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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2023 Volume I: Histories of Art, Race and Empire: 1492-1865

Colours of Humanity: Artistic representations of the "Other"

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This course unit will take students through American History, with a particular focus on colonialism in the era of 1492-1865. The focus will be on comparing, contrasting, and analyzing artwork from both colonial powers and colonized people, especially how they depict one another. Even those with only a bare bones understanding of art history and analysis will benefit from this unit, as it provides questions and activities to engage your students and guide discussion. The unit is meant to last approximately three weeks, and is chronologically organized within the three sections. It first looks at art by the colonial powers, both of Native Americans and Africans, takes a brief detour to analyze the founding principles of the various regions of what will eventually become the United States, and then looks at the same period through the eyes and artwork of the native peoples and enslaved Africans, and in particular their depictions of European culture and people.

(Developed for World History, grade 10; recommended for World History, grades 9-11, and U. S. History 1, grades 6-8)

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