



A Time to Every Purpose: The Four Seasons in American Culture

Michael Kammen

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In artworks from a mosaic by Marc Chagall to schoolchildren's paintings, in writings from Susan Fenimore Cooper to Annie Dillard, and in diverse print sources from family genealogical registers to seed catalogs, the four seasons appear and reappear as a theme in American culture.

In this richly illustrated book, Michael Kammen traces the appeal of the four seasons motif in American popular culture and fine arts from the seventeenth century to the present. Its symbolism has evolved through the years, Kammen explains, serving as a metaphor for the human life cycle or religious faith, expressing nostalgia for rural life, and sometimes praising seasonal beauty in the diverse American landscape as the most spectacular in the world. Kammen also highlights artists' and writers' shift in attention from the glories of seasonal peaks to the dynamics of seasonal transitions as American life continued to accelerate and change through the twentieth century.

Few symbols have been as pervasive, meaningful, and symptomatic in the human experience as the four seasons, and as Kammen shows, in its American context the annual cycle has been an abundant and abiding source of inspiration in the nation's cultural history.

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