

Joe Russell

American Studies

Mr. Russell and Ms. Alexander

7<sup>th</sup> period

### American Identity Project Proposal

For my American Identity Project, I plan to craft a historical fantasy short story called *Far-Walker's Cure*. I have always loved short stories and especially the classic pulp adventures of writers like Robert E. Howard, H.P. Lovecraft, and Edgar Rice Burroughs. I am especially drawn to this type of tale because I love how they deal with the mystery of the unknown. Despite my love for this type of tale, I have always wondered why so much of what might generally be called fantasy writing assumes certain tropes of European society. Why do wizards live in castles and not in deep canyons? Why do monsters terrorize sleepy villages instead of Wild West boomtowns? In short, why is the American landscape not the backdrop for more fantasy than it is?

The American Identity is so often defined by our complicated relationship with the environment in our nation's history, so why is that not reflected more often in the stories we tell to entertain ourselves? I have come to feel that this reflects a larger cultural bias that is the product of European colonialism. Native Americans possessed rich traditions that could be the basis for fairy tales or "weird" stories that would be every bit as engaging as those of European traditions. My goal is to craft a fantasy story using American themes of self-reliance and ingenuity and to set it against the uniquely American backdrop of the Western frontier.

It was in a somewhat silly conversation with a friend that I came up with the premise that gave me the idea for my final story. Our discussion turned to the idea of how monster combat is often worked into actual historical events in European history and how interesting it would be if something similar were done with an American historical event. Also at that time I was heavily researching the French-Indian War as a historical interest. As such, my story idea became one of George Washington fighting monsters on the American frontier during the French-Indian War.

As it relates to American identity, my story deals with the unknowns of the American frontier, some interesting aspects of Native American mythology as it relates to monsters, and the iconic image of Washington as America's first famous soldier. For added realism, all of the characters in my story will be real, historical figures whose personas will be adapted slightly for purposes of the fiction. I plan to use letters from Washington himself written during this historic period as research material so as to capture the feel of the historic times as well as the style of language that I want to mimic in my story.

My final product will be a short story of about 4,000 words. Once the project is complete, I plan to submit my story to various short fiction magazines in hopes of it being professionally published.