

In this great American asylum,<sup>1</sup> the poor of Europe have by some means met together, and in consequence of various causes; to what purpose should they ask one another, what countrymen they are? Alas, two-thirds of them had no country

What is an American?

Michel-Guillaume  
Jean de Crèvecoeur

Can a wretch who wanders about, who works and starves, whose life is a continual scene of sore affliction or pinching penury<sup>2</sup>—can that man call England or any other kingdom his country? A country that had no bread for him, whose fields procured him no harvest, who met with nothing but the frowns of the rich, the severity of the laws, No! urged by a variety of motives, here they came. Everything has tended to regenerate them: new laws, a new mode of living, a new social system. Here they are become men; in Europe they were as so many useless plants, wanting vegetative mold<sup>3</sup> and refreshing showers; they withered and were mowed down by want, hunger, and war. But now, by the power of transplantation, like all other plants, they have taken root and flourished! Formerly they were not numbered in any civil list of their country, except in those of the poor; here they rank as citizens. . . .

What attachment can a poor European emigrant have for a country where he had nothing?

- 1. asylum (ə-sī'ləm): a shelter.
- 2. penury (pĕn'yə-rĕ): extreme poverty.
- 3. vegetative mold: loose, crumbly soil that is rich in nutrients and helps plants grow.

PART 1

**kindred** (kĭn'drĭd) *n.* relatives or family  
**allurement** (ə-lōōr'mĕnt) *n.* attraction; enticement  
**despotic** (dĭ-spōt'ĭk) *adj.* like a dictator  
**servile** (sur'vəl) *adj.* humbly submissive; slavish  
**subsistence** (sĕb-sĭs'tĕns) *n.* livelihood

PART 2

His country is now that which gives him land, bread, protection, and consequence.<sup>4</sup> *Ubi panis ibi patria* [where my bread is earned, there is my country] is the motto of all emigrants. What then is the American, this new man? He is either a European or the descendant of a European; hence that strange mixture of blood which you will find in no other country. I could point out to you a man whose grandfather was an Englishman, whose wife was Dutch, whose son married a French woman, and whose present four sons have now four wives of different nations. *He* is an American who, leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds.

Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labors and posterity will one day cause great change in the world. Americans are the western pilgrims who are carrying along with them that great mass of arts, sciences, vigor, and industry<sup>6</sup> which began long since in the east; they will finish the great circle. The Americans were once scattered all over Europe; here they are incorporated into one of the finest systems of population which has ever appeared, and which

will hereafter become distinct by the power of the different climates they inhabit.

The American ought, therefore, to love this country much better than that wherein either he or his forefathers were born. Here the rewards of his industry follow with equal steps the progress of his labor; his labor is founded on the basis of nature, self-interest. Can it want a stronger allurement?

Turn BACK OVER

PART 3

PART 4

Wives and children, who before in vain demanded of him a morsel of bread, now, fat and frolicsome, gladly help their father to clear those fields whence exuberant crops are to arise to feed and to clothe them all, without any part being claimed, either by a despotic prince, a rich abbot,<sup>7</sup> or a mighty lord. Here, religion demands but little of him; a small voluntary salary to the minister, and gratitude to God. Can he refuse these?

The American is a new man, who acts upon new principles; he must, therefore, entertain new ideas and form new opinions. From involuntary idleness, servile dependence, penury, and useless labor he has passed to toils of a very different nature, rewarded by ample subsistence. This is an American. ❖

- 4. consequence: importance.
- 5. alma mater (äl'mə mä'tər): A Latin phrase that literally means "nourishing mother."
- 6. industry: energetic devotion to a task or endeavor; diligence.
- 7. abbot (äb'ət): the head of a monastery.

WHAT IS AN AMERICAN?

- CREVECOEUR

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

YOUR ASSIGNMENT IS TO:

- 1) Work in groups to address either part 1,2,3, or 4. You must read your passage and prepare the respective notes for your classmates.
- 2) Prepare a VISUALLY INTERPERATIVE READING OF YORU PASSAGE (this means you must read your passage slowly and completely, and pause as your group members stage a visual performance of your reading passage. USE PROPS/CREATIVITY to get your visual points across.

Part 1- Somehow, the p\_\_\_\_\_ of Europe have managed to come together in America. Now, though, they must ask themselves, "What country do we now belong to?" – Especially since they have left their former homeland.

-After all, can a man who is always pinching PENURY (which means living in extreme p\_\_\_\_\_) feel at home anywhere if he has no b\_\_\_\_\_ to eat or fields to harvest?

-Everything about American has r\_\_\_\_\_ the poor Europeans. Here they have new l\_\_\_\_\_, a new mode of living, and a new social system.

- In America, \_\_\_\_\_ feel like \_\_\_\_\_ (same word twice). In Europe, these same people were just useless p\_\_\_\_\_ (this is a m\_\_\_\_\_), eagerly looking for nutrient rich soil in which to grow.

-CONTINUING WITH THE ANALOGY (which is an extended metaphor situation)...

When these poor men lived in Europe, they w\_\_\_\_\_ and were mowed down by w\_\_\_\_\_ (which led to depression), hunger, and w\_\_\_\_\_.

But these same Europeans have been t\_\_\_\_\_ from a bad country to a new country – rich with potential – and they will take r\_\_\_\_\_ and flourish!

These men were once considered nothing, but now they rank as c\_\_\_\_\_.

Part 2 – His country (an American) is now that which gives him land, bread, p\_\_\_\_\_, and consequence, which means he feels i\_\_\_\_\_ and meaningful.

- Ubi panis ibi patria means where my b\_\_\_\_\_ is e\_\_\_\_\_, there is my c\_\_\_\_\_... and this is the motto of all e\_\_\_\_\_ (anyone fleeing a country).

SO THEN, WHO IS THE NEW AMERICAN?

-He is either a E\_\_\_\_\_ or a descendant of one; here you will find strange mixtures of b\_\_\_\_\_ unlike any other country.

-He is an American who, leaving behind him all ancient p\_\_\_\_\_ and manners, makes a new life for himself based on the new g\_\_\_\_\_ he obeys, and the new r\_\_\_\_\_ he holds.

Part 3 – In America, individuals of all nations are m\_\_\_\_\_ into a new race of m\_\_\_\_\_. The work of these Americans will one day cause great c\_\_\_\_\_ in the world – including changes in the A\_\_\_\_\_, sciences, vigor, and i\_\_\_\_\_ (which here means devotion to tasks/responsibilities).

Whereas Europeans were once scattered across the lands, here Americans are all a part of one fine system of p\_\_\_\_\_ which has ever appeared – and will adapt to whatever climate they inhabit.

-BECAUSE OF THESE FACTS... Americans should love this country much more than where their f\_\_\_\_\_ were born. Here, r\_\_\_\_\_ of hard work/industry come with the effort put in.

-I ask, what kind of man wouldn't want this kind of a\_\_\_\_\_ in a country?

Part 4 – Before, wives and kids desperately demanded food; however, they are now f\_\_\_\_\_ and f\_\_\_\_\_ as Americans. Kids now have energy to help their fathers clear f\_\_\_\_\_ and harvest the bountiful American crops.

-Parents can now also c\_\_\_\_\_ their children now without having to give any m\_\_\_\_\_ to despotic princes (princes who rule like d\_\_\_\_\_), or tyrannical kings.

-Additionally, American r\_\_\_\_\_ only requires a little donation, whereas citizens were expected to give large sums back in Europe.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS...

-The American is a new man! We have p\_\_\_\_\_ to live by, and we must continue to think in new ways and create new ideas.

-We, as Americans, were once poor, idle, and completely submissive (easily pushed around) and desperate.

Now, however, we t\_\_\_\_\_ (which means 'work') with new motivation. Our hard work in America yields/gives ample s\_\_\_\_\_, which means hard work brings results!

...THIS IS AN AMERICAN.