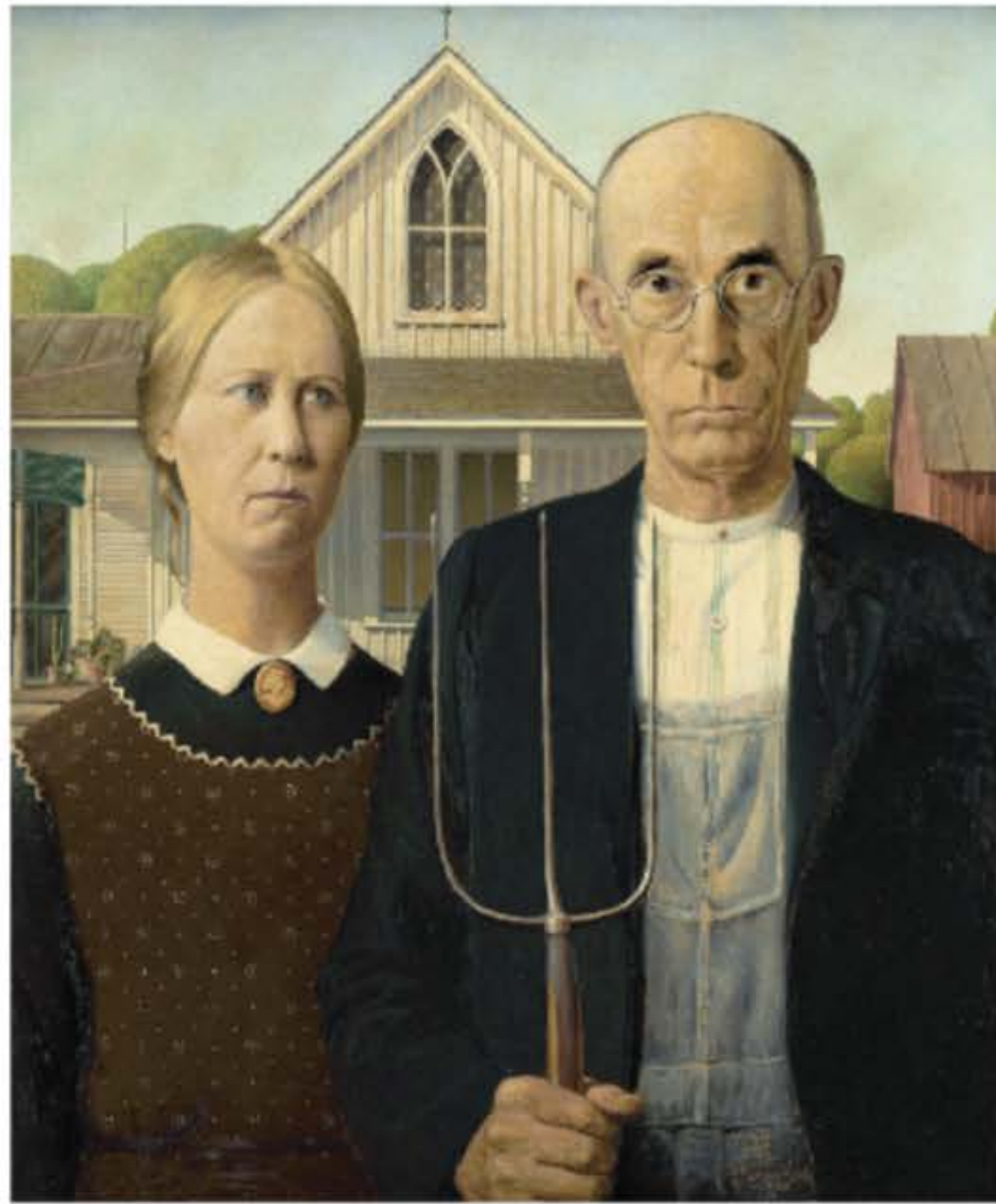


AMERICAN GOTHIC

Grant Wood (1891–1942) was born in Anamosa, Iowa. After studying at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, he continued his studies for a number of years in Europe, but unlike a number of Americans traveling abroad in the 1920s, he returned home declaring that “all the really good ideas I’d ever had came to me while I was milking a cow. So I went back to Iowa.” One of his early self-portraits has him in overalls similar to those worn by the farmer in *American Gothic* (1930), a work that made him an extraordinarily popular painter during the Depression of the 1930s when midwestern security and solidity offered simple American perseverance as an antidote to economic chaos. Curiously, many commentators regarded the painting as a satire of small-town parochialism and provincialism.

Some viewers interpreted the painting as a negative critique of rural life rather than a celebration of it. John Stone's treatment of *American Gothic* doesn't resolve that issue, but it clearly appreciates the humanity of the couple depicted in the painting. Stone, born in Jackson, Mississippi, was both a poet and a cardiologist. After earning a medical degree at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, he served on the medical faculty at Emory University School of Medicine, where he had a strong reputation for dealing with patients, students, and ultimately readers with directness and humor. Among his collections are *Where Water Begins* (1998) and *Music from Apartment 8: New and Selected Poems* (2004). In his "American Gothic," he makes a cordial and good-natured house call.



American Gothic, 1930 by Grant Wood, All rights reserved Wood Graham Beneficiaries / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY.

American Gothic Painted with oil on beaver board in 1930, *American Gothic* was created in a precise, realistic style reminiscent of fifteenth-century northern European artists. It earned a bronze medal at the Art Institute of Chicago's annual painting competition. The museum purchased it soon after, and it has been housed there ever since.

Description

The painting shows a man in overalls standing next to a young woman. He is wearing glasses and is holding a pitchfork. The background shows a two-story house. The man is tight-lipped, and the woman appears cold with a frown on her face.