
The American Dream Extension Task Preparation Sheet

1. Thinking about the prompt.

Read the following prompt:

Conduct additional research on the meaning of the American Dream. Then write a research-based essay making a claim about how attainable you believe the American dream to be. You should support your argument with examples and counterexamples from the literature read throughout the unit as well as evidence gathered through your independent research (see links provided by your teacher).

- Underline the task.
- Rephrase what the prompt is asking you to do:

The prompt is asking to make a claim about the meaning of the American Dream and how attainable the American Dream is. It is not just asking IF the American Dream is attainable, but how attainable it is. Evidence that offers both examples and counterexamples should be used to support the claim made.

- What is your claim about this topic right now? Why do you feel this way?

Though the American Dream has many different meanings to many different people, in its essence it is about bettering one's life and/or the lives around you. This dream is NOT attainable because it requires people to reach a final content state. However, contentment is not a state that most people can achieve.

- What are some texts that you have read in this unit that support your claim?(examples)

The Great Gatsby, "Volume II: Chapter XIII, Why the Americans Are So Restless in the Midst of Their Prosperity," "Hollywood Dreams of Wealth, Youth, and Beauty" "The Egg"

- What are some texts that would not support your claim?(counterexamples)

"Quilt of a Country," The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea that Shaped a Nation, "I Hear America Singing" by Walt Whitman

- Create a "working thesis," the claim that you have as you begin your research:

The American Dream is a dream of bettering one's situation or the situation of others around you; this dream is not attainable because it requires one to be content at some point in his/her life.

2. Conducting research.

Your teacher has provided you with a list of sources. Use the chart below to help you organize evidence collected as you research. Remember, you are also going to use information gathered from the texts you read in the unit. Use a source citation generator such as Easy Bib or Bib Me to create an MLA citation for each source used.

Source Title and citation	Specific Evidence to Include in Paper Please include correct parenthetical citation with page number or paragraph number	How does this evidence support your claim?
Sutter, John D. "The Most Unequal Place in America." <i>CNN</i> . Cable News Network, 30 Oct. 2013. Web. 21 Oct. 2016	<p>"Every mother wants a better life for her children. That's why Gilmore agreed to send two of her sons away. Her middle children, Stanley and Liray Jones, were going to drop out of high school in Lake Providence, she said. Rarely a week went by that fights didn't break out at the school, she said. She didn't think it was safe -- or an environment for learning.</p> <p>So, with their OK, she sent her only two sons to Texas to live with a relative. She misses them constantly. But they graduated, she said. They found a better life.</p> <p>Gilmore's kids who stayed in Inequality USA have not"(Sutter).</p>	<p>This evidence shows that wanting better for your child is a shared dream of all mothers, all people for that matter. Even if you can't make your life better, you can try to make life better for those around you.</p>
	"The phrase the American dream was first invented, in other	These quotations reveal that the statistics of upward

<p>Churchwell, Sarah. "The Great Gatsby and the American Dream." <i>The Guardian</i>. Guardian News and Media, 25 May 2012. Web. 21 Oct. 2016.</p>	<p>words, to describe a failure, not a promise: or rather, a broken promise, a dream that was continually faltering beneath the rampant monopoly capitalism that set each struggling against all; and it is no coincidence that it was first popularised during the early years of the great depression. The impending failure had been clear to Fitzgerald by the time he finished <i>Gatsby</i> – and the fact that in 1925 most Americans were still recklessly chasing the dream had a great deal to do with the initial commercial and critical failure of <i>The Great Gatsby</i>, which would not be hailed as a masterpiece until the 50s, once hindsight had revealed its prophetic truth"(Churchwell).</p> <p>"The American dream comes true for just 1%: for the other 99%, only discontent and bitterness await, resentment on a mass scale"(Churchwell).</p>	<p>mobility, of making your life better, do not support the attainability of this American Dream. This dream is one that was "continually faltering" and nearly possible to attain.</p>
<p>Pagan, Camille Noe. "Do Americans Still Believe in the American Dream?" <i>Do Americans Still Believe in the American Dream?</i> 10 Dec. 2013. Web. 21 Oct. 2016.</p>	<p>"A recent nationwide survey from LearnVest found that 43 percent of Americans today feel the dream is attainable for everyone — and about the same percentage feels that it's within their grasp, personally. And approximately 42 percent of those same respondents said they felt they were better off than their parents were at their age"(Pagan).</p>	<p>This is a counterexample to my claim. However, all it shows is that Americans BELIEVE the American Dream is attainable. It doesn't prove that they do actually achieve the dream. This also connects to my point about the dream as a motivator to never be satisfied and to continue to strive for more.</p>

Sources from the Unit		
Anderson, Sherwood. "The Egg". <i>The Triumph of the Egg</i> . New York: Huebsch, 1921.	<p>"It was in the spring of his thirty-fifth year that father married my mother, then a country schoolteacher, and in the following spring I came wriggling and crying into the world. Something happened to the two people. They became ambitious. The American passion for getting up in the world took possession of them"(Anderson)</p> <p>"For herself she wanted nothing. For father and myself she was incurably ambitious"(Anderson).</p> <p>"Then an idea in regard to getting up in the world came into his head. The American spirit took hold of him. He also became ambitious"(Anderson).</p> <p>"I wondered why eggs had to be and why from the egg came the hen who again laid the egg. The question got into my blood. It has stayed there, I imagine, because I am the son of my father. At any rate, the problem remains unsolved in my mind. And that, I conclude, is but another evidence of the complete and final triumph of the egg--at least as far as my family is concerned"(Anderson).</p>	<p>These quotations all show the progression of the effect that the American Dream of bettering one's life can have on someone. The narrator's father went from being happy, to leading a life of discontent because of his desire to make his life better.</p>
Fitzgerald, F. Scott. <i>The Great Gatsby</i> .	"He stretched out his hand desperately as if to . . . save a fragment of the spot that she had made lovely for	These quotations illustrate the way in which Gatsby yearned for Daisy, was obsessed with "capturing" her.

<p>New York: Scribner, 2004.</p>	<p>him”(Fitzgerald 153).</p> <p>“Possibly it had occurred to him that the colossal significance of that light had now vanished forever. Compared to the great distance that had separated him from Daisy it had seemed very near to her, almost touching her. It had seemed as close as a star to the moon. Now it was again a green light on a dock. His count of enchanted objects had diminished by one”(Fitzgerald 93).</p> <p>“But his heart was in constant, turbulent riot. The most grotesque and fantastic conceits haunted him in his bed at night”(Fitzgerald 99).</p> <p>“Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us”(Fitzgerald 180).</p> <p>“Tomorrow we will run faster, stretch our arms farther. . . .And one fine morning--”(Fitzgerald 180).</p> <p>“So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past”(Fitzgerald 180).</p>	<p>He constantly pursued her, never being satisfied with where he was in life. She was his American Dream. But even when he thought he had achieved it, it wasn’t enough. He wanted more. And that desire for more eventually ended his life.</p>	
<p>de Tocqueville, Alexis. “Why are Americans so</p>	<p>“In America I saw the freest and most enlightened men placed in the happiest circumstances that the world affords, it</p>	<p>These quotes reveal an outsider’s perspective on Americans. These observations paint a picture of Americans who are never satisfied and are constantly</p>	

<p>Restless In the Midst of Their Prosperity?" <u>Democracy in America</u> Trans. George Lawrence. Harper and Row. 1966.</p>	<p>seemed to me as if a cloud habitually hung upon their brow, and I thought them serious and almost sad, even in their pleasures.</p> <p>The chief reason for this contrast is that the former do not think of the ills they endure, while the latter are forever brooding over advantages they do not possess"(de Tocqueville)</p> <p>"In the United States a man builds a house in which to spend his old age, and he sells it before the roof is on; he plants a garden and lets it just as the trees are coming into bearing; he brings a field into tillage and leaves other men to gather the crops; he embraces a profession and gives it up; he settles in a place, which he soon afterwards leaves to carry his changeable longings elsewhere"(de Tocqueville).</p> <p>"Besides the good things that he possesses, he every instant fancies a thousand others that death will prevent him from trying if he does not try them soon. This thought fills him with anxiety, fear, and regret and keeps his mind in ceaseless trepidation, which leads him perpetually to change his plans and his abode"(de Tocqueville).</p>	<p>pursuing whatever is "next." They live their lives with anxiety and never contentment.</p>
<p>Cullen, Jim. <i>The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea</i></p>	<p>"The irreducible foundation of all varieties of Protestantism was this: a belief that the world was a corrupt place, but one that could be reformed. . . .This faith in reform became the central legacy of American Protestantism and the cornerstone of what became the American Dream"(Cullen 15).</p>	<p>This source reflects the idea that the definition of the American Dream has to do with elevating one's position in life. This is reflected in the Protestant's belief that the world could be improved. It is also reflected in the life story of Abraham Lincoln who rose</p>

<i>That Shaped a Nation.</i> New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.	“Lincoln’s entire public persona--his homely looks and unkempt appearance, his celebrated sense of humor, the self-effacing modesty he repeatedly deployed while running for and holding office. . .was leveraged on his modest beginnings and what he had made of them. . . it was made, and heard, as a testament to how democracy could elevate Everyman” (Cullen 76)	from humble beginnings to the highest position of power in the United States..
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3. After conducting research on your topic, has your claim changed?

- Make alterations to your “working thesis” here:

The American Dream is a dream of bettering one’s own life or the lives of others around you; this dream is not attainable because to attain this dream would mean that one was content, but Americans seem always to strive and want more. The desire for better is a never ending cycle which can leave people unfulfilled and unhappy.

- Rewrite your thesis statement here. Use the following thesis statement from “Quilt of a Country” as your model:
 “America is an improbable idea. A mongrel nation built of ever-changing disparate parts, it is held together by a notion, the notion that all men are created equal, though everyone knows that most men consider themselves better than someone.”

Your rewritten thesis statement:

The American Dream is a dream of bettering one's own life or the lives of others around one; it is a dream, however, that is not attainable because to attain it would mean one is content, and Americans seem always to want more. This desire for better is a never ending cycle which can leave people unfulfilled and unhappy.

4. Outlining

****Remember to include claims and counterclaims in your body paragraphs**

Topic of Body Paragraph 1: Define the American Dream

Texts discussed in this paragraph: The Great Gatsby, Great Gatsby and the American Dream, The Most Unequal Place

Topic of Body Paragraph 2: Explanation of how the pursuit of the dream can destroy people

Texts discussed in this paragraph: The Great Gatsby, "The Egg"

Topic of Body Paragraph 3: Why this dream is unattainable.

Texts discussed in this paragraph: The Great Gatsby, "The Egg" "Why Americans are So Restless" "Do Americans Still Believe in the American Dream?"

5. Creating Citations

Place the bibliographic citations for your sources in alphabetical order in the chart below.

MLA Citation

Anderson, Sherwood. "The Egg". *The Triumph of the Egg*. New York: Huebsch, 1921.

Churchwell, Sarah. "The Great Gatsby and the American Dream." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 25 May 2012. Web. 21 Oct. 2016.

Cullen, Jim. *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea That Shaped a Nation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

de Tocqueville, Alexis. "Why are Americans so Restless In the Midst of Their Prosperity?" Democracy in America Trans. George Lawrence. Harper and Row. 1966.

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*. New York: Scribner, 2004.

Pagan, Camille Noe. "Do Americans Still Believe in the American Dream?" *Do Americans Still Believe in the American Dream?* 10 Dec. 2013. Web. 21 Oct. 2016.

Sutter, John D. "The Most Unequal Place in America." *CNN*. Cable News Network, 30 Oct. 2013. Web. 21 Oct. 2016

**These sources should be listed in alphabetical order on the Works Cited page in your paper.

6. Drafting.

- Complete a draft of your essay. Look over your outline of “Quilt of a Country” and the text itself as you write your draft. Use Quindlen’s language, varied syntax, and integration of sources as models for your own paper.

7. Peer Revision

- Trade papers with a classmate and complete peer revisions of your essays, using the steps below:
 - Identify and underline the thesis or main claim of the essay.
 - Next to each body paragraph, write a one-sentence summary. Determine how the ideas of the body paragraph are connected to the main claim of the essay. Next to the thesis statement, write a brief summary describing the organization and connection between various ideas of the essay.
 - In each paragraph, highlight the information used from the sources. Make sure that this source information supports the thesis. Place a plus sign next to relevant evidence from sources and a minus sign next to irrelevant evidence or false reasoning.
 - Review the sentence structure and use the Mentor Sentence Anchor Chart to offer suggestions for increasing the complexity by adding more phrases and clauses or varying syntax. Highlight (in a second color) sentences that need to be revised to vary syntax. Add suggestions for revisions to these highlighted sentences.
 - Examine the vocabulary used in the paper. Circle words that could be replaced with more specific vocabulary. Make suggestions for revisions.
 - Edit the essay for spelling mistakes and use of proper punctuation. Suggest one use of a hyphenated adjective in the paper.

8. Publishing

- Use available technology to publish your paper, making sure to include all revisions. When you have completed publishing, use the Extension Task Rubric to evaluate your finished product. Make any corrections needed.