American Literature

1st Unit Socratic Seminar Preparation

**Feel comfortable discussing the following literature:**

* Anne Bradstreet’s poems: “verses Upon the Burning of Our House” and “Author to Her Book”
* Cotton Mather’s account of the Salem Witch Trials
* Jonathan Edwards’ sermon “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God”
* Thomas Jefferson’s “Declaration of Independence”
* Francis Scott Key’s “Star-Spangled Banner”

**When looking at the above list of literature, in your composition notebook and on the documents, themselves, write an answer to the following discussion prompts:**

* *If the literature presented in this list was the only text you had available to give an account of American History, what story does it tell?*
* *Is Anne Bradstreet a good Puritan woman? Why or why not? How does she reflect this (or not reflect this) in her poetry?*
* *In “The Author to Her Book,” why does Bradstreet CHOOSE to belittle her poetry? What is the intended effect of this choice on the reader?*
* *What patterns do you see emerging between the two poems you have read in terms of ideas, based on what you know about Bradstreet?*
* *In looking at Mather’s account of the trials, what tone does he present and what evidence is the strongest to prove this.*
* *If you only had Mather’s account of this trial, what would your perspective be? Is it logical to have only one viewpoint on a historical event?*
* *How does Edwards get his point across? What techniques does he use to achieve this, and how does this impact the reader/listener?*
* *What kind of rhetorical appeal (ethos/pathos/logos) is Edwards making to his audience? Is it effective? Why or why not?*
* *What values does Jefferson’s Declaration state and which one is the strongest and why?*
* *How is democracy explained in Jefferson’s Declaration? Does our society still “hold these truths to be self-evident?”*
* *Do the words of The Star-Spangled Banner present the ideas and beliefs of the time? Are these words still relevant to modern society?*
* *How might the words of the National Anthem have varied if penned by a less prominent or less educated citizen?*

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