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### Runner up entry for 2022

Jonathan Dayan  
*Connecticut College*

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**CODE**

**Name**

Jonathan Dayan

**Title of Paper**

The Nostalgic Indian and the Battle for American Identity

**Class Year**

First-year

**Date Research Undertaken**

Fall 2021

**Citation Style Used**

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**Affiliated Course**

HIS 105 U.S. NATIVES AND NEWCOMERS

**Faculty Name**

Professor Taylor Desloge

**Student Major**

History/Environmental Science

## Narrative Questions

- 1. Describe how you came to choose your topic, specifically noting any pre-research that you did. What sources did you use in this pre-research? To what extent did you consult with librarians, faculty, or others? How did this pre-research lead you to your topic?**

My topic stemmed from a passage in Jill Lepore's *The Name of War* regarding Americans cultivating an idea of the heroic Indian in plays and books. I was extremely intrigued by this paradox of praising the culture you are actively destroying through expansion West. With this idea I reached out to Mrs. Jennifer Ishee at The Linda Lear Center. As a part of this project, we were supposed to use primary sources from the collection so in my email I asked for any information pertaining to the topic. In her response she provided me with many sources with the most important one being Steven Conn's *History's Shadow: Native Americans and Historical Consciousness in the Nineteenth Century* which I used as the basis for my pre-research to get ideas flowing. In addition to this I met with my professor who recommended I read through Lepore's notes on the topic to see the sources she used. Through Lepore's notes, faculty recommendations, and some basic material I found on JSTOR I began to make new connections. While I already had a topic in mind, I did not want to rehash Lepore's work so a major goal of my pre-research was to build my own conclusions from her claims. Without the help of my professor and Mrs. Jennifer Ishee I would not have shifted from generally writing about American's appropriating Indian culture to how they reformed that culture into a distinctly American woodsman identity.

- 2. Describe your process of finding information for your project. Note specifically the tools you used to undertake your research, as well as the specific search strategies you used within these tools. (Note: "Ebsco," being an umbrella vendor, is not a specific enough response when identifying tools; listing the "library database" is also an unacceptably vague answer. Specific tools include JSTOR, America: History & Life, Web of Science, etc., along with OneSearch, the new library system.)**

Depending on what I was looking for I tended to use a different library resource. For example, on JSTOR I found many examples of Indians exaggerated to meet the American image depicted in artwork. Here it was difficult to narrow down the results as I was focusing on more early-American depictions of Indians that reflect the values of an emerging American Identity. Since Native Americans have been depicted in art for hundreds of years, I had to be sure to narrow my results to the time period I was studying instead of just clicking the "images" filter. With this I used the library's One Search system to locate secondary sources to expand my base knowledge on the topic. For my searches here I mainly used key terms like "American Identity" and narrowed down the results to physical books within our library. For me it is easier to focus and analyze a physical book instead of an eBook,

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so this filter benefited me. Lastly for the primary sources I relied on both the Linda Lear Collections and JSTOR to find works from authors at the time. As with the artworks, my main goal was to narrow down the extensive lists of books and journals to those which fell within my area of study before I began reading through them. With the primary sources Mrs. Jennifer Ishee picked out about half a dozen works within the collections that pertained to my topic before I narrowed down the books by time period.

### **3. Describe your process of evaluating the resources you found. How did you make decisions about which resources you would use, and which you wouldn't? What kinds of questions did you ask yourself about resources in order to determine whether they were worthy of inclusion?**

When looking at a source I asked, what are the motivations of this author, when was it created, and who is the audience for this author. Through these questions I determined whether the source was related to my paper. For example, I found many examples of art created in the 1880s as artists lamented the loss of the frontier. Such works fell outside of the time frame even while their subjects were similar. An accurate paper had to focus on sources written within the early 19th century to highlight the transition from identifying with Native Americans to identifying with the frontiersman. After narrowing down the time period, I began scrutinizing the works themselves. At this stage I focused on pieces which explicitly displayed a shared and evolving identity between American and Native American culture. This was because I did not wish to misinterpret those works which might have been praising the frontier instead of the people living there. In many of the pieces this was a major grey area. Falling back on those first three questions I examined works that were meant for a large American audience like Sigourney's poems or Catlin and Cole's art pieces. In looking at the audiences of these works I was able to ascertain which depictions were broadly held among Americans who gave their creators the motive to provide their audience the image they longed for. Only then could I draw conclusions about the Indian's role in the American Identity.