



# BOULEVARD

## OVERVIEW

### Introduction to American Experience: Revolution, Perseverance, and Innovation

Boulevard's *American Experience: Revolution, Perseverance, and Innovation* presents seventy-seven objects drawn from four institutions located in Washington, D.C.: the U.S. Capitol Building Visitor Center, the Library of Congress, the National Gallery of Art, and the White House Historical Association. This rich selection of artifacts—paintings, posters, illustrations, broadsheets, musical scores, photographs, ciphers, manuscripts, and maps—spans from the period of early exploration of North America through the present.

### Inspire Your Students Across Curriculum

*American Experience* supports integrated learning and teaching at any grade level, especially grades 7-12. It provides particularly rich inspiration for making cross-curricular connections and for the study of U.S. history, government, social studies, civics, economics, geography, literacy arts, and art history.

### How to Use This Resource

This resource is designed for use by teachers, educators, and students to enrich their exploration of Boulevard's immersive experience and to encourage close-looking, scaffolded inquiry, and critical thinking. Examine an object in-depth or study a sequence of works for comparison and broader contextualization. Our educational materials engage these historic objects (and spaces) through a range of themes, offering multiple ideas for lesson plans, discussion questions, and other suggestions for writing, making, and doing. Depending upon your teaching goals and learning objectives, these activities can be customized and adapted for an entire class, a small-group, or for self-guided learning.

### The U.S. Capitol

A neoclassical landmark, the United States Capitol—which has been built, burnt, rebuilt, and expanded over the last 200 years—remains an iconic and enduring symbol of the American people and their government, attracting millions of visitors each year. At the heart of the Capitol Building is the architecturally spectacular Rotunda, a circular hall, ninety-six feet in diameter, crowned by the Capitol's world-renowned inner dome. Visible through the eye of the dome, 180 feet above the floor, is a massive fresco by Constantino Brumidi entitled the *Apotheosis of Washington*. Topping the walls, in the belt just below the Rotunda's thirty-six windows, is the *Frieze of American History*, a mural painted to give the illusion of a

panoramic sculpted relief. Installed on the walls below the frieze are eight impressive large-scale narrative paintings depicting scenes from the early exploration of North America, the Revolutionary War, and the founding of the new nation, created by some of the most significant nineteenth-century American artists, including John Trumbull and John Vanderlyn.

### Library of Congress

Founded in 1800 and originally housed in the Capitol Building, the U.S. Library of Congress is the largest library in the world. Its holdings encompass texts written in a variety of languages and include more than 162 million objects, books, manuscripts, photographs, prints, newspapers, maps, sheet music, film, and sound recordings. Within *American Experience*, twenty-six diverse objects culled from this unparalleled collection are displayed within a Beaux-Arts style interior inspired by the Thomas Jefferson Building, the edifice which housed the first iteration of the Library. This virtual installation serves to highlight important points in the narrative of American history from the founding of the nation and westward expansion to the Industrial Revolution and the Civil Rights Movement.

### National Gallery of Art

The first National Gallery of Art building and its foundational collection were the gift of Andrew Mellon, a philanthropist who wanted to ensure that the nation's capital and the American people would have a world-class institution to rival those of Europe. Since opening its doors to the public in 1941, the National Gallery of Art has amassed over 120 thousand works of art, ranging from the twelfth century to the present. Seventeen paintings selected from this remarkable collection are displayed within two adjacent rooms, echoing the classical elegance of the institution's West Building galleries. In addition to their aesthetic impact, these portraits, landscapes, and genre scenes provide rich insight into American history and culture from the Revolutionary Period through the Reconstruction Era.

### The White House

The White House is a symbol of American democracy, the seat of the Executive Branch, and, since 1800, the residence of every President of the United States. Each President has contributed to the legacy of the Executive Mansion, and its architecture and interiors reflect the story of our great nation. Within *American Experience*, a stately and elegant room inspired by historic White House decor contains portraits of the first twenty-five U.S. presidents. Drawn from the White House Collection, these important paintings represent the foundational leaders who helped shape and guide our nation between 1789 and 1909. Informative text accompanying each portrait provides comprehensive biographical details, reminding us of pivotal events in each presidency, which, in turn, became defining moments in U.S. history.