

Prompt: In the nineteenth and most of the twentieth centuries, handwriting instruction (print and cursive) was virtually universal in schools in the United States. By contrast, little if any time is devoted to such lessons today. While some argue that handwriting instruction should still have a place in schooling, others maintain that digital technologies have rendered such instruction unnecessary.

Carefully read the following six sources, including the introductory information for each source. Write an essay that synthesizes material from at least three of the sources and develops your position on the place, if any, of handwriting instruction in today's schools.

Source A (Gillis)

Source B (worksheet)

Source C (Trubek)

Source D (Kysilko)

Source E (Pot)

Source F (graph)

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible position.
- Select and use evidence from at least three of the provided sources to support your line of reasoning. Indicate clearly the sources used through direct quotation, paraphrase, or summary. Sources may be cited as Source A, Source B, etc., or by using the description in parentheses.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

Source A

Gillis, Carly. "Schools Debate Cursive Handwriting Instruction Nationwide." *HuffPost*, 30 Mar. 2011. www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/03/30/cursive-handwriting-instr_n_842069.html.

The following is excerpted from an article on a news Web site.

Cursive handwriting instruction is disappearing.

Students and teachers alike have swapped pencils for keyboards, baselines for blinking cursors, and have all but written off the traditional route of writing.

Although standardized tests may not pick up the flourish of a cursive capital "T" or grade against floaters and sinkers, proponents of cursive handwriting maintain that there is value in teaching the craft and hope to save it from being erased from educational relevancy.

ABC News reports that 41 states have adopted the Common Core State Standards for English, which omits cursive handwriting from required curriculum. Now that it's not mandatory, schools around the country are debating whether or not to spend valuable teaching resources on penmanship.

In New York, some schools are considering cutting it altogether. Deb Fitzgerald, a second-grade teacher at Van Schaick Elementary in Cohoes, told CBS 6 Albany that she'd rather "move on" and focus class time on other topics.

Colorado schools are also engaged in a similar debate. Some teachers believe that cursive is archaic and that students should be prepared for contemporary communication. Susana Cordova, chief academic officer Denver Public Schools, told the Denver Post:

"In many respects, it's only inside our schools where we see such emphasis on paper and pencil," she says. "The move outside our schools, and in innovative schools, is toward technology. There will always be a role for the written word by hand on paper. But the experiences most of us have, with 30 minutes a day practicing cursive in class, has gone by the wayside."

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Source B

"Lowercase Cursive Letter Practice Worksheet." *TLSBooks*,
www.tlsbooks.com/pdf/cursivepractice.pdf.

The following is adapted from a free printable worksheet available on a Web site created as a resource for parents and teachers of students from preschool to sixth grade.

Lowercase Cursive Letter Practice



Write each letter three times.

Name: _____

a
b
c
d
e
f
g
h
i
j
k
l
m

n
o
p
q
r
s
t
u
v
w
x
y
z

Source C

Trubek, Anne. "Handwriting Just Doesn't Matter." *The New York Times*, 20 Aug. 2016, www.nytimes.com/2016/08/21/opinion/handwriting-just-doesnt-matter.html?mcubz=0&_r=0.

The following is excerpted from an opinion piece published in a national newspaper.

These arguments [in favor of learning cursive handwriting] are largely a side show to the real issues, which are cultural. In April, when the Louisiana State Senate voted to put cursive back into the public school curriculum, senators yelled "America!" in celebration, as though learning cursive were a patriotic act.

A month later, Alabama required the teaching of cursive in public schools by the end of third grade by way of "Lexi's Law," named for the granddaughter of the state representative Dickie Drake; Mr. Drake believes "cursive writing identifies you as much as your physical features do." In other words, our script reveals something unique and ineluctable about our inner being.

For most of American history, cursive was supposed to do the opposite. Mastering it was dull, repetitive work, intended to make every student's handwriting match a standardized model. In the mid-19th century, that model was Spencerian script. It was replaced by the Palmer Method, which was seen as a more muscular and masculine hand suitable for the industrial age—a "plain and rapid style," as Austin Palmer described it, to replace the more effeminate Spencerian. Students who learned it were taught to become "writing machines," holding their arms and shoulders in awkward poses for hours to get into shape for writing drills.

It was also believed that mastering the Palmer Method would make students better Christians, immigrants more assimilated Americans (through its "powerful hygienic effect"), "bad" children better ("the initial step in the reform of many a delinquent") and workers more industrious (because the script had fewer curlicues and strokes than Spencerian).

Our 19th- and 20th-century counterparts grafted their values onto handwriting, just as we do with our conceptions of individualism, patriotism and the unique self. These are projections we make onto squiggles and loops.

We have seen similar debates over the meaning of handwriting during other moments of historic transition. In the early medieval era, monks were told to stop using a Roman-based script because it looked too pagan and to adopt a more Christian-looking one. In the 16th century, Erasmus wrote a dialogue in which characters writing in the Renaissance-infused Humanist script complain about the "barbarous" look of Gothic script which they deem less civilized. They also complain that women have messy, impatient handwriting. (Today, women are perceived as being naturally better at penmanship than men, largely because handwriting is now taught at a younger age, when the fine motor skills of girls are more developed.)

Cursive has no more to do with patriotism than Gothic script did with barbarism, or the Palmer Method with Christianity. Debates over handwriting reveal what a society prizes and fears; they are not really about the virtues or literacy levels of children.

Finally, current cursive advocates often argue that students who don't learn cursive won't be able to read it—"they won't be able to read the Declaration of Independence"—but that is misleading. Reading that 18th-century document in the original is difficult for most people who know cursive, as the script is now unfamiliar. A vast majority of historical manuscripts are illegible to anyone but experts, or are written in languages other than English.

In fact, the changes imposed by the digital age may be good for writers and writing. Because they achieve automaticity quicker on the keyboard, today's third graders may well become better writers as handwriting takes up less of their education.

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Source D

Kysilko, David. "The Handwriting Debate." *National Association of State Boards of Education*, 20 Sept. 2012, www.nasbe.org/latest-news/handwriting-debate/.

The following is excerpted from a report published on the Web site of a nonprofit organization that represents state boards of education in the United States.

Handwriting encompasses two distinct forms: manuscript or printed writing using block letters that are not connected when forming words, and cursive writing, where successive letters are joined and angles are rounded. In the United States, printed writing is generally taught beginning in preschool or kindergarten and continuing through 2nd grade, while cursive is taught beginning in the 3rd grade and continuing through 5th grade. . . .

Those who favor handwriting instruction . . . have "common sense" points: there are and will likely always be times when handwriting notes or lists will be necessary or more convenient—and cursive is faster than printing; handwritten correspondence to individuals has a greater impact on the receiver than emails or digitally printed communications; students, especially in elementary school, still turn in handwritten assignments; there is still a need to be able to read cursive, especially in the case of primary source documents; and cursive is a powerful cultural and historical link to human development, since the drive and ability to draw symbols with our hands is one of the defining characteristics of our species.

But the strongest arguments in favor of teaching cursive are emerging from a growing body of research from the last 10 to 15 years that points to the educational benefits of learning to write by hand—benefits that go well beyond just the ability to write and read cursive. Following are some of the findings.

* **Cognitive and Motor Skills Development:** Because handwriting is a complex skill that involves both cognitive and fine motor skills, direct instruction is required to learn handwriting (it is not good enough to just give a workbook to students and hope for the best). However, the result of good instruction is that students are benefited both in their cognitive development and in developing motor skills.

* **Literacy Development:** Handwriting is a foundational skill that can influence students' reading, writing, language use, and critical thinking. Students without consistent exposure to handwriting are more likely to have problems retrieving letters from memory; spelling accurately; extracting meaning from text or lecture; and interpreting the context of words and phrases.

* **Brain Development:** The sequential hand movements used in handwriting activate the regions of the brain associated with thinking, short-term memory, and language. In addition, according to Virginia Berninger, Ph.D., professor of educational psychology at the University of Washington, cursive in particular is linked with brain functions around self-regulation and mental organization. "Cursive helps you connect things," Dr. Berninger said in an interview.

* **Memory:** The act of handwriting helps students (and adults) retain information more effectively than when keyboarding, mostly likely because handwriting involves more complex motor functions and takes a bit longer. One study comparing students who took notes by hand versus classmates who took notes by computer found that the handwriters exhibited better comprehension of the content and were more attentive and involved during the class discussions.

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE.

* **Written Expression:** Elementary-age students who wrote compositions by hand rather than by keyboarding, one researcher found, wrote faster, wrote longer pieces, and expressed more ideas.

Source E

Pot, Justin. "Cursive Writing Is Obsolete; Schools Should Teach Programming Instead." *Make Use Of*, 17 Feb. 2015, www.makeuseof.com.

The following is excerpted from an editorial published on a Web site that provides information about technology.

Hardly Anyone Uses Cursive

Almost everyone reading this article was taught cursive in school, but most of you don't use it. "Much of our communication is done on a keyboard, and the rest is done with print," says Morgan Polikoff, assistant professor of education at the University of Southern California. "While both research and common sense indicate students should be taught some form of penmanship, there is simply no need to teach students both print and cursive." There's only so much time in the day, and which skills we decide to teach has a dramatic impact on the lives of students. Does it really make sense to prioritize an obsolete ability?

It's Not About The Extra Benefits

Learning cursive does offer some benefits: it helps develop fine motor skills, for example, and stimulates certain regions of the brain. You could make similar arguments about almost anything. Playing the original Super Mario Bros helps develop fine motor skills, for example, but requiring school children to play that game 15 minutes a day would be an (admittedly awesome) waste of time. If cursive is taught, it should be taught not as an essential life skill but as an art—like calligraphy—or as an interesting relic of the past. Modern people don't use it, and education systems should stop pretending they do.

Bad Reasons To Learn Useless Skills

Cards on the table: penmanship was my least favourite class as a kid (with the possible exception of math). I shudder to think of the time I spent learning cursive: 15 minutes of schooling, every day. It's a staggering waste—but even worse, in retrospect, were the reasons my teachers said it was important. "You're going to use this every day," I was told. I don't. "In college, if you can't write cursive, you won't be able to take notes fast enough." I didn't use cursive; I kept up just fine. Of course, teachers gave me lots of bad reasons for learning things—that doesn't mean learning them isn't important. I hated learning multiplication tables, but was told it was important because when I grow up I "won't be carrying a calculator with me everywhere." That prediction didn't turn out, but I'm not bitter about learning multiplication tables—I use that skill multiple times every day. So while I hated both penmanship and math class, I'm not upset about multiplication tables. The problem with cursive is I never use it. Surveys show most adults feel the same way. Typing is faster, and print is fast enough when you happen to need to use paper (and it's increasingly possible to avoid paper entirely).

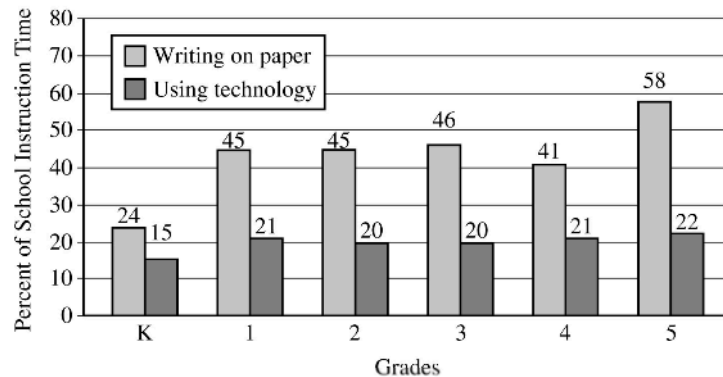
Education Should Focus On The Future

Just because you learned something in school doesn't mean your kids should: the world is changing, quickly. And while it's hard to make predictions about where technology is headed, it's safe to say the future won't involve a lot of cursive handwriting (unless some kind of disaster sends us back to 14th-century technology, in which case handwriting will be the least of our problems). There's only so many hours in a day, so it's important education systems prioritize. Every hour spent learning an obsolete skill like cursive is time they're not learning the programming skills needed for great jobs, or other essential life-skills like managing your money.

Source F

“Time Spent in Classroom Handwriting versus Technology.” *Learning Without Tears*, 5 Nov. 2013, www.lwtears.com/files/Research%20Bulletin_Nov%202013_For%20WEB_Nov5.pdf.

The following is a graph of the results of a 2013 national survey of 450 elementary school teachers in the United States that asked how much of their time students spent writing on paper and how much of their time they spent using technology.



My Essay: The Importance of Handwriting

Cursive writing is a form of penmanship that features joined, rounded letters dating back to before the sixteenth century. However, in light of current technological advancements cursive has been less prevalent in American curriculums, and is deemed obsolete by several states in the nation. Although some may argue that cursive is an unnecessary skill to be taught in schools due to its declining usage in modern society, it should still be included in American education because it does not require expensive resources, it helps people develop important skills.

The materials required to teach cursive are extremely cost efficient, and easy to source. Source B is a tracing worksheet that can be given to students to teach cursive. The description emphasizes that the print out is free to download, from an online link. Cost effective resources such as the letter practice worksheet in source be can be used to easily equip students with good penmanship, which is an extremely important skillset. Source F, is a graph published in Learning Without Tears. It explores the cruciality of neat handwriting, because it displays the difference between the percent of school instruction time spent writing on paper, compared to writing online. A significantly larger percentage of students spend their time writing on paper, therefore their penmanship can affect their ability to produce optimal writing. By teaching cursive, schools can increase the efficiency of students' writing which ultimately boosts the quality of their academic work, for a low cost that leaves plenty of resources for a plethora of separate activities that can broaden their skillset.

Next, schools teaching cursive writing will enable the development of students, in several important aspects that lay the foundation for future academic journeys. David Kysilko's article, "The Handwriting Debate," with the National Association of State Boards of Education substantiates the several critical skills that cursive writing allows students to develop. It fosters the improvement of cognitive skills along with increased brain development, memory, and written expression. When taught in schools, cursive is introduced to children in elementary grade levels. These young minds not only absorb the important content being taught in school, they also learn social cues, behavioral etiquette, and enhance their

physical and motor skills, and they grow significantly more when they are exposed to an environment that encourages the expansion of these foundational skills. Cursive not only acts as a supporting pillar to their academic skills, it also helps them activate functions in their brain that are connected to thinking, language, and self regulation. The benefits of cursive are plentiful, and it should be implemented in schools.

Even so, several people still believe that cursive is an obsolete, archaic script that is useless when faced by the advancing fields of technology. Source E asserts that schools should use their time more effectively by teaching students programming skills, or money management instead of outdated cursive writing. Granted, money management and programming are incredibly important in modern society, however when looked at from a neutral stance, they are incredibly crucial because they lay the foundation for skills that will be required by jobs in the future. Source D argues that cursive writing does exactly that. Source D expands on the literary development children are exposed to through cursive writing by explaining that penmanship is an important influence over critical thinking. Without the consistent exposure to handwriting, students face issues with interpreting the context behind phrases, and extracting meaning from literature. Without having the ability to understand context, and meaning it is extremely difficult to navigate the professional world, especially due to the prevalence of communication in several workplaces. Corporate positions require people management just as much as they require programming, if not more. Cursive is not just a fancy way to write, it is a base. Teaching cursive in schooling is imperative to ensure the successful development and enrichment of students, and therefore though online devices are becoming extremely prevalent in modern society, cursive cannot be deemed as obsolete due to the plethora of irreplaceable skills it helps one gain. Handwriting instruction should be included in education.

Prompt: In a 1994 interview with a nonprofit that connects promising young people to leaders and pioneers in various fields, black comedian and actress Whoopi Goldberg said, "I am the American Dream. I am the epitome of what the American Dream basically said. It said you could come from anywhere and be anything you want in this country. That's exactly what I've done."

Write an essay that argues your position on the extent to which Goldberg's claim about the American Dream is valid. In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible position.
- Provide evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

My Essay:

America is an extremely diverse country, with a population made up of several different races and religions. Despite the improved quality of life bestowed upon several refugee immigrants, and citizens, Goldberg's claim is invalid. People who are not from the United States cannot simply be anything they want to in the country due to limitations caused by immigration status and discrimination.

America has high immigration rates from several areas in the world, due to its strong legal system and job opportunities. Several immigrants who try to find work in the U.S. require an H-1, or work visa, to be able to legally settle in the nation. Due to recent political shifts, the situation with visas has become extremely volatile, with heavy risks of deportation. President Donald Trump took a stance against H-1 visas, imposing harsh fiscal policies that make it extremely difficult for new immigrants to renew and apply for the work visas. Several people on work visas who are offered opportunities from companies with better economic benefits are unable to accept new jobs as well due to the new legal complications with the H-1 and the decade long queues to receive a Green Card. This halters their ability to be anything they want in America because they are no longer able to have the freedom to choose the paths that lead to their goals. Additionally, some opportunities are simply not open to immigrant populations, and are only open to citizens. Naturalization is the process of attaining citizenship through getting an H-1, then a greencard, and finally applying for citizenship. The process can take up to two decades. One prerequisite to becoming the President of the United States, is being a citizen by birth, not by naturalization. An immigrant man who wants to be the President of America is simply ineligible. These conditions can show the unequal opportunities given to the different settlers in America, proving that not everyone can be anything that they want to. Additionally, as the daughter of immigrant parents I can see the legal difficulties that stop my parents from receiving the same opportunities as others first hand. My parents waited for 11 years before receiving their greencard. During those 10 years they had to work at the same company for low wages, though they were offered opportunities at several higher paying, more prestigious organizations with lower work loads. Their dependency on the H-1 visa stagnated their career, and prevented their opportunities of economic growth. My mom always wanted to be a senior manager, however she was unable to because of her legal status as an immigrant on H-1. People who are of immigrant status are unable to reach their full potential due to the limitation

and dependency that visas cause, therefore one cannot come from anywhere and be anything they want to be.

Secondly, several people in America face detrimental discrimination that stops them from reaching their goals. Immigrant populations in American education systems face discrimination through several viral terms. These terms can be anything ranging from microaggressive to outright racist. Terms like "curry-muncher," "Ching-Chong," and "N*gger," are thrown around several American high schools. Irvington high school is a 9-12th establishment in the Bay Area's Fremont Unified School District. Several students go through the day witnessing intense profanity and racial slurs embedded into daily speech. It is taken very lightly amongst the youth population, however it has intense effects on the mental health of several students. In the 8th grade, I was called a "dirty, hairy, Indian" by 3 students. I am a girl of Indian origin, and this caused me to have intense insecurity about my ethnicity for a very long time. During this period of time my self consciousness caused me to have intense fear of public speaking, depression, and lowered academic performance. Discrimination caused me to miss out on several opportunities that could be extremely beneficial to my future, like prestigious programs, and opportunities to network with professionals in my field of interest. I was not able to get into my dream research lab because of the extracurriculars I was unable to take. The racism that people who are not of American origin face is incredibly painful, and it takes opportunities to achieve one's goals away. Therefore people from different backgrounds cannot be anything they want to be in America.

There are some populations that can receive a much better quality of life in America, due to its strong legal protection system, however that does not necessarily allow them to achieve their goals. Immigrants can seek asylum in America, for example Mexican citizens fleeing from the cartel, however these citizens can lead a much safer, and prosperous life that may not necessarily let them achieve their dreams. They may be in a better position to gain economic freedom, however they may not be able to get their dream jobs or scholarships, due to the requirement of citizenship being a prerequisite. Even some citizens who do not constantly need to worry about deportation and the constant legal hardships that come with being an immigrant are not able to achieve the American Dream. Therefore, in the United States, it is not always possible to achieve one's end goals and be in the position that they want to .

The highest-priority ones are the Synthesis, Argumentative 1, and Rhetorical 1 essays, in that order. I'd really appreciate feedback on this one as well, but I do need those first because those three are more pressing at the moment. Thank you so much!

Prompt: In a report for The Heritage Foundation, a conservative research and advocacy organization, political pundits Rea Hederman and David Azerrad argue that "the first pillar of the American Dream is economic freedom. Without the liberty to acquire and possess property and to dispose of it in free markets, our station in life would essentially be fixed at birth. . . . economic freedom creates a world in which all may aspire to improve their lot." Write an essay that argues your position on the extent to which Hederman and Azerrad's claim about the relationship between capitalism and the American Dream is valid. In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible position.
- Provide evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

Essay: Capitalism has a direct relationship with the American Dream, as argued by Rea Hederman and David Azerrad. Though people argue that the most important aspect of the American Dream is equal opportunity, unaffected by discrimination for the people of the United States, economic freedom is what enables people to find success in their pursuit of happiness in America. Capitalism is acknowledged as the "first pillar" because it allows people to build and maintain a comfortable lifestyle, and gain a respectable status in society, both of which are what several pursuers of the American Dream aspire to achieve.

Capitalism has a close relationship with the American dream. To truly understand the American dream, one must look at what it means to achieve it. The American dream is beyond a house, a white picket fence, and saturday baseball games with krackerjacks, it means to have a life that one can be content with, a life with economic freedom. However achieving this dream does not have a uniform difficulty, the difference lies with the financial status that people face. Last year, when college decisions began coming out, several students received their admission letters to their dream schools. However the contrast between 2 of them truly shows the importance of economic freedom, and its relationship with achieving this American dream. One student received their letter of acceptance from the school, and was overjoyed immediately. They came from a well off family, and had enough money to comfortably afford the new opportunity that faced them. The other was an immigrant from a family that could barely afford their water bill. Only one of the two students went to college. The American dream is tied to capitalism because achieving it requires taking the opportunities to progress in life, expensive opportunities. Without the financial backing, the requirements change from hard work to a miracle. Additionally, the average 1 story house in a good neighborhood costs 1-2 million dollars in the bay area. The average annual rent for an apartment in New York costs more than a few acres of land in India. Building a comfortable lifestyle itself in America is expensive, and hard to maintain. The white

picket fence around a home with 3 acres in the back is a mere daydream for several impoverished people living in the United States. When some people cannot afford a 2 bedroom condo, they surely cannot afford the American dream, which is why it has a close relationship with capitalism.

Additionally, capitalism is tied to the American dream because having money serves as a shield against unsafe conditions and discrimination. During the industrial revolution, the development of factories led to severe health hazards and harm to several people. The main population working there were impoverished populations looking for jobs. This is seen in the Triangle Shirt Waist factory fire, where violated architectural codes led to the loss of several people. Impoverished people working several risky jobs just to pay bills face this even in modern America. Having a sense of security is part of the American dream, and without money people have to work in unsafe conditions very often, showing the relationship between money and the American dream. Discrimination is seen in daily life for several people. Social media trends flaunt clothing and apparel that is worth a paycheck for several Americans who work minimum wage. There are luxurious brands like Prada, Chanel, and more that are out of budget for people without financial backing. The members of society that cannot afford them face ridicule in schools, offices, neighborhoods, and several public settings whether professional or casual. The American dream outlines peace and conditions that help people thrive. This peace is disturbed for the people who daily face difficult working conditions and discrimination due to their clothing. The 2 populations have poverty, and low economic standing in common. Therefore the American dream has a close relationship with capitalism because money makes it easier to attain.

Though people may say that opportunities are given to everyone equally, several people need a high economic backing to accept these opportunities. Everyone has different living conditions, and money plays an important role in them. Some don't live under constant financial stress from bills, and have extra money to spare. That additional funding is used as an investment for their happiness and their pursuit of the American dream, however for the people who cannot afford to invest in this journey, it is extremely difficult to attain the status of living that an ideal happy American has. Therefore, the relationship between capitalism and the American dream is incredibly direct. Capitalism and economic backing make the American dream and a good quality of life attainable, and significantly easier to achieve.

Prompt: In 2004, Barack Obama was a candidate for the U.S. Senate from Illinois when he delivered the keynote address at the Democratic National Convention, a major gathering where the Democratic Party officially nominated Senator John Kerry as its candidate for president. The following is an excerpt from that speech. Read the passage carefully. Write an essay that analyzes the rhetorical choices Obama makes to share his vision of America. In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that analyzes the writer's rhetorical choices.
- Select and use evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the rhetorical situation.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

On behalf of the great state of Illinois, crossroads of a nation, land of Lincoln, let me express my deep gratitude for the privilege of addressing this convention. Tonight is a particular honor for me because, let's face it, my presence on this stage is pretty unlikely. My father was a foreign student, born and raised in a small village in Kenya. He grew up herding goats, went to school in a tin-roof shack. His father, my grandfather, was a cook, a domestic servant.

But my grandfather had larger dreams for his son. Through hard work and perseverance my father got a scholarship to study in a magical place: America, which stood as a beacon of freedom and opportunity to so many who had come before. While studying here, my father met my mother. She was born in a town on the other side of the world, in Kansas. Her father worked on oil rigs and farms through most of the Depression. The day after Pearl Harbor he signed up for duty, joined Patton's army and marched across Europe. Back home, my grandmother raised their baby and went to work on a bomber assembly line. After the war, they studied on the GI Bill, bought a house through FHA, and moved west in search of opportunity.

And they, too, had big dreams for their daughter, a common dream, born of two continents. My parents shared not only an improbable love; they shared an abiding faith in the possibilities of this nation. They would give me an African name, Barack, or "blessed," believing that in a tolerant America your name is no barrier to success. They imagined me going to the best schools in the land, even though they weren't rich, because in a generous America you don't have to be rich to achieve your potential. They are both passed away now. Yet, I know that, on this night, they look down on me with pride.

I stand here today, grateful for the diversity of my heritage, aware that my parents' dreams live on in my precious daughters. I stand here knowing that my story is part of the larger American story, that I owe a debt to all of those who came before me, and that, in no other country on earth, is my story even possible. Tonight, we gather to affirm the greatness of our nation, not because of the height of our skyscrapers, or the power of our military, or the size of our economy. Our pride is based on a very simple premise, summed up in a declaration made over two hundred years ago, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal. That they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights. That among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

That is the true genius of America, a faith in the simple dreams of its people, the insistence on small miracles. That we can tuck in our children at night and know they are fed and clothed and safe from harm. That we can say what we think, write what we think, without hearing a sudden knock on the door. That we can have an idea and start our own business without paying a bribe or hiring somebody's son. That we can participate in the political process without fear of retribution, and that our votes will be counted - or at least, most of the time.

This year, in this election, we are called to reaffirm our values and commitments, to hold them against a hard reality and see how we are measuring up, to the legacy of our forbearers, and the promise of future generations. And fellow Americans - Democrats, Republicans, Independents - I say to you tonight: we have more work to do. More to do for the workers I met in Galesburg, Illinois, who are losing their union jobs at the Maytag plant that's moving to Mexico, and now are having to compete with their own children for jobs that pay seven bucks an hour. More to do for the father I met who was losing his job and choking back tears, wondering how he would pay \$4,500 a month for the drugs his son needs without the health benefits he counted on. More to do for the young woman in East St. Louis, and thousands more like her, who has the grades, has the drive, has the will, but doesn't have the money to go to college.

Essay: In his keynote address at the 2004 Democratic national convention in which he was a candidate for the U.S senate from Illinois, former president Barack Obama, a politician of black descent, from a patriotic family with a history of serving America, utilizes repetition to appeal to the American population to show his acknowledgement of the problems many citizens face, and personification to link america to commendable traits seen in humans to make his audience understand his vision and what he plans to accomplish as a politician if he were to be elected as part of the nation's leadership, as well as to show why his vision should be implemented, to gain more votes and support from the population.

Firstly, Obama makes use of repetition throughout his speech when he is about to state something he would do if he was in office, to place emphasis on his plan of action. As a politician Obama's goal through this speech is to find a point where he can appeal to the American population, and share his vision to gain their votes and support. Obama shares, "we have more work to do. More to do for the workers I met in Galesburg, Illinois, who are losing their union jobs at the Maytag plant that's moving to Mexico, and now are having to compete with their own children for jobs that pay seven bucks an hour. More to do for the father I met who was losing his job and choking back tears, wondering how he would pay \$4,500 a month for the drugs his son needs without the health benefits he counted on. More to do for the young woman in East St. Louis, and thousands more like her, who has the grades, has the drive, has the will, but doesn't have the money to go to college" This statement shares about the problems that the population is facing, especially problems that cause people immense pain, to target their emotions, and help them feel a sense of unity and start wanting his vision to come true. Obama repeats the statement "more to do" because it emphasizes the mental pressure points and problems he will target to gain immense support from people who live with these problems daily. Obama also uses repetition when he says, "That we can tuck in our children at night and

know they are fed and clothed and safe from harm. That we can say what we think, write what we think, without hearing a sudden knock on the door. That we can have an idea and start our own business without paying a bribe or hiring somebody's son." This quote also targets an emotional response from the population, because this is again, targeting problems that people face in situations where they don't have free autonomy over their situation. Obama is implying that his vision can give them the freedom to make choices that won't continue making them susceptible to these issues, and that this will happen if they vote for him and allow him to carry out his vision through his repetition of the phrase "that we can" which emphasizes his points. Therefore, Obama's use of repetition places emphasis on emotional problems the population faces, and he uses repetition to gain more votes.

Next, Obama uses personification, by giving the nation human traits. Obama refers to America as, "a generous America." Generosity is a commendable human trait, and by giving America this trait Obama allows his vision to be more understandable, or personified to be easier for the population to comprehend. A generous America appeals to citizens because in a land where a lot of success is determined through financial status, generosity and opportunities are very valuable. Obama's use of personification allows him to link America with opportunity. The message that this sends to the audience is that by electing Obama, he will maintain and broaden this core value of America. By living in a nation governed by someone who prioritizes opportunity and resources for the betterment of its people he appeals to the citizens who are always prioritizing a better way of life. Through this Obama gains more votes, by sharing his vision. Additionally, Obama also states, "They would give me an African name, Barack or 'blessed,' believing that in a tolerant America your name is no barrier to success." This also uses personification, by linking the trait of tolerance to America. America is a very racially and religiously diverse nation. By personifying America as tolerable, and showing toleration of diversity in his vision, Obama appeals to all of the races in America, all of the people who believe in equality for everyone. Obama shows that if he is elected, all of the people in the nation will have equal opportunity no matter what their race, gender, or religion is. Obama utilizes this to appeal to the emotional aspect of the population as well, directly sending a message to everyone who had their rights violated through racist encounters, or opportunities taken away due to their ethnic background. He is showing them that by voting for him he will protect their rights no matter who they are, and what their backgrounds are. Therefore, Obama's use of personification appeals to the vision that he wants to maintain, for the betterment of America, and he uses it to help his argument appeal to the citizens for more votes.

Obama's rhetorical choices of personification and repetition help him address and emphasize the vision that he will work towards accomplishing as an elected official. He appeals to the populations' emotions to cause more support for himself as a candidate, and to gain more votes to win the election in his 2004 keynote address.

Prompt: Hua Hsu is a staff writer for The New Yorker whose work often explores American culture, identity, and history. In "The Curious Career of 'the American Dream,'" published by The New Yorker in 2026, Hsu considers whether the promise of opportunity, prosperity, and self-invention still holds meaning in contemporary America. Read the passage carefully. Write an essay that analyzes the rhetorical choices Hsu makes to communicate his position on the changing meaning of the American Dream:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that analyzes the writer's rhetorical choices.
- Select and use evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the rhetorical situation.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

Many of these accounts [about how to revive the American Dream] are notable because they come from liberal or progressive circles, where faith in the American Dream is often dismissed as gauche and conservative. After Zohran Mamdani won the 2025 New York City mayor's race, the activist and former Democratic National Committee co-vice-chair David Hogg remarked that Mamdani's election was about "making the American Dream possible again." Mamdani, proud of his socialist values, had developed a language for communicating a collective, interdependent vision of city life through his consistent emphasis on affordability. For progressives like Hogg, Mamdani's campaign showed a way to address the Democratic Party's so-called American Dream problem: the way left-leaning politicians struggle to talk about a more prosperous future. It's one thing to point out that the MAGA movement draws on a troublingly distorted or bigoted version of the nation's past. It's another to offer something equally sweeping and seductive in its place.

Despite America's wealth and relative stability, numerous metrics suggest a country in distress, lagging behind other affluent nations in everything from life expectancy to results on surveys of global happiness and well-being. The American Dream once presumed a steady, patient faith in merit and hard work. Now, with the internet as our window onto the world outside, people fantasize about exponential, rather than linear, accumulation. Influencers cash in on viral fame, startups fear that this is the last age of human innovation, and people seem increasingly hungry to seize what they can before the old systems, and the values that sustained them, disappear. The rise of cryptocurrency and online prediction markets signals a deepening loss of faith in the visions of middle-class stability that once powered American life. For some, upward mobility feels more attainable in Canada or Western Europe than it does in the U.S. A recent Wall Street Journal article made clear that "the new American dream, for some of its citizens, is to no longer live there," with a record number of Americans choosing to move abroad. There's even the recent social-media trend of "Chinamaxxing," in which Americans with no obvious connection to China fetishize and marvel at the futuristic life style and opportunities available there.

A couple of years ago, I began teaching a class on the American Dream, mostly because I noticed that more and more of my college students were voicing curiosity about it. Some of them invoked it ironically, but many genuinely wondered whether it used to be real, and what it

meant to inherit this foundational idea at a time when norms seemed in constant flux. It sounded like a fragment of language from another world, and yet they recognized how they had internalized its enchanting logic, the belief that there is something virtuous in the relentless pursuit of material achievement. What I realized was that they were in search of a meaningful future, since the one that had compelled so many of their forebears dutifully forward no longer seemed possible.

My students grapple with what horizons remain meaningful today. We're taught to believe that hard work insures a good outcome, even as the stepping stones to a secure life grow harder to find. Where does one look for models if élites and powerful decision-makers seem to have ascended through nepotism or greed rather than through merit? How can homework and grades possibly matter in the age of A.I.? One student, reflecting on the relentless demand for productivity and output, wondered if the American Dream was delivery on demand or having the time to cook for yourself. Earning a college degree or owning a home was once not just a status marker but an investment that promised material returns. Today, people amass unmanageable debt simply to keep faith with a story that feels increasingly detached from their reality.

Inevitably, our discussions turn to what else might draw us onward, if not the white picket fence. The American Dream, as James Truslow Adams explained, was never just about cars and salaries. Even if many who debate his phrase today have no idea who he was, Adams's own career can prompt us to ask what, exactly, we are seeking. After all, he left business to devote himself to history and to thinking about what it might mean for America's future. He believed that the collective spirit of self-improvement was symbolized best not by the nation's wealth but by the reading room of the Library of Congress, open to rich and poor alike. My students and I try to imagine a version of the American Dream that becomes something altogether different. Is the answer to be found in Fitzgerald or Baldwin, in a politician or a viral star? We still haven't figured it out, but no one has given up yet.

Essay: Hua Hsu, a staff writer and college professor who explores ideologies and culture rooted deep into American society utilizes allusions by referring to american leadership, irony by pointing out the contrast with reality and teachings and symbolism by using common examples to share his bigger picture through his depictions of contemporary America in his 2026 article published in The New Yorker. He uses rhetorical devices to convey that the promise of opportunity, prosperity, and self-invention, has been severely diluted, and doesn't hold meaning in modern American society.

Hsu alludes to the American Democratic Party. He refers to the "progressive circles, where faith in the American Dream is often dismissed as gauche or conservative." He proceeds to refer to its lacking in the subject of the American Dream by pointing out that the party finds it difficult to talk about a successful and prosperous future for America. The American dream is commonly known as the end goal, or what the average American citizen desires out of his life. By alluding to the lack of this value in the democratic party, which was the standing leadership at the time, he exposes the lack of meaning the promise of prosperity holds in modern society. The allusion evokes the audiences' reasoning and helps them ponder upon whether the

government's lack of priority for one of America's core values should be accepted. His use of the allusion helps evoke logos within the audience to reason with them about how the American dream is losing meaning and value amongst modern society. Additionally, Hsu also alludes to an article published in the wall street journal. A recent Wall Street Journal article made clear that "the new American dream, for some of its citizens, is to no longer live there," with a record number of Americans choosing to move abroad. This allusion also helps him highlight the newfound deterioration of the American dream. Many people find themselves drawn to the new opportunities and jobs promised by America. His allusion to the decreasing will to live in America shows the decreasing weight of the promise of opportunity. Through his allusions he helps the reader understand the diminishing meaning of the American dream.

Hsu also uses irony throughout his text. He states, "My students grapple with what horizons remain meaningful today. We're taught to believe that hard work ensures a good outcome, even as the stepping stones to a secure life grow harder to find." This is ironic because it shows that though the initial teachings ensure a good outcome through hard work, in contemporary America even hard work doesn't ensure opportunity. Hsu's use of irony helps him convey the meaningless promise of opportunity and prosperity to the audience to show how the American Dream doesn't hold as much weight in contemporary society anymore.

Another prevalent rhetorical device in his article is symbolism. Hsu symbolizes hard work as homework in his article when he states, "How can homework and grades possibly matter in the age of A.I.?" The rhetorical question asked through symbolizing homework as hard work helps him quantify and allow the audience to understand the meaninglessness of hard work in a society focused on smart workarounds. He uses this symbolism to share a quantified and understandable depiction of the uselessness of the work in a nation where opportunity is not guaranteed, and prosperity is decreasingly probable. He uses this to show the lessening worth of the promise of prosperity and opportunity in America.

Hsu's use of rhetorical devices help him share the lack of meaning America's promise of prosperity, opportunity, and self innovation holds in contemporary society. He wants the reader to understand that through years of a constantly changing and adapting society, American values and appeals have significantly been diminished. He uses rhetorical devices to help quantify this lofty topic, and inform them about the unfortunate lack of prevalence of the american dream in an increasingly leftward, and competitive nation.