

American Culture

If YOU were there...

You live in Philadelphia in 1830. Though you've lived in the city all your life, you dream about the West and the frontier. Now you've discovered a wonderful writer whose stories tell about frontier life and events in American history. You can't wait to read his next exciting adventure. You think that perhaps someday you could be a frontier hero, too.

Why would the frontier seem so exciting?

What You Will Learn...

Main Ideas

1. American writers created a new style of literature.
2. A new style of art showcased the beauty of America and its people.
3. American ideals influenced other aspects of culture, including religion and music.
4. Architecture and education were affected by cultural ideals.

The Big Idea

As the United States grew, developments in many cultural areas contributed to the creation of a new American identity.

Key Terms and People

Washington Irving, p. 308

James Fenimore Cooper, p. 309

Hudson River school, p. 310

Thomas Cole, p. 310

George Caleb Bingham, p. 310

TAKING NOTES

As you read, take notes on the new developments in American culture in the 1820s and 1830s. Write your notes in a chart like the one below.

	Characteristics
Literature	
Visual arts	
Religious music	
Architecture	
Education	

BUILDING BACKGROUND Until the early 1800s, Americans took most of their cultural ideas from Great Britain and Europe. But as American politics and the economy developed, so too did a new national culture. Writers and artists were inspired by American history and the American landscape.

American Writers

Like many people the world over, Americans expressed their thoughts and feelings in literature and art and sought spiritual comfort in religion and music. Developments in education and architecture also reflected the growing national identity.

One of the first American writers to gain international fame was **Washington Irving**. Born in 1783, he was named after George Washington. Irving's works often told about American

American Arts

Early to mid-1800s

American architects are inspired by ancient Greece and Rome.



history. Through a humorous form of writing called satire, Irving warned that Americans should learn from the past and be cautious about the future.

Irving shared this idea in one of his best-known short stories, “Rip Van Winkle.” This story describes a man who falls asleep during the time of the American Revolution. He wakes up 20 years later to a society he does not recognize. Irving published this and another well-known tale, “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,” in an 1819–20 collection.

In some of his most popular works, Irving combined European influences with American settings and characters. His work served as a bridge between European literary traditions and a new type of writer who focused on authentically American characters and society.

Perhaps the best known of these new writers was **James Fenimore Cooper**. Cooper was born to a wealthy New Jersey family in 1789. Stories about the West and the Native Americans who lived on the frontier fascinated him. These subjects became the focus of his best-known works.

Cooper’s first book was not very successful, but his next novel, *The Spy*, was a huge success. Published in 1821, it was an adventure story set during the American Revolution. It appealed to American readers’ patriotism and desire for an exciting, action-filled story.

In 1823 Cooper published *The Pioneers*, the first of five novels featuring the heroic character Natty Bumppo. Cooper’s novels told of settling the western frontier and included historical events. For example, his novel *The Last of the Mohicans* takes place during the French and Indian War. By placing fictional characters in a real historical setting, Cooper popularized a type of writing called historical fiction.

Some critics said that Cooper’s characters were not interesting. They particularly criticized the women in his stories; one writer labeled them “flat as a prairie.” Other authors of historical fiction, such as Catharine Maria Sedgwick, wrote about interesting heroines. Sedgwick’s characters were inspired by the people of the Berkshire Hills region of Massachusetts, where she lived. Her works include *A New-England Tale* and *Hope Leslie*.

READING CHECK Analyzing How did American writers such as Irving and Cooper help create a new cultural identity in the United States?

A New Style of Art

The writings of Irving and Cooper inspired painters. These artists began to paint landscapes that showed the history of America and the beauty of the land. Earlier American painters had mainly painted portraits. By the

1827

John Audubon begins publishing *The Birds of America*, which is highly admired in England.



1830s the Hudson River school had emerged. The artists of the **Hudson River school** created paintings that reflected national pride and an appreciation of the American landscape. They took their name from the subject of many of their paintings—the Hudson River valley.

Landscape painter **Thomas Cole** was a founder of the Hudson River school. He had moved to the United States from Britain in 1819. He soon recognized the unique qualities of the American landscape. As his work gained fame, he encouraged other American artists to show the beauty of nature. “To walk with nature as a poet is the necessary condition of a perfect artist,” Cole once said.

By the 1840s the style of American painting was changing. More artists were trying to combine images of the American landscape with scenes from people’s daily lives. Painters like **George Caleb Bingham** and Alfred Jacob Miller travelled west to paint scenes of the American frontier, including trappers, traders, settlers, and Native Americans.

READING CHECK Finding Main Ideas How did the style of American art change to reflect the American way of life in the early 1800s?

were held for the purpose of reawakening religious faith. These meetings sometimes lasted for days and included large sing-alongs.

At many revival meetings people sang songs called spirituals. Spirituals are a type of folk hymn found in both white and African American folk-music traditions. This type of song developed from the practice of calling out text from the Bible. A leader would call out the text one line at a time, and the congregation would sing the words using a familiar tune. Each singer added his or her own style to the tune. The congregation of singers sang freely as inspiration led them.

While spirituals reflected the religious nature of some Americans, popular folk music of the period reflected the unique views of the growing nation in a different way. One of the most popular songs of the era was “Hunters of Kentucky,” which celebrated the Battle of New Orleans. It became an anthem for the spirit of nationalism in the United States and was used successfully in Andrew Jackson’s campaign for the presidency in 1828.

READING CHECK Summarizing How did music reflect American interests in the early to mid-1800s?

Religion and Music

Through the early and mid-1800s, several waves of religious revivalism swept the United States. During periods of revivalism, meetings

Architecture and Education

American creativity extended to the way in which people designed buildings. Before the American Revolution, most architects followed the style used in Great Britain. After the

American Arts (continued)

1828

Noah Webster publishes his first dictionary of American—not British—English.



1830

George Catlin travels widely to paint images of Native American ways of life before they are lost.



1836

Painters of the Hudson River school prove American landscapes are worthy of art. (Thomas Cole's *The Oxbow*, 1836)



Revolution, leaders such as Thomas Jefferson called for Americans to model their architecture after the styles used in ancient Greece and Rome. Many Americans admired the ancient civilization of Greece and the Roman Republic because they contained some of the same democratic and republican ideals as the new American nation did.

As time went by, more architects followed Jefferson's ideas. Growing American cities soon had distinctive new buildings designed in the Greek and Roman styles. These buildings were usually made of marble or other stone and featured large, stately columns.

Americans also embraced educational progress. Several early American political leaders expressed a belief that democracy would only succeed in a country of educated and enlightened people. But there was no general agreement on who should provide that education.

Eventually, the idea of a state-funded public school gathered support. In 1837 Massachusetts lawmakers created a state board of education. Other states followed this example, and the number of public schools slowly grew.

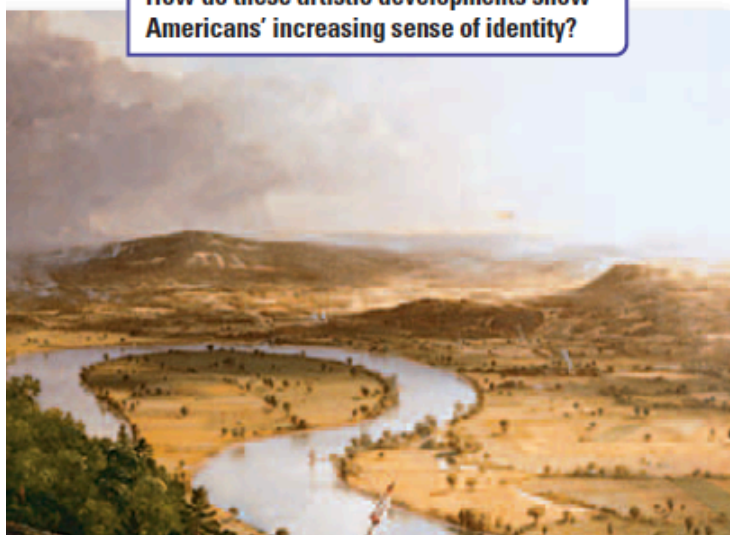
READING CHECK Identifying Points of View

Why did some Americans call for new architectural styles and more education after the American Revolution?

ANALYSIS SKILL

ANALYZING INFORMATION

How do these artistic developments show Americans' increasing sense of identity?



SUMMARY AND PREVIEW As the United States grew, so did a unique national identity. In Chapter 10 you will read about the changing face of American democracy.

go.hrw.com

Online Quiz

KEYWORD: SC7 HP9

Section 3 Assessment

Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and People

- a. Describe** What topics interested American writers in the early 1800s?

b. Draw Conclusions Why is Washington Irving considered an important American writer?
- a. Identify** What influence did Thomas Cole have on American painters?

b. Describe How did American painting styles change from the early period to the mid-1800s?
- a. Describe** What effect did religious revivalism have on American music?

b. Elaborate Why do you think folk songs like "Hunters of Kentucky" were popular?
- a. Identify** On what historical examples did many American architects model their buildings?

b. Predict What might be some possible results of the growing interest in education in the United States?

Critical Thinking

- 5. Categorizing** Review your notes about new developments in American culture. Copy the graphic organizer below and use it to show how these cultural developments reflected a new American identity.

Cultural Development → New Identity

Cultural Development → New Identity

Cultural Development → New Identity

Cultural Development → New Identity

Cultural Development → New Identity

FOCUS ON WRITING

- 6. Identifying Values** You can tell much about someone's values by what that person makes. For instance, you could guess that a person who creates a collage of personal mementos for a friend's birthday is creative and values personal relationships. As you read this section, make note of what the United States created and what it valued.