

# **The American Dream**

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## CONTENT

I.	The Notion and Its Origins	4
II.	Immigration and the American Dream	7
III.	The Evolution of the American Dream	11
IV.	Martin Luther King Jr. and His Dream	15
V.	The Shattering of the American Dream	17
VI.	9.11 and the Way It Influenced the American Dream	20
VII.	The American Dream Today	22

## I. The Notion and Its Origins.

### Pre-reading activity.

**In your opinion, what is meant by the American Dream? Write down your definition.**

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With a fellow-student, write 3 questions below that you have about "the American Dream."

1. \_\_\_\_\_?
2. \_\_\_\_\_?
3. \_\_\_\_\_?

Read the text below and look for answers to your questions.

*Steven Stone*

*November 21, 2002*

*The Dying American Dream*

<http://www.renewamerica.us/columns/stone/021121>

#### **“A definition**

Socrates said, in essence, that all learning is *defining*. Learning involves putting words – precise words – to old ideas, in search of truth.

Any discussion of the “American Dream”, therefore, must begin with its clear definition. To accurately construct this definition, we need to go no further than the Declaration of Independence, the inspiration for America’s national ideals.

After affirming that all legitimate human rights are God-given, the Declaration declares that “among these [rights] are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” Such ideals, of course, are hollow without the freedom to pursue and apply them. Any meaningful definition of the American Dream, therefore, must center in the reasonable freedom actually to seek these three cherished ends – the pursuit of happiness, the exercise of liberty, and the sustaining (and protecting) of life. That is clearly the basis of the original American Dream.

In a word, the American Dream – if it has any meaning at all – is the freedom to choose exactly how we will undertake anything we wish to do in this life, provided that in doing so we respect the rights of all others to do the same thing.

#### **Freedom and opportunity**

Ultimately, the Dream is *personal freedom*, and that freedom exists only to the extent that we have *actual opportunity*...

Before going further, it is important to stress that the American Dream is not limited to “material success” – nor does it mean “getting rich”. It is the freedom to **TRY** to live as we ourselves choose to live in all dimensions of life – material, spiritual, vocational, educational – in harmony with the divine laws of the Creator who gave us life and endowed us with natural rights. As long as we are law-abiding, as long as we are concerned with the welfare and happiness of others as our own, we have every right to live exactly as we please – as we seek to follow the will of God in our individual lives.

That is the American Dream – inspired by the Declaration, and protected by the Constitution”.

### Answer the questions:

1. What are the aspects of the American Dream, according to the author?
2. Would you include both material and spiritual things in the concept of the American Dream? Why? Why not? Give your reasons.
3. Is your definition of the American Dream different from the author's? In what respect is it different? Are there any similarities?
4. Can you think of any Americans who have lived to see their Dream realized?
5. Have you found all the answers to your questions in the text? If not, read on!

**Read the following dictionary definitions of the American Dream. Discuss them in pairs. Compare them. Which one do you consider to be the most informative?**

*Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture, 1992, p. 33:*

**American Dream (the):** the idea that the US is a place where everyone has the chance of becoming rich and successful. Many immigrants to the US in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century believed in the American Dream

*Oxford Guide to British and American Culture, 2001, p. 13:*

The **American Dream**: the belief of Americans that their country offers opportunities for a good and successful life. For minorities and people coming from abroad to live in America, the dream also includes freedom and equal rights.

*З.С. Трофимова. Словарь новых слов и значений в английском языке. 1993, с. 19:*

**American Dream:** американская мечта. 1. Идеалы демократии, равенства и свободы, на которых основаны США. 2. американский образ жизни; американская культура и общество.

**American Dream** является политической философией американизма и понимается большинством англо-говорящих как сочетание свободы и равных возможностей.

Иногда используется иронично и саркастически теми, кто критикует американский образ жизни.

Известные американские писатели Норман Мейлер и Эдвард Олби резко критикуют американское общество и его «мечту», первый в романе “An American Dream”, а второй – в пьесе “The American Dream”.

<http://www.americana.ru>

**American Dream** // «американская мечта» // Идеалы свободы и открытых возможностей для всех, основанные на вере в безграничные возможности США и их исключительное место в мире, которыми руководствовались, согласно официальной американской политической мифологии, «отцы-основатели» //Forefathers, Founding Fathers// Соединенных Штатов Америки. В широком понимании: американские ценности, от самых высоких до простой мечты американца о собственном доме. Концепция «американской мечты» критиковалась многими философами и писателями, например, Н. Мейлером в одноименном романе 1965г. “An American Dream”, но для многих она продолжает сохранять привлекательность.

*Irina Zhukova, Maria Lebedko. American Quilt. A Reference Book on American Culture. 1999, p. 33:*

**American Dream.** A proverbial phrase connoting popular belief that perseverance and hard work will bring forth America's bounty in the form of material well-being. For an average American the hope for prosperity and happiness is symbolized particularly by having a house of

one's own. Possibly applied at first to the hopes of immigrants, the phrase now applies to all except the very rich, and suggests a confident hope that the economic and social condition of one's children will be better than that of one's own. The average American is supposed to dream of having a family, living in a house in the suburbs, having more than enough money to live on, having two cars, etc. In the past, only the husband was expected to work. This is becoming increasingly rare nowadays.

**Summarize the constituents of the American Dream and fill in the graph. The first point is shown as an example:**

1. To be rich and successful
2.
3.
4.

**Skim the following text to find its message:**

*[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American\\_dream&Internet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_dream&Internet)*

“It is usually believed that the word-combination in question first appeared in print in 1931, when an American historian, J.T. Adams, used it in his book entitled “The Epic of America”. Interestingly, some sources point out that the phrase came into the American vocabulary much earlier, namely, in 1867. At that time an American writer, Horatio Alger, put out his book “Ragged Dick”, which told a rags-to-riches tale of a poor orphan boy in New York City who saves money, works hard and eventually becomes rich. The moral of the book was that through honesty, hard work and perseverance, the American Dream was available to anyone willing to make an effort.

However, it was J.T. Adams who drew everyone's attention to the phrase, treating it seriously and scientifically. He wrote: ‘The American Dream is that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement. It is a difficult dream for the European upper classes to interpret adequately, and too many of us ourselves have grown weary and mistrustful of it. It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position’.

Adams was well aware of the fact that this was a new term and argued with his editor, E. Sedgwick, who was against using it in the book's title. Allegedly, Sedgwick said that ‘no red-blooded American would pay \$3.50 for a dream’. However, Adams replied that “Red-blooded Americans have always been willing to gamble their last peso on a dream...’

It goes without saying that the notion of such a dream, the concept as such, is likely to have emerged long before the 1930s, as it has already been pointed out. But it is symptomatic that the term began to be widely used during the Depression, when the prevailing feeling among the American people was that of fear, disappointment, even loss. What was it that people in the years of the Great Depression felt they had lost? It may well have been the same things they still list when describing the American Dream today: individual freedom, social justice, the ability to maintain certain living standards, and the hope of a better life for their children.

So, when J.T. Adams used the phrase, he managed to capture something peculiarly American: a belief in a society both open and dynamic, a society based on a commitment to individual opportunity and to a better life for each generation. He put across an important

message to his fellow-citizens: ‘Don’t lose heart. Everything’s not lost as long as we believe that people succeed because of their actual individual talents, efforts and accomplishments rather than the social class into which they are born’”.

**Can you think of any components of a happy and fulfilling life in Russia? What do the two countries have in common? Are there any differences between the two countries in this respect? Write a short essay for your students’ paper on the subject. Your essay should have the following format:**

**I. General Introduction.**

**II. Differences and similarities.**

**III. Your point of view.**

**IV. Conclusion.**

**Parts II and III of your essay may consist of more than one paragraph, depending on the number of ideas, or theses that you would like to introduce.**

## **II. Immigration and the American Dream.**

**Scan the text to find out the reasons why immigrants came to America. List the main points:**

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American\\_dream&Internet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_dream&Internet)

“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. Additionally, from the Revolutionary War well into the later half of the nineteenth century, many of America’s physical resources were unclaimed and often undiscovered, allowing the possibility of coming across a fortune through relatively little, but lucky investment in land or industry...

Many early American 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 famine 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.

The acquisition of great wealth by such famous personalities as Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller appeared to demonstrate that if you had talent, intelligence, and a willingness to work extremely hard, you were likely to be a success in life as a result.

Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, immigrants fled the monarchies of Western Europe and their post-feudal economies, which actively oppressed the peasant class. These economic systems required high levels of taxation, which did not promote development. The American economy, however, was built up by people who were consciously free of these constraints...

...The American Dream, along with the escape from persecution or war in one’s home country has always been the primary reason for immigrants wanting to come to America...

By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the promise of the American Dream had begun to lure substantial numbers of immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe. Huge numbers of Italians, Poles, Greeks, Jews, Russians and others came to find work in industrial cities such as New

York, Chicago, Philadelphia and Detroit. This wave of immigration continued until the outbreak of World War I.

The American Dream appears to have enduring appeal to many in other countries. The United States remains a magnet for immigrants today, receiving one million legal entrants annually – the highest such rate in the world. Whereas past generations of immigrants tended to come from Europe, a majority of contemporary immigrants arrive from Latin America and Asia. Unknown numbers of illegal immigrants also enter the country annually, chiefly from across the southern border with Mexico.”

**Read an extract about present-day situation with immigration in the United States. Answer the questions and complete the task afterwards.**

***The Americano Dream***

***July 14<sup>th</sup> 2005***

***From The Economist print edition***

**If domestic mobility is a centrifuge, immigration is a melting pot**

AMERICA is going through one of its periodic bursts of high immigration. According to the Census Bureau, the country is home to about 34 m people born abroad, half as many again as ten years ago. It is also going through one of its periodic panics about the subject...

The critics fear that the Hispanic wave – especially that part rolling in from Mexico, which accounts for about two-thirds of the total – is in danger of creating two nations: the existing one (which Robert Levine, in the *Public Interest* magazine, dubbed the “Anglo-Protestant-African-Catholic-Indian-German-Irish-Jewish-Italian-Slavic-Asian society”), and a Spanish-speaking sub-group. The new wave is unusually big, say the worriers; it is growing unusually fast, is unusually cohesive (everyone speaks Spanish) and, unlike previous waves of immigrants, it is fed by a country next door that is continually refreshing the cultural differences between Hispanic immigrants and the rest of the country. As Samuel Huntington expressed it in his book, “Who are We?”, published last year, Mexican immigration is leading towards the demographic *reconquista* of areas Americans took from Mexico...it is also blurring the border between Mexico and America, introducing a very different culture.”

If true, this would obviously be a big problem in its own right. It would also reinforce centrifugal trends that are already present in American society. But this section will argue that such fears are much exaggerated. There are problems, to be sure, though these mostly concern America’s immigration policy and illegal immigrants. But legal immigrants are neither as numerous nor as culturally different as the pessimists fear. And, far from exacerbating the centrifugal forces in America, immigrants are helping to counteract them.

Some 34m Americans, around 11% of the population, were born abroad. That sounds a lot. But in 1890, a time of mass immigration of Italians, Irish and Jews, that proportion was 15%. At one point, the Irish alone made up 10% of the population.

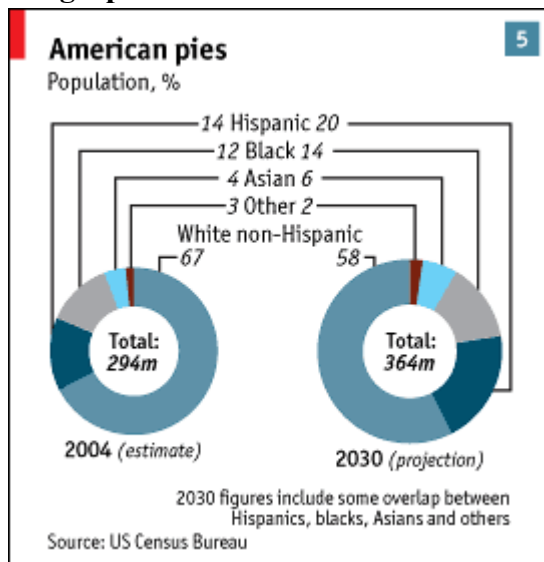
By far the largest immigrant group now consists of Hispanics. They accounted for around half of America’s total population increase between 2000 and 2004, more than in the 1990s. Half the Hispanics are under 27. The Census Bureau forecasts that by 2050 the Hispanic population will have increased by 200%, the population as a whole by 50% and whites by only 30%. At that point, Hispanics will make up just under a quarter of the population, and Mexicans about one-sixth.



## Questions for discussion:

1. How many Americans were born abroad, according to the author?
2. What was the proportion of immigrants at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century?
3. Why are there worries expressed about the new wave of immigration?
4. What are the Census Bureau forecasts for the future?

**Assignment: Study the graph below and compare the situation with sections of population in 2004 and 2030. Prepare a short presentation for your fellow-students, using the graph as a basis.**



**Before reading the text that follows, discuss with your fellow-student what the title may mean. Skim through the text and say whether your predictions have been correct. Answer the questions attached to the text.**

From *Her American Dream*

By Marilyn Gardner, staff writer for *The Christian Science Monitor* ([www.csmonitor.com](http://www.csmonitor.com))

Sometimes, when Ada Torrado unlocks the door of the bakery that bears her name – Ada’s Creations – she thinks about how far she has come since leaving the Dominican Republic and immigrating to Providence, R.I., with three small children.

Unable to continue her 13-year career in Dominican banking because she spoke little English, she settled for a menial job in a jewelry factory. But after two years, realizing that Providence had no Spanish bakery, she began making Spanish desserts to sell and eventually opened a bakery. In the process, she joined the ranks of immigrant women entrepreneurs, one of the fastest-growing groups of business owners in the United States. “I have more and more customers”, Ms. Torrado says, her voice lilting on the phone. “My dream is coming true”.



In 2000, 8% of employed immigrant women were business owners, compared with 6% of employed native-born women, according to a report from the Immigration Policy Center in Washington. The largest group – 41% -- comes from Latin America and the Caribbean. 30% come from Asia and the Pacific Islands.

“The fact that more women than men are immigrating to the US tells me that they are looking for opportunities”, says Susan Pearce, director of Global Women of Baltimore and author of the report. “There are more women who would appreciate the opportunity to own a business”.

Those businesses, mostly in service industries, range from one-person home-based enterprises to firms bringing in millions of dollars. Many employ family members and others from their country, as well as native-born Americans. In addition to contributing to the local economy, the jobs they create enable some workers to send money to relatives back home.

### **Questions for Discussion:**

1. Why are more women than men immigrating to the US?
2. What proportion of employed immigrant women were business owners as compared with employed native-born women? How can those figures be accounted for?
3. Where do most immigrant women come from?
4. What kind of businesses do they usually own?

**Read excerpts from Arnold Schwarzenegger's address as governor of California (September 2, 2004) from *The Capitalism Magazine*. (<http://www.CapMag.com>). Complete the task after the text.**

### **The American Dream**

*By Arnold Schwarzenegger (September 2, 2004)*

Thank you.

What a greeting!

This is like winning an Oscar! ...As if I would know! Speaking of acting, one of my movies was called "True Lies". It's what the Democrats should have called their convention.

My fellow Americans, this is an amazing moment for me. To think that once a scrawny boy from Austria could grow up to become governor of California and stand in Madison Square Garden to speak on behalf of the president of the United States. That is an immigrant's dream. It's the American dream.

I was born in Europe... and I've traveled all over the world. I can tell you that there is no place, no country, more compassionate, more generous, more accepting and more welcoming than the United States of America...

I...arrived here in 1968. I had empty pockets, but I was full of dreams... Everything I have – my career, my success, my family – I owe to America. In this country, it doesn't make any difference where you were born. It doesn't make any difference who your parents were. It doesn't make any difference if, like me, you couldn't even speak English until you were in your twenties.

America gave me opportunities and my immigrant dreams came true. I want other people to get the same chances I did, the same opportunities. And I believe they can.

**Pair work. Ask questions to these answers. Do it taking turns.**

1. "That is an immigrant's dream. It's the American dream."
2. "I...arrived here in 1968. I had empty pockets, but I was full of dreams..."
3. "Everything I have – my career, my success, my family – I owe to America."
4. "In this country, it doesn't make any difference where you were born."
5. "It doesn't make any difference who your parents were."
6. "It doesn't make any difference if, like me, you couldn't even speak English until you were in your twenties."
7. "America gave me opportunities and my immigrant dreams came true."
8. "I want other people to get the same chances I did, the same opportunities."

**Summarize in writing the main points of this section.**

### III. The Evolution of the American Dream.

**Introductory remarks.** It is obvious that the American Dream is not a static, but a dynamic concept. It changes with time. Some people say that the American Dream is mainly about attaining material prosperity, that people work more hours to get bigger cars, fancier homes, but in the end have less time to enjoy their prosperity. Others say that the American Dream is beyond the understanding of people living below the poverty line: they are just trying to make sure that their families survive. Yet others have a vision of a new American Dream, with less focus on financial gain and more emphasis on living a happy, fulfilling life.

**For example, this is what an American sociologist, Richard Florida, writes about “The New American Dream” (Richard Florida. *The New American Dream. Washington Monthly, March 2003*). Scan the text to find out what the author means by the phrase. List the new aspects of this notion, comparing them with the ones in the section “The Notion and Its Origins.” Is there anything they have in common? What are the differences, if any? Share your ideas with the class.**

“The American Dream is no longer just about money. Better pay, a nice house, and a rising standard of living will always be attractive. But my research and others’ show another factor emerging: The new American Dream is to maintain a reasonable living standard while doing work that we enjoy doing. In fact, many people are willing to trade income for work they enjoy. I’ve interviewed countless professionals who left secure jobs for riskier new ventures, often at lower pay, not for a shot at a stock-option bonanza but for a chance to do work that excites them...

Clearly, a living wage is still essential. Too many Americans still have trouble affording what they need or would like to have. But being able to afford food and decent health care is merely a baseline requirement. Most people, including those on the lowest rungs, have a bigger vision, and it isn’t “the chance to get rich”, the line Reagan once borrowed from Lincoln. It’s Jefferson’s idea: the pursuit of happiness. The dream is to reap intrinsic rewards from our work rather than merely be ‘compensated’ for the time and effort we put in...

The old American Dream was a job with which to feed your family. The new Dream is a job *you love*; with which to feed your family”.

However, Richard Florida is not alone in his perception of the notion being in the state of flux, of constant evolution. Thus, Matthew Warshauer, Professor of History at Central Connecticut University, argues that today the emphasis in realizing one’s American Dream is not on hard work and perseverance (as it used to be in the XVIII, XIX, and the first half of the XXth century), but on getting money quickly, on instant wealth. (*M. Warshauer. Who Wants to be a Millionaire: Changing Conceptions of the American Dream. American Studies Today Online. (<http://www.americansc.org.uk>)*)

**Read excerpts from his article and list the ways one’s American Dream may be realized today, according to the author.**

**First, read the introduction to the article and answer the questions, following it:**

“... Americans have traditionally centered their efforts on thrift and hard work. During the Colonial Period, Benjamin Franklin counseled people on “The Way to Wealth”. *Poor Richard’s Almanac* advised that “Early to Bed, and early to rise, makes a Man healthy, wealthy, and wise”. The key to wealth was industry: “Industry pays debts”,” insisted Poor Richard. Americans of the Early Republic expanded Franklin’s notion of industry into a labor ideology. For many the goal was not extravagant wealth, but, rather, economic independence and the opportunity for social

advancement through financial gain. Abraham Lincoln insisted that the greatness of the American North was that industry allowed all men to prosper...

In the midst of industrialization following the Civil War, many Americans experienced profound hardship in the changing economic landscape. They found solace in the tales of Horatio Alger, whose characters overcame adversity through industry, perseverance, self-reliance, and self-discipline. The ubiquitous “rags to riches” legend became a cornerstone of American society; anyone could succeed and achieve wealth if they worked hard. The commitment to industry illustrated by Alger’s characters, Lincoln’s ideals of free labor, and Franklin’s practical maxims were further solidified in the American mind by the addition of a religiously based, Protestant “work ethic”. Many believed that hard work allowed one to not only achieve financial success, but, through that success, revealed God’s grace.

Numerous scholars note that the shift away from the traditional American work ethic corresponded directly with the rise of industry... The aftermath of World War II exacerbated the ethical shift as a consumer culture blossomed and Americans became preoccupied with material goods. As one critic noted, “consumed by desires for status, material goods, and acceptance, Americans apparently had lost the sense of individuality, thrift, hard work, and craftsmanship that had characterized the nation.”

The result of this shift in work ethic has actually spurred rather than lessened the people’s desire to achieve the American Dream... Many Americans no longer entertain a vision for the future that includes time, sweat, and ultimate success. Rather, they covet the shortcut to wealth... Many people believe that wealth can be obtained quickly and easily.

### **Questions for Discussion.**

1. How did the understanding of the American Dream change with time, in the author’s opinion?
2. What are the reasons for this?

**Pre-reading task. Skim the first part of the article to find out what the author thinks about the TV game show “Who Wants To Be A Millionaire”. How does he support his point of view? How does the author use Poor Richard’s well-known maxim “Early to Bed, and early to rise, makes a Man healthy, wealthy, and wise” to drive his point home to the readers?**

*Who wants to be a millionaire?* Little reveals the shift in the quest for the American dream more than the insanely popular television game show, “Who Wants To Be A Millionaire,” hosted by Regis Philbin...

What sets apart “Who Wants To Be A Millionaire” from game shows of the past is the sheer amount that a contestant can win, combined with what at times seem to be amazingly easy questions. Five players achieved the \$1,000,000 mark in 2000, and two more have won the top prize in 2001. Dozens have won upwards of \$500,000. In addition to high rewards, “Who Wants To Be A Millionaire” is successful because the average viewers see themselves as potential winners.

“Who Wants To Be A Millionaire’s” success is directly related to the belief that anyone with a little knowledge and a lot of luck can be a millionaire. Such a message resonates with the mass of people specifically because it seems to make the American Dream so easily accessible. In the process, the most basic, traditional means of achieving the Dream, industry, has been eradicated. Poor Richard’s counsel to engage in “industry” is unnecessary in such a schema. Nowhere in Franklin’s writings did it say, “early to bed, early to rise, hope for some luck and you might win a prize.”

**Compare the material of this part of the article with the analogous game show on the Russian TV.**

- 1. Are the motivations of the players the same in Russia and in the USA?**
- 2. Do you think that the questions are at times “amazingly easy” in the Russian version?**
- 3. What do you think about the game?**
- 4. Would you like to take part in it?**

**Discuss these questions with your fellow-students.**

**Scan the part of the article which follows and find out what the chances of winning in a lottery are.**

*State lotteries.* “Who Wants To Be A Millionaire” and similar game shows are only the latest craze in capitalizing on the American Dream. All one needs is “A Buck and a Dream”, boasts the New York Lottery. Just as in the game shows, the lottery focuses on the hope of easy money with minimal effort. One does not need to work hard in order to choose a series of numbers...

Whereas the payoffs for the big jackpot lotteries are significantly higher than the “Millionaire” games – a May 2000 Powerball game reached 350 million, the odds of winning are equally long. With an average 1 in 12 to 14 million chance of winning, and 1 in 80 million for the big prizes, the degree of luck needed is astronomical. Still, Americans flock to the lottery when the possibility of scoring big is most remote...

Similar to the “Millionaire” game shows, one of the key components to realizing the American Dream is luck. Once again, Americans are sent a message that success can be achieved, not through industry, but, rather, via chance...

With such a message one might argue that the American Dream is alive and well, that its integrity has been maintained. Industry, Ben Franklin’s traditional ingredient, is realized through calculation and superior planning. Nothing, however, could be further from the truth. The lottery is unquestionably random. One needs only a buck, a dream, and unimaginable luck. Thus, like the “Millionaire” game shows, state lotteries, through carefully targeted advertising, have played upon and drastically altered the customary conception of the American Dream.

**What do you think of lotteries?**

**Have you ever won in a lottery?**

**Do you think that all lotteries are a waste of time and money? Share your views with your fellow-students.**

**Read the next part of the article and identify its main points.**

*Compensation lawsuits.* If game shows and lotteries have seemingly opened a path to fulfilling the American Dream, so too has the proverbial “million dollar injury”. Litigation<sup>1</sup> is as American as apple pie, though it does not leave so sweet a taste in the mouth of most Americans... Still, Americans file tens of thousands of law-suits each year, many in the hopes of cashing in on a personal injury or product liability case. Some scholars have likened such strategies to playing the lottery...

Equating tort-suits<sup>2</sup> to achieving the American Dream may be viewed as extremely strange at best. Yet the similarity between game shows, lotteries, and tort litigation is not as far-fetched as one might think. In all three situations the desired end is a trip to the bank with a fat check. In

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<sup>1</sup> Use of the legal system to settle a disagreement (судебный процесс, судебное дело, тяжба).

<sup>2</sup> Legal suits settling a disagreement caused by an action that harms someone and for which you can be judged legally responsible, although it is not a crime (рассмотрение в суде иска о возмещении ущерба, возникшего в результате гражданского правонарушения).

recent years a number of court cases have resulted in just such an outcome. If a plaintiff wins a lawsuit he will most likely receive not only compensatory damages (those that reimburse for medical expenses, lost wages, etc.), but may also be awarded punitive damages (those that punish the defendant for negligent or dangerous behavior). Moreover, in order to send a message to the offending company jury awards for punitive damages often far exceed compensatory damages. Thus like game shows and lotteries, injury and product liability lawsuits can be extremely lucrative. And once again, in such a process the traditional road to the American Dream is circumvented. Ben Franklin's industry and Lincoln's labor ethic are not components of a plaintiff's road to riches. The classic American ingredients of hard work, frugality, and self-reliance do not appear in the lawyer's brief. America's new Poor Richard mantra has become "Early to bed, early to rise, file a law suit and sue till they cry".

The case that has become the poster child for both pro- and anti-tort reform advocates is the infamous McDonald's hot coffee spill in which an elderly woman was awarded \$2.9 million after accidentally pouring hot coffee on to her lap and suffering a serious burn. On the surface the case looked like a quintessential example of tort litigation gone haywire. A woman takes what is known to be a hot beverage, places it on her lap in a car, and proceeds to spill the contents. For this example of utter negligence she is awarded millions...

**Does a similar problem exist in Russia?**

**Have you seen similar cases on TV or read about them in the media?**

**What is your attitude to them?**

**Discuss these questions with the class.**

**Now read the closing part of the article. Why does the author think that the means of achieving the American Dream are the most important point in the discussion of this issue? Do you agree/disagree with the author? List the conclusions the author comes to at the end of his article.**

*Conclusion.* The "rags to riches" legend has and continues to be a cornerstone of the American Dream. The traditional message taught that through hard work, frugality, and self-sacrifice one could achieve financial success and social mobility. Ben Franklin counseled industry, Abraham Lincoln sang the praises of the northern labor system, and Horatio Alger instilled hope in generations of Americans. All three helped to establish basic guidelines for success in a land of infinite possibility.

There are unquestionably many Americans who continue to abide by such tenets and in doing so are rewarded for their efforts. Yet there are also those who have come to believe that the American Dream's promise of riches is just that, a promise, and as such they feel entitled to instant financial success...

What is the end effect on society? Do millionaire game shows and promises of lottery millions help to further erode the ethic of work and self-reliance that once embodied the American Dream, replacing it with an ethic of luck? Or are these sources of instant gratification merely products of an ethic already lost to some Americans? Perhaps the truth lies somewhere in the middle...

Ultimately, most Americans would like to achieve the American Dream of financial independence. Yet it is the means of achieving it that are essential to the nation's ethical foundations. It seems that many Americans covet the easy roads to the Dream and in the process undercut the core values that established the Dream in the first place... There can be little doubt that the producers of the millionaire game shows, the state lotteries, and lawyers are getting rich on other people's yearning for the American Dream.

**Summarize the main points of this section in writing, using thesis sentences.**

#### IV. Martin Luther King Jr. and His Dream.

**Introductory remarks.** When I visited the USA on an IV Program, I kept asking Americans of different backgrounds, living in different places, belonging to different generations, the same question: “What do *you* understand by the American Dream?” I must say that one of the most



striking answers I heard from a high school student in Memphis, Tennessee. When I asked high-school students what their understanding of the American Dream was, some answers were quite predictable: “It is having enough money to be able to pursue your own interests in life – good education, traveling, sports, and so on”. And then an African American girl stood up and said: “I think that the American Dream implies that you should learn to serve other people, in the same way as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. did”.

Indeed, it is not accidental that in one of his most moving and dramatic speeches, delivered on August 28, 1963, when 250000 people of all races marched in Washington,

D.C., to demand that the nation should keep its promise of “justice for all”, Martin Luther King Jr. addressed the mass rally with the words that are remembered today: “I have a dream...”

***What do you know about Martin Luther King, Jr.? What is he noted for? Share your knowledge with the class. Learn more from well-known reference-books and dictionaries, such as The Oxford Guide to British and American Culture (OUP, 2001), The Longman Dictionary of English language and Culture (Pearson Education Limited, 2005), The Cambridge Biographical Encyclopedia by David Crystal (CUP, 1995).***

***Listen to Martin Luther King's famous speech (<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkihaveadream.htm>). What makes it so powerful? As you listen, take notes on his rhetorical techniques.***

“I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of this creed – we hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal.

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, sons of former slaves and sons of former slave-owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day, even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression; will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today!

I have a dream that one day, down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of interposition and nullification, that one day, right there in Alabama, little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers. I have a dream today!

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places shall be made plain, and the crooked places shall be made straight and the glory of the Lord will be revealed and the flesh shall see it together”.

*Share your notes with a fellow-student. Did you have similar ideas?*

*Now listen to excerpts from one of Martin Luther King's great sermons, which is called "The American Dream" ([/www.stanford.edu/group/King/publications/sermons/650704\\_The\\_American\\_Dream.html](http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/publications/sermons/650704_The_American_Dream.html)) and which was delivered at Ebenezer Baptist Church, Atlanta, Georgia, on July 4 1965, two years after his "I Have A Dream..." speech. In what way are the two speeches similar? What are the differences? Summarize your observations in writing and share your ideas with the class.*

"...this morning I would like to use as a subject from which to preach: "The American Dream". (Yes, sir)

It wouldn't take us long to discover the substance of that dream. It is found in those majestic words of the Declaration of Independence, words lifted to cosmic proportions: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by God, Creator, with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness". This is a dream. It's a great dream.

The first saying we notice in this dream is an amazing universalism. It doesn't say "some men", it says "all men". It doesn't say "all white men", it says "all men", which includes black men. It does not say "All Gentiles", it says "all men", which includes Jews. It doesn't say "all Protestants", it says "all men", which includes Catholics. (Yes, sir) It doesn't even say "all atheists and believers", it says "all men", which includes humanists and agnostics.

Then that dream goes on to say another thing that ultimately distinguishes our nation and our form of government from any totalitarian system in the world. It says that each of us has certain basic rights that are neither derived from nor conferred by the state...The American Dream reminds us, and we should think about it anew on this Independence Day, that every man is an heir of the legacy of dignity and worth.

Now ever since the founding fathers of our nation dreamed this dream in all of its magnificence – to use a big word that the psychiatrists use – America has been something of a schizophrenic personality, tragically divided against herself. On the one hand we have proudly professed the great principles of democracy, but on the other hand we have sadly practiced the very opposite of those principles...

...One day, here in America, I hope that we...will become one big family of Americans. Not white Americans, not black Americans, not Jewish or Gentile Americans, not Irish or Italian Americans, not Mexican Americans, not Puerto Rican Americans, but just Americans. One big family of Americans.

...About two years ago now, I stood with many of you who stood there in person and all of you who were there in spirit before the Lincoln Monument in Washington. (Yes) As I came to the end of my speech there, I tried to tell the nation about a dream I had. I must confess to you this morning that since that sweltering August afternoon in 1963, my dream has often turned into a nightmare; (Lord) I've seen it shattered. I saw it shattered one night on Highway 80 in Alabama, when Mrs. Viola Liuzzo was shot down. (Lord, Lord) I had a nightmare and saw my dream shattered one night in Marion, Alabama, when Jimmie Lee Jackson was shot down. (Lord) I saw my dream shattered one night in Selma, when Reverend Reeb was clubbed to the ground by a vicious racist and later died... I've seen my dream shattered as I've walked the streets of Chicago (Make it plain) and seen Negroes, young men and women, with a sense of utter hopelessness because they can't find any jobs. And they see life as a long and desolate corridor with no exit signs. And not only Negroes at this point. I've seen my dream shattered because I've been through Appalachia, and I've seen my white brothers along with Negroes living in poverty. (Yeah) And I'm concerned about white poverty as much as I'm concerned about Negro poverty.

So yes, the dream has been shattered, (Amen) and I have had my nightmarish experiences, but I tell you this morning once more that I haven't lost the faith. (No, sir) I still have a dream (A dream, Yes, sir) that one day all of God's children will have food and clothing and material



well-being for their bodies, culture and education for their minds, and freedom for their spirits...

*Write an article “Martin Luther King Jr. and His Dream” for a students’ publication. Follow the guidelines at the end of section I.*

## **V. The Shattering of the American Dream.**

*Introductory remarks.* An opinion has been expressed, time and again, that at present we are witnessing the end of the American Dream. It has been traditionally believed that in America, the land of opportunity, hard work is always rewarded by financial success. These days, however, the very existence of the American Dream is often questioned, what with large numbers of homeless people, drug problems, and a soaring crime rate.

*Read the following passages from Professor Marquardt book “The New Americans”. Professor Marquardt is a Fulbright scholar, who received an award from the National Endowment for the Humanities to study Russian history and culture at Harvard. His book is devoted to the discussion of the burning issues in the USA with young Americans, expressing their viewpoint. The author only formulates the questions, providing a minimum of guiding commentary and allowing the youth to speak for themselves and the reader to reach an individual conclusion.*

*What makes the author think that the idea of the American Dream is fading away? List the facts he mentions to make his point clear to the readers.*

“The New Americans are aware they face an uncertain future and the American Dream that was so much an integral part of the psychology of previous generations seems somehow less obtainable to them”.<sup>3</sup>

“As Americans, we have traditionally viewed ourselves as a modern version of God’s “chosen people”, the privileged few among the peoples of the world who for one reason or another have been selected to live in this, the land of plenty. We have never questioned our right to do so and we have generally viewed ourselves to be deserving of our special status. This is, after all, our birthright as Americans, to be so favored by God’s wondrous blessings.

America is the land of opportunity. We have arrived on these shores from far-off places and have found in this nation our homes and the possibility to realize our dreams. Limited only by our abilities and level of ambition, it is “all there” for the taking. If one strives in America, success will ultimately follow.

Some would say the views just expressed make up what is essentially the American reality. But there are others who would suggest to us that perhaps today these same views might be better described as the American mythology.

How else can we explain the disaffection and desperation so many feel today in our country? How else can we explain the homelessness that plagues increasing numbers of our people? How can we explain the epidemic that is our drug problem? How can we explain the crime rate in this country that seems to rise almost daily, threatening the security and quality of life for all our citizens?”<sup>4</sup>

“America to people around the world and to those of us who live here as well is many things. Most of all, it is the embodiment of idealistic man. Here is where someone may arrive from a far-off land, speaking little if any English, wearing little more than the proverbial shirt on one’s back and after a few short years of work become a financial success of note, followed

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<sup>3</sup> A. Marquardt. *The New Americans*, 1994, p.p. x-xi.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p.185.

up with a triumphant vacation-trip back to the homeland to proudly exhibit to astounded friends and relatives just what can be accomplished in this great land.

To think of America is to visualize hope and a profound sense of optimism. It is the land of plenty, resource-rich, uncrowded with a standard of living and quality of life that is envied the world over.

Ironically, for an increasing number of Americans, the American Dream shows no signs of ever becoming a reality. This is the great contradiction in our society today... Nothing epitomizes the American contradiction more than the sight of the homeless walking the streets of American cities, sitting in doorways, sifting through the garbage of those more fortunate than they, or lining up in front of the city shelters in the hope of at least for one night there will be a warm bed where it might be possible to drift away for a few hours into the world of dreams, leaving their nightmarish reality behind at least for the moment.

... As we hurdle headlong toward the end of the American Century, one also is given to wonder if we are also witnessing the end of the American Dream”<sup>5</sup>.

***Do you agree with the author? Why? Why not? Substantiate your answer.***

***What does the author say about the traditional view of Americans?***

***In what way has it changed, in the author’s opinion?***

***What does the author mean by “an idealistic man” and does this notion have little or nothing to do with the reality?***

***Why does the author refer to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as “the end of the American Century”? Find it out by turning to reference books on US history and culture and make it the basis of a talk, sharing your findings with your fellow-students.***

***Skim the following extracts from Paul Krugman’s article “The Death of Horatio Alger” [from the January 5, 2004 issue] (<http://www.thenation.com/doc/20040105/krugman>) and try to answer the questions: Why does the article bear this title? What was Horatio Alger? In what way is his name connected with the American Dream?***

The other day I found myself reading a leftist rag that made outrageous claims about America. It said that we are becoming a society in which the poor tend to stay poor, no matter how hard they work; in which sons are much more likely to inherit the socioeconomic status of their father than they were a generation ago.

The name of the leftist rag? *Business Week*, which published an article titled “Waking Up From the American Dream”. The article summarizes recent research showing that social mobility in the United States (which was never as high as legend had it) has declined considerably over the past few decades. If you put that research together with other research that shows a drastic increase in income and wealth inequality, you reach an uncomfortable conclusion: America looks more and more like a class-ridden society.

...Now [the gross inequalities of the 1920s] are back. According to estimates by the economists Thomas Piketty and Emmanuel Saez – confirmed by data from the Congressional Budget Office – between 1973 and 2000 the average real income of the bottom 90 % of American taxpayers actually fell by 7 %. Meanwhile, the income of the top 1 % rose by 148 %, the income of the top 0.1 % rose by 343 % and the income of the top 0.01 % rose 599 %... The distribution of income in the United States has gone right back to Gilded Age levels of inequality...

It is true, however, that America was once a place of substantial intergenerational mobility: Sons often did much better than their fathers. A classic 1978 survey found that among adult men whose fathers were in the bottom 25 % of the population as ranked by social and economic status, 23 % had made it into the top 25 %. In other words, during the first thirty years or so after World War II, the American Dream of upward mobility was a real experience for many people.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p.p. 323-325.

... The *Business Week* piece cites a new survey of today's adult men, which finds that this number has dropped to only 10 %. That is, over the past generation upward mobility has fallen drastically. Very few children of the lower class are making their way to even moderate affluence. This goes along with other studies indicating that rags-to-riches stories have become vanishingly rare, and that the correlation between fathers' and sons' incomes has risen in recent decades. In modern America, it seems, you're quite likely to stay in the social and economic class into which you were born...

... Goodbye, Horatio Alger. And goodbye, American Dream.

***Now scan the text, trying to find answers to the following comprehension questions:***

- 1. What is the meaning of the phrase "a leftist rag"?***
- 2. What does the author refer to as "legend" in the second paragraph?***
- 3. What does he mean by "a class-ridden society"?***
- 4. What figures does the author adduce in the third paragraph? What do they imply?***
- 5. What is meant by "Gilded Age levels of inequality" in the same paragraph? Which period in the history of the United States does the author allude to?***
- 6. How do you understand the phrase "intergenerational mobility" in the fourth paragraph? Does the author explain it in any way?***
- 7. What is meant by "rags-to-riches stories" in the last paragraph? Does the phrase ring a bell?***
- 8. What does the author mean by using the phrase "the correlation between fathers' and sons' incomes has risen in recent decades"?***
- 9. Which aspect of "the shattering of the American Dream" does the author mainly deal with?***

***Compare the two reading texts given in the present section. They are basically devoted to the same subject, but treat it differently. Which of the authors has managed to get his message across to you more convincingly? Why? Express your ideas in writing.***

***They can be used as the basis for a debate, with the class dividing themselves into two opposite camps, defending their viewpoint. Here are the guidelines:***

- a) To conduct the debate, you should divide the class in such a way that friends don't sit together.***
- b) Each group chooses its leader.***
- c) You have to reach consensus within a group. In other words, you may not agree, but you must support the statement.***
- d) Get together and decide who is going to say what, so that there are no repetitions.***
- e) Support your point of view with at least four points.***
- f) Present your arguments to the class. Here time limit may be of the essence – say, 10 minutes.***
- g) This is followed by a rebuttal from your opponents, who should disprove every statement you have made. It is important to anticipate what your opponent is going to say.***
- h) You may vote after the debate, deciding which of the groups has been more convincing in proving their point of view.***

## VI. 9.11 and the Way It Influenced the American Dream.

**Introductory remarks.** September 11, 2001, the day of the appalling in its atrocity terrorist attack on the USA, is viewed by many as a tragic watershed, which has changed the Americans' understanding of the American Dream, among other things. They have become more concerned not with what awaits them in the future, but with what happens to them every day of their lives, "carpe diem" being the general motto.

**Read extracts from the article which follows – "A Nation, Still In Pain, Rallies" ( by Roger Simon from "US News and World Report", October 21, 2001) – and answer the questions attached to it:**

**"Now we understand the horrors of terrorism firsthand. Now, we are all one".**

You cannot embrace a city or hug a country or wrap your arms around 5,000 dead. And so you do what you can. You shed a tear, you write a check, you gather your children close...and you do something peculiarly American: You express your love for your country however you wish, from painting your house with Old Glory to questioning your government's war on terrorism. Americans today are marching to the same drummer, but nobody is goose-stepping. And an examination of the "new patriotism" that has gushed forth following the infamous events of September 11 suggests that patriotism in this country is far more varied, complex, and nuanced than many suspect.

Americans have not stopped being Americans, which is to say, they have not stopped asking questions, expressing opinions, or being willing to both oppose and support. "Remember the picture of the little girl running down the road in Vietnam?" asks Stud Terkel, 89, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Good War*, a tribute to those who lived through World War II. "Some kid in a plane dropped that bomb, as he was told to do by his government. To that little girl, that was an act of terrorism. To the kid in the plane, it was his duty. Now we are connected to that little girl. We have now experienced what others have experienced, and now we understand the horrors of terrorism firsthand. Now, we are all one. And to recognize that is to begin to understand.

"I remember Robert Maynard Hutchins, the president of the University of Chicago, telling us, 'The duty of you young people is to always question authority. Always ask why. This is not just a privilege, but a duty.' To me, that is patriotism, that is helpful to our country"...

Our feelings about our government have always been complex, and we have the Founding Fathers to blame. They did not, after all, start out as patriots. If they had been, they would have flown the Union Jack, drunk toasts to King George III, and loyally paid his Stamp Tax. Instead, they were revolutionaries, thinkers, questioners. And they questioned whether there was a limit to patriotism, a limit to love of country. They decided there was – a government derived its "just powers from the consent of the governed" and "whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive to these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government..." The Founders certainly loved their new country...

And even though Bush has introduced the word "homeland" into the American vernacular, our patriotism is clearly not a mystical, atavistic devotion – that being impossible in any case in a country where so many people come from so many different places...

### Comprehension Questions:

1. What does the author mean by "Old Glory" in the first paragraph? Do you know any other names for this? Turn to reference books recommended on p. 16 and find out.

2. What is meant by the sentence “Americans today are marching to the same drummer, but nobody is goose-stepping” in the same paragraph?
3. Why is reference made to “the little girl running down the road in Vietnam” in the second paragraph?
4. Where do the words “just powers from the consent of the governed” and “whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive to these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government” come from?

### Questions for Discussion:

1. What message does the author of the article wish to get across to his readers?
2. What does he mean by the “new patriotism”?
3. How do you understand patriotism? Compare your point of view with the author’s.  
Are they similar or do they differ? Can you think of any reasons for this?  
Discuss these questions with your fellow-students.

Now skim extracts from the article by John Gaver “Defending the American Dream” (How the Wealthy Defend against Taxes, Tort and Terrorism), written on July 4, 2002 – [www.actionamerica.org](http://www.actionamerica.org) – and answer the attached questions:

As our elected representatives argue among themselves about how best to exert even more legislative control over citizens and corporations, in the name of “**fighting terrorism**”, they fail to realize that just that sort of draconian legislation is actually brewing a virtually unseen crisis of terrifying proportions. Combine that with the effects of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and more data that we have uncovered and what you have is a recipe for disaster.

The wealthiest people in the United States – those who have achieved the American Dream – those who pay almost all of the taxes – those who are responsible for the vast majority of US investment capital – are leaving the United States in large and growing numbers. This isn’t news that it isn’t the poor who are leaving. But, new data that we have uncovered confirms that it is indeed, the wealthiest Americans, who are being forced to leave. Furthermore, we can now expect to see this **government induced capital flight** increase dramatically in the near future, as a result of the growing media attention to this issue and the effect of the terrorist attacks.

This is a very serious problem, because as we have shown in previous articles, if only the top earning 1 % of taxpayers leave (just over a million taxpayers), it will mean a loss of over one third of income tax revenue, requiring a **50 % tax increase** for those who remain.

It would be a serious mistake to call those who are leaving, unpatriotic. After all, what could be more patriotic than defending the **American Dream**. In fact, all that they are doing is responding to a recent spate of oppressive laws, designed to punish the wealthy for having achieved the American Dream. If anyone in this equation is unpatriotic, it is our elected lawmakers, who are attacking the American Dream and forcing these patriotic Americans to defend what they have achieved, by taking it elsewhere...

For many years now, Forbes Magazine has been publishing annual lists of the 400 wealthiest Americans and the World Billionaires. When most people look at those lists, they just look at the names and net worth of the people on the lists. But, we have discovered that those lists tell a much more important story, if you dig deep enough...

In fact, the Forbes lists show that since 1999, the number of **US billionaires has dropped by over 13 %**, with a 7 % drop in average net worth, while the number of **billionaires worldwide has increased by over 80 %**.

*November 2005 update – Both of the 2005 Forbes lists are out now and the new numbers show that since 1999, the growth in the number of US billionaires is only slightly more than*

could be explained by inflation, while the number of billionaires worldwide is growing at a pace six times greater (22 % vs. 132 %). Furthermore, the total net worth of those US billionaires grew only 5 % (not even keeping up with inflation), since 1999, while the total net worth of the worldwide billionaires grew by 76 %. Also, keep in mind that the numbers for the worldwide billionaires were skewed downward, by the low numbers for the US billionaires. In other words, it's even worse than these numbers would indicate, at first glance.

Think about what those numbers say. Either wealth is leaving the United States at an alarming rate and moving offshore or wealthy people in the United States are losing huge amounts of money, while wealthy people in the rest of the world are making tremendously more money. It doesn't matter which explanation you accept, because if you accept the second scenario, how long do you think wealthy Americans will continue to stay in such an inhospitable business environment before adopting the first scenario. What it comes down to is that **the land of opportunity no longer offers the greatest opportunity.**

**... Since September 11, more people who can afford it, are leaving.**

### Questions for discussion.

1. Who has achieved the American Dream, in the author's opinion?
2. Why are these people leaving the USA? List the reasons adduced by the author:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

3. How would it affect those who remain in the USA?
4. What figures does the author adduce to prove his point?
5. What are the author's views on patriotism?
6. Are they similar to the ones expressed in the previous text, or do they differ?  
Discuss this with your fellow-student.
7. What conclusions does the author come to?

## VII. The American Dream Today.

Skim extracts from the editorial by Mortimer B. Zuckerman "Living The Dream" from *U.S. News & World Report, July 12, 1999* and answer the attached questions:

*More than ever, America's unique promise is a reality*

Americans are celebrating July 4 in a spirit of exuberance. The good old days are today. Millions of Americans are benefiting from our historic boom. America is delivering on its promise of the American dream. The dream derived from aspiration to be free of political domination... No taxation without political representation was more than a tactical political cry. Nobody quite realized what freedom for the individual would mean economically, least of all, perhaps, the man who wrote the Declaration of Independence we celebrate today. But our political freedom, rooted in that essential respect for the individual, and our open door to the world unleashed stupendous energies and creativity. Free to transcend our origins, however humble, free to make of ourselves whatever our talents permit, we created a new social type – the self-made man. That's why, in America, we ask a person not who he is who his family is but what he does. Millions were attracted here by the dream of a fresh start, a second try, a third try, an escape from the confinements and hatreds of the past.

Our immigrant history and our frontier experience helped us evolve a unique culture of self-reliance, independence, resourcefulness, pragmatism, and novelty. We are comfortable with change and with people who make things happen... And we are still discovering new frontiers.

**New frontier.** On the eve of the millennium, we have crossed – are still crossing – a frontier of technology... The result? We have an information processing system ideally suited to our individualism, openness, and adaptability...

The economic success would have been jeopardized if the millions who came here from abroad had not embraced their new identity as Americans with such gusto. Getting on together, we came to see, is essential for getting on... It was not ever thus, of course... Blacks suffered over two centuries of slavery, then over half a century of segregation. Catholics, Jews, Irish, have all been rejected by nativists with the slogan “This is my pot. Now you do the melting”.

But the barriers of class and race have been increasingly eroded by the prospect of success – initially by the ease of acquiring land in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, and today by the prospects of success based on individual merit and mass education... We have become increasingly a universalist nation that welcomes all and includes all, in the context of a fluid, mobile, and bountiful society.

The Constitution is not just a piece of paper. It lives. We have given life to that document by becoming an increasingly just and humane society. As broader and broader segments of our population have participated in American expansion and growth, the American dream joins us all. We are not just creating it, we are living it – and this July rightly celebrating it.

#### **Questions for discussion.**

- 1. What new social type does the author mention in his article?**
- 2. What is meant by “frontier experience” in the second paragraph?**
- 3. Why does the author refer to the revolutions in technology and information as the “new frontier”?**
- 4. Has “getting on together” always been the case in the history of the USA for people of different races, nationalities and religious beliefs? What examples does the author mention?**
- 5. How would you interpret the slogan cited by the author at the very end of the fourth paragraph: “This is my pot. Now you do the melting”? Discuss it with your fellow-student.**
- 6. Why does the author refer to the American nation as “a universalist” one in the last but one paragraph? Does he give any explanation of what he means by it? The word is not registered in dictionaries of English. How was it formed?**

**Read excerpts from the article by *Bruce Bartlett “American Dream Momentum” of October 18, 2004 (<http://www.nationalreview.com>), and complete the assignment after the text.***

The report, “The American Dream in 2004”, was commissioned by the National League of Cities. It is based on a national public-opinion survey completed in August. The purpose of the report was to find out whether people still believe in the American Dream, whether it is still achievable, and what it means.

The good news is that 63 % of Americans believe that they are presently living the American Dream. Moreover, 62 % believe that it is achievable for most Americans and 65 % think their children have a good shot at it. Even among those who say they are not living the American Dream, 42 % are fairly confident that they will achieve it some day.

Of course, the American Dream means different things to different people. For most it means a good job and financial security. But, somewhat surprisingly, living in freedom came in second. And when people were given a chance to mention what they felt are the two most important factors in the American Dream, living in freedom was the most frequently mentioned.

Among those who cite freedom as an essential element of the American Dream, young people were most likely to list it as number one. Americans between the ages of 18 and 29 cited

living in freedom as the key element of the American Dream 45 % of the time. By contrast, only 24 % of those between the ages of 50 and 64 put freedom at the top of their list.

Race, sex, income, and education also play a role in how important freedom is to the American Dream. Whites are more likely to see it as important, blacks and Hispanics less so. Men are more likely than women to cite the importance of freedom, and those with higher incomes and education are more likely to do so than those with less.

Politically, 44 % of Republicans say that freedom defines the American Dream, while only 29 % of Democrats do.

When asked about barriers to the American Dream, poor public education topped the list for every group except blacks, who cited racial discrimination. Younger people are more likely to put poor education at the top of their list than older people, perhaps because they are closer to it and because our educational system has deteriorated since many older people were in school...

When asked about the biggest dilemmas in their local area, crime and crime-related problems such as drugs came in first by a wide margin. Among economic issues, unemployment was first, but was cited by only 7 % of the sample. Taxes were second, above health care, sprawl, poverty, and the cost of living. Interestingly, terrorism didn't even register and such hot-button issues as the environment, racism, and declining morality were listed by just 1 % of respondents.

The idea of an American Dream may seem corny or outmoded to elites, but it is something that still resonates powerfully with average people. Great leaders like Martin Luther King and Ronald Reagan understood this implicitly, which is a key reason why their words connected with the American people so deeply.

**Decide whether the following statements are true or false:**

- 1. The report, "The American Dream in 2004", was commissioned by the US Department of the Interior.**
- 2. 63 % of Americans believe that they are presently living the American Dream.**
- 3. 50 % believe that it is achievable for most Americans and 80 % think their children have a good shot at it.**
- 4. 32 % are fairly confident that they will achieve it some day.**
- 5. The two most important factors in the American Dream are financial security and freedom.**
- 6. 20 % of Americans between the ages of 18 and 29 cited living in freedom as the key element of the American Dream.**
- 7. People of different race and gender, having different levels of income and education have the same idea about how important freedom is to the American Dream.**

**In the previous text the author says that "...the American Dream means different things to different people". To have a clearer idea of how different the modern understanding of the American Dream can be, read an extract from an interview with Steve Mullin (working for the IVP office in Philadelphia) and an article from the virtual publication [www.russianny.com](http://www.russianny.com) (December 16, 2004) by an immigrant Ilya Merenson who give their personal views on what the American Dream is:**

**Steve Mullin:** "What is the American Dream? This brings us back to that notion that you believe that one of people's objectives in life is to be happier and make their families happier. How do I work so that they are happier? I find it to be a very easy thing to believe. This doesn't mean to say that all the families are alike, and all of them have the same things, the same dreams.

Take my sister, for example. She has a PhD in history, but it doesn't interest me at all. And she looks at the stuff I do and can't understand why I am so happy about it. So, certainly there may be different views on it.

But in the United States it's also connected with the following idea: how do you care for many, many families? You keep asking yourself this question: How do I make life for my kids



better? How do I make the world better for my kids? How can this generation make the world better for the next generation? So, on the one hand, it's connected with these general issues. But on the other hand, it's also more specific for most human beings. If any of you have kids, that's what you are thinking. I want my children to live a better life; I want to make it easier for them. And part of that is environment, but also part of it is amassing wealth, so that I can transfer wealth to them.

Part of the American Dream, of this notion, is what are the things that make you happy? And, certainly one thing for most human beings is the ability to enjoy safe environment, safe home, to do things you like to do – in other words, have a lot of opportunities. This is a very important thing. And also accumulating wealth, but not for the sake of it, but either to be able to pass it on to your kids, or do various things with it: go to baseball games, go on vacation, go around the world, travel, do other things. This is what we don't really take as sort of given to us – this is what many people try to strive for.

So the idea is: I work hard, but the rewards are good. And this is what the market system here allows you to do. You work, you get some rewards, and for Americans it's very important to be able to spend their leisure time well. A hundred years ago we worked six days a week and you worked since you were twelve years old until you were about ready to die. You worked twelve hours a day, and how was your leisure life? In the evening you fell asleep and then in the morning you got back to work. So what was your life? It was mostly work. But now our working week has become shorter, our working hours shrank, as we get more productive, and people like to do other stuff in their spare time. I wouldn't say it's a necessarily American trait, although I do think that Americans have become almost experts in it, in doing the whole bunch of different things besides work. So one of the aspects of the American Dream is: how do you get the options to be able to take advantage of living besides just working, then dying?"

#### **Илья Мерензон. "Твоя American Dream"**

Ах, дорогие читатели, простите меня заранее за мое философское и лирическое настроение. Я сам понимаю, каково вам, только что вернувшимся из ночного клуба, или из японского ресторана, где огонь и как черт хозяйничающий рядом с ним сын Азии в головной повязке с иероглифической надписью «Повар» готовили шипящий ужин, или из бара с достаточно большим количеством сидра, или из какого-нибудь другого волнующего места... каково вам читать искрящимися глазами, обнимая одной рукой свою новую девушку, какие-то полупьяные размышления об «Американской мечте».

Ну, собственно, и начнем размышлять. (Было бы просто чудесно, если бы вы сейчас находились рядом. Это разговор для кресла и может быть какого-нибудь вина...) Итак, у многих, с кем я разговаривал, есть своя «американская мечта». **American Dream**. Я не говорю про «заработать много денег!, Путешествовать!, Купить большой дом/машину... и т.п.». Все эти желания универсальны. Но, есть еще и Американская мечта.

Ну вот, например, моя.

Я хотел бы рано просыпаться в желательной большой и светлой и офигительно чистой квартире, одевать какой-нибудь хороший костюм, висящий на вешалке с вечера, выходить из дома, когда все спешат на работу, идти в какое-нибудь уютное кафе неподалеку, есть вкусный и здоровый завтрак, пить горячий некрепкий чай с лимоном, читать *The New York Times*, не торопиться, и потом уже идти по делам.

В принципе, мечта вполне осуществима. Нереальная она, конечно, но вполне бытовая. Этакое идеальное утро. Кстати, оно будет идеальным только если превратится в ритуал.

К чему я это все... А, да. Просто, если подумать о том, как бы ты хотел жить, может быть можно просто взять и начать жить, так как хочешь. Может быть (только может быть, не обязательно это так), кто-то из тех, кого мы знаем, старается добиться чего-то непонятного, забывая, что что-то, чего он на самом деле сильно хочет, уже может быть получено. И никаких титанических усилий не требуется.

**How do Steve Mullin and Ilya Merenson treat the point at issue?  
Which components of the American Dream does Steve Mullin list in his interview?  
Have any of them come as a surprise for you?  
What can you say about Ilya Merenson's point of view?  
List similarities and differences between the two viewpoints.**

So far we have been discussing only “the American Dream”, bringing out its original character and peculiarities. However, the notion as such has, in its turn, given rise to numerous other “national dreams”. The media are especially fond of using such phrases as «украинская мечта» (connected with the recent gas crisis – a dream to be able to live without products made in Russia), the Russian Dream, the European Dream, and so on.

Now skim extracts from the article by *Jeremy Rifkin* (who is the author of the book “*The European Dream: How Europe's Vision of the Future is Quietly Eclipsing the American Dream*”) “*Two Dreams About the Future*” (*Chicago Tribune. Chicago, Ill.: Dec 3, 2004. pg. 27*) and complete the assignments following it.

A powerful new political experiment is unfolding across the Atlantic that might provide a new frame of reference for all those Americans who find themselves increasingly at odds with the direction America is heading. Twenty-five nations, representing 455 million people, have joined together to create a United States of Europe. The European Union's gross domestic product now rivals the United States'; making it the world's other great superpower. The EU is already the world's leading exporter and largest internal trading market, and the euro is stronger than the dollar. Moreover, much of Europe enjoys a longer life span and greater literacy, and has less poverty and crime, less blight and sprawl, longer vacations and shorter commutes to work than we do in the U.S. When one considers what makes a people great and what constitutes a better way of life, Europe is now beginning to surpass America.

Equally important, a new European Dream is emerging that in many ways is the mirror opposite of the American Dream. While the American Dream emphasizes unrestrained economic growth, personal wealth and the pursuit of individual self-interest, the European Dream focuses more on sustainable development, quality of life and the nurturing of community. We Americans live (and die) by the work ethic and the dictates of efficiency. Europeans place more attention on balancing work and leisure. America has always seen itself as a great melting pot. Europeans, instead, prefer to preserve their rich multicultural diversity. Americans place a premium on property rights and civil rights. Europeans favor social rights and universal human rights. Americans put their faith in God and country. Europeans put their faith in social welfare and civil society. We believe in maintaining an unrivaled military presence in the world. Europeans, by contrast, emphasize cooperation and consensus over go-it-alone approaches to foreign policy. The European Dream is the first attempt at creating a global consciousness for a shrinking world.

All this does not suggest that Europe has suddenly become a utopia. Its problems are complex and its weaknesses are glaringly transparent. The point, however, is not whether Europeans are living up to the dream they have for themselves. We have never fully lived up to the American Dream. Rather, what's crucial is that Europe is articulating a bold new vision for the future of humanity that differs in many of its most fundamental aspects from America's.

...The American Dream, with its emphasis on individual opportunity, the pursuit of self-interest and personal success in an unfettered marketplace, faith in God and love of country and belief in a strong military presence in the world, is what brought droves of Americans to the polls to re-elect the president.

On the other hand, many of the voters who cast their ballot for Sen. John Kerry are the Americans who have growing doubts about the American Dream. First, there are millions of Americans who have worked hard, sacrificed and still have been unable to move on up in a society increasingly weighted to the interest of America's wealthiest families. The U.S. currently ranks a dismal 24<sup>th</sup> among industrial nations in income inequality – the disparity

between the very rich at the top and the multitude of working poor at the bottom; only Mexico and Russia rank lower among the industrialized nations. Then there are the many other Americans who have made good on the American Dream only to find that its overemphasis on individual self-interest and material success is far too limited to fulfill their deeper needs and aspirations. They realize that even the most self-reliant American can no longer go it alone in a world where a SARS epidemic, a computer virus, a terrorist attack, a stock market scandal or global warming make everyone potentially vulnerable and reliant on each other. These Americans are in search of a broader global vision reflecting their involvement in an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world.

Together, these two groups of disheartened Americans represent a new kind of disenfranchised minority – one no longer completely wedded to the American Dream, until recently regarded as the most fundamental shared value of the American people. According to a recent survey, barely 51 % of Americans still believe in the American Dream (the same percentage as people who voted for Bush), and a third of Americans say they no longer believe in the American Dream at all..

**1. List the differences between the USA and the EU that the author mentions in the article. Arrange them according to the following scheme:**

<b>The USA</b>	<b>The EU</b>
<b>1. population</b>	
<b>2. GDP</b>	
<b>3. currency</b>	
<b>4. life expectancy</b>	
<b>5. literacy</b>	
<b>6. poverty</b>	
<b>7. crime</b>	

**2. Now list the differences between the American Dream and the European Dream, mentioned in the article:**

<b>The American Dream</b>	<b>The European Dream</b>
<b>1.</b>	
<b>2.</b>	
<b>3.</b>	
<b>4.</b>	
<b>5.</b>	
<b>6.</b>	

**3. Questions for discussion.**

**a) What does the author mean by “blight and sprawl” in the first paragraph? Do you have similar phenomena in your country? Illustrate your point.**

**b) How does the author classify Americans depending on their attitude to the American Dream? Which three categories does he single out?**

**Read the following three essays by 2<sup>nd</sup> year students of Moscow State University (The Department of World Politics) comparing the American Dream and the Russian Dream. Which one do you like best/(agree with most) ? Why?**

**Underline the sentence in each essay that you like most. Give reasons for your choice in writing.**

**Dasha Tsygankova:**

Americans are said to have three main goals in the course of their lives. It is considered that every American man must build a house, plant a tree and give birth to a son. In consideration of such an understanding of the American dream I have an explanation to every part of it. To build a house may mean to get self-affirmed, to make a career, to settle down and become prosperous. To plant a tree is to make something for this world, to leave something useful after yourself, something that you could be remembered for. And to give birth to a son means that you have someone to inherit what you have achieved in life.

To my mind this is not what only Americans wish. Every person wants to be successful and wealthy. But some special points of the American dream are, I think, the question of mentality. It is the typical American superiority, endless energy, perseverance, individual freedom and the striving for democracy and social justice.

Concerning the Russian dream I don't think it differs much from the common wish to live a good life. But there is one thing that every Russian has always wanted. It is stability. Stability in the political sense, stability in the economic sense, at least a rough idea of what is going to happen tomorrow, a little certainty that you will not lose what you had before and confidence in the future.

The opinions of Russians and Americans begin to totally differ when it is the matter of creating a family. I believe that an American would first find a job, become a well-to-do man and only then get married. A Russian person would begin by getting married and then would want to achieve everything together. I don't think we should argue with one of these views. Everyone has his own dream, after all. It still depends on the mentality, upbringing and maybe even education.

Nevertheless, tastes differ and every individual has his own value system. But one dream is always common: every human wants to be happy.

### **Olga Roslyakova:**

First of all I'd like to say that I'm not going to write about mythological Russians' inclination to freeloading which is considered by a number of people to be the basis of the Russian Dream. I'm quite convinced that most people in this country do not share the opinion that all Russians dream of doing nothing and getting all possible pleasures and wealth. This is a utopian motto of any normal lazybones (I say "normal" because unfortunately or fortunately it's normal to be lazy). And this motto is an international one. Russia doesn't have an "honorable" monopoly on freeloading.

Some people say that most Russian folklore fairytales prove that Russians aspire to freeloading, it's their ideal. But for some mysterious reasons they very often forget that the most eminent folklore freeloaders were rewarded for their kindness or courage, not for being lazy. In my opinion it's very difficult, even impossible to decide what is more fair – to reward a person for perseverance and hard work (as it is in the American Dream) or for some other virtues.

The question of the Russian Dream is much more difficult and complicated than it may seem at first sight. Trying to find a concrete definition of the notion "the American Dream" you do not face many difficulties, while the notion of "the Russian Dream" is very dim, vague.

The Russian society of today reminds one of a puzzle and it will be very difficult to fit the pieces together in the nearest future. The Russian society is, to say the least, not homogeneous. The split (or even splits) between different social groups is (are) too deep. And as a result it's rather rash to speak about "the Russian Dream" which is shared by all citizens of this country. The country is on the crossroads. We live in the time of profound changes in all spheres and particularly in the ideological sphere. I believe that "the American Dream" is a kind of an ideology that unites and consolidates people, both native-born Americans and immigrants. Russia has been searching for such a national idea for more than 15 years. Unfortunately, it has been searching in vain.

Yet, I'll try to compare the basic components of the American Dream with the most common hopes and concerns of Russian people.

Firstly, as it is known, the American dream is the belief of the Americans that their country offers opportunities for a good and successful life (Oxford Guide to British and American Culture) while most people in Russia want their life to change and be completely different. The All-Russian poll of urban and rural population conducted in 2003 proves it. About 70 % of respondents wanted their life to change. And taking into consideration that 38% said they wanted "to get out of this misery" you come to a conclusion that most Russians do not think their country to be a land of opportunities.

Secondly, the American Dream includes freedom and equal rights. But in Russia these problems are, to say the least, not of primary importance because of an extremely hard economic situation and because of the fact that democratic traditions are not so strong in Russia as in the USA. Of course Russia today is not a democratic country in the proper sense of this word. And this is so not because of the government's policy but because of our history. It's impossible to build a developed democratic society in a few years, after centuries of absolute monarchy and decades of totalitarian regime. So, democratic values in Russia are not of primary importance because most people are deeply concerned with how to survive and how to bring their children up "in this misery".

In my opinion the American Dream in these two essential aspects is very far from hopes and wishes of most Russians.

### **Maria Bochkova:**

It doesn't matter what nationality or country you belong to: you have a dream because everyone in the world wants to be happy, rich and healthy. Even though each nation has its own fairy-tale about Cinderella, certainly various people have different mentality and conditions of life that influence their dream.

Still many people can disagree with me. Without any doubt their main point will relate to the following misconception regarding Globalization: Globalization means practically the same as Americanization. And as a result the American dream has become the universal one.

And it might seem so at first sight. But let us see how close, for example, the Russian dream is to the American dream.

In my opinion, Americans have always wanted to use the opportunities that their country gave them. From the very beginning they did their best to become rich and prosperous. But only a few years ago their attitude went through a radical change (*reference to 9.11*). They've come to value the happiness that every day of life gives them. And now the American dream is to be satisfied with the work you do, to see your children happy and to do something worth being remembered for. Nevertheless wealth was, is and always will be important to Americans precisely because of the protestant mentality and Calvinist doctrine, according to which prosperity is the only sign of the person being chosen by God or not.

Russian religion is different: honest, loyal, generous people will go to Heaven, in contrast to cruel, wicked and greedy, who will burn in Hell. And to be rich is considered a sin in Russia. That's why the Russian dream has nothing to do with money. It is to have a happy family, loyal friends, to be pleased with your actions and your job. The great test of it was during "perestroyka", when teachers, doctors and famous scientists began to get very little money for their work. And despite this they continued to work in their institutions, inventing and making discoveries, which, in my opinion, is impossible in the USA.

**Search the Internet to find out more about the American Dream. Which site would you recommend to your fellow-students? Why?**

**Report back to the class about the results of your search.**

**Use your notes as the basis for an annotated bibliography of websites.**