

Name:

Hour:

American Gothic Makeovers

(Due to strict copyright laws, I am unable to include a picture of American Gothic. You can view the artwork on the Art Institute of Chicago's website. Visit: http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/modern/73pc_wood.html)

Next to the Mona Lisa, American Gothic is one of the world's most easily recognizable paintings. People from all over the world have seen reproductions of the sour-faced couple in front of the white farmhouse. Parodies and copies of the couple have appeared in advertisements, political cartoons, clothing, puzzles, and more. Your job for this assignment is to create your own parody, or makeover, of the painting.

The American Heritage Dictionary on Yahoo defines a **parody** as a literary or artistic work that imitates the characteristic style of an author or a work for comic effect or ridicule. How is this different than **plagiarism**?

Art History

Grant Wood painted American Gothic in 1930. An old farmhouse in Iowa with Gothic style windows at both ends inspired him, so he sketched the house on the back of an envelope and took it back to his studio. He added drawings of his sister and his dentist and transferred the finished idea to a board. He used oil paints to complete the painting, and entered it in a contest at the Art Institute of Chicago. Grant won a \$300 prize and American Gothic became part of the Art Institute's permanent collection.

Grant Wood's painting style was known as **Regionalism**. Regionalism was an American art movement that began in the 1930's after the end of WWI. The Regionalists thought it was important to develop an American art movement that was different from European art styles. Regionalists created paintings about ordinary, hard-working, rural people of the Midwest. The paintings are full of symbols that describe midwestern culture. The woman's apron, the pin on her dress, the gothic window, the barn, the pitchfork held tightly in the man's fist, and the man's overalls are all symbols we can "read" in the painting. The symbols help define the place and time the painting represents.

American Gothic has spurred a lot of discussion. People cannot agree on what the painting is about. Is it supposed to be a farmer and his wife? A farmer and his daughter? Why is he holding the pitchfork? Does the curl at the base of the woman's hair indicate that she is not as proper as her dress and expression indicate? Some people believed it was a celebration of American values, while some people thought it was poking fun at American values. What do you think?

The Project

1. Before you begin your painting, you will need to come up with a plan. You will need to decide what the subject matter will be and what symbols you will use to make your painting more understandable for viewers.

The following questions will help you brainstorm. Write your ideas down in the available spaces.

- What type of people will you represent? (You may NOT copy existing people or cartoons!)

- What will they wear?

- What will they be holding?

- What will the building in the background be?

2. Next you will need to practice drawing facial proportions. Ms. Wagner will take you through this step-by-step.

3. When you feel comfortable creating facial proportions, you may start sketching your parody. Keep in mind that you want to include meaningful symbols to help define who your painting represents!

4. Lastly, transfer your sketch to the canvas board. When your sketch is done you will be able to start painting.