Student name: Group:

Art movement.....American scene XX, c.
Timeframe.....1920 – 1940
Topic Focus.....The search for an American style

Teaching material: The instructor will provide video materials for educational purposes. ~15'

Background information**:** The term refers to a group of artistic movements that emerged in the United States, united by their reaction against European modernist styles and their attempt to define a uniquely American artistic identity. This meant distancing themselves from abstraction and the avant-garde. There is no strict chronology for the development of the American Scene, as there was considerable overlap among the various movements and phases associated with it. The movement reached its peak during the period between the two world wars. These movements were characterised by depictions of everyday life in the United States, often set in rural or small-town environments.

These artists insisted that the true solution to the numerous and growing problems of urban American life, highlighted by the Great Depression, lay in returning to the country's agrarian roots. Therefore, in the face of severe economic uncertainty, social upheaval, and political change, American artists remained committed to projecting a deeply personal vision. Determined to avoid the influence of European artists and academic instruction, they fought to establish and maintain their own identity. While these movements had distinct characteristics, they all shared a common commitment to depicting everyday life and culture in the United States.

Discussion questions: How do you imagine the art created in the US during the 1920s and 1930s? (10')

Main activity: In 1935, Grant Wood published the essay *Revolt Against the City*, in which he argued that the Great Depression was beneficial for American art because it forced many American artists, unable to afford travel abroad, to draw on their own traditions instead of European ones. He claimed that looking to America for artistic inspiration was neither provincial nor narrow-minded, but rather created an independent style that was both personal and narrative.

Two of the artistic movements commonly associated with the American Scene are:

- **Regionalism:** This movement focused on portraying specific regions of the United States and their unique characteristics and cultures. Regionalist artists often employed bold and simplified forms and vivid colours to capture the essence of their subjects. *Grant Wood* is a prominent example.
- **Social Realism:** This movement was defined by its commitment to representing the social and political realities of the United States, particularly the struggles of the working class. Social Realist artists often used detailed and realistic techniques to create powerful and emotionally charged images. *Reginald Marsh and Edward Hopper* are key figures in this movement.

Group activity: Provide the class with a list of key artists and works related to these two movements.

Textos relevantes: *The American Scene: A Reader* by William Carlos Williams (1936) – This anthology compiles writings by American artists and writers, including Walt Whitman and Georgia O'Keeffe, offering a cultural history of the United States through the lens of art.
The American Scene by Henry McBride (1941) – This book presents critical appraisals of American Scene art, including the works of Grant Wood, Thomas Hart Benton, and John Steuart Curry, exploring the movement's connections with American culture and history.

1. On the concept of AMERICAN SCENE.

3. Key words and Key artworks.

2. On the topic of Regionalism and Social Realism.

4. General summary. Conclussions.