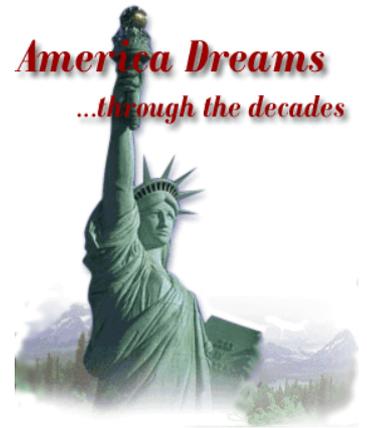


## **The American Dream!**

**1) What is the American Dream? – Read the following short statements and complete the mind map with the ideas mentioned; write a short essay about the main ideas of the American Dream:**



James Truslow Adams: "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 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 to 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."

United States' Declaration of Independence: "All Men are created equal. They are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, among these life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness."

Thomas Wolfe: "To every man, regardless of his birth, his shining, golden opportunity – the right to live, to work, to be himself, and to become whatever thing his manhood and his vision can combine to make him"

**Read the following article from PARADE magazine about the American Dream today; then answer the questions below:**

## **Is the American Dream Still Possible?**

*To be “middle class” in America once meant living well and having financial security. But today that comfortable and contented lifestyle is harder to achieve and maintain. PARADE asked Americans nationwide about their finances and outlook for the future.*

The traditional American Dream is based on the belief that hardworking citizens can better their lives, pay their monthly bills without worry, give their children a start to an even better life and still save enough to live comfortably after they retire. But many average Americans are struggling—squeezed by rising costs, declining wages, credit-card debt and diminished benefits, with little left over to save for retirement.

Does the dream survive? Do most Americans still believe they can forge better lives for themselves?

We surveyed more than 2,200 Americans, of whom fully 84% described themselves as belonging to the middle class, regardless of where they live (living costs are higher in some regions) or the size of their household. Most of those surveyed describe themselves as married and having a family. More than 64% say they are employed full-time or part-time. Most say they are in reasonably good health and have a satisfying religious or spiritual life. They own a home and at least two cars, and they are able to take vacations. By international standards, they live a life of prosperity.

Yet behind this prosperity is a growing unease. Half of the employed respondents say that they’ve experienced either increased health-care costs or a cut in health benefits over the last three years, and 39% have had cuts in their overtime, raises or bonuses. Almost two-thirds say they live from paycheck to paycheck, and 47% say that no matter how hard they work, they cannot get ahead. More than a third worry about job loss, and nearly 83% say that there is not much left to save after they’ve paid their bills. Statistics from the Commerce Department bear this out: The savings rate for Americans is the lowest it has been in 73 years.

Most of those interviewed display qualities common to American success stories: determination, flexibility, pragmatism, willingness to work hard and especially self-reliance. Almost three-quarters of the respondents say they take responsibility for their own financial destiny and believe that they will succeed or fail based on their own efforts. Still, many are downsizing their dreams.

Who is responsible? One of the most intriguing results of the survey is that 89% of the middle class believes that businesses have a social responsibility to their employees and to the community. Yet 81% believe that, in fact, American businesses make decisions based on what is best for their shareholders and investors, not what’s best for their employees.

Randy Omark, 55, is a former flight attendant for TWA. After 26 years with the airline, his pension was frozen and then taken over by the government, so now he gets \$324 a month in payments. Today, despite having a college education, Randy works for \$9 an hour finding community jobs. “It used to be that if you stayed with your job, you would be rewarded,” he says. “Now there is no guarantee.” As for retirement, Randy says, “Eventually, my wife and I will just downsize everything, sell our house and move into a smaller one.”

So is the dream changing? “The American Dream is a bygone thing,” many of the respondents say. “It’s not the way life is anymore.” They used to believe they were responsible for their own destiny. But it’s not that simple any more. Now it’s faith and fortitude.

**True or false?**

Correct the false statements:

|  | <b>T</b> | <b>F</b> |
|--|----------|----------|
| Some decades ago, the American middle class had fewer worries than nowadays.                         |          |          |
| Being “middle class” depends on the size of your household and the place where you live.             |          |          |
| Compared to other countries, Americans live in better conditions.                                    |          |          |
| American success stories are of good quality.  |          |          |
| Most American companies care more about their employees than about their shareholders and investors. |          |          |
| Randy Omark cannot find a good job because he doesn’t have a good education.                         |          |          |

**Answer the following questions in 1-3 sentences.**

- 1) What is the idea of the traditional American Dream based on?
- 2) How has that dream changed?
- 3) What are the things an average middle class American can afford?
- 4) Which qualities used to make a successful American?
- 5) What are Randy Omark’s plans for the future?
- 6) How has the American Dream changed?

**Explain the following excerpts from the text:**

Almost two-thirds say they live from paycheck to paycheck, and 47% say that no matter how hard they work, they cannot get ahead.

Still, many are downsizing their dreams.

“It used to be that if you stayed with your job, you would be rewarded,” he says. “Now there is no guarantee.”

**Further texts; read the following critical essay about the modern American Dream:****What is the American Dream?**

The term was first used by James Truslow Adams in his book *The Epic of America* which was written in 1931. He states: "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 to 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."

In the United States' Declaration of Independence, our founding fathers: "...held certain truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness." Might this sentiment be considered the foundation of the American Dream?

Were homesteaders who left the big cities of the east to find happiness and their piece of land in the unknown wilderness pursuing these inalienable Rights? Were the immigrants who came to the United States looking for their bit of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, their Dream? And what did the desire of the veteran of World War II - to settle down, to have a home, a car and a family - tell us about this evolving Dream? Is the American Dream attainable by all Americans? Would Martin Luther King feel his Dream was attained? Did Malcolm X realize his Dream?

Some say, that the American Dream has become the pursuit of material prosperity - that people work more hours to get bigger cars, fancier homes, the fruits of prosperity for their families - but have less time to enjoy their prosperity. Others say that the American Dream is beyond the grasp of the working poor who must work two jobs to insure their family's survival. Yet others look toward a new American Dream with less focus on financial gain and more emphasis on living a simple, fulfilling life.

taken from: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/lessons/97/dream/thedream.html>