

American Metaphors

The passages below offer three views of American culture, each from a different time period in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Read each passage and answer the questions that follow.

Passage 1: "The Melting Pot"

There she lies, the great Melting Pot – listen! Can't you hear the roaring and the bubbling? There gapes her mouth – the harbour where a thousand mammoth feeders come from the ends of the world to pour in their human freight. Ah, what a stirring and a seething! Celt and Latin, Slav and Teuton, Greek and Syrian, - black and yellow . . . Yes, East and West, and North and South, the palm and the pine, the pole and the equator, the crescent and the cross – how the great Alchemist melts and fuses them with his purging flame! Here shall they all unite . . . what is the glory of Rome and Jerusalem . . . compared with the glory of America, where all races and nations come to labor and look forward!

*The Melting Pot*, Israel Zangwill, New York: Macmillan, 1909.

- 1) According to Zangwill, what happens to each culture as it comes to the United States?
- 2) In your own words, what would American culture look like based on Zangwill's idea?

Passage 2: "Salad Bowl"

But as the groups [of immigrants] were transformed by influences in American society, stripped of their original attributes [characteristics], they were recreated as something new, but still as identifiable groups . . . The assimilating [making alike] power of American society and culture operated on immigrant groups to make them . . . something that they had not been, but still something distinct and identifiable. . . . their transformations did not make them all into the same thing.

*Beyond the Melting Pot*, Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, The M.I.T. Press and Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA 1963.

- 3) According to Moynihan, what happens to each culture as it comes to the United States?
- 4) How does the Moynihan feel about Zangwill's idea about American culture? Support with information from the text.

Passage 3: "Cultural Mosaic"

. . . to homogenize [blend] 200 million human beings into a single monolith [single block of stone], instead of recognizing that America is a magnificent mosaic, made up of many cultures . . . I find the whole idea of the melting pot frankly very repugnant [distasteful]. I don't want to be melted down into a monolith.

Congressman Roman Pucinski, 1970

- 5) According to Pucinski, what happens to each culture as it comes to the United States?
- 6) Would Pucinski agree more with Zangwill's or Moynihan's idea of American culture? Explain with information from the text.

**Extension:**

You are now the author. Just as the authors above, think of a word or phrase that describes American culture (but do not use the words or phrases that they did). Explain in at least 50 words:

- what the word or phrase is
- why you chose it
- how it is a metaphor for American culture.

To get you started, ask yourself how do you view American culture? Then think of an item, word, or phrase that can represent your idea American Culture.

**Extra Credit:**

Include an illustration of your metaphor. Your illustration must be in color and must be your creation, not an image from the internet.