetrate and impinge on one another; issues and problems in contexts that do not dwarf the individual; and the possibility of better combinations of thought and action, knowledge and power, scholarship and citizenship. Regional approaches offer both ways of understanding the geography behind history and

ways of understanding history in a geographical context.

Community-based approaches can also provide opportunities to instruct students in practical economics, as Paul Gagnon maintains in "Why Study History?" (56), a study of the way American history is presented in widely used textbooks. Gagnon finds that textbooks inadequately instruct young Americans in the way economic expansion has always been supported by public efforts. In the past this expansion "was heavily subsidized by American consumers, taxpayers, workers, and also by slave labor in the South and by an earlier generation of British and Europeans, whose labor produced investment capital. *Subsidy* remains a bad word in the American lexicon, yet it is axiomatic that all enterprise must in some way be subsidized to one degree or another. . . . Texts could say that there is nothing wrong with subsidy as such, provided that the gains and losses are reasonably distributed. It is another name for community effort."

Such an understanding of American economic history would render less utopian Robert Reich's concept of "collective entrepreneurialism," which conceives of a firm or corporation as a community (Robert Reich, 150). This or a similar presentation of American economic history would help to blend the message of capitalism, which says the individual must make it on his own, with the Christian message (valued by the founders of Plymouth Colony) that says we bear responsibility for our neighbors and for others in our community and encourages us to think of ourselves as community members.

A widely held point of view maintains that our way of thinking and talking about American life overemphasizes the role of the individual, while underemphasizing the importance of community, thus impoverishing our entire moral discourse. According to this critique, we are increasingly asked to think of ourselves as individual consumers, with the result that a sense of community, of purposes pursued in common, is eroded. Encouraged in mean-spirited self-interest and self-absorption, we withdraw from generosity, compassion, concern for others.

Ellen Goodman (228-29), an acute observer of the contemporary scene, has called this withdrawal "a privatization of everything." Symbolic of this privatization of all aspects of our lives during the past decade, she thinks, was the conversion of a Boston church into a condominium. A church, a place where people communed, was converted into rentable, leasable, purchaseable *private spaces*. This conversion illustrates, in Goodman's view, a general turning away from community into private spaces, a greater concern with private goods than with the public good. If our lives are focused on private consumption, so goes this argument, we are disposed to reduce our support of public efforts and institutions (education, safety, recreation). For when we think of ourselves primarily as consumers, we will prefer burglar alarms to police forces; private gardens to public parks; private vacations to community recreation; Home Box Office and video discs to public libraries or public broadcasting. We will see nothing odd about cutting subsidies to mass transportation while making government loans to automakers.

Parents and students, this argument contends, have even been asked to think of themselves as consumers of education, with the result that more and more emphasis is placed on short-term benefits, and education is viewed in an increasingly narrow way. We look for education that can be quickly translated into good (by which we mean well-paying) jobs. The long-term value and the broader view of education are less and less emphasized when we think of education as a product, not as a process, and of ourselves as consumers of it.

Communities must of course consist of intelligent, thoughtful individuals whose capacities are developed to their fullest. Both statements remind us that while training is an important part of any education, training alone can only make us into a tool, an instrument to be employed by someone else. Genuine education aims to produce more than a one-eyed Cyclopean view of life as consumership lived in private spaces by people who "reck not of one another." In the same way that our two eyes, working

together, produce a single vision, our training and our education function as two eyes which can work together, providing vision for our individual lives as well as for our lives in common with others; coordinating our vocations and our citizenship in a single vision which sees, as N. Scott Momaday once put it, “beyond all the billboards of illusion” that confront us when we think of ourselves only as consumers of goods and services.

The alternative to the one-eyed, Cyclopean life of individuals who take no thought for one another is suggested by the poet Gary Snyder (101), whose recommendations for effective citizenship begin with a consideration of community as a physical place. It is not possible, Snyder writes, to make things better “without our feet on the ground. Stewardship means, for most of us, find your place on the planet, dig in, and take responsibility from there. . . .” Snyder’s conception of citizenship assumes work at the community level—the “tangible work of school boards, county supervisors, local foresters, local politics. Even while holding in mind the largest scale of potential change. Get a sense of a *workable territory*, learn about it, and start acting point by point.”

The Appalachian region of America is a workable territory; it is a definable place on the planet where citizens can dig in and take responsibility, where work at the level of local community is compatible with national and international perspectives. The Appalachian region is one of those potential “communities of memory and hope” considered so important by Robert Bellah and the other authors of *Habits of the Heart*. For Appalachian America, according to the historian Carl Degler (5), has an interesting and complex triple history. The region has the double history shared by all Southerners—a history as Southerners and as Americans. Additionally, southern Appalachia has a history of its own, as neither north or south, as a borderland America, a place between places.

In Southern Appalachia, America’s first frontier, many different groups came together: the English and Scotch-Irish, the Swiss, the Germans, the French, together with native Americans and

blacks. In Southern Appalachia two different economies and cultures mingled: the planter economy and culture of the lowland South and the economy and culture of the small, independent farmer. This mingling of economies and cultures, nationalities and ethnic groups made Appalachia, according to the historian Wertenbaker (*The Old South*, 219), “a test laboratory of American civilization.”

Southern Appalachia was and still is a test laboratory of American civilization. In the nineteenth century Cassius Clay considered the people of the mountain South natural supporters of freedom because they owned land but few slaves (Peck, 4, 64). And today one of the things being tested is whether or not—as Robert Coles (201) suspects—there is something redemptive for all America in the experiences, the values, the culture, the “community of memory” known as Southern Appalachia.

In years past many young college- and university-trained people from Southern Appalachia have had to go outside their region to find opportunities in professions. Regrettably, higher education has often effectively cut people off from their communities and people. A mother from Blackey, Kentucky (Reck, 24), expressed what many parents have felt over the years when she said, commenting on the exodus of young people, “We lose our purpose when we lose our children . . . they . . . become citizens of nowhere.”

In recent years it has been increasingly possible for college- and university-trained people to find opportunities within their Southern Appalachian region. This may become increasingly the case, for Southern Appalachia has many needs—health care professionals, teachers, nurses, trained professionals in local government, community workers of all kinds. The efforts of humanities educators in the Southern Appalachian region can contribute to a “community of memory and hope”; as teachers of history, literature, economics, political science, and other disciplines associated with the humanities, the region’s educators can help to replace “citizens of nowhere” with citizens of somewhere—

communities constituted by both space and time, by a sense of history and collective experience and an understanding that individual good and the welfare of the total community are inseparable.

Our writers contribute significantly to our awareness of ourselves as members of a community. For in contemporary America, just as they have done in all times and places, writers function as creators and sustainers of communities of memory. Writers, John Updike (23) has pointed out recently, instruct the community in matters of tribal identity. “Who we are, who our heroic fathers were, how we got where we are, why we believe what we believe and act the way we do—these are all questions the writer deals with, whether in poems, songs, or stories that serve as memory banks.”

A recent collection of stories by Wendell Berry (136-37) provides a contemporary example of this ancient function of the writer as a creator and sustainer of community. Berry’s collection *The Wild Birds* bears the subtitle “Six Stories of the Port William Membership,” an allusion to the collection’s theme of interdependence, the notion that the people of Berry’s fictional Port William are all responsible to and for one another and to their place; that not only those who happen to be living at the moment have a say in things, but also the dead and the yet unborn. They are all—the living, the dead, and the yet unborn of that place—part of a membership. As a character, Burly Coulter, observes in the title story, “. . . we are members of each other. All of us. Everything. The difference ain’t in who is a member and who is not, but in who knows it and who don’t.” It is from such communities of memory as those found in the writing of Berry and other American writers that we are most likely to recover and carry forward our sense of community.

Works by three major American writers—Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*, Thoreau’s “Civil Disobedience” and *Walden*, and Sinclair Lewis’s *Main Street* provide the basis for text-centered considerations of the theme of community in American life.

The Scarlet Letter

by Nathaniel Hawthorne

Often considered the first genuinely American novel, *The Scarlet Letter* is a central text in the American literary canon, recognized for the universality of its story, the humanness of its characters, for its form and structure, and for the appropriateness of its language. Hawthorne’s story is about concealed sin (with emphasis more on the concealment than on the sin) and its effects on four individuals—Hester Prynne, Arthur Dimmesdale, Roger Chillingworth, and Hester and Dimmesdale’s daughter Pearl. Hawthorne is also concerned with the Puritan community in which his story is set, with its values, with the relationship of his main characters to the community, and with the way the individuals affect the community, its attitudes, values, and more.

From the moment Hester Prynne emerges from prison wearing the scarlet letter “A” on her dress, she is confronted—in the market—by the community, represented by a number of deftly sketched minor characters. And at the end of the story, when the Reverend Mr. Dimmesdale publicly acknowledges his guilt—again in the marketplace, on a scaffold before the assembled citizenry—the confrontation is one between the individual and the community. Hawthorne’s story of these four individuals is framed by an initial and a concluding confrontation with the community and its values while at the same time it shows the harshness and inflexibility with which these values are held and expressed.

The individuals are changed by their confrontation with the community, but the community, too, is changed as the individuals, who have lived for the most part in isolation from it, are reintegrated into the community through the public revelation of their sin, and through the community’s interpretation of the meaning of the public revelation in the marketplace. In time even the meaning of the scarlet letter itself changes from that of stigma to a symbol associated with sorrow, awe, and reverence, and Hester Prynne herself becomes a comforter and a counselor in the village.

“Civil Disobedience” and *Walden*

by Henry David Thoreau

Many of Thoreau’s assertions might at first give the impression that he dissociates himself from any idea of community. “I am not responsible for the successful working of the machinery of society,” he declares in “Civil Disobedience” (222-240). He expresses his felt sense of difference and distance from his neighbors, as when, coming out of jail for refusal to pay taxes, he says he saw that his neighbors were “a distinct race from me by their prejudices and superstitions, as the Chinaman and Maylays are. . . .” In the same essay he writes, “I quietly declare war on the state . . . though I will still make what use and get what advantage of her I can.”

Yet Thoreau is not unconcerned with the idea of community. On the contrary, he desires a different and better kind of community than what he finds available. His attitude toward his neighbors, toward the larger community of Concord, and toward the state is influenced by his individualism and devotion to principle and the highest calling of his conscience. Thoreau declares his desire to be “a good neighbor” and “a bad subject” (of the state). He calls for a community and a government which can show “a true respect for the individual.” His move to Walden Pond, where he lived for over two years, is not a turning away from community, or an antisocial act of withdrawal from community; rather, the move is an attempt to discover how a community might be better. He undertakes a practical experiment to discover whether the necessities of life could not be obtained more simply and easily than was the case among his neighbors, who were caught up in an unexamined, materialistic life. Thoreau goes to Walden Pond with his neighbors and the larger community in mind. As he announces early on in *Walden*, his purpose is to wake his neighbors up. His wish is to waken everyone to the realization that living can be simple and yet fulfilling to the *individual*; that it is possible to imagine a community compatible with greater freedom for its individual members.

Main Street

by Sinclair Lewis

Carol Milford Kennicott, the protagonist of *Main Street*, is similarly bent on waking her neighbors up and improving the community of Gopher Prairie, to which she has moved after marrying one of the town’s residents, Dr. Will Kennicott. Her husband is representative of his community in that he is a complacent, conventional, self-satisfied booster of his home town, practical and matter-of-fact, not inclined to examine life—his own or anyone else’s. Carol, however, wants to improve things. She wants to reform her husband, Gopher Prairie, the whole community.

In this effort she encounters opposition not only from her husband, but from everyone else in Gopher Prairie. Or if not active opposition, then stolid indifference. The men are interested in cars and trains. They are xenophobic and convinced that their town is the greatest place on earth. The women, who belong to two clubs in town, The Jolly Seventeen and The Thanatopsis Club, have no interests beyond homemaking, cooking, and their children. They have no conception of improving their lives, for they see nothing wrong with things as they are. Carol Kennicott discovers that the members of The Thanatopsis Club, though officially dedicated to improving social conditions, are not interested in improving anything; in fact, they have no notion of what improvements would entail. They are not interested in helping the poor and deny that Gopher Prairie has any poor. Carol discovers that the town librarian does not consider it part of her role to encourage people to read; more important to her is keeping the books in their proper places on the library shelves.

Nevertheless, Carol Kennicott makes a number of efforts to change the community. She tries to raise funds for a new city hall. She puts on an amateur theatrical, has dreams of an annual Community Day—all in an effort to create a “more conscious life” for the community. But she finds herself pitted against what

de Tocqueville, in his classic examination of America, termed the “tyranny of the majority.” People in Gopher Prairie disapprove of her because she pays a maid a salary they consider too generous. She demonstrates, in their view, that she is unconventional when she gives a party with an Oriental theme. She proves to be positively scandalous—especially after she has a dalliance with a young tailor in the town.

Eventually Carol Kennicott feels that the citizens of Gopher Prairie are a race apart from her—no less than Thoreau felt distanced from his neighbors after spending a night in jail. And when she and her husband “lie together in a hot bed in a creepy room—enemies, yoked” (284), she thinks they represent two races of people: a race of the “neurotic,” to which she belongs, and a race of the “stupid,” to which her husband Will and the other residents of Gopher Prairie belong. Finally she is set apart from the community of Gopher Prairie and stigmatized by its residents no less than was Hester Prynne in Salem. In the eyes of the residents of Gopher Prairie Carol wears a letter “R” (for reformer) or an “I” (for idealist).

Thinking to escape Gopher Prairie, its smug complacency and narrowness, its refusal to examine life, she leaves her husband, and taking her young son with her, goes to Washington, where she hopes to become involved in war work. She needs to find out what her work is (404). She discovers that Washington is only a larger Gopher Prairie.

The Scarlet Letter, “Civil Disobedience” and *Walden*, and *Main Street* offer varied instances of individuals in their relationship to community. The texts are useful in helping to isolate, examine, and better understand the tensions that exist in the American experience between American individualism and our sense of community. The two “races” identified by Carol Kennicott in *Main Street* correspond not only to “two souls” resident in the breast of Sinclair Lewis, but to something in the American character, in American cultural values. The “enemies, yoked” are

not only the idealist Carol Kennicott beside her complacent and unimaginative husband, on a hot night in Gopher Prairie; they are antimonies in the complex of American attitudes, values, and mores—the romantic, progressive, principled idealist impulse alongside the realist, materialistic impulse which is, though often crude and crass, nevertheless capable of seeing its opportunity and taking it. One is reminded of the embodiment of these impulses in extreme form in Quentin and Jason Compson in William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*.

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Participant Reflections: Community

According to Robert Bellah, a community is comprised of memories:

Communities . . . have a history—in an important sense they are constituted by their past—and for this reason we can speak of a real community as a “community of memory,” one that does not forget its past. In order not to forget that past, a community is involved in retelling its story, . . . and in so doing, it offers examples of the men and women who have embodied and exemplified the meaning of community (153).

Perhaps the most effective way of telling America’s story is through its literature, stories, verse, and songs because through fictional characters, the past becomes present, lives and breathes and is understood by comparison and identification with local situations, local characters, and local communities.

Willa Ann Baker, “In Search of Community”

The United States continues to undergo a change within the rural farming community. No longer is the country based on an agrarian economy. An evolution has occurred within society toward a business- and service-oriented community. With this shift in focus away from the family farm and rural community, the nation’s value system has experienced a change as well. People can no longer value the family farm when it is not economically or personally satisfying. As a result, more and more family farms will cease to exist. The family farming tradition is coming to a rapid conclusion, marking the end of the farm-based community.

Vickie Sutton, “The Grip of Progress on the Family Farm”

We all know the contributions to scholarship and the preservation of culture that we owe to the various monastic communities of the Middle Ages. Most Americans are aware of the effects on our national character and culture of such religious communities as the Puritans and the Quakers. But do you know that we owe the invention of the circular saw, the propeller, and the clothes pin to the communal Shakers? that many of our educational ideas come from the experimental schools set up in the nineteenth-century communities of followers of Fourier and Owens? that the first free public schools in America were part of one of these communities in New Harmony, Illinois? that the silver or stainless steel flatware you buy from Oneida today is manufactured by a company started as a “free-love” commune? My point is that communitarianism as a Western and an American tradition has had far-reaching effects on our culture.

Louis H. Palmer, III, “Zoulakia: A Look at an Intentional Community”

Of the three sinners in Hawthorne’s book, Hester alone survives. It might be interesting to look at why. Early on in the novel, Hester’s sin sets her outside the comfort and security of the community in which she lived. That Hester truly considered herself a part of the community is evident in her conscious penance. There are many times that Hester speaks personally about her sin. She tells Pearl at one point, “Once in my life I met the Black Man! . . . This scarlet letter is his mark!” (172). Later as she contemplates leaving New England she says, “Look your last on the scarlet letter and its wearer! the people’s victim and lifelong bond-slave. . . .” (213). Thus, one must believe that Hester was so imbued with the moral sentiment of her colony that she accepted the fact that there was a sin which must be paid for, and her staying may have partly been for that reason.

Rita Silver, “The Revolt Against the Village”

Hester's struggle to be true to her own values, to rise above the bigotry and intolerance of her community, are universal themes; yet they are particularly applicable to the American experience. "The call of the American experience has been a radical search for identity by attempting to free ourselves from orders, old hierarchies of rank and belief, to discover the emergent man" (Hoffman). The struggle of the individual against society has been reflected not only in *The Scarlet Letter* but also in major works such as *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *Main Street*, and *Spoon River Anthology*.

Carolyn C. Cahill, "The Community: Hester Prynne's Adversary in *The Scarlet Letter*"

In both novels, the structure of the communities seems based on the Hamiltonian idea that the aristocracy—the wealthy, landed, professional, or well-born—of a group is best suited to govern the whole group.

The aristocracy's disregard for the common man's interests is much more evident in *Main Street*. Lewis describes the Gopher Prairie aristocracy as ". . . all persons engaged in a profession, or earning more than twenty-five hundred dollars a year, or possessed of grandparents born in America." The Stowbody, the Clark, the Elder, and yes, the Kennicott and their kind, thus sit in judgment of and wield power over the Scandinavian and German farmers, mill hands, and hired girls. Every motion made by the farmers and laborers to better their lives is immediately labeled "socialist" by these superiors grown rich (or at least comfortable) off profits earned by the common man's labor.

Janice K. Hildebrand, "Terms of Isolation: An Examination of Social Distance in *The Scarlet Letter* and *Main Street*"

Sinclair Lewis lays bare the narrowness of the small town with its solid middle-class values—home, family, regular habits, business, smugness, and narrow-minded people. He considers all small towns of his day the same and equally monotonous. According to Goist, "The negative sides of small-town community: sharing in the lives of others can frequently turn out to be petty back-biting and gossip or sheer meddlesomeness." Lewis also points out that solidarity among people can lead to the stifling of the uniqueness of the individual.

Lynn Avant, "Individuality in American Communities: Past and Present"

Main Street and *Lake Wobegon Days* are literary creations that fit into a body of literature concerned with the American village in the twentieth century. At the turn of the century the village was considered above attack. Charles and Mary Beard report that when Harding ran for president, he campaigned as a representative of the common people who lived in small towns. Part of a campaign speech was:

What is the greatest thing in life, my countrymen? Happiness. And there is more happiness in the American village than in any other place on the face of the earth.

As Harding was extolling the happiness found in the villages, the literary people were showing the weaknesses of the village. In the 1980s the vast majority of the people live in larger communities. The small town or village is now more a memory of the past which we view through nostalgia-colored glasses. The problems listed by Keillor are ones we acknowledge, but ones that we accept as a less important theme or footnote to a place that is far away in space and time.

Patricia B. Chastain, "The End of an Era: A Comparison of *Main Street* and *Lake Wobegon Days*"

The connections between the individual and the community values give Hester Prynne her strength, but defeat Carol. The difference lies not in the connection, but in the two women. Hester uses her understanding of the values of the group to carve a niche for herself and her daughter; eventually she leaves the community but returns after providing for her daughter's future. Carol leaves the community but returns to give birth to her daughter. She has great plans for her daughter, but the reader is left to wonder if she will be any more definite in providing for her daughter's future than she has been in living her own life. Carol Kennicott examines her life and values, but she never really understands that she must make an assessment of individual values within the parameters of her community values. Neither she nor Hester live happy lives, but Hester's life takes meaning from within herself while Carol drifts always looking for an outside panacea for her unhappiness.

Carol sees herself but she never sees the community in which she is to live, nor does she see a true picture of her role in that community. She does not see that one "must also acquire a capacity for an informed sympathy with an understanding of the desires and values of others" (Hand).

Her consolation to herself that she "has not fought the good fight but she has kept the faith" (Lewis) confirms her acceptance that she will never bridge the gap between her individual values and the community values.

Leta Baharestan, "The Individual in His Own Briar Patch"

Explore Cultural Values in Your Own Community Through Literature!

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Often we as teachers expect our students to be enthused and enlightened with the energy from great literary works. We attempt to convey its message in ways applicable to their everyday lives and thoughts. We are then disappointed and sometimes outraged when the theme or soul of a story or poem is misinterpreted or ignored completely by our students. This rings especially true with junior high students who are a mixture of abstract and concrete thinkers and all shades in between. I have found that through working with familiar themes students can, with the help of hands-on activities, relate the concrete life they lead to the more abstract concepts in literature.

I chose the theme of "community," a familiar aspect of our culture, to teach cognitive skills in thinking and writing, performance skills in speaking, as well as an appreciation for literature and its ability to provide a means of inquiry into personal and cultural values. I selected the following short literary works to integrate into the community unit: "This Farm For Sale" by Jesse Stuart, "Journey to the Forks" by James Still, "The Lottery" by Shirley Jackson, Sterling North's version of "Thoreau of Walden Pond," and *The Spoon River Anthology* by Edgar Lee Masters.

Reading "This Farm For Sale" was a springboard for students to discover things that were good and worth keeping, indeed worth advertising, about their own communities. As Stuart's family learned to appreciate the abundant farm that provided them with a plentiful table, my students found creeks, community centers, church life, and good neighbors were aspects of their communities worth "selling to others."

Students enjoyed the dialect in Still's "Journey to the Forks." The story is an excellent means for examining the traditional

values regarding education and religion in our own Southern Appalachian community. We learned that our parents, grandparents, and people in our community provide a great influence on why we believe as we do. I knew one student had gained some insight following this remark: “I guess if I hadn’t ever gone to a Baptist church and had always gone to a Jewish church, I would think the Jewish beliefs were right!”

No other literary work in the unit held my students’ interest more than Jackson’s disturbing account of a small-town tradition in “The Lottery.” This story is excellent for generating thinking on higher cognitive levels. Students analyzed traditional values through interviews with people in their communities. We discussed possible ways to “do away with the lottery.”

In our study of Thoreau’s *Walden*, students initially were eager to throw their books out the window and dispense with their chores for a Thoreauvian paradise. After a closer examination, however, of Thoreau’s utopia, many were willing to be more accepting of the demands of their present communities’ lifestyles. Materialism seemed to prevail; few were willing to give up their nice clothes, comfortable homes, cars, and jamboxes.

Edgar Lee Masters’ *Spoon River* poems were difficult for some students to read, but most enjoyed the idea of “telling all” from the grave. Students concluded that honesty was upheld by Masters; scandal and sensationalism were relished by the Spoon River community. Students recognized this as an aspect of their own culture and over half made use of scandal in creating their own “Spoon River” poems from unknown tombstones.

Ultimately I accomplished two goals through the community unit. Students increased their skills in oral communication, writing, and higher thinking skills. In the affective realm, my students showed a strong appreciation and enthusiasm for several masterworks of literature. In addition they were given an opportunity to examine their own communities and community values and the way in which their personal values fit into that broader perspective.

Community: A Thematic Unit Designed for an Eighth-Grade Language Arts Class

Approximately 6 Weeks

Rationale

Since junior high students are at an identity stage of development, the study of their own communities will allow them to examine and value them and will ultimately help them know themselves better.

The unit integrates literature, writing, listening, speaking, and viewing skills in accordance with the Standard Course of Study in the North Carolina Basic Education Plan. It also incorporates all the cognitive thinking levels in Benjamin Bloom’s Taxonomy.

Literature

Short Stories: “This Farm For Sale” by Jesse Stuart; “Journey to the Forks” by James Still.

Essay: “Thoreau of Walden Pond” by Sterling North.

Poetry: *The Spoon River Anthology* by Edgar Lee Masters.

Films: “The Kid Who Wouldn’t Quit: The Brad Silverman Story,” an ABC After School Special; “The Lottery,” based on a short story by Shirley Jackson.

Textbook: *Your English*, North Carolina State adopted, Coronado Press.

Objectives

Writing:

1. Writing descriptive, persuasive, and point-of-view paragraphs.
2. Writing an advertisement.
3. Writing a poem.

Literature:

1. Recalling events in a story and poem.
2. Analyzing a short story (setting, character, plot—climax,

resolution, internal/external conflict—mood, theme).

Speaking:

Using the proper speaking skills—(1) standard English, (2) pace, (3) volume, (4) eye contact, (5) posture, (6) gestures, and (7) inflection of voice—in discussions, poetry readings, a one-minute persuasion speech, and an interview.

Viewing: Analyzing a film.

Listening:

1. Following directions.
2. Answering questions after listening to readings.
3. Evaluating peers' speeches.

Grammar:

1. Using complete sentences in writing.
2. Using details and examples to develop a paragraph.
3. Recognizing and writing compound sentences using commas and semicolons.
4. Recognizing adjectives and prepositional phrases used as adjectives and using them in writing.

Day 1: *Introduction to Community Unit.* Discussion on what a community is, names of individual communities. Have students look up official definition in dictionary and thesaurus. Put these columns on board or overhead: *Name of Community; Buildings; People (ages, types of work they do, etc.); Churches; Schools; Businesses; Recreation Facilities; Miscellaneous (unique features).*

Use these columns as brainstorming technique and write individual communities and fill in proper columns as students give information. Have student copy his/her community features on his/her own paper. This is a pre-writing exercise. Have students add to this list as an independent exercise; students will use this list to write a descriptive paragraph.

Day 2: *Lesson.* Recognizing and using adjectives.

Day 3: *Lesson.* Recognizing and using prepositional phrases as adjectives.

Day 4: *Assignment.* Write one descriptive paragraph on your community using adjectives/prepositional phrases. Review topic sentence and supporting details. Use lists from Day 1. Self-edit paper and edit partner's paper. Write final draft for homework.

Days 5, 6: *Analyze a short story.* Read "This Farm For Sale" by Jesse Stuart. Give background information on Jesse Stuart. Discuss setting, characters, plot (climax, internal/external conflict), mood, and theme. Make columns on board for: *Title; Author; Setting; Characters; Plot—climax, internal/external conflict; Mood; Theme.* Have students fill in detailed information in columns—emphasize theme.

Days 7-9: *Lesson.* Recognizing and writing compound sentences; using commas and semicolons in compound sentences.

Days 10, 11: *Writing a persuasive paper.* Three paragraphs, trying to convince someone to come to your community to live. Use "old" lists and add intangibles to them, such as: nice people, job opportunities, etc. (things that tell about the quality of life in your community). Teacher input: writing topic sentences, details and examples for development. Give examples to students. Note: Eighth-grade North Carolina students are tested for writing a persuasive or point-of-view essay.

Day 12: *Self-editing / helping circles on rough drafts.* Write final draft in class or for homework.

Assignment. Bring pencils, crayons, old magazines, etc. to do advertisement in class tomorrow.

Day 13: *Project.* Use persuasive papers to make an ad to entice someone to your community. "Sell" your

- community; use pamphlets advertising tourist attractions as models.
- Day 14: *Lesson.* Speaking and listening skills. Students, be prepared to use “pamphlet” to give a one-minute speech to sell your community. “Listeners” will evaluate.
- Day 15: *Persuasive speeches.* “Listeners” evaluate on a scale of 1 to 10 in these areas: posture, eye contact, pace, volume, inflection of voice, and correct grammar.
- Day 16: *Lesson.* Conducting an interview. Class composes ten questions to ask an older member of his/her community how life was in the community in the past (at least 30 years ago). Interviews due in approximately one week.
- Days 17, 18: *The Spoon River Anthology.* Teacher reads selections. Introduce readings and stir students’ interest by discussing what people who are lying in their graves would say if they could speak. Hand out one poem of the anthology to each student. Student must interpret his/her poem. Have students use the dictionary or thesaurus to help with unfamiliar words. Work with partner and rehearse reading of his/her poem.
- Day 19: *The Spoon River Anthology.* Students read and interpret his/her poem in class.
Assignment. Students go to a graveyard in his/her community. Write down name, age, any information on tombstone of a person the student does not know.
- Day 20: *Write* a ten-line poem using *Spoon River* poems as a model. Have partner edit poems.
- Day 21: *Presentations.* Students read poems in class. “Listeners” evaluate.
- Days 22, 23: *Class discussion.* “Intolerance in a Community.”
- 1) *What is intolerance?* 2) *What are some things your community will not tolerate?* 3) *Who are some people your community will not tolerate? Why?*
Show film. “The Kid Who Wouldn’t Quit”
- Analyze the film. Use same method as short story.
 - Discuss community’s reaction to Brad.
 - What was Brad’s and his parents’ reaction to them?
 - What is the word for people who don’t like a certain group of people? Prejudice.
 - What are some prejudices you see today?
 - How can you avoid being prejudiced?
- Day 24: *“Thoreau of Walden Pond.”* Read in class. A man who was not tolerant of the community; his critique of his community. Discuss Thoreau’s ideas and way of life. Does it appeal to you? Why? Why not?
- Day 25: *Point-of-view paper.* Review topic sentences, writing details. Students write 3-paragraph paper on this prompt: *I would / would not like to live like Thoreau.*
- Day 26: *Values in a community.* Discuss what “values” means. Have students listen for values in the story as teacher reads “Journey to the Forks.” (Students have some problems reading dialect.) Give a quiz recalling events in the story. Students write value(s) in the story—attitudes regarding religion and education are obvious. List values in the students’ own communities.
- Day 27: *Write* a paragraph describing the most important value in your community. Be sure to tell why you think it is important. Give examples of this value. Peers edit papers. Final draft at home.
- Day 28: *Students share interviews with class.* Discuss similarities and differences in people interviewed.
- Day 29: *Film.* “The Lottery.” Before showing film, discuss

- traditions in a community. Teacher prepares papers for drawing (all white except one with a black dot). Conduct drawing so students understand what a lottery is. Winner gets homework pass. Show film.
- Day 30: *Students write their reactions to film.* Discussion of tradition: good and bad traditions; when should traditions be kept and when should they be disregarded?; Old Man Warner's role; Tessie's change of attitude toward the lottery; etc.
- Day 31: *Making your community better.* List at least five problems or bad things about your community. Discuss these in class. Select one of these "problems" and write a one-paragraph editorial giving this problem and explaining how this problem could be corrected or your community made a better place to live. Complete rough draft in class; have a partner edit. Final draft for homework.
- Day 32: *Presentations of editorials.* Community snack.

Community in Nathaniel Hawthorne's Work

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Because Nathaniel Hawthorne writes in a manner that freshmen find difficult to understand, I begin my Hawthorne unit by reading seven short stories by Hawthorne; then my students are accustomed to the way he writes, and they feel better equipped to read *The Scarlet Letter*. We begin by using the theme of community to unite the short stories and the novel. We discuss the term "community" and relate it to our lives. I also mention the definitions of community used in *Habits of the Heart*. My students are able to visualize different types of communities—a school community, a neighborhood community, a community of friends, a church community, and a community of isolation. My students find it difficult to understand how one can be isolated

from a community, until I ask them questions like: Is there anything you could do that would isolate you from your family, friends, or neighborhood? Do you know anyone who has been alienated from his/her community? Normally they are able to come up with at least one example. Thus, they are better able to understand Hester's plight.

We read the following short stories and discuss how community is involved in each.

1. "My Kinsman, Major Molineux." This story has young Robin who leaves his innocent world to discover another type of people. As a result, Robin (which means "innocence") is forced to lose his innocence and see a community with revenge, evil, and punishment.
2. "The Minister's Black Veil." This story shows a community treating the Reverend Mr. Hooper like an outcast (like Hester Prynne) because of a symbol, the black veil (the scarlet letter). The people think he has become something evil because of a mere piece of cloth. Rev. Hooper becomes a better minister because of the black veil. Similarly, Hester becomes a better advisor for the women because of her "red badge of courage."
3. "The Birthmark." In this story Georgiana is treated with disdain because of her mark of imperfection. Her husband's dislike for her flaw results in her death because no one can be perfect on earth. Similarly, Hester is rejected for her mark of imperfection.
4. "The Ambitious Guest." This story portrays a community of families who open their hearts to a stranger. Later it is seen that this community of friends and family share a common destiny.
5. "Young Goodman Brown." This is a story of a man who rejects his community of friends, church, and family because he mistrusts them.
6. "Ethan Brand." This story shows a man who goes in search of the unpardonable sin; by doing so, he manages

to alienate himself from everyone and is not accepted in any community. He then commits suicide, which could be the unpardonable sin. He says he has the unpardonable sin in his heart. (Dimmesdale carries his here also.)

7. “Dr. Heidegger’s Experiment.” This story shows the older community in search of a younger one.

Now we review the notes on Hawthorne’s life. I emphasize certain characteristics like his being a recluse for twelve years, his Brook Farm community experience, and his family life. Also, I review the notes from a previous unit on Puritan beliefs and punishments. I remind them that the sin of adultery was punished by the sinner’s wearing a letter “A.” I also mention to them that the word “adultery” is not mentioned in *The Scarlet Letter*. I ask my students to mark the passages dealing with community. They are usually surprised to see the change in the letter “A” (adultery to angel, able). They are also surprised to see the community’s attitude change from one of hatred to one of acceptance of Hester. Lastly, we discuss events that were once perceived as scandalous to mere acceptance in today’s world. Freshmen usually find it difficult to understand why Hester was so severely punished for her sin. I explain to them that this story took place over 300 years before and the times have changed. Then we are able to discuss other aspects of ethics that have changed throughout time.

One other thing I do is have my students cut out letters to wear for the day that depict their secret sin. I let them choose the color of paper to indicate their sin. Then we wear them and have fun letting people guess what sin we have committed.

I. Short Story Unit (2 weeks)

- A. Lecture on Nathaniel Hawthorne
- B. Definitions of “community”
- C. Read seven short stories by Hawthorne
 1. “My Kinsman, Major Molineux”
 2. “The Minister’s Black Veil”

3. “The Birthmark”
4. “The Ambitious Guest”
5. “Young Goodman Brown”
6. “Ethan Brand”
7. “Dr. Heidegger’s Experiment”

- D. Test on short stories
- E. Essay due with suggested topics dealing with community

II. *The Scarlet Letter* (4 weeks)

- A. Lecture on Puritan beliefs and punishments
- B. Read *The Scarlet Letter*
- C. Review of community and seven short stories
- D. Test on the novel
- E. Essay on *The Scarlet Letter* with suggested topics
- F. View the PBS film of *The Scarlet Letter*

During the past two years I have been forced to do *The Scarlet Letter* as a book report book. In order to cover other major writers, it was easier to issue study questions and give the students three weeks to read the book independently; but at the conclusion of the three weeks, we discuss the novel thoroughly. Therefore class time can be spent studying other major authors.

Resources

- Bellah, Robert *et al.* *Habits of the Heart*. New York: Harper & Row, 1985.
- Gerber, John C. *Twentieth Century Interpretations of The Scarlet Letter: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliff: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968.
- Hart, James D. *The Oxford Companion to American Literature*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1965.
- Kaul, A. N. *Hawthorne: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliff: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966.
- Leverenz, David. “Mrs. Hawthorne’s Headache: Reading *The Scarlet Letter*.” *Nineteenth Century Fiction*. March 1983, pp. 552-575.
- Martin, Terence. *Nathaniel Hawthorne*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1983.
- Mellow, James R. *Nathaniel Hawthorne in His Times*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 1980.

Work



*For Silas Lapham his paint is “like his heart’s blood.”
The millhands at Plant 2 [in Rhoadhiss] were honored
and proud to know that they wove the cloth for the flag
that is on the moon.*

*Sherrie Hartsoe, A Death in
Rhoadhiss, North Carolina*

“A Busy Multitude”: Work in American Life and Literature

Drive a nail home and clinch it so faithfully that you can wake up in the night and think of your work with satisfaction—a work at which you would not be ashamed to invoke the Muse. . . . Every nail driven should be as another rivet in the machine of the universe, you carrying on the work.

Henry David Thoreau, “Conclusion,”
Walden

The historian Everett Dick recounts the experiences of a German immigrant, Gert Goebel, as he undertook the work of settlement on the American frontier. Better educated than his neighbors, Goebel observed their work with a feeling of superiority. The work appeared to be simple, and he began his own settlement confident that he could do the necessary work easily and better than his ignorant neighbors. After all, such things as cutting corn, clearing new ground, and splitting logs for rails were simple tasks. All one had to do was go at the work intelligently.

But when Goebel, with his father and brothers, tried to make corn shocks as they had observed their neighbors doing it, their shocks fell down, and they couldn't understand why. Nor could they figure out why, when they tried to split rails, the work proved so difficult. When they tried to cut down trees, their progress was painfully slow, and they blistered their hands. When at last they had prepared a few logs to be split into rails, no amount of thinking about the problem could explain why wedges became stuck in still unsplit logs. When they ruined a wooden maul from so much pounding on the wedges, and made a new one, they could not understand why their new maul was soon reduced to splinters. By the end of the day they had got their wedges stuck repeatedly, ruined two mauls, made themselves sore and morose—and still had not a single rail to show for their

efforts. Two helpful neighbors finally taught them which trees were best for making rails, which wood made a durable maul, which end of a log to begin splitting. And in a two-hour demonstration of rail-splitting in which these neighbors completed between forty and fifty rails, Goebel learned more than he could have in months of thinking about the work (Dick, 304-07).

From the beginnings of the American experience in the colonial period, Europeans had found it necessary to set aside or modify their inherited ideas and attitudes in order to make a satisfactory adjustment to the conditions and demands in the new American environment. The experience of the Goebel family typifies the experience of millions who came both before and after them. As was the case with the Goebel family, the conditions of the new environment and the demands it made on settlers were such that, especially in the American workplace, practice proved superior to theory, experience and skill to formal education. While the typical American workplace has long since ceased to be a frontier settlement, that frontier experience, repeated countless times as settlement moved westward, together with concepts, attitudes, and values of our collective cultural heritage, have profoundly influenced our attitudes about work.

It has frequently been said that Americans are perhaps the hardest working people in the world. We are said to have a “work ethic.” While this may be so, we certainly did not invent the work ethic. Long before America was settled, work was valued by people and cultures contributing to our Graeco-Roman, Judeo-Christian heritage. The evils of idleness, the Roman philosopher Seneca advises, can be shaken off by hard work (Epistles, 56.9). Both the Old and New Testaments value work. God's creation, according to the Genesis account, was the work of six days. In keeping with this example, the sixth commandment states that man shall work six days and rest on the seventh. The Old Testament attitude toward work is ambiguous. On the one hand work is a curse resulting from man's disobedience and fall from grace. For the most part, though, work in the Old Testament is

associated with honor and virtue. The sleep of a laboring man, according to Ecclesiastes 5:12, is sweet. Paul, in the New Testament, repeatedly reminds members of the early church that they will be judged by their work. "Every man's work shall be made manifest," he writes in 1 Corinthians 3, "for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." The connection between work and salvation is seen in the motto of the Benedictine Order—*Orare est laborare, laborare est orare*: To pray is to work, to work is to pray—where work and prayer are synonymous.

The attitude toward work brought to America by the earliest settlers was no doubt a part of their Calvinist doctrine. John Calvin, the great sixteenth-century reformer and contemporary of Luther, emphasized the glorification of God through action—through sacrifice, labor, discipline. Thrift, sobriety, and above all, industriousness, were signal virtues, means toward the end of glorifying God. One served God by performing works. John Winthrop's vision of "a city upon a hill" to be built by the members of Plymouth Colony, is spoken of as "this work we have undertaken . . ." (Bartlett, 264). Elsewhere in the colonies work was, from the beginning, of paramount concern. The situation had become so serious by September 1608 that Captain John Smith, President of the Colony of Virginia, in a Statement to the Council, bluntly decreed: "You must obey this, now, for a law—he that will not work shall not eat" (Seldes, 389).

In the northern and southern colonies alike in the seventeenth century there were laws against idleness, though in the South, a writer noted, planters were not very fond of work "or any manly exercise except Horse (sic!) racing. . ." (Wertenbaker, 262-63). In 1629 Governor Endicott was advised by the Massachusetts Bay Company that "noe idle drone bee permitted to live amongst us. . . ." (Wish, V.1, 51). Recent emigrés and travelers in the post-Revolutionary period were often surprised at how respectable ordinary labor was in the new country (Krout, 40). Thomas Jefferson even defended Southern planters against the charge of

idleness and wrote of the varied and unremitting duties of a planter (Wish, VI, 228). Although American society has surely become more secular than it was in the colonial period, the religious rationale for sobriety, thrift, and industry has continued to inform our attitude toward work. A student of Horatio Alger's popular nineteenth-century novels describes Alger's formula as: "middle-class respectability equals spiritual grace" (Cords and Gerster, vol. 2, 113). Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905) argued that the "rationalized, systematized pursuit of material gain was plainly linked to the 'worldly asceticism' promoted by Calvinist religion" (Fox, 4-5). Tocqueville (V. II, 264-65) noted a driven quality in the typical American: a persistent need to be up and doing, as if not only material gain but spiritual salvation depended on it, and a resulting inability really to be at leisure. As if in illustration of Tocqueville's observation, Henry Ford asserted, "I do not believe a man can ever leave his business. He ought to think of it by day and dream of it by night" (Ford). American devotion to work has been so consistent that by the twentieth century, when leisure became commonplace, "for the professional and intellectual man it became almost fashionable to work long hours" (Commager, 422).

The word "work" has a long and complicated history in the English language and is related to other words such as "labor" and "leisure." Modern English "work," derived from the Old English noun *weorc*, and from the related verb *wyrcan*, is our general word for both doing something and for something done. Although it has most frequently come to denote paid employment, this is not always the case, for in modern English one can speak of *working* in the garden. On the other hand a woman who runs a household and rears children is distinguished from a woman who *works* outside the home. Thus, while the meaning is not exclusive, "work" as a noun or verb in most instances has come to be associated with activity undertaken for a wage or salary, with the condition of being hired.

"Work" is related to "labor," which, in the Middle Ages, carried

a strong sense of pain and toil. ("Toil" itself, derived from a Latin root word meaning "to stir or to crush," bore the meaning of trouble or turmoil before it came to mean "hard labor.") While "labor" and "toil" connoted more arduous activity than "work," manual workers came to be referred to as "laborers" as early as the thirteenth century, and the supply of such people was shortened to "labor" by the seventeenth century. Although "laborer" was also a *worker* from the fourteenth century on, "work" could still be used in a general sense by Shakespeare: "Fie upon this quiet life, I want worke." (Henry IV, II,iv). "Work" compounded with other words to produce *workman*, *workingman*, *workfolk*, *workpeople*, and in the nineteenth century the *working class* came to be used in making an important socio-political distinction.

The most important shift in the meaning of the word "work" has been from generalized activity to that of paid employment and has come about as a result of the development of capitalist productive relations. According to Raymond Williams (145-48, 281-84) to be "*in work* or *out of work* was to be in a definite relationship with some other who had control of the means of productive effort. 'Work' then partly shifted from the productive effort itself to the predominant social relationship." Shift from the activity to the relationship has made it possible to say that a woman running a household and rearing children is *not working*. An older sense of the word is preserved, however, for it is still possible to distinguish between one's real *work* and what one does only as a job for wage or salary. Activities undertaken during time other than that spent in paid employment are said to be done "on our own time," or during our "free time" or "leisure time" (the word "leisure" comes from the Latin *licere*, meaning "to permit"). Because "work" has become specialized and refers most often to paid employment, it is possible to refer to "leisure-time activities" which may entail considerable effort. And it is in this sense that we may refer to *works* of art, or to any undertaking for which we are not remunerated by contractual or otherwise formal agreement.

The separation of the male and female spheres of work during the late medieval and early modern periods may be a reason why, in contemporary English, we do not speak of a woman who stays at home and rears children as working, while a woman who is employed outside the home is said to work. This usage suggests that a woman works only when she enters the sphere of activity separated in space from the home and dominated by males. But this distinction has not always been possible. In the fourteenth century the typical European bourgeois townhouse combined living and work space (Rybczynski, 25). The homes of artisans and shopkeepers combined living space with shops and studios, and even the wealthy included counting rooms in their residences (Duby, *et passim*). But by the time of the Renaissance, the home had increasingly become the realm of women and "a setting for private acts and personal moments." Male work and male social life had moved outside the home. The work of women remained much as it had been before, but its isolation from the work of men was new (Rybczynski, 70-71).

The world of the early colonists was already characterized by the separation of work from the domestic sphere, and the nature and meaning of work had been transformed by capitalism. Immigration to the colonies was due in large part to economic dislocations brought about by the enclosure movement and the introduction of large-scale commercial farming. "Sheep eat men," was the cry of people who had been evicted from farmland converted to the raising of sheep (Wish, v. I, 12). Many of these uprooted people, or their descendents, eventually made their way to the American colonies (Bailyn, 36-44). In the 1760s in Ireland, Scotland, and Northern England, the desire to emigrate to the colonies reached a fever pitch. British government officials expressed alarm and a sense of urgency. A report from Ireland in 1773 stated that in the previous half-dozen years Ulster had "been drained of one-fourth of its trading cash and the like proportion of the manufacturing people' by emigration." The belief that North America was "the best poor man's country in the

world” had become so universal that British authorities in the early 1770s considered banning emigration to the colonies altogether and began compiling an official register of emigration in an effort to determine the reasons for emigrating.

A growing economic force, capitalism, was the engine that drove the dislocation in the English countryside and which facilitated much of the colonizing in the New World. Some of the first settlements and plantations were the efforts of joint stock companies. When John Donne declared in “An Anatomie of the World: The First Anniversary,” in 1611, “’Tis all in peeces, all cohaerence gone,” (191) he was talking not only about a loosening of ties of kinship, but of the collapse of an entire feudal system in a process of early modernization. Indeed, the age of exploration and the subsequent settlement of the North American continent we now see as manifestations of a new era. The social, economic, religious, and philosophical forces operating in fifteenth-, sixteenth-, and seventeenth-century Europe, we have come to see as the beginnings of the modern age. The early explorers and adventurers, the colonists and settlers, the indentured servants and redemptioners who came to America by the hundreds, then by the thousands, then by the hundreds of thousands and eventually by the millions, were moderns.

The West was modern, or becoming so, before America was settled. Or, more accurately, America’s settlement occurred as part of the dawning of the modern world. And certainly the Industrial Revolution, a most conspicuous aspect of the modern age, began in England and was well advanced before the American Revolution. So neither the modern era nor the Industrial Revolution, which transformed life in the West, is to be exclusively associated with the United States. Yet it was in the United States that the nature of work was transformed—with consequences for the country and for the entire globe that persist to the present time.

According to Boorstin (20-31), Europeans in the nineteenth century began to notice and comment on an “American System of Manufacturing” quite different from their own, and which

might have been more accurately called a “New England System.” This system did not rely on the special skills of craftsmen who performed each step in the production of a manufactured item. (Highly skilled craftsmen had never been plentiful in the colonies or in the new young nation; in fact, their scarcity and the resulting absences of vested interests explain why the workplace was transformed in America before it was in Europe.) Instead, the new system rationalized and systematized the manufacturing process—broke the manufacture of any item down into simple steps, which could be performed by an unskilled or semi-skilled worker, and then, to take advantage of waterpower at specific sites, organized the various steps under one factory roof. This departure, which came to be known as the Uniformity System, was not so much the result of boldness or inventiveness as it was of necessity and the disposition to experiment; it had the effect of transforming production, the nature of work, and the role of the worker. As Boorstin explains:

In Europe the making of a complex machine, such as a gun or clock, had remained wholly in the hands of a single highly skilled craftsman. . . . The new Uniformity System broke down the manufacture of a gun or of any other complicated machine into the separate manufacture of each of its component pieces. Each piece could then be made independently and in large quantities, by workers who lacked the skill to make a whole machine.

Henceforth the world of production and manufacturing would require not skill but know-how. This modern factory organization would bring changes in the relationships between labor and capital, countryside and city, in the position of women and of the family. It would be the chief difference between Western life in the twentieth century and the eighteenth century, and by the twentieth century, would have implications for the entire human community.

One almost immediate consequence of the organization of

work at a single site was the inadvertent organization of workers, living and working in close proximity, into a community of common interest. The first Trades Union was organized in Boston in the 1830s, and laws against conspiracy were revised in such a way as to give the American labor movement its charter of legality in 1842 (Boorstin, 46). And well into the twentieth century the manufacturing system that brought large numbers of men and women together on one site organized not only the work, but contributed to the organization of the workers, who took the family as a model for the community they created in pursuit of their interests (Hall, *et passim*).

But for generations, even while its transformation was going on, work was not problematical for the average American. It was obvious why one worked. The fruits of one's labor were seen immediately and directly in the food, clothing, and shelter work provided for oneself and one's family. One saw the usefulness of one's work in one's community. One's work made sense. But as the manufacture of products became increasingly rationalized and systematized, exploded into small steps that could be routinely performed, and as the end product of work became increasingly remote from the worker, work lost much of its immediate satisfaction and meaning. The rationalization of work eventually rationalized the life of the worker, dividing life neatly into work, on the one hand, and play, or leisure, on the other, with the result that both were robbed of satisfaction and meaning. Thus, an understanding of work in the American experience necessarily entails a consideration of leisure, and a consideration of whether or not the meaning of both work and leisure is not to be sought in their connection rather than in their separation.

During his presidential campaign in 1880, James A. Garfield observed, "We may divide the whole struggle of the human race into two chapters: first, the fight to get leisure; and then the second fight of civilization—what shall we do with our leisure when we get it?" By that time the collective experience of Americans consisted of subduing wilderness, fighting a war for

independence and establishing a nation, fighting a civil war, and then transforming an essentially rural, agrarian society into an increasingly urban and industrial one. Most Americans were still caught up in the transformation; their experience better prepared them to work than to take leisure. For many, perhaps most, leisure was but a euphemism for laziness (Tarbell, 287-88).

Yet thoughtful Americans from the earliest times knew the difference between leisure and indolence, and furthermore, knew how to value leisure. In 1743 Benjamin Franklin wrote:

The first drudgery of settling new colonies, which confines the attention of people to mere necessaries, is now pretty well over; and there are many in every province in circumstances that seem at ease and afford leisure to cultivate the finer arts and improve the common stock of knowledge. . . ." (*Adams, frontispiece*).

Franklin wrote in *Poor Richard's Almanac* for 1746, "A life of leisure and a life of laziness are two things," and his life after he retired from his printing business illustrated that proposition.

Thoreau, looking about him in his New England community of Concord, concluded that most people were "so occupied with the factitious cares and superfluously coarse labors of life that its finer fruits cannot be plucked by them." The laboring man lacked the leisure to be "anything but a machine," and yet Thoreau believed this situation existed "through mere ignorance and mistake," and that leisure was within reach of even the poorest person (327). As Franklin taught his countrymen, by word and deed, a lesson with respect to leisure, Thoreau incorporated into his experiment at Walden Pond an illustration of the leisure available to the person of modest means. And in his reflections upon the experiment, like Franklin, he suggested not only that leisure and laziness are two things, but that true leisure may be, paradoxically, more productive than mindless industry. Thoreau writes of "days when idleness was the most attractive and productive industry" (475).

Franklin, however, came to be revered not for his views on leisure but rather for his emphasis in *Poor Richard* on sobriety, thrift, and industry. And Thoreau was writing against the grain of his time, for in the nineteenth century the gospel of work was preached from many pulpits. Indeed, the “work ethic” that supported the vigorously developing industrial world permeated England and America to such an extent that we might speak of a morality of exertion and effort in which the connection between work and spiritual salvation is transparent. In 1829, near the end of his life, Goethe declared to his Boswell, Eckermann (Eissler II: 1189), “If I work incessantly to the last, nature owes me another form of existence when the present one collapses.” It is Goethe’s greatest creation, the character of Faust, who couches his pact with Mephistopheles in terms of constant striving and ceaseless effort:

*If to the moment I should say:
Abide, you are so fair—
Put me in fetters on that day,
I wish to perish then, I swear.
Then let the death bell ever toll,
Your [Mephistopheles’] service done, you shall be free,
The clock may stop, the hand may fall,
As time comes to an end for me.
(185)*

When Faust dies and Mephistopheles is about to claim his soul, God intervenes and saves Faust, despite all Faust’s shortcomings and transgressions, observing:

*Who ever strives with all his power,
We are allowed to save.
(493)*

Thomas Carlyle, greatly influenced by Goethe, is a conspicuous advocate of work. He declares (196-97), “All work is noble, even cotton spinning, is noble; work is alone noble. . . . A life of ease is

not for any man, nor for any god.” The coiner of the term “captains of industry,” which is the title of the fourth chapter of his book *Past and Present* (267-73), in which he also observes, “Blessed is he who has found his work; let him ask no other blessedness,” in turn was admired by Thoreau’s contemporary and sometime mentor Ralph Waldo Emerson (331), who says, in “Fragments on the Poetic Gift”:

*That book is good
Which puts me in a working mood.*

Charles Lamb (563) is a feeble voice in the nineteenth century when he asks, “Who first invented work, and bound the free/ And holiday-rejoicing spirit down?” For the most part, the century’s leading writers in England and America could not say enough about the salutary effects of work, effort, and exertion. Browning (VI: 57) suggests that work has the power to forestall death: “No work begun shall ever pause for death.” Hugh Clough’s earnest and optimistic lines (Bartlett, 564) are well known:

*Say not the struggle naught availeth,
The labor and the wounds are vain,
The Enemy faints not, nor faileth,
And things have been as they remain.*

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (370) sounds the call to action, effort, and exertion in “A Psalm of Life”:

*Let us, then, be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor and to wait.*

Perhaps the most memorable poetic nineteenth-century expression of devotion to ceaseless effort, striving, and exertion is to be found in Tennyson’s (66-67) “Ulysses,” in which the restless Odysseus/Ulysses, in a monologue spoken in a quiet time after the Trojan War and all the adventures of the trip home, says:

*How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnished, not to shine in use!
As though to breathe were life!*

*Death closes all; but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with gods.*

...

*'Tis not too late to seek a newer world,
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.*

...

To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

Tennyson's poem, which appeared in 1842, is set in the world of ancient Greece; but it is very much a poem of its time, for in its tone and tenor it expresses the adventures and enterprising spirit of the men who explored the West, of the men and women who first settled the North American continent, of the early industrialists and entrepreneurs who were at that time in the process of seeking and finding a newer world. The world that was coming into being in England and America in the nineteenth century, and in western Europe generally, left little doubt about the efficacy of effort and industriousness, or about the reality of progress. And while the greatest hymns to ceaseless striving may have been written in the nineteenth century, the intellectual, spiritual, economic, and social conditions that give rise to them are inseparable from the experience of modernity which had increasingly affected life in the West since the Renaissance.

The Enlightenment in eighteenth-century Germany emphasized not only religious toleration, but also a never-ending pursuit of truth, a view necessary for the idea of progress which is also associated with the Enlightenment. Goethe's predecessor, the brilliant critic and dramatist G. E. Lessing, preferred the

pursuit of truth to truth itself. Lessing valued the *effort* one exerted to get at the truth more than the possession of truth and thought the effort to know the truth a better indication of the worth of the individual.

*Nicht die Wahrheit, in deren Besitz
irgendein Mensch ist oder zu sein
vermeint, sondern die aufrichtige Muehe,
die er angewandt hat, hinter die Wahrheit
zu kommen, macht den Wert des Menschen.*

Lessing thought that the possession of truth brought one to rest, made one indolent and proud. *Der Besitz macht ruhig, traeger und stolz.* He concluded that if God held out all truth in his right hand, and in his left the desire to pursue truth, even though the pursuit would be filled with error, and said, "Choose!" he would choose the pursuit of truth over truth itself.

*Wenn Gott in seiner Rechten alle Wahrheit
und in seiner Linken den einzigen, immer
regen Trieb nach Wahrheit, obschon mit dem
Zusatz, mich immer und ewig zu irren,
verschlossen hielte, und spraeche zu mir:
Waehle!—Ich fiele ihm mit Demut in seine
Linke und sagte: Vater gib—die reine Wahrheit
ist ja doch nur fuer dich allein (Lessing, 87).*

This ceaseless activity extolled in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was not the sphere merely of great men—kings and wealthy industrialists and entrepreneurs. The heroic spirit of Tennyson's poem spoke to ordinary men and women, for it was within the reach of the humblest to improve their station in life. As the historian Francis Parkman (xviii) pointed out in 1865:

*The growth of New England was a result of the aggregate
efforts of a busy multitude, each in his narrow circle toiling
for himself, to gather competence or wealth.*

In an enduring example of nineteenth-century American prose, The Gettysburg Address, Lincoln (Bartlett, 523) calls on his audience to consider the Civil War an unfinished *work*:

It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they [*the dead*] who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us. . . .

But even before the end of the nineteenth century there were indications of a change in the attitude toward work—a change that would make Thoreau, stepping to his different drummer, seem prophetic. In 1882 the influential social critic Herbert Spencer addressed a banquet audience in New York City on the subject of leisure. Spencer (who along with Thomas H. Huxley, popularized Darwin’s theory of evolution, applied it to human society, and coined the term “survival of the fittest”) told his audience, “We have had somewhat too much of the ‘gospel of work’” (Shapiro, November 11 entry).

Certainly in America by the time of the Great Depression, when millions of Americans had leisure forced upon them, the emphasis in discussions of work had shifted. Americans were notoriously willing workers, but they were unprepared for leisure.

Not only economic depression but the increasing use of machines in production idled men and women and threatened to alter the nature of work and render the traditional worker superfluous. In 1933 Ralph Aiken (A-7) predicted that leisure, not work, would be the challenge of the future. “Whether we like it or not,” he wrote, “the world is evidently entering upon a period of leisure for all men.” The influence of the machine was causing “the ideals of an industrious past” to fade beyond recognition. The Russians, Aiken believed, were making a serious mistake in attempting to build a paradise for factory workers because the entire social structure “raised on the life and labor of the factory worker” was already out of date in the 1930s. Soon, Aiken asserted, “a mill-hand will be as rare as a bison. He is marked for

extinction.” Aiken foresaw a time when engineering progress would have all but eliminated the factory worker; when machines would “force freedom on a laborious and willfully toiling people.”

But the problem with the factory model of the worker was not just that such workers would be supplanted by machines. The nature of the work performed by the factory worker was in itself problematic. The Uniformity System, as described by Boorstin, rationalized work and divided processes into simple, distinct steps which were performed repeatedly by the worker. The worker was deprived of a sense of accomplishment or completion or closure as the task was fragmented and diminished. The work did not demand the attention and capacities of the entire person, but only a part of the worker—a hand or an eye.

The Uniformity System resulted in work that lacked the scope and variety of work in the pre-industrial frontier and settlement period. Life on the frontier, and later on farms, in villages and small towns, required that men and women, and children, acquire a variety of useful skills which might be employed with the changing of the seasons, or as the needs of the family or community altered. If, in such situations, men and women were, typically, jacks-of-all-trades, masters-of-none, work had obvious meaning and usefulness in terms of one’s family and community, and presented the worker with constant challenge and variety.

The historian Everett Dick illustrates the variety of work experiences in the lives of individuals on the American frontier. One man, Gideon Lincecum, who did not learn to read until he was fourteen, was a student of medicine three years later. Subsequently he was a store clerk, then store proprietor, farmer, and town boomer. After going bankrupt, he made a comeback by exhibiting a troupe of Indians about the country—all before returning to the practice of medicine (219). According to Dick, Little Rock, Arkansas’ first mayor “combined with his duties as chief magistrate those of justice of the peace, schoolteacher, bookkeeper, clerk in the post office, house- and sign-painter,

glazier, and general tinker." A traveler recollected a man in Alabama who was "a schoolmaster, a lawyer, an almanac-maker, a speculator, and a dealer in eggs. . . ." (336).

Such work experiences were not untypical long past the frontier and settlement phases. Wilma Dykeman (60-61) provides a vivid account of a man named J. C. Smathers, who lived in rural Western North Carolina well into the twentieth century and who impressed travelers with "the versatility of his offices and accomplishments." A traveler stopped at Smathers' tavern learned that Smathers was not only the proprietor of the tavern but also the postmaster, storekeeper, and operator of the blacksmith shop. In addition, Smathers ran the local mill and farmed. A pillar in the Methodist church, he was the father of thirteen children, and, in addition to his other skills and activities, he was, or at some time during his life had been, a rock and brick mason, carpenter, shoemaker, tinner, painter, plumber, harness- and saddle-maker, candle-maker, beekeeper, glazier, butcher, lawyer, politician, and schoolmaster.

But the Uniformity System of factory work radically altered the nature of the typical work experience. The system organized work at a single site, broke work into small bits or steps, removed the worker from any experience of the usefulness of the work, and generally divided not only the work, but separated the worker from pleasure or satisfaction in the work, thereby changing work into labor or drudgery.

While we do not always distinguish between labor and work, our survey of the history of the two words suggests they are two different things, just as leisure and idleness are. Labor is something thrust upon us. We have to do it. And once we have done it, we have to do it again—tomorrow, next week. Labor is taking out the garbage, mopping the floor, doing the laundry. *Housework* is really *houselabor*.

The word "work" might better be reserved for other activities—things we do, not only because we need to do them, but because, additionally, we choose to do them. The word "work" ought to be

reserved, too, for things which, once done, may not have to be done ever again. Work can be done "once and for all." Sometimes we use the word "work" in this sense, as when we speak of works of art, or the collected works of an author. But usage confuses the meanings, since a *work* of art may have been a *labor* of love.

Nevertheless, labor enthralled, is essentially drudgery, while genuine work, paradoxically, contains elements of freedom and play. The distinction between labor and work figures in Robert Frost's poem "Two Tramps in Mud-Time" (275-77). The poem's speaker is chopping wood in his yard when two strangers, the tramps, approach and volunteer to chop the wood for pay. For the tramps, chopping wood is labor; they don't *want* to chop wood, but they need a job and money. The poem's speaker probably needs wood, too, but he goes at the chopping of it with an altogether different attitude than the one the tramps would bring to it. He chooses to chop wood. The work affords him pleasure. His need and his pleasure coincide. He enjoys:

*The grip on earth of outspread feet,
The life of muscles rocking soft
And smooth and moist in vernal heat.*

More than a physical pleasure, chopping the wood is a kind of contemplation—or at least the occasion for contemplation. Chopping the "good blocks of beech" gives "a loose to [his] soul."

An attitude of play and enjoyment distinguishes what would have been the tramps' labor from what is the speaker's work. Labor is dull, lackluster. Work is undertaken in a spirit of freedom and enjoyment.

A further consideration is that labor separates, while work unites. Labor involves separation of what we need to do from what we choose or like to do. But real work unites need and choice, need and performance. We labor out of compulsion, we work freely. We endure labor, we enjoy work. We hold something back from labor. We say our heart isn't in it. We devote our whole self to work.

Work absorbs us totally, as we are totally absorbed when we play. And that is why work, properly understood, really is play and why, as Frost concludes the poem:

*Only where love and need are really one,
And the work is play for mortal stakes,
Is the deed ever really done. . . .*

Work, then, involves an element of play not found in labor. Work is something we do at our leisure—leisure being understood, as both Franklin and Thoreau viewed it, as something quite different from idleness. And the circumstances of our lives in contemporary America may dispose us to better appreciate the role of leisure in the lives of both Franklin and Thoreau. We are better positioned, as heirs to a critique of the “gospel of work” that has lasted now for well over half a century, to see that while Thoreau was a dissenting voice in the nineteenth century, a man trying to wake his neighbors up to an examination of their lives, his attitude toward leisure is more widely appreciated now, perhaps the prevailing view.

In discussions of economics and the workplaces of business and industry we have long heard the phrase “division of labor,” by which is meant specialization of tasks. But a more important division has occurred. Work has been divided into its constituent parts: labor and play. Work has been split, sundered. This creates a problem, perhaps two problems. Wendell Berry, in *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture* (90-95) writes about a school of agriculture which let a contract to a waste disposal firm to haul horse manure off the university farm, and then bought chemical fertilizers for some of the school’s field projects. On the surface, in the context of rational and efficient procedure, this arrangement may appear to be—and perhaps is—unexceptional. But, as Berry observes, the school took a solution and neatly divided it into two problems.

Something similar occurs when we arrange our lives in such a way as to divide work into labor and fun/play/entertainment.

Labor, apart from enjoyment or satisfaction, is inevitably dull, dreary—a problem. Fun or play or entertainment, apart from achievement, deep involvement, is also a problem. Carol Bly, in *Letters from the Country* (frontispiece) quotes Selma Laegerloeff, the Scandinavian writer, who observes, “The soul is constantly about to starve; it cannot live on fun alone. If the soul gets no other food, it will first tear apart other creatures . . . then itself.”

But together, labor and play, effort and pleasure, are a solution. Frost understands that the tramps are asking him to separate his work and his play. The tramps, Frost writes, thought:

*My right might be love but theirs was need.
And where the two exist in twain
Theirs was the better right—agreed.*

But while the tramps may have a certain logic and conventional wisdom on their side (the logic and conventional wisdom of Thoreau’s neighbors), the speaker in Frost’s poem doesn’t allow them to chop his wood, for he knows that they are asking him to separate his experience into work, on the one hand, and play, or pleasure, on the other. Others may allow this to happen, but he will not.

*But yield who will to their separation,
My object in living is to unite
My avocation and my vocation
As my two eyes make one in sight.*

The dissenting view of Thoreau and Frost is admirably represented in contemporary America by Wendell Berry (Harper’s, 19-24), who realizes that the wholeness of our lives has been sundered by a “purely economic economy,” which promotes an ideal of competition that excludes affection and robs work of its pleasure. “That there can be pleasure industries, . . .” Berry writes, “can only mean that our economy is divorced from pleasure, and that pleasure is gone from our workplaces and our

dwelling places. Our workplaces are more and more exclusively given over to production, and our dwelling places to consumption.”

Berry contrasts this situation with work which blends labor with fun and laughter, with affection for neighbors and relatives, with pleasure and a sense of satisfaction. Berry holds out the hope of recovering such wholeness and a sense of leisure which is not incompatible, as Thoreau knew, with productivity. Berry writes:

It is possible, as I have learned again and again, to be in one's place, in such company, wild or domestic, and with such pleasure, that one cannot think of another place that one would prefer to be, or of another place at all; one does not miss or regret the past, or fear or long for the future. Being there is simply all, and is enough. Such times give one the chief standard and the chief reason for one's work.

A standard and a reason for one's work is certainly what is required. But, given the diversity of American life, we can be reasonably certain that a single standard or reason will not prove satisfactory for everyone. We have a common heritage which includes the Biblical interpretation of work as a curse, as well as the view of Enlightenment thinkers, such as Lessing and Goethe, who found satisfaction and even salvation in ceaseless effort and activity. But the endless striving of Goethe's Faust, the ceaseless adventuring of Tennyson's Ulysses, represent only one of two human impulses: one may be “to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield,” but the other is to come to rest, to be at peace, as Faust knew when he imagined being able to say to the moment, “Abide, you are so fair”; as Frost knows in “Two Tramps in Mud-Time”; as Wendell Berry knows when he writes of the ability to be “in one's place . . . with such pleasure, that one cannot think of another place that one would prefer to be. . . .” Ideally these two impulses, to exert effort and to be at rest, are united in such a way that one is pleasurable at rest in effort and exertion. And some people may be able to achieve such a solution in their lives,

managing to make their work their play. Certain entrepreneurs and tycoons of the past have certainly delighted in their work, as if it were play. And the contemporary tycoon Donald Trump (1) asserts, “I don't do it for money. I've got enough, much more than I'll ever need. I do it to do it. . . . Deals are my art form.”

Most people are not likely to be fortunate enough to unite their avocation and their vocation. Yet many will find an accommodation with a certain dividedness or separation in their lives, devoting a certain amount of time to remunerated employment, but finding their real “work” in activity outside that employment. Such arrangements are more common than is generally realized. Ronald Gross (17) writes of “hundreds of thousands of ‘invisible scholars’ in America today—women and men pursuing their own intellectual projects, without academic affiliations”—women and men for whom scholarship is “their joy, but not their job.” Such scholarship has been investigated in *Amateurs: On the Margin Between Work and Leisure*, by Robert Stebbins. While the work of the amateur has been depreciated in the age of the expert and specialist, one way to recover the wholeness of work, the sense of affection and play, may be through the rehabilitation of the status of the amateur.

For still others, for whom the problem is work that is not as large as they are, a complaint of a woman quoted in Studs Terkel's *Working* (xxiv), suggests the solution may be in a combination of work experiences, either simultaneously, like the Western North Carolinian described by Wilma Dykeman, or serially, like the work experiences of people in an earlier America who had multiple careers. Such solutions provide work that challenges and offers variety.

Different accommodations will prove possible and satisfactory for different individuals. What is certain, however, is that the separation of work from play has reached such a stage in American life that it has, paradoxically, engendered a new kind of work, leisure counseling! (Moby, 16-17) Such counseling has come into being in response to what the Dutch historian Johan

Huizinga, in his book *Homo Ludens (et passim)*, sees as the decline of the play-element in Western culture, and in response to what Josef Pieper (*et passim*) sees as a growing incapacity for leisure.

Such leisure counseling and the people involved in this profession may popularize a new attitude toward work which could be liberating to both men and women. This seems to be the goal of such popular essays as "How To Work For Somebody Else and Still Be Yourself" by Lisa Burnbach (14). Leisure counselors and writers on the subject may help parents overcome their inherited fear of "idleness," which results in their preferring to let children watch television rather than "do nothing." Parents can be helped toward a more positive view of "unstructured time" and toward Franklin's distinction between leisure and idleness, toward an understanding, not unlike Thoreau's, that hours in which children do nothing may prove to be, paradoxically, productive.

Certainly it is not uncommon in late-twentieth-century America for ordinary people to be more thoughtful about the role of work in their lives, and to agree with Thoreau that "the life which men praise and regard as successful is but one kind" (338). Throughout the 1970s and 1980s newspapers and magazines have featured individuals who turned down promotions in business, government, and industry that would bring them more money and prestige but would be, in their view, detrimental to their family or uproot them from a community. An economics professor (Whitman, 12) argues that the quest for individual self-fulfillment, which began in the 1960s, has weakened all traditional models of authority, including the traditional concept of worker loyalty to the corporation.

Many Americans have become skeptical of the "gospel of work." They might agree that, at its best, this gospel or ethic liberated millions and showed them what was possible through effort; Americans are also quick, however to see a dark side to the work ethic, expressed in the term "workaholic." A popular version of the work ethic's dark side associates work with Puritanism, as

does Barbara Ehrenreich (10) in a recent essay.

The work ethic came along . . . in the form of Puritanism—the idea that the amount of self-denial you endured in this life was a good measure of the amount of fun awaiting you in the next. But the work ethic only got off the ground with the Industrial Revolution and the arrival of the factory system. This was . . . simply a scheme for extending the benefits of the slave system into the age of emancipation.

This new system is identified with capitalism, described as an arrangement whereby "huge numbers of people had to be convinced to work extra hard, at pitifully low wages, so that the employing class would not have to work at all." The gospel of work, according to this critique, is capitalism's public relations. "Overnight, with the help of a great number of preachers and other well-rested propagandists, work was upgraded from an indignity to an 'ethic.' "

Not all working Americans share Ehrenreich's flippant cynicism toward work. But a surprising number do. American businesses and industries are aware of a different attitude toward work and of a diminished commitment to work. Many firms and corporations have responded to worker complaints and dissatisfaction, particularly where considerations of family and community are concerned, by experimenting with new maternity leave policies for both fathers and mothers; by introducing corporate day care for children; and by efforts to be "good neighbors" in communities where they are located.

It is clear that many of our dissatisfactions with work are related to our roles as individuals and as members of families and communities. For Nora Watson, interviewed in Studs Terkel's *Working* (521), her work is unsatisfying because it does not comport with her sense of herself as an individual. "Most of us, like the assembly line worker, have jobs that are too small for our spirit. Jobs are not big enough for people." Therese Carter, a housewife, derives satisfaction from housework that might

otherwise be drudgery because she does it for her family. “. . . I’ll cook a pie and I’ll get to see everybody eat it. This is my offering. I think it’s the greatest satisfaction in the world to know you’ve pleased somebody. Everybody has to feel needed. I know I’m needed. I’m doing it for them. . . .” (303) Philip Da Vinci derives a similar satisfaction from work done for people beyond the family circle, in the larger community. A lawyer who left a position with a large insurance company, Da Vinci found satisfaction in providing legal services for the poor in Chicago. “I finally got into something where I actually felt useful” (537).

Old problems related to work persist. The failure of a Southern state legislature to pass legislation having to do with working conditions of migrant farm workers has led to the accusation of a “plantation mentality” on the part of lawmakers (“Plantation Mentality,” 4-A). Issues considered long ago resolved reappear: within the past two years network news programs have aired stories about disagreements on the part of unions and garment industry management concerning the permissibility of work performed in cottage industry settings, especially in rural areas and small towns in the Northeast. Ironically, women workers find the arrangement attractive because it permits them to stay at home with children and family. The unions argue that the arrangement leaves the women vulnerable to exploitation and low wages. While women have entered the work force outside the home, they continue to bear burdens and responsibilities as homemakers—and still women earn lower wages and salaries than men do, further evidence of injustice and exploitation. In addition, hundreds of thousands of workers—both men and women—are becoming members of a downwardly mobile American

middle class (Newman). While these work-related issues persist—it is always, as it was in Dickens’ time, the worst of times, the best of times—others are thinking about getting art into the workplace, not by making art useful but by making “useful activities artistic” (Lasch, 45).

We sense that our attitude toward work has changed, but we cannot foresee where the changes will ultimately lead. History tells us that our attitude toward work has been influenced by evolving social and economic views. We are heirs to the eighteenth-century concept of self-interest; to the subsequent refinement of that concept, enlightened self-interest; to the concept of the greatest happiness of the greatest number; to the concept of utility; the labor theory of value. And just as hardly any scientific theory is held today that was held when the Industrial Revolution began around 1760, most social and economic views of that period have persisted and evolved (Bronowski, 42, 67). And our views are likely to go on evolving, with implications for the way we think and feel about work.

We can also be reasonably certain that we are more likely to find solutions to both private and public problems having to do with work (such as low productivity, declining innovation) through our culture—through careful examination and reflection upon our history, heritage, and collective experience. And that culture is best focused and reflected in our literature and history.

The *Autobiography* of Benjamin Franklin, William Dean Howell’s *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, and Ole Roelvaag’s *Giants in the Earth* provide the basis for text-centered considerations of the theme of work in American life.

Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*

Franklin has often been called the first real American, the “new man” de Crevecoeur describes in his “Letters from an American Farmer.” Franklin’s *Autobiography* is the story of the paradigmatic American man; it is the first, and perhaps still the best American success story, the story of the self-made man who, through determination, good habits, and, above all, through diligence and industry, made his own life the most successful of his many projects.

Franklin (74) explicitly attributes his success to hard work. “I mention . . . industry the more particularly and the more freely,” he writes, “that those of my Posterity who shall read it, may know the Uses of that Virtue, when they see its Effects in my Favor throughout this Relation.” Franklin worked hard as a printer, as well as in his many civic undertakings. He helped found the Junto, an organization for the mutual exchange of ideas and intellectual improvement, which evolved into the American Philosophical Society. He helped establish a lending library; served as postmaster; reorganized the fire department; established an academy which became the University of Pennsylvania. He worked on behalf of a program for inoculation against smallpox. His many projects included efforts to improve city sewers and pave streets.

With utility and rationality as his overarching values, Franklin worked to make himself useful to himself, his family, and to his fellow man. The catalog of virtues, and the daily scorecard—his “Scheme of Employment for the Twenty-four Hours of a Natural Day”—he kept in pursuit of them, show how he used “industry as a means of attaining Wealth and Distinction.” American literature offers no better text than Franklin’s *Autobiography* as a starting point for a consideration of work as a cultural value.

The Rise of Silas Lapham

by William Dean Howells

William Dean Howell’s *The Rise of Silas Lapham* brings ethical considerations to bear on the theme of work. The story of Silas Lapham’s success is, like that of Franklin’s, a story of diligence, determination, and hard work. Lapham is a conventional American success. As the novel opens, Lapham is being interviewed by a reporter. He proudly displays photos of his wife and daughters and relates how he was brought up in a large family, later went to work, bought out a stage route, and eventually made a fortune manufacturing paint containing a mineral his father had discovered on their farm. In the paint manufacturing business Lapham had a partner, one Rogers, who had provided the initial capital enabling Lapham to get started. Later Lapham had forced Rogers out, but considered this simply good business.

In the course of the novel Lapham encounters the social prejudice of Boston Brahmins, who are unimpressed with self-made men. He suffers business setbacks and begins to speculate. He builds a new house in an exclusive section of Boston with the hope of gaining social acceptability. The house burns before he and his family can occupy it. But when forced to choose between losing his fortune or participating in a dishonest business venture, he chooses to lose the greater part of his wealth and to forego his ambition for social position. Lapham’s refusal to sacrifice his integrity and sense of fairness results in a material decline, but also in an ethical and moral rise and regeneration. His display of honesty also wins him the admiration of the Boston Brahmins whom he could not impress with money.

Giants in the Earth

by Ole Roelvaag

Roelvaag's *Giants in the Earth* is the story of a man's struggle to wrest a living from the earth. The protagonist Per Hansa moves with his wife and three children from Minnesota to the Dakota Territory in the late nineteenth century. Per Hansa is optimistic and exuberant. Working from dawn until past dark, he clears land and builds a house for himself and his family. He devotes himself with joy, enthusiasm, and ingenuity to making a success in the new land, though life is a struggle against cold weather, drought, and grasshoppers which devour crops. But his wife has great difficulty in adapting to this pioneer life. She longs for their old life in a Norwegian village, and in her desperation turns with fanatical zeal to the solace of religion. When a neighbor is believed to be near death, and a blizzard is in progress, Per Hansa's wife urges him to set out into the storm to seek a minister, since she believes last rites for the neighbor to be of paramount importance. Per Hansa dies of exposure in the blizzard while trying to bring a minister to a dying neighbor and friend.

Giants in the Earth is an epic saga of pioneer life and of the immigrant experience in America. The conflict between Per Hansa, obsessed with work, and his wife, for whom personal feelings and relationships are more important than material success, affords opportunities to examine changing and unchanging attitudes and assumptions about work in the context of the American experience.

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Participant Reflections: Work

A maze of superstitions was accepted as true, and many of them profoundly influenced my grandmother's daily work. Some of these traditions originated in England, others in Ireland and Scotland, and were absorbed in New England, Pennsylvania, and in Southern Appalachia. The Indian neighbors of the early settlers contributed much to the existing folklore. Horton Cooper points out another contributor to Appalachian superstition. Superstition, Cooper says, "was acquired by signs and omens of the lonely and eerie environment, of rugged topography and dark shadows which the mountains cast at night." Indeed, in the early existing environment of the Southern Highlands of North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, Alabama, Georgia, and Kentucky there was an almost endless dark forest with coves and valleys that looked shadowy in the moonlight and gave off uncertainty and fear. Thus, a blend of Old World traditions and the frontier experience gave the Southern Appalachians a rich folklore of superstitions.

Josephine Buckner, "The Influence of Appalachian Superstitions on Farm Work"

As colonial Americans became more advanced and the work ethic began to change, the American idea of work and the family also changed. Parents' attitudes toward their children and the children's attitudes toward work began to make a definite and drastic change. In the nineteenth century the upper classes saw children as fragile and in need of scrutiny. Their work consisted of their studies, and they were not expected to work alongside their parents. This attitude goes along more with modern parents than colonial times.

In *Families and Work* Gerstel points out that nineteenth-century women "nurtured their children and managed the tensions husbands brought home from jobs." This description is also

applicable to many women of today, but in addition to nurturing children and managing tensions, they also have to accept the responsibilities of being a working woman.

Michelle Wood, "Work and Family: The Ties that Bind"

In spite of greater job opportunities and more labor-saving devices for household work, today's woman still has some uncomfortable moments as she searches for "meaningful work." The problem seems to include not only the way we are perceived by others, but also the way we perceive ourselves, a condition that may simply be indicative of today's society in general, a place where appearance is everything. Perhaps what is needed is a healthy dose of the Thoreauvian ideal of expressive individualism; to allow and even encourage those who march to a cadence all their own.

Margaret A. Higgins, "Women's Work in a Man's World: American Women Looking for Meaningful Employment"

The authors contend that Americans are no longer committed to the "nose-to-the-grindstone" way of life. Interestingly enough, it is the stories by and about American immigrants which bear this out most clearly (Singer's "A Son from America" and Uchida's "Of Dry Goods and Black Bow Ties"). Other stories such as "A Day's Pleasure" and "The Split Cherry Tree" and "A Mother in Mannville" indirectly lead one to believe that education will help save one from grueling physical work. Jerry is going to school in order to be able to get off the farm. The narrator in "A Mother in Mannville" is a writer who hires others to do physical labor for her. The work of an educated person is made to appear less demanding and therefore preferable.

Jane Woodard, "A Man is Not a Piece of Fruit"

Snyder's next two books of poems, *Turtle Island* (1974) and *Axe Handles* (1983) present the most recent synthesis of his views on work, focusing once again on the tasks of his life and demonstrating how the physical, social, and meditative aspects of work go together.

Regarding Wave is Snyder's invocation to the Muse, to the eternal feminine. He has chosen, he tells us, the spiritual path represented by "long hair," which is "... to accept, go *through* the powers of nature," contrasting it with the Bhikku or hermit-ascetic who shaves his head. This is the choice of fertility over celibacy that opens up a new kind of work for the participant—the "common work of the tribe" and the family, which requires an embracing of the real world in all its aspects, and a dedication to doing good works in a social context. Snyder uses the phrase "the real work" to identify his new ideal.

Louis H. Palmer, "At the Heart of Work: A Reading of Gary Snyder's Poems"

No other American writer so epitomizes the philosophy of the work ethic as does Benjamin Franklin. Throughout his writings Franklin extols industry as the primary virtue to be developed by his colonial contemporaries. Industry is a theme throughout his *Autobiography* as he traces his journey from penniless apprentice to life as a comfortably wealthy statesman, philanthropist, and public servant. Franklin sets a lofty example by accomplishing an incredible body of work during his 84 years as writer, scientist, inventor, and public servant.

June Mann, "Benjamin Franklin: Philosopher of Industry"

Franklin's contributions to society owe their existence not only to the Franklin whose persona in the *Autobiography* identifies him with the work ethic, but also to the Franklin, who, in keeping with the example set by his father, believed that good conversation

at dinner was more important than the dinner itself. Franklin was a thinker whose leisure time allowed him to develop intellectually.

Carolyn Cahill, "Franklin: The Man Behind the Pose"

Although *Giants in the Earth* was written about an era over 100 years after the American colonial period, the pioneering conditions under which the characters struggled and their agriculture-centered lives can be compared in many ways to those of our first colonists. Nancy Cott, in her book *The Bonds of Womanhood*, mentions that in the eighteenth century (the colonial period) in agricultural areas men and women "shared similar work patterns; their work, tied to the land, was seasonal and discontinuous."

Margaret A. Higgins, "Women's Work in a Man's World: American Women Looking for Meaningful Employment"

Giants in the Earth is a powerful novel, one worthy of study at many levels. Not only does it give to the student a clearer understanding of immigration, it humanizes this epoch of American history. *Giants in the Earth* gives value and worth to our common heritage that has either been overlooked or unrealistically sensationalized by television. And most importantly, *Giants in the Earth* explores human nature—the lighter as well as the darker side—and provides insight into our own lives as we make decisions that help us either defeat or cope with the giants in the earth.

Danny Lawrence, "Roelvaag's *Giants in the Earth*"

When Per Hansa is not asked to go to town to buy supplies, he takes out his ill-humor in work and plows an acre and a half of land. He discovers the great healing power of work. If you are disappointed and discouraged—work!

Annye S. Holt, “The Theme of Work as a Cultural Value in American Literature”

Per Hansa exemplifies Turner’s frontier characteristics in his approach to working to conquer the prairie. Strong both physically and spiritually, he is an eternal optimist who is well suited to frontier life and believes he can accomplish anything if he works hard enough. He imposes his will upon life. “The urge within me drove me, Per Hansa, on and on, and never would I stop; for I reasoned like this, that where I found happiness others must find it as well.”

Kay Senter, “The Frontier: Land of Promise, Work, and Reality”

One aspect of the early pioneers’ approach to work is spontaneous innovation, which is present in the work of both Per Hansa and Jesse Stuart. Facing new situations for which he knows no precedents, Per Hansa summons his creativity: “There was no such thing as the impossible any more” (Roelvaag). In the beginning he decides to plant potatoes before building a house so that he can have a good crop both for food and for trading. When he builds the house, he puts it under the same roof with the barn, something no other settlers in that community had thought to do.

Interestingly enough, the innovation, individualism, and competition which are intertwined in both Per Hansa and Jesse Stuart do not become overly tangled with materialism. Although some critics feel that Per Hansa is materialistic, all of his attempts to sell potatoes are efforts to get money to supply needs—not extravagances—for his family. His attitude toward material things is evidenced in his thoughts while building his

house: “They had laboured hard and faithfully; well, they would get their wages in due time, every last one of them—but he couldn’t bother them with such trifles now.” Stuart clearly avoids materialism because he serves as principal on a teacher’s salary and, along with some of his teachers, works without pay for a time.

Marilyn Raines, “Pioneers at Work: Per Hansa and Jesse Stuart”

Riding over to the beach house leased for the summer, a place to and from which Silas commutes in order to continue working, he tells Tom Corey the way he spends his “leisure” time:

“There’s one thing I always make it a rule to do,” he said, “and that is to give my mind a complete rest from business while I’m going down on the boat. I like to get the fresh air all through me, soul and body. I believe a man can give his mind a rest, just the same as he can give his legs a rest, or his back. All he’s got to do is to use his will power. Why, I suppose, if I hadn’t adopted such rules with the strain I’ve had on me for the last ten years, I shoulda been a dead man long ago.”

For Silas, leisure is a preparation for more work. It is being regulated and governed as if it is a part of work rather than work being an aspect of his leisurely attitude toward life. Silas, as well as many of us, would probably miss the irony of the metaphor used in the title of Helen H. Pilla’s article about developing leisure skills, “Accumulating Interest in Your Leisure Savings Account,” and the irony in John W. Kendrick’s statement, “Time should be set aside for spontaneous activities. . . . I believe basic guidelines can help people be more productive and effective in their pursuit of happiness.”

Lisa Wishon, “The Relationship of Work and Leisure”

Out of Work

Louis H. Palmer, III

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This is a curriculum unit for six weeks for ninth grade. It was developed as a result of a summer seminar for teachers, part of the Southern Highlands Institute for Educators series on cultural values in American Literature. The seminar was taught by Jim Wayne Miller during the summer of 1988 at Appalachian State University. I have selected materials from a wide variety of sources, including materials we read during the seminar. Obviously many of the ideas and suggestions I have incorporated into this unit were provided by Dr. Miller and the other participants: this is less an individual work than an attempt to organize and focus this material into a specific time-frame.

I use a journal format for writing assignments. This allows a student to build up a body of work before it is turned in and to look back over that work. Writing about what a class is studying helps a student to own that subject, to feel involved actively rather than to submit passively.

Vocabulary can be taken from the reading selections so that the students learn the words before they come upon them, or students can make their own vocabulary lists from words they look up as they read.

Ninth-grade students are a good age to deal with the concept of work. Many are working themselves for the first time, filling out those forms and complaining about what the government takes out. Others are considering dropping out soon, when they turn sixteen, and are interested in work for that reason.

It was obvious to me from the first that it is unfair and artificial to speak of work as a theme or “a cultural value.” For most people it is a great deal more than that. It is an activity that takes up a major part of their lives. Even when we are not “at work” we spend much of our time at some kind of secondary work—housework, yardwork—or involved in community work.

We often do some form of work as recreation, such as “working out.” A curriculum unit on work in literature could be as amorphous as a curriculum unit on “the rest of my life,” and it is certainly a lot to deal with in six weeks, or a year, for that matter. I decided to try to get a handle on it by dividing it up into six subthemes or aspects of work, and assigning one to each week. These are arranged to follow loosely the progression from settlement to a modern, urban-industrial society with two side-trips to examine the things we use to help us work and the use we put to time not used for work. The units are entitled *Settlement, Agriculture, Tools, Industry and Apprenticeship, Choosing and Changing,* and *Leisure*.

Week 1, day 1. *Defining the field*

Brainstorming: What is work?

The students suggest and the teacher writes on the board different categories of work. Suggest some that we often hear in the news—whitecollar/bluecollar; public sector / private sector; service/manufacturing; skilled/unskilled—and list examples of each. Also give examples of what is meant by *seasonal, professional, part-time, temporary*, and other terms we hear applied to work. Discuss qualifications for various jobs, in terms of education, on-the-job-training, and experience. Discuss the way jobs change with time (example: typesetters—originally a skilled, fairly high-paying, male-dominated position now done on keyboards by lower-paid workers, predominately women).

For a homework assignment, students could look in a newspaper or magazine and find an article about a job or jobs in general, then bring it in and be prepared to give a report on it to the class.

Week 1, day 2. *Settlement*

Start with two or three of the class reports assigned for homework, then introduce the theme for the week: *Settling*. Either through brainstorming or guided discussion, talk about the problems that the settlers in your area faced. What were they

looking for? What would make a good spot to settle? What would they need to bring with them? How did they get started once they selected a place?

Then discuss the work of settlement. What would be a family's priorities once they found a place? What should be done first? Have students list what they would need to take with them—tools and supplies—for such a project. Remind them that the next trip to the store would be six months away and that everything would have to be carried on a wagon.

This is a nice introduction to the first reading assignment, an excerpt from John Ehle's *The Land Breakers*. I have chosen just a short passage from the first section, "1779" (Ehle, 7-17). This passage should make two points: to confirm or disprove theories about what is needed, and to demonstrate the amount and variety of work that went into the process of settlement. It can also be used to show how different, how alien and beautiful, the primeval forests were, even to those who are familiar with our forests.

Week 1, day 3.

It helps to explain the various tools whose use is described in the passage—froe, adze, wedges, maul rings, gouge. These can be actually brought in and demonstrated during the *Tools* week.

Discuss the way it must have felt to be the only humans in a remote area: the fear and loneliness, the dangers. Another aspect of settlement is isolation. Frost's "The Hill Wife" (126-29) series of poems gives voice to the fears of a young woman isolated from all but her husband. These poems can be read quickly as a narrative. Fear and isolation give us a transition to the next work.

Week 1, day 4.

The next reading is a short story by James Still, "The Proud Walkers," from *The Run for the Elbertas* (Still, 16-29). Make the point that there are still people engaged in the work of settling in areas that are remote from civilization; point out that it takes

place in the 1930s in the mountains of Kentucky, not a very far-removed time compared with 1779.

The story can be used in a variety of ways. I recommend reading out loud for the wonderful rhythm and vocabulary of Still's Kentuckians. Here the fear and suspicion felt by the narrator and his mother turn out to be groundless, and a final point can be made that much of the work of settlement, especially at first, was cooperative. Give examples like barn-raising and quilting bees, where practical and social needs were combined. The settlers couldn't afford to separate work and play like we do.

Week 1, day 5.

The final reading is about the settlement of the Midwestern prairie by immigrants from Norway. It is from Ole Roelvaag's *Giants in the Earth* (38-59). I suggest that the students read this selection, then compare and contrast it with the Ehle or the Still selections in a short essay, to come to terms with the similarities and differences that climate and geography made in people's settlement experiences.

A final point to be made is that in most of our history courses great emphasis is laid on the explorers and conquerors, but little on the settlers who were the ones who actually made this country what it is.

Week 2, day 1. Agriculture

An historical perspective is necessary here because few young people now have had the experience of growing up in an agricultural situation, and most farms are large and mechanized. The decline of the small or family farm has had its effect in a lessening of self-sufficiency for us all. Have students write about what they would do if their family was isolated from the means of supply that they are accustomed to using; or what the family would do if money became worthless.

Week 2, day 2.

Discuss methods of farming before modern farming machinery. Again, use the previously read selections from Ehle, Roelvaag,

and Still to illustrate the amount of work necessary to cultivate with hand and animal labor. Frost's poems, "Mowing" (17), "The Death of the Hired Man" (34), and "After Apple-Picking" (68), can be used to give vivid illustration to the lives of family farmers.

Week 2, day 3.

Two more Frost poems can be used to illustrate the nightmare side of the family farm in the post-settlement period: "Home Burial" (51) and "The Hill-Wife" series (126). Both of these show the strain that isolation and continuous physical work can have on the individual and the family.

Week 2, days 4 and 5.

I would conclude this section by a discussion of a modern writer's look at the dissolution of the family agricultural life. From the stories of Breece D'J Pancake, "Trilobites" (21) and "First Day of Winter" (163), illustrate lives made desolate by the passing of this once dominant lifestyle. Still's "I Love My Rooster" (1) from *The Run for the Elbertas* also dramatizes this conflict through a husband/wife coalcamp/farm conflict.

Week 3, day 1. Tools

Start the section on tools with an extended definition of "tools." Point out that "tool" can mean a skill like reading or writing complete sentences, as well as a complicated machine like an automobile or a computer. Students can list the tools necessary for any of the three periods discussed—settlement, agriculture, or industrial.

Students read Alice Walker's short story "Everyday Use" as an introduction to the topic of tools. This story can help to point out that some of the things we cherish from the past we don't see anymore as tools, but as folk art.

Week 3, days 2, 3, and 4.

Focus with examples or demonstrations of the tools necessary for settlement, agriculture, and industrialization. Eric Slone's beautifully illustrated books are very helpful here. Discuss statements like: "The bush axe is the tool that tamed the South,"

or "The cotton gin revolutionized agriculture."

Out of this analysis of how we accomplish what we do will come the realization that tools are the basis for technique and technique is the basis for technology. The physical-science definition of work can be brought in here and used as a "tool" for the analysis of work in physical and economic terms—what exactly we mean when we talk of "man-hours" and "labor-intensive" and "cost-effective."

Week 3, day 5.

To conclude this section, read a selection of poems about tools. From W. S. Merwin "Tools" (26) and "Song of Man Chipping an Arrowhead" (8) from *Writings to an Unfinished Accompaniment*; from Gary Snyder "What I Have Learned" (85) and the title poem (5) from *Axe Handles*—the second one is a good one to compare with Frost's "The Axe-Helve" (185); from Doc Dachtler's *Drawknife* the title poem and "The Bloomfield Haypress" (9).

Week 4, days 1 and 2. Industry and Apprenticeship

This section is introduced by Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*, which can be introduced as the story of a young man's attempt to get away from the limitations of society and family in order to make something of himself, rather than as a story of one of our (yawn!) Founding Fathers. This is an urban success story dealing with an early period in the industrial society, but Franklin's experiences are readily contrasted with those of the rural areas. He must be trained in a technological expertise, and eventually becomes involved in the mass-production of what was, in his day, the latest in "information technology."

The main difference between Franklin's development and that of his rural and settler counterparts is that he, as we do today, had a much wider field of choices, both to do self-improving things and to do self-destructive things. A reading of the *Autobiography*, then, can be linked to modern social problems such as drugs, as well as to questions about the training and education necessary for various vocations.

I would advise a quick run-through, not a long one, and focusing on these things that students today have in common with Franklin.

Week 4, day 3.

From Howell's *The Rise of Silas Lapham* I recommend reading the introductory interview with the reporter (5-24) and then summarizing the remaining plot, pointing out the circular path that Lapham makes from the stable agricultural world of the farm through his venture into capitalism and back. Here with the advent of literary "realism" we see also a sort of nostalgic and romantic look at the agricultural past.

Individual students might report on the various utopian societies formed during the late nineteenth century, including Brook Farm, where the young Nathaniel Hawthorne found himself too exhausted after a long day of physical labor to be able to write.

Week 4, day 4.

We look further into the idealization of the past with Thoreau's *Walden*. Students should read Chapter 1, "Economy," for Thoreau's anti-progressive bias toward the newly industrialized society. A good writing exercise is to take one of Thoreau's statements and either defend or refute it using contemporary examples.

Week 4, day 5.

To contrast with Thoreau's view, and more fitting with that of Silas Lapham, have students read Whitman's "Years of the Modern," and compare it with Sandburg's "Chicago," written in the same spirit of optimism sixty years later. In terms of work, training, education, the horizons have expanded tremendously.

Much of Gary Snyder's work, especially his last two books, *Turtle Island* and *Axe Handles*, have to do with his experiences with homesteading, which he sees as a resettling in an agricultural mode after rejecting the industrial/technological worldview. Some

attention to these books with work as a unifying theme could serve to bring together the three periods of development, which we see as progressive, but which Snyder sees as a conflict between "old ways" of an environmentally sound lifestyle and the "invader mentality" of blind progress and ecological exploitation.

Week 5, day 1. *Choosing and Changing*

Thoreau's and Whitman's contrasting voices lead us to an important demographic fact: most of the people who are now in high school will change careers three or four times during their working years.

Students should think about the jobs that they are interested in and do cluster diagrams about jobs and the education or training necessary for those jobs, forming jobs into "families" that require similar preparation.

Week 5, days 2 and 3.

Students do library research into their chosen professions, looking at what they can do now to be better prepared and trained for the job. They will write a 500-word essay describing what they have done and plan to do.

Week 5, days 4 and 5.

Students will interview a person in their chosen field and transcribe the interview. This will involve careful choice of relevant questions, also consideration of the possibility of job obsolescence and job change in the future.

Week 6, day 1. *Leisure*

Using brainstorming and class discussion, work on the chicken-egg question of work and leisure: do we work so that we can have leisure, or do we use our leisure time to compensate for the rigors of working? In this context discuss stress and its effects, the term "workaholic," and the work-related causes of alcoholism and drug-abuse.

Week 6, day 2. *Women's Roles*

Several of the readings have had to do with women and their ambivalent social place vis-à-vis “men’s” work. We can trace the disaffected women in Still’s “The Proud Walkers” and Frost’s “The Hill Wife” and “Home Burial” to the modern cliché of the bored and overindulged housewife who gets a job to “find herself.” Other examples are the women in Silas Lapham’s household, his wife and daughters. Should women be “free” to do “social” work? How have changing times changed woman’s place in the working world? Students can discuss or write opinion papers on these subjects.

Week 6, day 3. *Social Leisure*

Read Frost’s “A Time to Talk” (124) as an introduction to the question of “down-time” in work. Does the family farmer have an idea of “loss of productivity” from talking to a neighbor? How has that changed with industrialization? “Two Tramps in Mud Time” (275) raises a similar question, as well as the further question that the robotization of production leads us to ask: Is work a right or a privilege?

This can lead to the old capitalist/communist arguments about control over production and the merits of free economic competition. A good exercise is to hand out opinions at random and have students support them from their reading.

Week 6, day 4. *Reasons for Leisure*

Have students give reasons why we need leisure. Use Frost’s “A Lone Striker” (273) and “Directive” (377) as examples of a person feeling the need to get away. Is the individual justified in that kind of action? Use Thoreau as another example—he chose a life of comparative leisure as opposed to one of “quiet desperation.”

Week 6, day 5. *Leftovers*

Every unit should have a *Leftovers* day, but for a final focus I want to point out that in our industrialized society there are many by-products of our work and leisure. Two poems about this detritus, Wallace Stevens’ “The Man on the Dump” (163) and Doc Dachtler’s “The Berkeley Dump” (21), both raise, in different ways, the question of what to do with what is left over. A contrast of Stevens’ aesthetic view with Dachtler’s more practical one could lead to many different answers. This is a question that could be asked about the assembly-line worker who has been replaced by a robot, as well.

In Steinbeck’s *Travels With Charley* (115-119) the writer finds himself in an uncleaned hotel room and constructs a biography of its former resident, Lonesome Harry, from the garbage he leaves behind. In an article in *Notes Plus* (9) Evelyn Funda suggests using garbage as a basis for writing assignments. David Macaulay’s *Motel of the Mysteries* depicts an archaeological dig in 4022 that causes the discoverers to mistake a motel room for a sacred temple. Either of these could be used to lead into an assignment where we could be analyzed by the content of our garbage.

In this plan I have tried to provide a general outline for a discussion of poems and stories about the theme of work in American literature. I have also tried to tie in these works and the ideas they generate with contemporary concerns and issues. Work is something that affects all of us, and the changing economic and social conditions of the world affect what work is available. A unit such as this one may serve to provide the connection that students feel is missing between the school and the real world. I would hope that it might also allow them to see the advantages of continuing their education with the goal of finding the work that they want.

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Bibliography of Supplemental Works

The letter following each title represent the theme the volume addresses: Family (F), Community (C), Work (W). Dates in parentheses are those of the first publication if it differs from the more recent edition.

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- Anderson, Sherwood. *Winesburg, Ohio*. (C) New York: The Viking Press, 1966. A fictional community history, fitting into the early twentieth-century category of literary "realism."
- Berman, Marshall. *All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*. (W) New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982. This examination of the experience of modernity defines the modern period as starting around 1500, and uses Goethe's *Faust* as a symbol for modern man. Caught up in a current of constant change, experiencing the disunity and fragmentation of the old values, he seeks to impose his will upon it, to develop it. Berman sees modernity not as something recent, but rather as a Western tradition extending back in time over the past four hundred years.
- Bradford, William. *Of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647*. (C) New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953 (1908). Bradford's famous history of the early settlement. It shows that our stereotype of the Pilgrim era as grim and repressive is not completely accurate. Bradford gives us insight into the development of one of our first communities.
- Bradstreet, Anne. *The Works of Anne Bradstreet*. (F) John Howard Ellis, ed. Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1962. Bradstreet's poetry shows the passion and depth of her feelings for members of her family—feelings not generally associated with the Puritans.
- Bronowski, Jacob. *Science and Human Values*. (W) New York: Harper & Row, 1965. In this look at Western values since the Renaissance Bronowski disagrees with the Romantic opposition between science and humanism, saying that "Men have asked for freedom, justice, and respect precisely as the scientific spirit has spread among them."
- Byrd, William. *The Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover*. (F) Louis B. Wright and Marion Tirling, eds. Richmond, Virginia: The Dietz Press, 1941. This diary, originally written in Byrd's idiomatic shorthand code, tells of the personal aspects of the life of one of the colonies' Southern leaders. Surprisingly modern in his attitudes toward such topics as sex and leisure, Byrd lets us know that plantation life was not completely a post-Civil War myth and that our "culture of narcissism" has its roots in our earliest history.
- Cheever, John. *The Wapshot Chronicle*. (F) New York: Harper & Brothers, 1967. This novel portrays an eccentric New England family living in a declining seaside town in the middle of the twentieth century. Cheever's characters are improbable and believable. His style is seamless.
- Cords, Nicholas and Patrick Gerster. *Myth and the American Experience*. (C) New York: Glencoe Press, 1973. A series of essays on the mythologization of American cultural traits and heroes.

- Dreiser, Theodore. *Sister Carrie*. (F) Jack Salzman, ed. New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970. This story of a young, innocent girl's decline and fall after she comes to the big city is an example of the literary naturalism of the early twentieth century. It expresses the evil, fallen world of the nineteenth-century moralism unencumbered by the hope or possibility of redemption.
- Dykeman, Wilma. *The Far Family*. (F) New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966. The story of the diaspora and return of a leading Tennessee family. Can traditional, rural values survive in the modern world?
- Dykeman, Wilma. *Return the Innocent Earth*. (W) New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973. Dykeman's novel deals with the Clayburn family and how they make the transition from being wealthy landowners of the South's agrarian past to participants in the Hobbesian business climate of the New South. This novel stresses the environmental and social damage caused by the new paradigm.
- Ehle, John. *The Land Breakers*. (C) New York: Harper & Row, 1964. Ehle's novel deals with the settlement period in the mountains. A justly acclaimed treatment, it is rich in realistic details, evoking the experiences of a young couple as they find and settle in a remote mountain area.
- Frost, Robert. *The Poetry of Robert Frost*. (W) New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969. This comprehensive edition contains all of Frost's eleven volumes of poetry. One of Frost's major themes is work. He spoke as usual in spite of himself when he said in "New Hampshire": "I don't suppose the work/ Much matters. You may work for all of me./ I've seen times I've had to work myself."
- Hansberry, Lorraine. *A Raisin in the Sun*. (F) New York: Random House, 1959. This play about the dreams and disappointments of a black family in Chicago is as eloquent today as it was when it was written.
- Hand, Learned. *The Spirit of Liberty*. (C) Third edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952. An eminent judge argues that community and self-interest are not necessarily mutually exclusive.
- Hughes, Charles Evans. *Conditions of Progress in Democratic Government*. (C) New Haven: Yale University Press, 1910. One of the best expressions of the progressive philosophy; Hughes stresses the civic and social responsibilities of the citizen of a modern society.
- Isaacs, Harold R. *Idols of the Tribe*. (C) New York: Harper & Row, 1975. A study of the relationship between individual identity and group identity in the community.
- Jackson, Shirley. *The Lottery*. (C) Cambridge, Massachusetts: Robert Bentley, 1949. In this collection is the famous short story of the same name about an ordinary community whose members have traditions that go back to the fertility rituals of primitive societies. Barbarism is presented as community tradition.
- Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac*. (C) New York: Oxford University Press, 1966. In this pioneering work on the environment Leopold stresses our responsibility for the environment and defines community as a "man-to-land" concern.
- Masters, Edgar Lee. *Spoon River Anthology*. (C) New York: Macmillan, 1959 (1915). A series of individual portraits in verse that form a collective artistic portrait of a fictional community.
- Miller, Arthur. *Death of a Salesman*. (W) Text and criticism, Gerald Weales, ed. New York: Viking/Penguin, 1977. This play, the story of Willie Loman, is Miller's modern tragedy of a man dehumanized and destroyed by economic forces and his own blindness about himself. A classic interpretation of the American dream gone sour.
- Nelson, William C. *Renewal of the Teacher-Scholar*. (W) Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges, 1981. A plea for increased attention to and support for humanistic concerns in the occupation of teacher in a liberal-arts program.
- Oates, Joyce Carol. *them*. (F) New York: Vanguard Press, 1969. A more recent work in the tradition of naturalism, Oates' novel deals with the "various problems and complexities" of being poor in America. A good contrast to *The Grapes of Wrath* because Oates' detached treatment lacks both the empathy and the humor that brightened Steinbeck's vision.
- Peiper, Josef. *Leisure: The Basis of Culture*. (W) New York: Random House, 1964. In this work Peiper argues against the Marxist concept of work in purely social and economic terms, defining work and leisure in moral terms, which, like the talents of the parable, are gifts given to man to use for the good of all creation.
- Sewall, Samuel. *The Diary of Samuel Sewall*. (F) New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1973 (1927). A look at the life of the early Massachusetts Bay Colony, both public and private, from one of the most prominent public figures of the day. Sewall's doubts and feelings of responsibility and guilt about the burdens of leadership and personal grief offer a sharp contrast with the attitudes expressed by his Southern colonial counterpart William Byrd.
- Smith, Lee. *Oral History*. (F) New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1983. In this novel Lee Smith has found her voice—voices, rather—with a ghost story as the starting point, the strange and spotted history of a family emerges from a series of points of view in a variety of styles.
- Steinbeck, John. *The Grapes of Wrath*. (F) Peter Lisca, ed. New York: The Viking Press, 1972. Probably the most well-known of Steinbeck's works, this populist novel follows a family of Okies from the Dust Bowl to the promised land of California. The earnestness of Steinbeck's message is tempered by the sensitivity and humor of his portrayal.
- Still, James. *River of Earth*. (F) Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1978 (1940). A simply and beautifully written book in which Still's ear for spoken language, in all its idiom and idiosyncrasy, infuses the story of economic and familial hardships with a "found" quality.
- Terkel, Studs. *Working*. (W) New York: Random House, 1974. This book is a documentation of how modern Americans feel about and deal with their work. The selections present interviews with a variety of people from all kinds of occupations.
- Thoreau, Henry David. "Life Without Principle." (W) (1854) from *Thoreau's Complete Works, Volume 2*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1929. This essay cautions the reader not to let the day-to-day drudgeries and trivialities of life interfere with his vision. "Read not the *Times*. Read the Eternities."
- "Twain, Mark" (pseud. of Samuel Langhorne Clemens) *Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins*. (F) Sidney E. Berger, ed. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1980. In his version of the classic children-switched-at-birth story, Twain adds the ironic twist that one child is black and one is white—but still no one can tell them apart.
- Wolfe, Thomas. *Look Homeward, Angel*. (F) New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1982 (1929). Wolfe's novel has a scope of vision that has rarely been attained in literature. It concerns in part the relationship between a man and his family, but Wolfe manages to tie in questions of freedom vs. responsibility, nature vs. nurture, freewill vs. predestination, and so on.

Further Readings

- Appalachian Women: An Annotated Bibliography*. Sidney Saylor Farr, ed. Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1981. (F/C/W)
- Arnow, Harriette Simpson. *Seedtime on the Cumberland*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983. (F/C/W)
- . *Flowering of the Cumberland*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984. (F/C/W)
- Bailyn, Bernard. *Voyagers to the West*. New York: Knopf, 1986. (W)
- Bouvard, Marguerite. *The Intentional Community Movement*. Kennikat Press, 1975. (C)
- Cawelti, John G. *Apostles of the Self-Made Man*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965. (W)
- Campbell, John C. *The Southern Highlander and His Homeland*. 1921; re-issued, University Press of Kentucky, 1969. (F/C/W)
- Carawan, Guy and Candie. *Voices from the Mountains: Life and Struggle in the Appalachian South*. Champaign, Illinois: University of Illinois Press. 1982. (W)
- Coles, Robert. *Migrants, Sharecroppers, Mountaineers*. Little, Brown, 1971. (F/C/W)
- Coles, Robert. *Working: Changes and Choices*. NY: Human Society Press, 1981. (W)
- Driskell, Leon V. *Passing Through. A Fiction*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: Algonquin Books, 1983. (F)
- Dunn, Durwood. *Cades Cove: The Life and Death of a Southern Appalachian Community 1818-1937*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988. (F/C/W)
- Dykeman, Wilma. *The French Broad*. University of Tennessee Press, 1965. (F/C/W)
- Egerton, John. *Generations. An American Family*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983. (F)
- Eller, Ronald D. *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880 - 1930*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982. (W)
- Erickson, Kai. *Everything in Its Path: The Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood*. Simon & Schuster, 1977. (C)
- Gaventa, John. *Power and Powerlessness. Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley*. Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1980. (F/C/W)
- Gertsel, Naomi and Harriet Gross. *Families and Work*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987. (F/W)
- Green, Archie. *Only a Miner*. Studies in Recorded Coal-Mining Songs. Champaign, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1972. (W)
- Hall, Jacquelyn D. and others. *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World*. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1987. (F/W)
- Hine, Robert V. *Community on the American Frontier: Seperate But Not Alone*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980. (C)
- Hirsch, E.D. *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs To Know*. Boston: Houghton Muffin Company, 1987. (F/C/W)
- Kahn, Kathy. *Hillbilly Women*. Doubleday, 1973. (F/W)
- Kephart, Horace. *Our Southern Highlanders*. 1922; re-issued, University of Tennessee Press, 1976. (F/C/W)
- King, Stephen Clark. *Wheelwright, Kentucky: Community in Transition*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1982. (F/C/W)
- Martin, Charles E. Hollybush. *Folk Building and Social Change in an Appalachian Community*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984. (C)
- Matthews, E.M. *Neighbor and Kin: Life in a Tennessee Ridge Community*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1965. (C)
- Nathans, Sydney, General editor. *The Way We Lived in North Carolina*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983. (F/C/W)
- Norman, Gurney. *Divine Right's Trip: A Folktale*. Dial Press, 1972. (F)
- Schwarzweiller, Harry K., James S. Brown, and J. J. Mangalam. *Mountain Families in Transition: A Case Study of Appalachian Migration*. Pennsylvania State University Press, 1971. (F/C/W)
- Stephenson, John. *Shiloh: A Mountain Community*. University of Kentucky Press, 1968. (C)
- Waller, Altina L. *Fued: Hatfields, McCoys, and Social Change in Appalachia, 1860-1900*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988. (F/C/W)
- Williams, John Alexander. *West Virginia and the Captains of Industry*. Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 1976. (W)

Critical Readings of American Thought

Beard, Charles A., and Mary R. Beard. *The Rise of American Civilization*. Two volumes in one. Revised and Enlarged. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1942.

One of the most significant studies of American history and civilization, the Beards' work stresses economic forces which have shaped the American family, influenced community life, and contributed to the nature of work. The Beards divide American history into The Agricultural Era (Vol. 1, from the colonial period to the approach of the Civil War), and The Industrial Era (Vol. 2, from the approach of the Civil War, which they view as a second American Revolution, to the 1930s). In their view the machine age and the achievements of new technology result in the disintegration of the colonial family regime, and bring complicated influences to bear on the American family, and especially on women and children. Old forms of community are weakened, while others come into being under the influence of the feminist and club movements. The treatment of work, closely allied to the economic forces on which this study is focused, is especially detailed, and ranges from a discussion of the labor supply in the colonial period, through the advances of organized labor in the nineteenth century and the effect of immigration, to the transformation of work in the machine age.

Boorstin, Daniel J. *The Americans: The National Experience*. New York: Random House, 1965.

Spanning the period from the Revolution to the Civil War, this volume continues Boorstin's history of the American people begun in *The Americans: The Colonial Experience*, published in 1958. Boorstin is especially attentive to the nature of the American national character, and he sees much of American history as a search for community. He shows how Puritans became Yankees; how stiff-necked dogmatists became "exemplars of ingenuity." With respect to community, the nation did not begin at any one time or place, but rather again and again. Americans formed new communities and reformed old communities with such rapidity that within less than a century after the Revolution what had been a fringe of colonial settlements along the Atlantic seaboard, bound to their mother countries, had become a continent-nation. Especially relevant are his chapters on "Organizing the American Factory," "Community Before Government," "Competitive Communities," and "Invisible Communities: The Negroes' Churches." The material on marriage among slaves, between whites and Negroes or Indians, and in transient communities, as well as the discussions of the scarcity of women and domestic servants, have implications for the topics of family and work.

Commager, Henry Steele. *The American Mind: An Interpretation of American Thought and Character Since the 1880s*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950.

Commager is especially insightful in his presentation of the paradoxes and tensions in the American mind: optimism co-existing with determinism; a strong emphasis on the individual with a tendency to be a joiner. He presents a clear and detailed account of how changes in the nature of work affected the American woman and hence the family. Valuable, too, is his account of how mainline American churches, to some extent through the influence of John Dewey, shifted emphasis from individual salvation to the reconstruction of community and society.

Lerner, Max. *America as a Civilization*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957.

In this monumental 1,036-page study Lerner attempts to see American civilization as a total pattern. To the degree that he succeeds, it is impossible neatly to identify his discussions of family, community, and work, since the topics overlap and interpenetrate

one another. For instance, in Chapter 4, "The Culture of Science and the Machine," Lerner examines the way in which science and the machine alter the nature of work; the rise of the individual and family firm; and the factory and corporation as community. Nevertheless, the titles of certain chapters and subsections suggest their relevance to the topics of family, community, and work. Chapter 7, "Class and Status in America," contains a subsection entitled "Class Profile of the Worker." A subsection of Chapter 9, "Character and Society," entitled "The Cement of Society," deals with the nature of community in America. Chapter 8, "Life Cycle of the American," has subsections devoted to "The Family as Going Concern," "Children and Parents," "Growing Up in America," "Courtship, Love, and Marriage," and "The Ordeal of the American Woman." "Life Goals and the Pursuit of Happiness," a subsection of Chapter 9, and Chapter 11, "The Arts and Popular Culture," deal in varying degrees of directness with leisure, a topic which is a part of any thorough consideration of work. Because Lerner seeks an overall pattern and does not attempt to deal with the topics of family, community, and work in a serial manner, no index could adequately list such topics; however, the index to this ambitious synthesis is helpful in gaining access to these topics.

Parrington, Vernon Louis. *Main Currents in American Thought: An Interpretation of American Literature from the Beginnings to 1920*. 3 vols. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1927.

Parrington's study remains a standard work of American literary scholarship, and is still one of the most stimulating attempts to see American literature as a reflection of social forces. Volume One, *The Colonial Mind*, treats the period from 1620 to 1800. Volume Two, *The Romantic Revolution in America*, deals with the next six decades, 1800-1860. The third volume, *The Beginnings of Critical Realism in America*, focuses on a comparable period from 1860 to 1920. The topics of family, community, and work are not indexed. For Parrington's treatment of these topics he must be read leisurely and as general background to the periods covered. His work is most valuable in dealing with the paradoxes, tensions, and ambivalence in the American mind, which he traces to the intellectual heritage of Europe in conflict with a New World environment; to the emergence of two classes, the yeomanry and the gentry; and to two ideals represented by the Puritan and the Yankee.

Perry, Ralph Barton. *Philosophy of the Recent Past: An Outline of European and American Philosophy Since 1860*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926.

Perry's survey is limited insofar as it covers a period of only about six decades, but his discussions are accessible to the layman. Perry's non-technical exposition of European and American philosophy will prove a useful aid to understanding Marx and his influence on the history of the American labor movement; Darwin and his influence (chiefly through his interpreter Spencer) on political and economic policies; and of Comte and Durkheim's influential view on the relationship of the individual to the community. Perry relates Emersonian transcendentalism to European antecedents, and, generally, links other American philosophers such as William James, John Dewey, and G. Santayana to the larger tradition of European thought.

Schlesinger, Arthur M., and Dixon Ray Fox, eds. *A History of American Life*. 13 vols. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929-1948.

These volumes, each written by an authority on the period covered, have long been a standard survey of social growth in America.

Volume I *The Coming of the White Man*, by Herbert Ingram Priestley, covers the period from 1492 to 1848.

Volume II *The First Americans*, by Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker, treats the period from 1607 to 1690.

Volume III *Provincial Society*, by James Truslow Adams, focuses on the period from 1690 to 1763.

Volume IV *The Revolutionary Generation*, by Evarts Boutell Greene, deals with the years between 1763 and 1790.

Volume V *The Completion of Independence*, by John Allen Krout, treats the period from 1790 to 1830.

Volume VI *The Rise of the Common Man*, by Carl Russell Fish, focuses on the twenty-year period from 1830 to 1850.

Volume VII *The Irrepressible Conflict*, by Arthur Charles Cole, covers the fifteen-year period from 1850 to the end of the Civil War, 1865.

Volume VIII *The Emergence of Modern America*, by Allan Nevins, treats the post-war period from 1865 to 1878.

Volume IX *The Nationalizing of Business*, by Ida M. Tarbell, covers the period from 1878 to 1898.

Volume X *The Rise of the City*, by Arthur Meier Schlesinger, focuses on the same period as Volume IX, 1878 to 1898.

Volume XI *The Quest for Social Justice*, by Harold U. Faulkner, is focused on the period from 1898 to 1914.

Volume XII *The Great Crusade and After*, by Preston W. Slosson, treats the period of the First World War and the post-war decade, 1914-1928.

Volume XIII *The Age of the Great Depression*, by Dixon Wector, covers the period from 1929 to 1941.

These volumes provide useful information on the topics of family, community, and work, beginning with Priestley's description of French-American family life in Volume I. Wertenbaker (Volume II) treats family life in New England giving attention to family size. In a chapter entitled "Planter and Puritan at Play," he deals with colonial leisure activities and with laws against idleness. Adams (Volume III) stresses the importance of the colonial family to the work of subduing the wilderness, and as a social, economic, and even military unit. Greene (Volume IV) provides useful information for the Revolutionary period having to do with family size, birth and death rates, and he stresses the importance of "obscure men and women who tilled the farms, founded homes and built ordered communities." He shows how the Revolution divided families, much as the Civil War would a little over a century later. Krout (Volume V) chronicles the development of Workingmen's parties and provides a detailed picture of family life and household industries. Fish (Volume VI), in describing the rise and fall of common man, deals with the importance of the family and community as institutions assisting and supporting individual immigrants to the United States. Fish also examines changes in the nature of work during the period covered. Coles (Volume VII) attributes changes in the American family to "The Growing Pains of Society" (Chapter 7). Alan Nevins (Volume VIII) deals with the crucial post-Civil War period in which modern America emerged. His account treats trade unions, labor movements, and strikes. But he does not overlook "The Everyday Life of Americans" during the period, and provides useful information concerning family and community. Ida M. Tarbell's *The*

Nationalizing of Business (Volume IX) is especially rewarding with regard to the topic of work. Tarbell continues the chronicle of Workingmen's parties begun in Volume V, detailing their role in the opposition to immigration. Arthur M. Schlesinger's *The Rise of the City* (Volume X), which covers the same period as Tarbell's volume, details the improved conditions of labor, the growth of leisure activities, and also comments on the effect of the city on family life. Faulkner's *The Quest for Social Justice* (Volume XI) deals with the increasing entry of women into the work force and the implications of this social phenomenon for family and community. Slosson (Volume XII) chronicles the conditions of family life and labor during and after World War I. The effects of the Depression on family and community life are dealt with at length in Wector's *The Age of the Great Depression* (Volume XIII). Wector also examines work relief, the Public Works Administration, and the status of labor under the New Deal.

Spiller, Robert E., and Willard Thorp, Thomas A. Johnson, and Henry Seidel Canby, eds. *Literary History of the United States*. Revised Edition in One Volume. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1953.

The eighty-one chapters of this standard history are, for the most part, the work of individual contributors, and, as the editors note, differences of opinion among the authors have been allowed to stand. Nevertheless, the various contributors share a number of assumptions that contribute to the unity of this study. They see American literature, from its beginnings, concerned not only with the theme of "cutting loose and faring forth," of starting over in a new land, but also with the theme of nostalgia for the rich culture of Europe. They all agree that American literature is an expression of the American experience, and that our literature helps shape that experience. They tend to see American literature as a series of cultural waves.

Especially relevant to the topics of family, community, and work are those chapters treating communitarian experiments, Transcendentalism, and utopianism, as well as Carl Van Doren's chapter on Benjamin Franklin, Dixon Wector's "The Education of Everyman," and Gilbert Chinard's "The American Dream."

Wish, Harvey. *Society and Thought in America*. 2 vols. New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1950.

Wish is informative and thought-provoking with respect to the topics family, community, and work. The author shows how, from the first, America was both a religious and a secular society in which the Enlightenment and the Great Awakening contributed to the national character. The battle between rationalism and secularism on the one hand, and faith, intuition, and revelation on the other, helped shape "a new national psychology" which would influence views of family, community, and work. Wish documents attitudes toward work in Puritan New England and cites the views of outstanding individuals from the colonial and early national period—Washington, Jefferson, Franklin. Similarly, his discussion of the impact of the frontier on American life, and the connection between romanticism and the concept of the common man, best expressed in Emerson's blend of individualism and idealism, contributes to an understanding of the family, the community, and work in America. His treatment of nineteenth-century utopian communities is authoritative. He notes that the attitude toward work in the American South is complicated by the institution of slavery. But, especially with respect to the topic of work, he fails in his treatment of one aspect of the South's complexity. At one point (vol. 1, p. 232) he deplores how poor whites—"listless, slothful people"—have frequently been confused with Southern highlanders—"far more alert in spirit and independent economically." Later, in a

discussion of the antebellum South (vol. 1, p. 494ff), he treats both Southern highlanders and poor whites in a brief section, thereby contributing to the likelihood of the two groups being confused.

Volume 2 deals with the continuing influence of both religious and secular impulses in the tension between philosophical determinism and the doctrine of free will, and with William James' attempt to resolve this tension in his philosophy of pragmatism. The chapters most directly relevant to the topics of family, community, and work treat the late nineteenth-century captains of industry, the labor movement, and the urban impact on rural life and on the home.

Acknowledgments

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We would like to acknowledge the contributions of the following guest presenters and recognize the wealth of resources they have made available to participating teachers and schools. Novelists Wilma Dykeman, John Ehle, and Lee Smith and poet Robert Morgan read from their works and discussed their portrayal of the themes of family, community, and work with participants. Scholars Edwin Arnold and James Lloyd presented lectures on William Faulkner. Native American Culturalist Eustace Conway held a program examining Native American perspectives on work.

Curriculum workshops offering suggestions for exploring cultural values with students were held by William Clauss, Office for Rural Education at Western Carolina University; Johnathan Sher, North Carolina REAL Enterprises, Chapel Hill; Julia Thomason, Appalachian State University; and Max Thompson, Appalachian State University. Elizabeth Long, Director of the ASU-Public School Partnership presented a workshop on establishing college-public school partnerships. Faculty representatives who served as liaisons between their institution and participating schools were Jed Bierhaus of Warren Wilson College, Roberta Herrin of East Tennessee State University, and William Lightfoot of Appalachian State University.

We would like to thank participant Louis H. Palmer for contributing the annotated bibliography of supplemental readings. Finally, we would like to recognize the following teachers who took part in the program and the schools which supported their participation.

Lynn Avant—Mabel Elementary School, Zionville, NC
 Leta Baharestan—Cocke County School, Newport, TN
 Willa Ann Baker—Harris Middle School, Spruce Pine, NC
 Barbara Benson—Watauga High School, Boone, NC
 Harry K. Books—Lawrence Middle School, Winston-Salem, NC
 Nariisse Bravard—West Alexander Jr. High, Taylorsville, NC
 James Brooks—West Wilkes High School, Millers Creek, NC
 Robert Brown—Belton-Honea Path High School, Honea Path, SC
 Josephine Buckner—Oak Hill Junior High School, Morganton, NC

Carolyn Bumgarner—Burns Junior High School, Lawndale, NC
 Carolyn Cahill—Morristown Hamblen High East, Morristown, TN
 Patricia Chastain—Powell High School, Powell, TN
 Judy Church—Belton-Honea Path High School, Honea Path, SC
 Patricia Collis—Harris Middle School, Spruce Pine, NC
 Stan Coss—Polk Central High, Mill Spring, NC
 B. C. Crawford—St. Stephens High School, Hickory, NC
 Tammy Forbes—Bassett High School, Bassett, VA
 Sherrie Hartsoe—West Iredell High School, Statesville, NC
 Margaret Higgins—Asheville-Buncombe Optional School, Asheville, NC
 Janice Hildebrand—Hibriten High School, Lenoir, NC
 Gloria Hinson—Bethel School, Waynesville, NC
 Laura Hodges—Watauga High School, Boone, NC
 Annye Holt—Asheville High School, Asheville, NC
 Linda Iovacchini—A. C. Reynolds Middle School, Asheville, NC
 Robinette Kimble—Edwards Junior High School, Central, SC
 Danny Lawrence—Carver High School, Winston-Salem, NC
 June Mann—Watauga High School, Boone, NC
 Louis H. Palmer—Whitlock Junior High School, Spartanburg, SC
 Leatrice Pearson—South Caldwell High School, Hudson, NC
 Marilyn Raines—Edwards Junior High School, Central, SC
 Patricia Ramsey—McDowell High School, Marion, NC
 Carolyn Ratledge—South Greene High School, Greeneville, TN
 Kay Senter—Morristown East High School, Morristown, TN
 Rita Silver—Chesnee High School, Chesnee, SC
 Vickie Sutton—Franklin High School, Franklin, NC
 Wilma Snyder—Dobyns-Bennett High School, Kingsport, TN
 Elizabeth Watson—Polk Central High School, Mill Spring, NC
 Lisa Wishon—Starmount High School, Booneville, NC
 Michelle Wood—G. W. Carver High School, Fieldale, VA
 Jane Woodard—Salem Junior High School, Morganton, NC