Contents

	List of plates	ix
	Acknowledgements	х
	Introduction	1
	An exceptional place or what is America? 1	
	What is American Studies? 4	
	Using the book 8	
	Critical approaches 8	
	A culture of many voices 12	
	Cultural politics/cultural studies 13	
	Power, position, hegemony 14	
	Dialogism 16	
	Transnationalism 17	
	The continuous 'play' of culture, history and power 18	
	Notes 19	
	References and further reading 19	
1	New beginnings: American culture and identity	22
	Reading Columbus 24	
	The American dream of identity: 'The Great Gatsby' 25	
	Maybe this is Heaven: 'Field of Dreams' (1989) 28	
	'The surface of an identity': the past as presidential discourse 30	
	Counter-cultural dreams 33	
	Multiplicity, difference and re-vision 36	
	New interrogations: Gloria Anzaldúa, Barry Lopez and Trinh T. Minh-ha 37	
	Conclusion: digging deep – 'Lone Star' (1996) 41	
	Notes 43	
	References and further reading 43	
	Follow-up work 45	
	•	

ix

1

2	Ethnicity and immigration: between many worlds	47
	Ethnic America: 'A vast ingathering' 47	
	Native Americans: assimilation and resistance 49	
	Reinscribing the tribe: writing ethnicity 51	
	Immigration and Americanisation 55	
	The crucible of difference 60	
	Immigrant stories: Jewish Americans 61	
	The future belongs to the mixture: melting pot, mosaic or hybrid? 68	
	Conclusion: the new Americans? 71	
	Notes 73 References and further medica 73	
	References and further reading 73 Follow-up work 77	
3	African Americans: 'I don't sing other people's voices'	78
	Out of slavery 78	
	New black histories 80	
	Imaginative cultural retrieval 86	
	Links in the chain: music and speech 91	
	New black voices 96	
	'Boyz N the Hood' (1991) 99	
	Conclusion: a story to pass on 100 Notes 101	
	References and further reading 101	
	Follow-up work 104	
4	In God we trust?: religion in American life	106
	Church and state 107	
	The eyes of all people shall be upon us 109	
	Changing patterns in American religious life 112	
	Contemporary evangelicalism 115	
	Religion and politics 122	
	African-American religion 124	
	Conclusion 129	
	References and further reading 130	
	Follow-up work 132	
5	Approaches to regionalism: the West and the South	134
	Case study 1: revising the American West 135	
	Imagined Wests 136	
	Land and the West 138	
	Masculinity and the land 141	
	Women and the West 145	

	Conclusion: the contested landscapes of the contemporary West 150	
	Case study 2: the South – beyond comprehension? 151 A diverse South 153 Documentary reportage 158 Writing the South 161 Southern music 162 Film and the South 165 Conclusion 168 Notes 168 References and further reading 169 Follow-up work 174	
6	The American city: 'the old knot of contrariety'	176
	Can we read the city? 176 Competing versions of the city 178 Theoretical city: the desire for control and order 180 The undivulged city: Poe's 'The Man of the Crowd' 184 The 'persuasive light': commerce and the city 185 The spaces of the city: architecture, art and ambivalence 187 Collage city 192 Postmodern city: Las Vegas 197 Conclusion, or no conclusion possible? 198 Notes 199 References and further reading 199 Follow-up work 201	
7	Gender and sexuality: 'to break the old circuits' Nineteenth-century roots: cultural politics 204 Nineteenth-century roots: literature and the 'First Wave' of feminism 208 Gender and the 1950s 'Second Wave' 212 Out of the 1950s: Sylvia Plath, 'The Bell Jar' (1963) 216 Sexuality and gender 219 Conclusion 224 Notes 227 References and further reading 227 Follow-up work 229	203
8	Representing youth: outside the sunken nursery	231
	Youth/history/representation 232	

Boundaries and youth spaces 235

A diverse West: Willa Cather and beyond 147

9

10

Housing the self 237 A model youth text? 'The Adventures of Tom Sawyer' 240 The dream of Eden 242 The spaces of self-creation 245 At the edge: the dark mood 249 Conclusion: Generation X/Generation Y 253 Notes 256 References and further reading 256 Follow-up work 258	
The spread of freedom	260
The mission of freedom 262 Cultural superiority 265 America as a model 267 American power 270 Continuity and change in American policy: pre-emption and unilateralism 271 Empire 274 Image 277 War at home 279 Conclusion 281 References and further reading 282 Follow-up work 285	
The transmission of American culture	287
American power 289 Coming to terms with Americanisation 291 Assessing Americanisation 298	
Case Study 1: the media 300	
Case Study 2: the Internet 304	
Case Study 3: Music 306	
Conclusion 309 Notes 310 References and further reading 310 Follow-up work 314	
Index	315