



Social Studies Exemplary Text Student Handout

America is an improbable idea. A mongrel nation built of ever-changing disparate parts, it is held together by a notion, the notion that all men are created equal, though everyone knows that most men consider themselves better than someone. “Of all the nations in the world, the United States was built in nobody’s image,” the historian Daniel Boorstin wrote. That’s because it was built of bits and pieces that seem discordant, like the crazy quilts that have been one of its great folk-art forms, velvet and calico and checks and brocades. Out of many, one. That is the ideal.

Quindlen, Anna. “A Quilt of a Country.” *Newsweek* September 27, 2001.

This is an example of exemplary text found in *Common Core Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects: Appendix B Text Exemplars and Sample Performance Tasks*. Retrieved from http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_B.pdf

Social Studies Exemplary Text Teacher Resource

America is an improbable idea. A mongrel nation built of ever-changing **disparate** parts, it is held together by a notion, the notion that all men are created equal, though everyone knows that most men consider themselves better than someone. “Of all the nations in the world, the United States was built in nobody’s image,” the historian Daniel Boorstin wrote. That’s because it was built of bits and pieces that seem **discordant**, like the crazy quilts that have been one of its great folk-art forms, velvet and calico and checks and brocades. Out of many, one. That is the ideal.

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EFL 5
Word Count 99

Teacher introduces the text with minimal commentary and students read it independently. Teacher then reads passage aloud. Give a brief definition to words students would likely not be able to define from context (underlined in text). Teacher guides the students through a series of text-dependent questions. Complete the performance task as a cumulative evaluation of the close-reading.

Text-Dependent Questions

1. What does the speaker say holds America together?
2. What does the word “discordant” mean in the paragraph? Use context clues to define the word. Is the connotation of the word positive, negative, or neutral and explain the connotation in your own words.
3. What does the speaker compare the country to? Do you agree with this comparison? What is the inherent paradox she points out?
4. What are the “ever-changing disparate parts” or the “discordant” “bits and pieces Quindlen refers to?”
5. What is the simile she uses to explain these? Why did she use this visualization?
6. What’s the importance of the sentence “out of many, one”? What Latin term does she reference and where is it found in our culture?

Performance Tasks for Informational Texts

Discuss the ways in which America is an “improbable idea” and similar to a quilt. [RI.9-10.1]

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