

The America Project

Burke/English Fall 2000

Introduction Throughout *Jasmine* Bharati Mukherjee examines the different Americas in which people live. Some of these Americas are cultural, others are regional, some are generational; still other differences result from race, wealth, and gender. Other distinctions are evident throughout the story as people move between identities, roles, values, and problems. This project's primary objective is to examine some aspect of our culture from multiple perspectives and, by studying it, arrive at some new insight into such questions as:

- Who is American?
- What does it mean to be America?
- What does America mean or represent?

In the course of your investigation you will also be working on the following skills:

- Developing useful, insightful questions about complicated subjects.
- Searching for, organizing, and interpreting different types of information that represent a range of perspectives.
- Making connections between ideas and expressing your ideas through words and images using the most effective media and format.
- Presenting your findings through images and words (written and spoken)

Finally, you must look at your subject from three perspectives. Here are some examples:

- *Music*: rock, rap, blues; past, present, future; three musical artists' views of America (e.g., Bruce Springsteen, Tupak, Bob Dylan)
- *Film*: three directors' work on the same theme (e.g., John Waters' series of teen films); films about war from three different directors, eras, or perspectives; three very important films and what they say about American culture (e.g., *Citizen Kane*, *Saving Private Ryan*, *Gone with the Wind*).
- *America*: what it means to someone from India, someone born in Burlingame, and a homeless person; what it means to a 90 year-old, a 45 year-old, and a 15 year-old.
- *Art*: three different artists' perceptions of America (e.g., Andy Worhol, Walker Evans, and Wayne Thiebeau)
- *Poetry*: Using the book *American's Favorite Poems* (I have three copies of it) and its companion web site (www.favoritepoem.org), read a sequence of poems that provide three different views about America. (Note: reading three poems would not be adequate).

Possibilities

- Music (see Rock-n-Roll Hall of Fame www.rockhall.com)
- Poetry ([favoritepoems.org](http://www.favoritepoems.org); www.poetry.org; www.poems.org)
- Values (What Does America Believe In?)
- Image: # Ways of Looking at America
- Film
- Religion
- Art (<http://www.time.com/time/time100/artists/index.html>)
- Ideas: (<http://www.time.com/time/time100/scientist/index.html>)
- Leaders: (<http://www.time.com/time/time100/leaders/index.html>)
- *DoubleTake*

- www.doubletakemagazine.org/teachersguide/activities/index.html)
- **Culture: (the following websites all contain excellent content)**
 - *Lost & Found Stories*: www.npr.org/programs/lfsound/stories/index.html
 - *American Memory*: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amhome.html>
 - *National Archives Exhibits*: <http://www.nara.gov/exhall/exhibits.html>
- **Wars: (see Stephen Ambrose's *Americans at War*)**

Requirements

- Reading
 - Bibliography of what you read, watch, and listen to (including web sites, articles, books, films, and so on) during the course of your project. Must be properly formatted (see *Write for College* for guidance in this area)
- Writing
 - Three page typed reflection on what you found out about your subject, the answers to your question(s)
 - Examples from and discussion of all three domains in your paper.
 - *Alternative*: A series of poems written about your subject with a one-pager analysis of what your poems say about the subject, complete with quotes from your own poems to support your ideas.
 - *Alternative*: A video or other multimedia production that includes a one-page analysis of what your production says about the subject (i.e., discusses what you were trying to accomplish through your video, what it says about America)
 - *Alternative*: A musical performance or either original or carefully selected American music that includes a one page analysis of your selections and how they relate to your subject.
 - *Alternative*: An original work of art (or multimedia presentation of art collected on-line and organized into a show organized around an idea) with a one-page typed analysis of or introduction to the show
- Thinking
 - Think in Threes graphic organizer
 - Evidence of planning, thinking, working
 - A list of the questions you asked to help you and those questions you were trying to answer through your research
- Speaking
- Be prepared to present on Tuesday and Wednesday November 21, 2000.

Assessment Your work will be evaluated according to the:

- Quality of your
 - Production
 - Presentation
 - Thinking
 - Writing
 - Work (all projects are to be done individually, though PAIRS may lobby me for special consideration)
- Degree of creativity, originality, and intellectual risk