

Theme: American Way

The **American way of life** is an expression that refers to the lifestyle of people living in the United States of America. It is an example of a behavioral modality, developed from the 17th century until today. It refers to a nationalist ethos that purports to adhere to principles of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." It has some connection to the concept of American exceptionalism and the American Dream.



1937 [Louisville, Kentucky](#). [Margaret Bourke-White](#). *There's no way like the American Way*

The American Way of life is individualistic, dynamic, and pragmatic. It affirms the supreme value and dignity of the individual; it stresses incessant activity on his part, for he is never to rest but is always to be striving to "get ahead"; it defines an ethic of self-reliance, merit, and character, and judges by achievement: "deeds, not creeds" are what count. The "American Way of Life" is humanitarian, "forward-looking", optimistic. Americans are easily the most generous and philanthropic people in the world, in terms of their ready and unstinting response to suffering anywhere on the globe. The American believes in progress, in self-improvement, and quite fanatically in education. But above all, the American is idealistic. Americans cannot go on making money or achieving worldly success simply on its own merits; such "materialistic" things must, in the American mind, be justified in "higher" terms, in terms of "service" or "stewardship" or "general welfare"... And because they are so idealistic, Americans tend to be moralistic;

they are inclined to see all issues as plain and simple, black and white, issues of morality.

Task 1

Can You Tell which Sentences are True and which are False?

Statements:

1. The American way of life is based on the principles of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."
2. The American Way of life is collective and community-oriented.
3. Americans value individualism and self-reliance.
4. Americans are not known for their generosity and philanthropy.
5. Education is not highly valued in American society.
6. Americans believe in progress and self-improvement.
7. Americans tend to see issues in shades of gray rather than black and white.

The American Dream

Few terms are defined in so many different ways or bandied about more loosely than "the American Dream." To some people, the term is a joke, an object of satire, derision, or contempt, and a made-in-America label for a congeries of chauvinistic clichés mouthed by jingoists. To others, it merely signifies self-determined success, wealth, the "good life" of modish clothes, sports cars, and hot tubs - in a word, the latest thing touted by Madison Avenue. And to still others, less scornful or frivolous, it denotes a unique set of social and moral ideals.

The phrase "the American Dream" came into the American vocabulary starting in 1867 when writer, Horatio Alger came out with his book "Ragged Dick." It was a rags-to-riches tale of a poor orphan boy in New York City who saves his pennies, works hard and eventually becomes rich. It became the model that through honesty, hard work and strong determination, the American Dream was available to anyone willing to make the journey. The origin of the American dream stems from the departure in government and economics from the models of the Old World. This

allowed unprecedented freedom, especially the possibility of dramatic upward social mobility.

Many early Americans prospectors headed west of the Rocky Mountains to buy acres of cheap land in hopes of finding deposits of gold. The American dream was a driving factor not only in the Gold Rush of the mid to late 1800s, but also in the waves of immigration throughout that century and the following. Impoverished western Europeans escaping the Irish potato famines in Ireland, the Highland clearances in Scotland and the aftermath of Napoleon in the rest of Europe came to America to escape a poor quality of life at home. They wanted to embrace the promise of financial security and constitutional freedom they had heard existed so widely in the United States.

Nearing the twentieth century, major industrialist personalities became the new model of the American dream, many beginning lives in the humblest of conditions but later controlling enormous corporations and fortunes.

The key difference here from the Old World societal structure is that the antiquated monarchies of Western Europe and their post-feudal economies actively oppressed the peasant class. They also required high levels of taxation, which crippled development. People who were consciously free of these constraints,

In the 20th century, the American dream had its challenges. The Depression caused widespread hardship during the Twenties and Thirties, and was almost a reverse of the dream for those directly affected. Racial instability did not disappear, and in some parts of the country racial violence was almost commonplace. Since the end of World War II, young American families have sought to live in relative bourgeois comfort in the suburbs that they built up. The possibility of great wealth has remained more of a distant dream in the recent century, while the widely held goal of home ownership, financial security, and civil and international stability have come to take the place of the common American dream in modern times.

The basic capitalistic virtues of hard work, intelligence and independence had been seen as the means to achieving this 'final' incarnation of the American dream.

A skeptical view would say that the American dream was built on aggressive colonialism. The Civil War to promote Liberty could be seen to be undermined by the earlier displacement, dispossession and slaughter of the original inhabitants of the land: this amounts to genocide on a par with that which many immigrants came to these shores to escape.

Other critics point out the falsity of the implied view that everyone can succeed and become rich if they only try hard enough. This view, it is said, penalizes people who are poor and already penalized, and does not take into account individual levels of ability and potential.

It is true that for most people the American Dream is a pursuit of material prosperity. But actually, to find out what your American Dream is you should find what you love. When you find what you love and fit it into your life (or better yet, fit your life around it), then you have found your personal dream, your own piece of the American Dream

Task 2

Questions:

1. According to the text, how is the term "the American Dream" sometimes viewed?

- A. A joke and a made-in-America label.
- B. A symbol of self-determined success.
- C. A conglomeration of chauvinistic cliches.
- D. A model of social and moral ideals.

2. When did the phrase "the American Dream" first appear in American vocabulary?

- A. 1867
- B. 1800s
- C. 1900s
- D. 1920s

3. What was the driving factor behind the waves of immigration to America in the 19th century?

- A. The promise of financial security and constitutional freedom.
- B. The discovery of gold in the Rocky Mountains.

- C. Escaping poor quality of life in Western Europe.
- D. The desire for acres of cheap land.

4. Who became the new model of the American Dream in the 20th century?

- A. Major industrialist personalities.
- B. Impoverished western Europeans.
- C. Orphan boys in New York City.
- D. Young American families in the suburbs.

5. According to the text, what virtues were seen as the means to achieving the American Dream?

- A. Hard work, intelligence, and independence.
- B. Aggressive colonialism and displacement.
- C. Financial security and constitutional freedom.
- D. Material prosperity and individual potential.

6. What does the text suggest is necessary to find one's personal American Dream?

- A. Pursuit of material prosperity.
- B. Trying hard enough to become rich.
- C. Discovering what you love and fitting it into your life.
- D. Achieving the common American Dream in modern times.