A “Storied” Relationship: The Marriage of American Literature and Art

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Miller’s Trials

How Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible* and other cultural visual sources have skewed our understanding of the Salem Witch Trials

What does this image claim had happened in Salem in 1692?

Project Pieces

*Examination of a Witch*, Thompkins H. Matteson, 1853, Peabody Essex Museum

*The Trial of George Jacobs, August 5th, 1692*, T. H. Matteson, 1855, Peabody Essex Museum
Assignment

• Select one of the Matteson works to focus on
• While at museum (or looking at PPT images if museum trip is not feasible), take several notes as to what is learned about the trials via the image (eg. color; placement; expressions-face and body, etc)
• Research Matteson’s background and conclude what may have influenced him to “alter” reality
• Write an article reviewing Matteson’s painting including a paragraph on its historical accuracy
Defining America:

Thomas Jefferson et al.
*Declaration of Independence*, 1776

Gilbert Stuart *George Washington, Lansdowne Portrait*, 1796
Hawthorne’s Puritans v. the Freakes

How *The Scarlet Letter*’s Rigid Puritan is more Myth than to the Letter!
Happy Puritans? Oxymoron?

- Mrs. Freake and her daughter’s portrait contains many colors
- Not the somber and melancholic Puritans that Hawthorne presents in *The Scarlet Letter*
- Hawthorne, so whatsa matta wit you?

Unidentified artist. *Elizabeth Freake (Mrs. John Freake and Baby Mary. About 1671-74*
Holding on to the Landscape: Transcendentalists and the Hudson River School Painters
So is this what Emerson meant by “Blight”?

“But these young scholars who invade our hills, Bold as the engineer who fells the wood, And travelling often in the cut he makes, Love not the flower they pluck, and know it not, And all their botany is Latin names.”

Thomas Cole. *Course of Empire Series, Destruction*. 1833-36
Trying to Stay United

• “Mr. President, - I wish to speak today, not as a Massachusetts man, nor as a Northern man, but as an American, and a member of the Senate of the United States.”

• “I have a duty to perform, and I mean to perform it with fidelity, not without a sense of existing dangers, but not without hope. I have a part to act, … for I am looking out for no fragment upon which to float away from the wreck, if wreck there must be, but for the good of the whole, and the preservation of all; … I speak today for the preservation of the Union. ‘Hear me for my cause.’"

– Daniel Webster, March 7, 1850 Speech Before the U.S. Senate

Emmanuel Leutze. George Washington Crossing the Delaware. 1851
Guilty Eradication: The Portrayal of Native Americans in Texts and Images

• “A white man, gazing on the scene,
   Would say a lovely spot was here,
   And praise the lawns, so fresh and green,
   Between the hills so sheer.
   I like it not--I would the plain
   Lay in its tall old groves again.”

• “This bank, in which the dead were laid,
   Was sacred when its soil was ours;
   Hither the artless Indian maid
   Brought wreaths of beads and flowers,
   And the gray chief and gifted seer
   Worshipped the god of thunders here.”

• “But I behold a fearful sign,
   To which the white men's eyes are blind;
   Their race may vanish hence, like mine,
   And leave no trace behind,
   Save ruins o'er the region spread,
   And the white stones above the dead.”
   —William Cullen Bryant “The Indian at the Burial-Place of His Fathers” (1824)

— John Vanderlyn. The Death of Jane McCrae. (1804)

— George Catlin. Catlin Painting the Portrait of Mah-to-toh-pa-Mandan (1861/69)
“My first American ancestor, gentlemen, was an Indian—an early Indian. Your ancestors skinned him alive, and I am an orphan.”

“All those Salem witches were ancestors of mine!”

“O my friends, hear me and reform! I seek your good, not mine. …Disband these New England societies…Hear me, I beseech you; get up an auction and sell Plymouth Rock! The Pilgrims were a simple and ignorant race.”

“I don’t mind coming out flat-footed and saying there ain’t any way to improve on [Pilgrim stock]—except having them born in Missouri!”

— Mark Twain “Plymouth Rock and the Pilgrims” Address to the New England Society, Philadelphia, 22 December 1881