

---

---

**GRASSHOPPER PUBLISHING COMPANY**

---

---

**TO:** STUDENTS IN ENGLISH 341  
**FROM:** WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS, PRESIDENT  
GRASSHOPPER PUBLISHING COMPANY  
**SUBJECT:** YOUR ASSISTANCE IN UPCOMING  
PUBLICATION/DOCUMENTARY  
**DATE:** 4/5/2002  
**CC:** PEGGY LANT



“the simple, honest, and natural grasshopper”

---

**A PROPOSAL FOR MEMBERS OF THIS CLASS**

---

I have been following with interest your work in English 341 this quarter concerning American literature of the second half of the Nineteenth Century—the Realist period. I am especially impressed with the manner in which you have addressed American culture: you have considered not only the literature of the time, but in your class discussions you have also talked about the clothing, the music, the daily activities, the buildings, the modes of travel, the landscaping, the food, and the arts of the period. And even more interestingly, you have related these aspects of American culture to the beliefs and the goals of the Realist writers and theorists, and you have made connections from nineteenth-century American culture to the culture of our own time and to the culture of the Romantic era which preceded the Realist era.

Because your work has been so compelling, I would like to propose that you assist Grasshopper Publishing Company in completing an work titled *The American Spirit: A Multimedia Anthology*. Since we find ourselves in the “information age,” I propose to collect works of several kinds for this anthology: I would like some websites, some multimedia presentations (Director , Flash, or PowerPoint, for example), and some traditional papers to include in the collection. When I describe the contents of the anthology, I am sure that you will see that your class is well qualified to contribute, and I hope that you (working alone or working with a group of colleagues in the class) will be willing to develop a project for the collection.

I would like to collect projects on any aspect of American culture—except literature—in the period 1860 to 1914. Each project will provide information on that particular aspect of American culture, connecting it with the culture of our own time, with the culture that came before (be that American, European, Asian, African, Caribbean, or Native American), or with the values and principles we have seen emerging from the Realist writers we have read. Each project will answer *some* question about that aspect of American culture. And each project will provide information in more than one medium (that is textual, visual, audio).

For example, I might wish to consider the connection of popular music of our time with popular music of the later Nineteenth Century. In my investigation, I might ask myself first, which sort of contemporary American music seems to have strong connections with the values and themes of the Realist writers. I might make a list of those themes to give myself some key terms to work with. I might decide, after this initial brainstorming, that Country Music would be a good focus for my project, and I might narrow my research question to this: **How does Country Music of the Twentieth Century perpetuate the themes and problems relevant to the Realist writers of the Nineteenth Century.**

If you would like to be part of our project—and I strongly urge you to participate—please complete the enclosed Project Prospectus by 1 August 2002. Be sure to follow Project Guidelines as you prepare your prospectus.