

American gothic by grant wood

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Certainly, the picture does not tell a tale of poverty but it tells one of a life of work with no pleasure in order to satisfy the basic requirements of livelihood, decent clothing, and shelter.

The painting further provides readers with an understanding of male-female relations and roles during the age in question. In this picture, the farmer is pictured holding a large pitchfork and dominates the painting. His daughter is standing just behind him and while he is looking straight ahead, gazing at onlookers, her eyes are averted. The pitchfork is a symbol of the manual labor for which men were responsible and the fact that the daughter is standing behind the father is indicative of the subservient status of females. Added to that, the fact that the man is looking straight ahead and the daughter's eyes are averted could be interpreted as evidencing the public role of men versus the private role of females. It is, thus, that the male figure is boldly looking at the painter and, hence, directly at us while the female figure is not.

Further to the above, the painting is very skillfully executed. The colors, while tending somewhat towards the somber, are vivid and a close look at the picture reveals the attention the artist devoted to the facial features of his characters. The lines on the farmer's face are very clearly and finely drawn, as are those on his daughter's. The background structure is as finely painted, with the same meticulous attention to detail, allowing viewers to see the individual panels of wood and reflections on the windows. Indeed, a close analysis of the painting establishes the fact that Wood's attention to detail is such that American Gothic ultimately emerges as an example of realism.

In the final analysis, Wood's American Gothic is a journey into a different age. The painting, with its realism, attention to detail, and subtle positioning of subjects vis--vis one another, takes viewers to a different era.