

# Values of bravery, greed and unity found in different novels

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## Performance Task

Popular culture often times shapes society around the world, whether it be through social media, media consumption, or literature, societal values are oftentimes influenced by popular works. This principle can be dated back to early American literature which often times embodied societal values, authors often times emphasize values seen as desirable and necessary in society at a given time. In the works, “ The General History of Virginia”, “ The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano”, and “ the Iroquois Constitution” embody values of bravery, greed, and unity.

Bravery was a popular value to hold in early America, colonists needed this to be able to overcome the fears and challenges of settlement in the New World. “ The General History of Virginia” embodies this value throughout the story, especially when John Smith was attacked,” then finding the captain, as is said, that used the savage that was his guide as his shield, all the rest would not come near him.” In a moment of panic and frenzy, Smith demonstrated astounding bravery, using his resources to avoid certain death. Colonists often times lived with an underlying fear of Native Americans, but overcame this fear, embodying bravery just like it is shown in the story. Another example of bravery in the story was Captain Smith’s acceptance of exploring the world outside the palisades,” weak judgement of dangers, and less industry in peace, committed the managing of all things abroad to Captain Smith.” Colonists were settling a largely unexplored world, and often times, settlers were reluctant to explore beyond the safety of the colony. It took the bravery of settlers like John Smith to be able to uncover

more about the vast unknown world that surrounded them. “ The General History of Virginia” showed the value of bravery throughout, the publication of this work showed that bravery was also an early American value.

The exploitation of innocent, defenseless people for economic profit is an evident example of greed, a large part of human nature. In “ The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano”, the author discusses the horrid details of the Atlantic Slave trade. Olaudah retells his account of the loathsome conditions aboard the ship, “ the closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship which was so crowded that each had scarcely enough room to turn himself.” The most prevalent motive behind the slave trade was greed. The Europeans could not help to exploit a defenseless population of people in order to reap huge profits for themselves. Many slaves aboard the ships died because of the crew’s selfishness, “ one day they had taken on a number of fishes.. they tossed the remaining fish into the sea again, although we begged and prayed for some as well as we could.” The crewmen could not help but to follow in the volatile model of the slave trade fueled by greed. They withheld all of the food for themselves, even though the slaves begged for some. Throughout Olaudah’s “ Interesting Narrative”, greed shines throughout the text, these economic motives fueling greed assimilated into society, many times people put money ahead of their moral values.

Unity is a core value in American society, and this value dates back centuries to the Native Americans. The “ Iroquois Constitution” laid down the foundation of the Five Nations, “ roots have spread out from The Tree of the

Great Peace, one to the North, one to the East, one to the South, and one to the West.” The imagery in this passage is extremely meaningful and symbolic. The roots of a tree spread out from a common base into separate unique roots and branches, but at the end of the day, they are united by a common cause. The tree symbolizes the unity of the Five Nations under the constitution. Another example of the value placed on unity is “ we place at the top of the Tree of the Long Leaves an eagle who is able to see afar. If he sees in the distance any evil approaching or any danger threatening he will at once warn the people of the confederacy.” The Five Nations is united behind a common case, the well being of all five of the nations at the forefront. Unity was definitely an important value in early American history. Just as the people of the Five Nations stood shoulder to shoulder united for the safety and wellbeing of their people, the fifty United States follow this model standing together for the well being of the nation as a whole.

Early American literature often times embodied values that society found relevant during the time period. Bravery is found in the work of John Smith, greed in the work of Olaudah Equiano, and unity in the constitution of the Five Nations. These values reflected the roots of early American society, bravery was necessary to explore the New World. Greed motivated ambitions although they were not always humane. Most importantly early America possessed a unity that has lasted throughout the centuries, ensuring the safety and prosperity of the United States and American society.