**Masterpiece: American Gothic, 1930 by Grant Wood**

**Keywords:** Parody, Regionalism  
**Grade:** 5th Grade  
**Month:** December/January  
**Activity:** Post Card Parody  
**TIME:** 1 hour

Regionalism is an American art movement that aggressively opposed European abstract art. The artistic focus was from artists who shunned city life, and rapidly developing technological advances, to create scenes in a representational style of rural, midwest American life. Regionalist style was at its height from 1930 to 1935, and is best-known through the so-called "Regionalist Triumvirate" of Grant Wood in Iowa, Thomas Hart Benton in Missouri, and John Steuart Curry in Kansas. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, Regionalist art was widely appreciated for its reassuring images of the American heartland.

**Meet the Artist**
- Grant DeVolson Wood was born in Anamosa, Iowa in 1891. When he was ten, his family moved to Cedar Rapids, Iowa where he soon learned the art of working with metal.  
- Wood first enrolled in an art school in Minneapolis, Minnesota when he was 19 but returned a year later to Cedar Rapids to teach in a one-room schoolhouse. When he was 22, he enrolled at the Art Institute of Chicago and worked as a silversmith.  
- From 1920 to 1928, he made four trips to Europe, where he studied many styles of painting, especially the French impressionism but it was the work of a 15th century Flemish painter, Jan van Eyck, known for perfecting the use of oil painting with remarkable clarity that Wood embraced and incorporated in his paintings.  
- In 1932, Wood helped found the Stone City Art Colony near his hometown to help artists get through the Great Depression.
• During this time, he also initiated an American Art movement known as Regionalism that rejected abstract art from Europe and focused on figurative paintings of rural, Midwestern, American themes.
• He taught painting at the University of Iowa's School of Art from 1934 until his death in 1942. During his tenure at the University, he was a key part in developing the University's cultural community.
• Although he is best known for his painting skill, he learned to work in a large number of media, including lithography, ink, ceramics, glass, wood and found objects.
• American Gothic is one of the most famous painting in American art and one of the few images to reach the status of cultural icon, along with da Vinci’s Mona Lisa and Edvard Munch’s The Scream.
• One of his designs is depicted on the 2004 Iowa State Quarter.

Possible Questions:
  o What kinds of things do you see in this artwork?
  o What images stand out? What images are replicated? (The pitchfork is also shown in the stitching of the man's overalls, the Gothic window and the structure of the man's face.)
  o Is this picture realistic?
  o Did the people in this painting really exist? (Yes, the man was Wood's dentist, Dr. Byron McKeeby from Cedar Rapids, Iowa and the woman is the artist's sister. The two were painted separately and never stood in front of the house.)
  o Why are they in the foreground?
  o Do you think this is a funny or serious painting?
  o Why do you think Grant Wood painted this picture?
  o Why do you think this painting is titled American Gothic? (Again, note the gothic style window on the house.)

KEY WORDS:
Parody - is a work created to mock, comment on, or poke fun at an original work, its subject, or author, or some other target, by means of humorous, satiric or ironic imitation. The American Gothic image is one of the most parodied artworks within American popular culture. Show students the other works at end of lesson that demonstrate a parody on American Gothic.

Activity:  Post Card Parody - Student will recreate their version of American Gothic using their own ideas.
Materials Needed: 8-1/2”x 11” white sketch paper (cut in half), colored markers, student’s own pencils, glue sticks, colored “Fouz” card stock.

Process:
1. Have the students take a minute to gather their thoughts about who they would like to depict in their masterpiece. (i.e. a hero, family member, animal, etc.) Keep the poster or other picture up so the students can use as reference.
2. Pass out the white sketch paper, markers, glue sticks and “Fouz” card stock to each student.
3. Have students sketch their own version of American Gothic. They may choose to draw the farmhouse in the background but may also choose another setting as long as they have two figures in the foreground.
4. Color in their sketches with the colored markers.
5. When finished have them mount their art piece onto the colored card stock and title their artwork in the bottom center on the card stock.
6. And write their name and class teacher on the back of the piece.
7. If desired, these may be mailed to someone special for the holidays.
Other examples of *American Gothic* Parodies:

- Photograph of first Parody of American Gothic, Parks
- Beavis Gothic
- Mickey and Minnie Gothic