Contents

Preface for Instructors v
Introduction: Thinking Critically, Challenging Cultural Myths 1

1

Harmony at Home: The Myth of the Model Family 17

A Family Tree, Freedom from Want, and Freedom from Fear 21
NORMAN ROCKWELL

The myth of the model family as visualized by America's most popular illustrator.

What Makes a Family? 26
E. J. GRAFF

"Most historians warn readers that to grasp 'family' history you must first abandon the idea that you already know what 'family' means."

Looking for Work 39
GARY SOTO

"For weeks I had drunk Kool-Aid and watched morning reruns of Father Knows Best, whose family was so uncomplicated in its routine that I very much wanted to imitate it. The first step was to get my brother and sister to wear shoes at dinner."

Growing Pains: Beyond "One Big Happy Family" 45
ANNDEE HOCHMAN

"Early in the summer of 1987, I flew back east to tell my parents I was in love with a woman...."
What We Really Miss About the 1950s  
STEPHANIE COONTZ

“What most people really feel nostalgic about...is the belief that the 1950s provided a more family-friendly economic and social environment, an easier climate in which to keep kids on the straight and narrow, and above all, a greater feeling of hope for a family's long-term future, especially for its young.”

About Marriage  
DANIELLE CRITTENDEN

“Compared to today's frantic two-career households, the suburban married life that was deemed so stifling and unfulfilling a generation ago seems blissfully peaceful and affluent.”

Visual Portfolio  
READING IMAGES OF AMERICAN FAMILIES

The Military-Nintendo Complex [MEDIA SELECTION]  
JOHN NAISBITT WITH NANA NAISBITT AND DOUGLAS PHILLIPS

“Video games are the most dangerous medium of the electronic war zone.”

An Indian Story  
ROGER JACK

“Finally it got so I didn’t worry as much about the folks at home. I would be out walking in the evening and know someone else’s presence was with me.”

Envy  
BEBE MOORE CAMPBELL

“It’s not fair,” I wailed. Ole Blondie had her dollhouse-making daddy whenever she wanted him. . . . Jackie, Jane, and Adam had their wild, ass-whipping daddy. . . . Why couldn’t I have my daddy all the time too?”

Black Women and Motherhood  
PATRICIA HILL COLLINS

“Motherhood—whether bloodmother, othermother, or community othermother—can be invoked by African-American communities as a symbol of power.”
Aunt Ida Pieces a Quilt
MELVIN DIXON

"Francine say she gonna send this quilt to Washington like folks doing from all 'cross the country, so many good people gone. Babies, mothers, fathers, and boys like our Junie...."

Learning Power:
The Myth of Education and Empowerment

From Report of the Massachusetts Board of Education, 1848
HORACE MANN

"Education, then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men,—the balance-wheel of the social machinery."

The Seven-Lesson Schoolteacher
JOHN TAYLOR GATTO

"School...is an essential support system for a model of social engineering that condemns most people to be subordinate stones in a pyramid that narrows as it ascends to a terminal of control."

"I Just Wanna Be Average"
MIKE ROSE

"...I was placed in the vocational track, a euphemism for the bottom level. Neither I nor my parents realized what this meant."

From Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work
JEAN ANYON

"...public schools in complex industrial societies like our own make available different types of educational experience and curriculum knowledge to students in different social classes."

Visual Portfolio
READING IMAGES OF EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT
The Achievement of Desire
RICHARD RODRIGUEZ

"For although I was a very good student, I was also a very bad student. I was a 'scholarship boy,' a certain kind of scholarship boy. Always successful, I was always unconfident."

Para Teresa
INÉS HERNÁNDEZ-ÁVILA

"...we were not only equal but superior to them. That was why I studied. If I could do it, we all could."

Thin Ice: "Stereotype Threat" and Black College Students
CLAUDE M. STEELE

"The success of black students may depend less on expectations and motivation—things that are thought to drive academic performance—than on trust that stereotypes about their group will not have a limiting effect in their school world."

Learning to Read
MALCOLM X

"My homemade education gave me, with every additional book that I read, a little more sensitivity to the deafness, dumbness, and blindness that was afflicting the black race in America."

The Roots of Debate in Education and the Hope of Dialogue
DEBORAH TANNEN

"Valuing attack as a sign of respect is part of the argument culture of academia—our conception of intellectual interchange as a metaphorical battle."

School
KYOKO MORI

"Many Americans who criticize their own school system for being 'too easy' idealize the Japanese school system because they are drawn to its tough image... They see it as a samurai version of their own fantasies about the American work ethic."
Politics in the Schoolroom

LYNNE V. CHENEY

"... it would be a mistake to overlook the... growing tendency for politics to drive the education of the young in this country, very often at the expense of truth."

Empowering Children in the Digital Age: Towards a Radical Media Pedagogy [MEDIA SELECTION]

HENRY JENKINS

"Governed by myths of childhood innocence, much contemporary media education emphasizes media's dangers and not its potentials, treating children as 'videots'... incapable of making their own meaningful judgments about the media."

Money and Success:
The Myth of Individual Opportunity

From Ragged Dick

HORATIO ALGER

"...Ragged Dick. You must drop that name, and think of yourself now as' — 'Richard Hunter, Esq.,' said our hero, smiling. 'A young gentleman on the way to fame and fortune.'"

From Colin Powell: Straight to the Top

ROSE BLUE AND CORINNE J. NADEN

"'People keep asking the secret of my success. There isn't any secret. I work hard and spend long hours. It's as simple as that.'"

Horatio Alger

HARLON L. DALTON

"... the Alger myth... serves to maintain the racial pecking order. It does so by mentally bypassing the role of race in American society."

Class in America: Myths and Realities

GREGORY MANTSIOS

"From cradle to grave, class standing has a significant impact on our chances for survival."
Stephen Cruz
STUDS TERKEL

"The American Dream, I see now, is governed not by education, opportunity, and hard work, but by power and fear."

Good Noise: Cora Tucker
ANNE WITTE GARLAND

"Cora wouldn't be happy at home, doing housekeeping. . . . She's cut out for doing exactly what she's doing—getting out and raising hell about issues that affect people. She keeps pushing."

Visual Portfolio
READING IMAGES OF INDIVIDUAL OPPORTUNITY

The Invisible Poor
JAMES FALLOWS

"Prosperous America does not seem hostile to the poor, and often responds generously when reminded. But our poor are like people in Madagascar. We feel bad for them, but they live someplace else."

From Seven Floors Up
SHARON OLDS

"Suddenly I see that I have thought that it could not happen to me, homelessness"

Money
DANA GIOIA

"Chock it up, fork it over, shell it out. Watch it burn holes through pockets."

The Black Avenger [MEDIA SELECTION]
KEN HAMBLIN

"... I have lobbed a loud salvo by declaring myself the Black Avenger, standing tall to dispel the Myth of the Hobbled Black. I am standing up to put an end to the decades of liberal propaganda which deny that today opportunity exists for any American man or woman willing to pursue it."

Race at the End of History
RONALD TAKAKI

"The function of the model minority today is not to control Black or Irish immigrant labor, and not even to create obedient, hard-working laborers. The function today is social control."
The Lesson
TONI CADE BAMBARA

"'Equal chance to pursue happiness means an equal crack at the dough, don't it?'"

4

True Women and Real Men:
Myths of Gender

How the Americans Understand the Equality of the Sexes
ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE

"[By] attempting to make one sex equal to the other, both are degraded; and from so preposterous a medley of the works of nature, nothing could ever result but weak men and disorderly women."

Girl
JAMAICA KINCAID

"...try to walk like a lady and not like the slut you are so bent on becoming...."

Becoming Members of Society: Learning
the Social Meanings of Gender
HOLLY DEVOR

"It seems most likely that gender roles are the result of systemic power imbalances based on gender discrimination."

The Story of My Body
JUDITH ORTIZ COFER

"...the hierarchy for popularity was as follows: pretty white girl, pretty Jewish girl, pretty Puerto Rican girl, pretty black girl."

Where I Come From Is Like This
PAULA GUNN ALLEN

"The tribes see women variously, but they do not question the power of femininity....They never portray women as mindless, helpless, simple, or oppressed."

Visual Portfolio
READING IMAGES OF GENDER
"Two Ways a Woman Can Get Hurt": Advertising and Violence [MEDIA SELECTION] 444
JEAN KILBOURNE

"Ads don’t directly cause violence, of course. But the violent images contribute to the state of terror . . . a climate in which there is widespread and increasing violence."

Advertising and the Construction of Violent White Masculinity [MEDIA SELECTION] 466
JACKSON KATZ

"The appeal of violent behavior for men, including its rewards, is coded into mainstream advertising in numerous ways: from violent male icons . . . overtly threatening consumers to buy products to ads that exploit men’s feelings of not being big, strong, or violent enough. . . ."

NEW YORK TIMES

"G.I. Joes have morphed over the last three decades into muscle-bound hunks that can harm the self-esteem of boys, according to a new study."

The Gender Wardens 479
CHRISTINA HOFF SOMMERS

"...American women enjoy many aspects of ‘la différence.’ Many want things that gender feminists are trying to free them from, be it conventional marriages and families, or fashions and makeup that sometimes render them ‘sex objects.’"

Appearances 492
CARMEN VÁZQUEZ

"At the simplest level, looking or behaving like the stereotypical gay man or lesbian is reason enough to provoke a homophobic assault."

The Bridge Builder: Kathleen Boatwright 500
ERIC MARCUS

"I needed to figure out if there was any Christian support somewhere that said I could reconcile my love for Jean and my love for my faith."

Girls Have All the Power: What’s Troubling Troubled Boys [MEDIA SELECTION] 510
SUSAN FALUDI

"Tirelessly they repeated the details of a Spur Posse ‘game’ that had riveted the media. It was a sex-for-points intramural contest in which
each time you had sex with a girl, which they called 'hooking up,' you racked up a point. You had to achieve penetration and you could only get one point per girl."

From Fly-Girls to Bitches and Hos [MEDIA SELECTION] 527
JOAN MORGAN

"The seemingly impenetrable wall of sexism in rap music is really the complex mask African-Americans often wear both to hide and express the pain."

Created Equal:
The Myth of the Melting Pot 534

From Notes on the State of Virginia 539
THOMAS JEFFERSON

"I advance it therefore, as a suspicion only, that the blacks...are inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind."

Let America Be America Again 545
LANGSTON HUGHES

"O, let America be America again—
The land that never has been yet—
And yet must be—the land where every man is free."

Causes of Prejudice 548
VINCENT N. PARRILLO

"Prejudice is a complex phenomenon, and it is most likely the product of more than one causal agent."

C. P. Ellis 562
STUDS TEREKEL

"A Klansman and a militant black woman, co-chairmen of the school committee. It was impossible. How could I work with her?"

I'm Black, You're White, Who's Innocent? 573
SHELBY STEELE

"I think the racial struggle in America has always been primarily a struggle for innocence....Both races instinctively understand that to lose innocence is to lose power."
Virtual Integration: How the Integration of Mass Media Undermines Integration
[MEDIA SELECTION] 584
LEONARD STEINHORN AND BARBARA DIGGS-BROWN

"By its very nature television creates imaginary or virtual relationships among people. What makes its impact on race unique is that for most whites their television contact with blacks is the closest they will ever come to crossing the color line."

Models of American Ethnic Relations: A Historical Perspective
598
GEORGE M. FREDRICKSON

"Four basic conceptions of how ethnic or racial groups should relate to each other have been predominant in the history of American thought about group relations—ethnic hierarchy, one-way assimilation, cultural pluralism, and group separatism."

Notes of a Native Speaker
611
ERIC LIU

"I never asked to be white. I am not literally white.... But like so many other Asian Americans of the second generation, I find myself now the bearer of a strange new status: white, by acclamation."

Assimilation
625
SHERMAN ALEXIE

"Mary Lynn wanted to have sex with any man other than her husband.... She was a Coeur d'Alene Indian married to a white man; she was a wife who wanted to have sex with an indigenous stranger."

Visual Portfolio
639
READING IMAGES OF THE MELTING POT

Optional Ethnicities: For Whites Only?
642
MARY C. WATERS

"For all of the ways in which ethnicity does not matter for White Americans, it does matter for non-Whites."

Secret Latina at Large
653
VERONICA CHAMBERS

"...like my homeland, I am a narrow being flanked by two oceans of heritage. I'm a secret Latina-at-large and that is more than enough for me."
Gray Boys, Funky Aztecs, and Honorary Homegirls
LYNELL GEORGE

"Here, where Central and South America meet the Pacific Rim and West Indies, the definitions of what it means to be black, white, brown, or yellow blur...."

Child of the Americas
AURORA LEVINS MORALES

"I am a child of the Americas,
a light-skinned mestiza of the Caribbean,
A child of many diaspora, born into this continent at a crossroads."

Westward Ho!
The Myth of Frontier Freedom
676

From "The Significance of the Frontier in American History"
FREDERICK JACKSON TURNER

"American social development has been continually beginning over again on the frontier. This perennial rebirth, this fluidity of American life, this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating American character."

Three Thousand Dollar Death Song
WENDY ROSE

"...You: who have priced us, you who have removed us: at what cost?"

The Twilight of Self-Reliance: Frontier Values and Contemporary America
WALLACE STEGNER

"Cut off from control, ungoverned and virtually untaxed, people learned to resent the imposition of authority, even that which they had created for themselves. Dependent on their own strength and ingenuity in a strange land, they learned to dismiss tradition and old habit, or rather, simply forgot them."
Dear John Wayne  [MEDIA SELECTION]  705
LOUISE ERDRICH

“How can we help but keep hearing his voice, 
the flip side of the sound-track, still playing: 
Come on, boys, we’ve got them 
where we want them, drunk, running.”

The Myth of the West  [MEDIA SELECTION]  708
ROBERT V. HINE AND JOHN MACK FARAGHER

“Thus, the progressive narrative of the western is consistently subverted 
by the presence of pathfinders who are also critics of civilization, outlaws 
who are Robin Hoods, and whores who have hearts of gold. Americans 
are drawn to characters of paradoxical impulse, to ‘good-badmen,’ or 
army scouts who identify with the Indian enemy.”

The American West and the Burden of Belief  734
N. SCOTT MOMADAY

“This is a crucial point, then: the West was occupied…. Those Europeans who ventured into the West must have seen themselves in 
some wise as latecomers and intruders. In spite of their narcissism, 
some aspect of their intrusion must have occurred to them as 
sacrilege....”

Visual Portfolio  750
READING IMAGES OF THE WEST, WILDNESS, 
AND THE MYTH OF AMERICAN FREEDOM

The Adventures of the Frontier in the Twentieth Century  755
PATRICIA NELSON LIMERICK

“The term ‘frontier’ blurs the fact of conquest and throws a veil over the 
similarities between the story of American westward expansion and the 
planetary story of the expansion of European empires. Whatever mean-
ings historians give the term, in popular culture it carries a persistently 
happy affect, a tone of adventure, heroism, and even fun....”

The Price of Admission: Harassment and 
Free Speech in the Wild Wild West  [MEDIA SELECTION]  777
STEPHANIE BRAIL

“The Internet is the Wild Wild West.... And just as it’s easy to roman-
ticize the Wild West, forgetting the abuses that took place during that 
savage time, it’s easy to romanticize these pioneer days of the Internet 
as well.”
The Origins of Gun Culture in the United States, 1760–1865

MICHAEL A. BELLESILES

"Before we accept an individual right to gun ownership in the Second Amendment, we must establish who were ‘the people’ who were allowed to ‘keep and bear arms.’...We will find that gun ownership was exceptional in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, even on the frontier...."

Freedom and Want: The Western Paradox

DONALD WORSTER

"Two dreams then are tugging at our feelings: one of a life in nature, the other with machines; one of a life in the past, the other in the future. Nature makes us what we are, we still like to think, makes us good and decent; but it is technology that makes us better."

Department of the Interior

LINDA HOGAN

"The experience of the wild is inside us, beyond our mental control, and it lies alongside the deep memory of wilderness, and it has rules and laws that do not obey our human will."

Looking for Nature at the Mall

JENNIFER PRICE

"The Nature Company constitutes a store-size contradiction between how we want to connect to nature and how we actually do, and between what we want Nature to be and what nature actually is."

Index of Authors and Titles