



# English III

## Summer Assignment

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Name



2026



# Welcome to English III

In order to prepare you for the high level of analysis and critical thinking that will be expected of you, the English III team has designed tasks to accompany the REQUIRED Summer Reading. Assignments are due on the first day of school and will count as an assessment grade.

During the 1st marking period, you will also engage in additional tasks related to this text, therefore, the reading of this book is critical and required.

# The Evolution of the American Dream

Eva Bod

## About this Text

Eva Bod holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology and Anthropology. As a former English teacher, her special interests include educational psychology, art history, and cultures around the world. In this text, Bod explores how the American Dream has evolved over time through historical, political, and societal events. **As you read, take notes on Bod's claims about how the American Dream has evolved over time.**

## Vocabulary

You will see the following words in this text:

- Aspiration [as-puh-rey-shuhn]
- Meritocracy [mer-i-tok-ruh-see]
- Nuance [noo-ahns]
- Proverbial [pruh-vur-bee-uhl]
- Tenet [ten-it]
- Virtuous [vur-choo-uhs]

INDEPENDENT READING	NOTES
<p><i>The American Dream of the 21st Century is radically different from its 1776 edition. From power struggles to purchasing power, this is the story of its evolution.</i></p> <p>[1] Few things have been more central to American identity than the American Dream. When asked, some may define it as a collection of freedoms. Others might say it's the hope of working hard and getting rich. In all likelihood, most people asked will offer a different definition.</p> <p>[2] One thing all definitions have in common is an appeal to <b>meritocracy</b> and a notion of success. The American Dream could be seen beginning as a promise written in the Declaration of Independence. In stating that all people have a right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, the founding fathers set the US apart as a new democratic nation.</p> <p>[3] The contemporary interpretation has come to include all people regardless of race, gender, and other identities in this right. Like the American Dream itself, the <b>nuance</b> of modern interpretations has gone through a series of transformations from when the Declaration of Independence was written. The story of this transformation, and why it matters, goes back to the people who started it all.</p> <p><b>Origin of the American Dream</b></p> <p>[4] Before it was a dream of wealth, the American Dream was an ethos. The guiding belief that the nation should be founded on equality, justice, and democracy defined the phrase for generations up until the mid-20th century.</p>	<p>Take notes on Bod's claims about how the American Dream has evolved over time.</p>

Staying relatively consistent, the American Dream remained a political ideal up until the years leading up to World War II.

[5] Most notably, it served as a major generating factor in the waves of mass migration during and briefly following the industrial revolution. Acting as a beacon to a land of greener pastures, the American Dream enticed immigrants with a promise of a new life. It also represented a moral obligation for those who came to uphold social and democratic equality. Implicitly, the view that opportunities came from a free and democratic nation was established in the Constitution.

[6] Between 1943 and 1949, the Dream largely retained its political definition as the structures for consumer credit were built. The institutions used today, and the moral assumptions necessary to allow the credit system to function, date back to this era. Once credit was established, the conversation would shift from moral freedoms in the American Dream to a more capitalist version of the Dream itself.

[7] In the meantime, changes around the world influenced American political <sup>1</sup> conversations. A key example is Mussolini's rise to power in November of 1922. <sup>2</sup>

"Fascism" became a buzzword; at the same time, the Ku Klux Klan was gaining prominence. To counter these political views, the American Dream evolved into a pro-democratic national ideal. It continued to live in the minds and hearts of citizens but emphasized the collective aspect of fighting for freedom for all.

### The Mid-Century Dream

[8] After World War II, American society underwent significant changes. Pro-capitalist policies and a growing economy led to a sense of national pride. An expansion of professional jobs accelerated the transition for many to climb the **proverbial** ladder to find financial success. During this period, the idea that hard work leads to success was likely the most possible it had ever been—that is, only for a portion of the population.

[9] Some soldiers came home having had an epiphany while abroad: race relations in the parts of Europe they fought in were different. For African Americans and other people of color, it soon became clear that race relations in America were structured in a way that disadvantaged them in everything from employment opportunities to social treatment, raising questions about the validity of the American Dream.

[10] These soldiers were forced to reckon with the difference in treatment and status they felt upon their return, recognizing that the American Dream of working hard to achieve success was not possible for all members of society. The new threat to the American Dream was not fascism, but a struggle over equality, dividing communities between those who believed in **meritocratic** promise and the disillusioned.

[11] Outlining the threat to the ideology, racial and capitalist divisions combined to form the idea of the "haves" and "have nots," particularly as the middle class grew. The country saw massive cultural changes in the 1950s, with commercial television entering homes and revolutionizing popular culture. Everything seemed possible—the economy was booming, new cars and consumer goods were abundant, and the United States had the strongest military power in the world. The decade also ushered in the "Golden Age of American Capitalism," driving

<sup>1</sup>Italian dictator and founder of the National Fascist Party who gained power in the 1920s

<sup>2</sup>a political system in which the government controls business and labor without opposition

down unemployment rates with a blossoming middle class. Public optimism helped define the American Dream for the next two decades.

[12] Simultaneously, the Cold War<sup>3</sup> began changing the political climate and a new national consciousness grew. Popular media accelerated the shift in commercializing the American Dream, resulting in the earliest echoes of the capitalist undertones of the Dream. Fueled by advertisements convincing consumers of a need to buy more, the links between freedom and wealth grew.

[13] Likewise, the national identity was increasingly defined by anticommunism.<sup>4</sup> The escalation of the international arms race during the late 1950s was marked by key events, notably space exploration and the expanding power of both the United States and the Soviet Union. In September of 1956, the Soviet Union sent<sup>5</sup> military aid to Afghanistan, and a mere three years later, Fidel Castro took power in Cuba. Both of these moments would influence American foreign policy for the next half-century, and with it, the American Dream.

### What Is “Freedom”?

[14] Turning the corner into the next decade, change was in the air. Political spats over capitalism and communism dominated the global stage, airwaves, and civic engagement. Dreaming of a democratic, free society never seemed more important. Civic engagement became near-mandatory and awakened a new cultural consciousness. Together, these factors, combined with the hardening of racial lines in America, broke out into a cultural revolution in the 1960s. Martin Luther King Jr., the beloved civil rights activist, delivered his famous “I Have a Dream” speech in 1963. Struggles for social justice, inscribed in the Declaration of Independence but painfully withheld in practice, came into full focus as protests and marches spread across the nation. Political cynicism contributed to the cultural change, with struggles increasing over civil rights and environmentalism.

[15] The struggle for equality poked a hole in the fabric of the American Dream: evidently, not all Americans were granted an equal chance at success. It’s during this decade that race-based arguments start to divide the American Dream, introducing the idea that the Dream might still exist but in different forms for the diverse spectrum of Americans.

[16] All the while, political relations between the United States and the Soviet Union continued to disintegrate. Between 1950 and 1970, the American cultural narrative had become increasingly woven with the capitalist freedoms enjoyed by the upper crust of society and the notion that financial success was only possible because of the value of a protected democracy. In other words, the general anti-Soviet attitude resulted in the hardening of a new definition of the American Dream: freedom from communist rule. The variation of “a freedom from” (as opposed to “a freedom to”) had been brewing for years, as evidenced by the wars in Korea and Vietnam. Thus, the American Dream was now encoded with freedom from communism, freedom from fascism, and freedom from a lack of upward mobility.

[17] The moral **tenet** of the American Dream had up until the 1970s been solely based on a generic idea of **meritocracy**. Now, suburbia had grown dramatically, leading to sprawling cities that were increasingly diversified. Advertisements broadly tied the American Dream to this phenomenon, targeting home builders and buyers alike. The ideal life of a citizen was now defined by having a

<sup>3</sup> a period of political tension between the United States and the Soviet Union

<sup>4</sup> refers to countries competing to acquire military capability such as weapons or technology

<sup>5</sup> Cuban revolutionary and politician

single-family home in suburbia. Classic images of a backyard barbecue and a white picket fence became a compelling symbol of wholesome success for the growing middle class. Thus the tie of homeownership to the American Dream was born, free from the bustle of cities and the bane of the countryside.

### **Buying Into the American Dream**

[18] Extending itself further from the American Dream of a **virtuous** society, the 1990s began to recognize the contributions of women and minorities in the civic arena. The last decade of the century also saw a shift in presidential trends, straying from the historically veteran-based profile defining their main appeal to voters. Technology started to influence all parts of life in the United States, introducing a new rush for accessories and opening a floodgate of new status-boosting products. Having a home was no longer enough: cell phones, televisions, video games, and personal computers were addictively enticing purchase options.

[19] The original pursuit of happiness planted in the American Dream transformed over the years, snowballing and picking up elements of race relations and capitalism along the way. Consequently, the Dream that exists today is a perplexing combination of materialist **aspirations** and vague notions of freedom. It is now more than ever a challenge to achieve, blocked by societal hurdles like race and class along with contemporary roadblocks like the Global Financial Crisis of 2008-2009. Nonetheless, multiple versions of the Dream exist in the contemporary cultural narrative and continue to play an important role in American society.

[20] In the political arena, the term has been adapted to suit new goals to address challenges. One of the most public displays of appreciation of the Dream was made evident when the first version of the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act was introduced in 2001. Holding both symbolic and legal significance, the act created a pathway for undocumented people who entered the United States as minors. When considering modern capitalism and the American Dream, social media platforms and marketplaces like Amazon have made it easier than ever to feel the purchasing pull of marketing.

[21] Together, these facets of history have kept the Dream alive and helped shape the multilayered version it is today. It leaves a lingering question that is pertinent and timeless, asking citizens to describe their definitions of success and thus leaving the chance for further evolution down the road.

## Close Reading

**Directions:** Reread or refer back to the section(s) indicated. Then answer the questions with your group. *10 minutes*

**START at PARAGRAPH 5**

**STOP at the end of PARAGRAPH 5**

1. According to Bod, what is the relationship between the American Dream and immigration? **[RI.3]**

**START at PARAGRAPH 15**

**STOP at the end of PARAGRAPH 15**

2. How does Bod's use of a metaphor in this paragraph strengthen a claim? **[RI., 4, RI.6]**

## Discussion

**Directions:** Read the discussion question and jot down a few ideas you would like to share with your classmates. As you participate in the discussion, be sure to support your ideas with text evidence.

*10 - 15 minutes*

In the final paragraph, Bod calls the American Dream "multilayered." What does she mean by this? **[RI.4]**

My Ideas	
Ideas from the Discussion	

## Independent Practice

**Directions:** Answer the multiple choice questions for "The Evolution of the American Dream." *5 minutes*

1. What is the purpose of the first two paragraphs of the text? **[RI.5]**
  - A. to explain the true definition of the American Dream
  - B. to encourage people to continue to pursue the American Dream
  - C. to suggest the American Dream is rooted in the pursuit of success
  - D. to praise the founding fathers for establishing the idea of the American Dream
  
2. According to paragraph 11, the rise of popular media in the 1950s shaped the definition of the American Dream as... **[RI.3]**
  - A. pro-democratic national ideas.
  - B. freedom from communism.
  - C. owning a home in suburbia.
  - D. freedom to buy more.

3. Reread the excerpt from paragraph 18.

*“Technology started to influence all parts of life in the United States, introducing a new rush for accessories and opening a floodgate of new status–boosting products. Having a home was no longer enough: cell phones, televisions, video games, and personal computers were addictively enticing purchase options.”*

What is the *best* meaning of the phrase “opening a floodgate” as it is used in the excerpt? **[RI.4]**

- A. allowing something new to happen
- B. demonstrating support
- C. showing the way
- D. ruining a space

4. How does the final paragraph support Bod’s thesis? **[RI.5]**

- A. It offers her final definition of the American Dream.
- B. It argues that the American Dream should stop being reimagined.
- C. It concludes the American Dream will continue to be defined by asking questions.
- D. It emphasizes the idea that the American Dream will continue to be shaped by events.

### **Independent Practice**

**Directions:** Answer the short response prompt for, “*The Evolution of the American Dream*” by Eva Bod. *15 minutes*

**PROMPT:** Explain how Bod uses structure to develop an idea about the American Dream. **[RI.2, RI.5]**

**Also, make sure to incorporate relevant unit vocabulary in your writing.**

# Excerpt from *Democracy in America:* *Why Americans Are So Restless*

Alexis de Tocqueville

## About this Text

Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859) was a French diplomat, political scientist, and historian. Tocqueville is best known for *Democracy in America*, which was published in two volumes in 1835 and 1840. In the following excerpt from the book, Tocqueville discusses the effect that a democracy has on the mindset and behavior of Americans. **As you read, annotate for how specific words and phrases reveal what Tocqueville thinks of Americans.**

## Vocabulary

You will see the following words in this text:

Circumscribe [sur-kuhm-skrah-yb]  
Gratification [grat-uh-fi-key-shuhn]  
Trepidation [trep-i-dey-shuhn]  
Tumult [too-muhl-t]

INDEPENDENT READING	NOTES
<p style="text-align: center;">Chapter XIII:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">“Why the Americans are So Restless in the Midst of Their Prosperity”</p> <p>[1] In certain remote corners of the Old World you may still sometimes stumble upon a small district that seems to have been forgotten amid the general <b>tumult</b>, and to have remained stationary while everything around it was in motion. The inhabitants, for the most part, are extremely ignorant and poor; they take no part in the business of the country and are frequently oppressed by the government,<sup>12</sup> yet their countenances are generally placid and their spirits light.</p> <p>[2] In America I saw the freest and most enlightened men placed in the happiest circumstances that the world affords, it seemed to me as if a cloud habitually hung upon their brow, and I thought them serious and almost sad, even in their pleasures.</p> <p>[3] The chief reason for this contrast is that the former do not think of the ills they endure, while the latter are forever brooding over advantages they do not possess. It is strange to see with what feverish ardor the Americans pursue their own welfare, and to watch the vague dread that constantly torments them lest they should not have chosen the shortest path which may lead to it.</p>	<p>Take notes on how specific words and phrases reveal what Tocqueville thinks of Americans.</p>

<sup>1</sup> demeanor or expression

<sup>2</sup> **Placid (adjective)**: not easily upset or excited; involving little movement or activity

<sup>3</sup> **Ardor (noun)**: enthusiasm or passion

[4] A native of the United States clings to this world's goods as if he were certain never to die; and he is so hasty in grasping at all within his reach that one would suppose he was constantly afraid of not living long enough to enjoy them. He clutches everything, he holds nothing fast, but soon loosens his grasp to pursue fresh gratifications.

[5] In the United States a man builds a house in which to spend his old age, and he sells it before the roof is on; he plants a garden and lets it just as the trees are,<sup>4</sup> coming into bearing; he brings a field into tillage and leaves other men to gather the crops; he embraces a profession and gives it up; he settles in a place, which he soon afterwards leaves to carry his changeable longings elsewhere. If his private affairs leave him any leisure, he instantly plunges into the vortex of politics; and if at the end of a year of unremitting labor he finds he has a few days' vacation, his eager curiosity whirls him over the vast extent of the United States, and he will travel fifteen hundred miles in a few days to shake off his happiness. Death at <sup>5</sup> length overtakes him, but it is before he is weary of his bootless chase of that <sup>6</sup> complete felicity which forever escapes him.

[6] At first sight there is something surprising in this strange unrest of so many happy men, restless in the midst of abundance. The spectacle itself, however, is as old as the world; the novelty is to see a whole people furnish an exemplification <sup>7</sup> of it.

[7] Their taste for physical gratifications must be regarded as the original source <sup>8</sup> of that secret disquietude which the actions of the Americans betray and of that <sup>9</sup> inconstancy of which they daily ford fresh examples. He who has set his heart exclusively upon the pursuit of worldly welfare is always in a hurry, for he has but a limited time at his disposal to reach, to grasp, and to enjoy it.

[8] The recollection of the shortness of life is a constant spur to him. Besides the good things that he possesses, he every instant fancies a thousand others that death will prevent him from trying if he does not try them soon. This thought fills him with anxiety, fear, and regret and keeps his mind in ceaseless trepidation, which leads him perpetually to change his plans and his abode.

[9] If in addition to the taste for physical well-being a social condition be added in which neither laws nor customs retain any person in his place, there is a great additional stimulant to this restlessness of temper. Men will then be seen continually to change their track for fear of missing the shortest cut to happiness.

[10] It may readily be conceived that if men passionately bent upon physical gratifications desire eagerly, they are also easily discouraged; as their ultimate object is to enjoy, the means to reach that object must be prompt and easy or the trouble of acquiring the gratification would be greater than the gratification itself. <sup>10</sup> Their prevailing frame of mind, then, is at once ardent and relaxed, violent and <sup>11</sup> enervated. Death is often less dreaded by them than perseverance in continuous efforts to one end.

[11] The equality of conditions leads by a still straighter road to several of the effects that I have here described. When all the privileges of birth and fortune are

<sup>4</sup> the preparation of land for growing crops

<sup>5</sup> **Bootless (adjective):** useless or ineffective

<sup>6</sup> the quality or state of being happy

<sup>7</sup> **Exemplification (noun):** the act of providing an example or proving a point

<sup>8</sup> a state of uneasiness or anxiety

<sup>9</sup> likely to change frequently without an apparent reason

<sup>10</sup> **Ardent (adjective):** enthusiastic or passionate

<sup>11</sup> **Enervate (verb):** to cause someone to feel drained of energy

abolished, when all professions are accessible to all, and a man's own energies may place him at the top of any one of them, an easy and unbounded career seems open to his ambition and he will readily persuade himself that he is born to <sup>12</sup> no common destinies. But this is an erroneous notion, which is corrected by daily experience. The same equality that allows every citizen to conceive these lofty hopes renders all the citizens less able to realize them; it circumscribes their powers on every side, while it gives freer scope to their desires. Not only are they themselves powerless, but they are met at every step by immense obstacles, which they did not at first perceive. They have swept away the privileges of some of their fellow creatures which stood in their way, but they have opened the door to universal competition; the barrier has changed its shape rather than its position. When men are nearly alike and all follow the same track, it is very difficult for any one individual to walk quickly and cleave a way through the dense throng that surrounds and presses on him. This constant strife between the inclination springing from the equality of condition and the means it supplies to satisfy them harasses and wearies the mind.

[12] It is possible to conceive of men arrived at a degree of freedom that should completely content them; they would then enjoy their independence without anxiety and without impatience. But men will never establish any equality with which they can be contented. Whatever efforts a people may make, they will never succeed in reducing all the conditions of society to a perfect level; and even if they unhappily attained that absolute and complete equality of position, the inequality of minds would still remain, which, coming directly from the hand of <sup>13</sup> God, will forever escape the laws of man. However democratic, then, the social state and the political constitution of a people may be, it is certain that every member of the community will always find out several points about him which overlook his own position; and we may foresee that his looks will be doggedly fixed in that direction. When inequality of conditions is the common law of society, the most marked inequalities do not strike the eye; when everything is nearly on the same level, the slightest are marked enough to hurt it. Hence the desire of equality always becomes more insatiable in proportion as equality is more complete.

[13] Among democratic nations, men easily attain a certain equality of condition, but they can never attain as much as they desire. It perpetually retires<sup>14</sup> from before them, yet without hiding itself from their sight, and in retiring draws them on. At every moment they think they are about to grasp it; it escapes at every moment from their hold. They are near enough to see its charms, but too far off to enjoy them; and before they have fully tasted its delights, they die.

[14] To these causes must be attributed that strange melancholy which often haunts the inhabitants of democratic countries in the midst of their abundance, and that disgust at life which sometimes seizes upon them in the midst of calm and easy circumstances. Complaints are made in France that the number of suicides increases; in America suicide is rare, but insanity is said to be more common there than anywhere else. These are all different symptoms of the same disease. The Americans do not put an end to their lives, however disquieted<sup>15</sup> they may be, because their religion forbids it; and among them materialism may

<sup>12</sup> **Erroneous (adjective):** incorrect

<sup>13</sup> governed by the will of the people, especially the majority

<sup>14</sup> **Retire (verb):** to move back or recede

<sup>15</sup> **Disquieted (adjective):** uneasy; without peace or tranquility

<sup>16</sup>

be said hardly to exist, notwithstanding the general passion for physical gratification. The will resists, but reason frequently gives way.

[15] In democratic times enjoyments are more intense than in the ages

of <sup>17</sup>

aristocracy, and the number of those who partake in them is vastly larger: but, on the other hand, it must be admitted that man's hopes and desires are oftener blasted, the soul is more stricken and perturbed, and care itself more keen.

<sup>16</sup> despite

<sup>17</sup> government by a small group of privileged people, usually determined by wealth and family lineage

## Close Reading

**Directions:** Reread or refer back to the section(s) indicated. Then answer the questions with your group. *10 minutes*

**START at PARAGRAPH 1.**

**STOP at the end of PARAGRAPH 3.**

1. What ideas about Americans and people in the “Old World” does Tocqueville’s word choice develop? **[RI.4]**

**START at PARAGRAPH 6.**

**STOP at the end of PARAGRAPH 8.**

2. How does Tocqueville's word choice in these paragraphs reflect his point of view of Americans? **[RI.4, RI.6]**

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**Discussion**

**Directions:** Read the discussion question and jot down a few ideas you would like to share with your classmates. As you participate in the discussion, be sure to support your ideas with text evidence. *10 - 15 minutes*

Consider Tocqueville's opinion of Americans. Do you agree? Why or why not? <b>[RI.6]</b>
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My Ideas	
Ideas from the Discussion	

## Independent Practice

**Directions:** Answer the multiple choice questions for the excerpt from *Democracy in America: Why Americans Are So Restless*. 5 minutes

1. Reread the following sentence from paragraph 3:

*“The chief reason for this contrast is that the former do not think of the ills they endure, while the latter are forever brooding over advantages they do not possess.”*

What does the word “ills” refer to? **[RI.4]**

- A. fears
- B. misfortunes
- C. poverty
- D. sickness

2. Paragraph 5 supports a central idea in the excerpt by arguing that... **[RI.5]**

- A. Americans’ indecision is a marker of their unhappiness.
- B. Americans are unaware of the abundance they already possess.
- C. Americans’ pursuit of goods is a distraction from their fear of death.
- D. Americans’ desire to have it all motivates them to move on quickly to new things.

3. How does paragraph 8 support a central idea in the text? **[RI.5]**

- A. It illustrates that Americans are anxious because they have a short life span to acquire possessions.
- B. It demonstrates that Americans have shorter life spans than people in other nations.
- C. It shows Americans fear death because they are forced to give up their possessions.
- D. It implies that Americans’ pursuit of material goods causes them to live short lives.

4. Which statement *best* describes the central idea of the excerpt? **[RI.2]**

- A. Americans are never satisfied with what they have and constantly strive for more.
- B. Americans’ pursuit of material goods is unique from other democratic nations.
- C. People living in other countries are happier than Americans.
- D. Americans' greed stems from their fear of death.

## Independent Practice

**Directions:** Answer the short response prompt for the excerpt from *Democracy in America: Why Americans Are So Restless*. 15 minutes

**PROMPT:** How does Tocqueville's tone reflect his central idea about Americans? [RI.2,

RI.4] Also, make sure to incorporate relevant unit vocabulary in your writing.

# Sentence Study:

## Juxtaposing Multiple Examples for Emphasis

### Today's Goal

You already know the basic rules of English syntax: how to arrange words and phrases to make a logical sentence. Today, you will analyze and imitate how Tocqueville varies syntax to produce a particular effect in *Democracy in America: Why Americans Are So Restless*.

### PART 1: Analyzing the Mentor Sentence

**Directions:** Read the Mentor Sentence from *Democracy in America: Why Americans Are So Restless* by Alexis de Tocqueville. Then answer the questions that follow.

#### MENTOR SENTENCE

In the United States a man builds a house in which to spend his old age, and he sells it before the roof is on; he plants a garden and lets it just as the trees are coming into bearing; he brings a field into tillage and leaves other men to gather the crops; he embraces a profession and gives it up; he settles in a place, which he soon afterwards leaves to carry his changeable longings elsewhere.

#### QUESTIONS:

1. Summarize the actions of the man in the sentence.

2. What is surprising about the man's actions?

3. Tocqueville could have conveyed his idea in simpler, shorter sentences:

*In the United States, men are impatient and discontent. They do not take any time to enjoy the results of their work.* Compare these sentences to the mentor sentence. How does Tocqueville's use of juxtaposing examples create a more effective sentence?

## PART 2: Breaking Down the Mentor Sentence

Directions: Follow the directions below and answer the questions.

### MENTOR SENTENCE

In the United States a man builds a house in which to spend his old age, and he sells it before the roof is on; he plants a garden and lets it just as the trees are coming into bearing; he brings a field into tillage and leaves other men to gather the crops; he embraces a profession and gives it up; he settles in a place, which he soon afterwards leaves to carry his changeable longings elsewhere.

### QUESTIONS:

1. Circle or highlight the punctuation in the mentor sentence.
2. What do you notice about how Tocqueville uses punctuation to connect ideas? Why do you think he chose to connect ideas this way?

3. Using a different color, highlight the conjunctions in the mentor sentence.
4. What do you notice about the conjunctions? How does this affect the way a person would read the sentence out loud?

5. Recall that *syntax* is the arrangement of words and phrases in a sentence. How do the syntax and punctuation of this sentence add to the reader's understanding of Tocqueville's opinion of Americans?

### **PART 3: Imitating the Mentor Sentence**

**Directions:** Write your own sentence, imitate the technique of using multiple juxtaposing examples that Tocqueville uses in the mentor sentence. Be prepared to share your sentence with the class. Your sentence can be about:

- a high school student
- a public figure or celebrity
- another person of your choice.

# I Am Not Proof of the American Dream

TaraWestover

## About this Text

Tara Westover is an American memoirist, essayist, and historian. Her memoir *Educated* debuted at number 1 on *The New York Times* bestseller list in 2018 and was a finalist for a number of national awards. She was chosen by *Time* magazine as one of the 100 most influential people of 2019. In this essay, Westover distinguishes what she believes her story says about the American Dream from what others say about her. **As you read, take notes on how Westover develops claims related to the American Dream.**

INDEPENDENT READING	NOTES
<p>[1] When I think of my first semester of college, the memory comes to me as a physical sensation. I feel tired. There is the siren-scream of an alarm sounding at 3:40 in the morning. I feel it in my teeth. Then images: the orange glow of the jumbo numbers in pitch black, the instinctual, semiconscious tapping of the button, the gradual shrinking of my bed as I climb out of it and move toward the door. I do not change my clothes. It was my habit to dress for the day the night before, because an alarm blaring at 3:40 really does sound much better than an alarm blaring at 3:30.</p> <p>[2] Outside I feel the Rocky Mountain winter on my cheeks as I begin the scramble to campus on sidewalks that will not be salted for another three hours. I'm heading for the engineering building, where I will pick gum out of short nylon carpet, wipe strange equations from dusty chalkboards, and scour the interior of toilet bowls with an odorless blue gel. I will finish around 8 a.m., then head to class.</p> <p>[3] This was my routine for the first two months of my freshman year. Then, because I was short on rent, I added a second job, serving coleslaw and Jell-O in the cafeteria. The woman who worked alongside me was also a freshman who could not afford the meal plan. I don't recall either of us mentioning the fact that we were serving food we could not afford to eat; I don't recall feeling angry as I hooked my apron in my locker and reached into my backpack for my own lunch, a protein bar and pack of ramen noodles (10 cents at my local grocery store). I also don't recall feeling humiliated or disrespected to be cleaning plates or toilets used by my classmates. The full complexity of my opinion on inequality and poverty then could have been summed up with utter simplicity: I was tired.</p> <p>[4] I wrote about these and other experiences in my 2018 memoir, "Educated," which surprised me by becoming a best seller. My story was one of extremes: born in the mountains of Idaho to Mormon parents who kept me out of school, I had never set foot in a classroom before my first semester of college at Brigham Young University. I graduated in 2008 and won a scholarship to the University of Cambridge, where I earned a Ph.D.</p> <p>[5] A curious thing happens when you offer up your life for public consumption: People start to interpret your biography, to explain to you what they think it means. At book signings, in interviews, I'm often told that my story is uplifting,</p>	<p><b>Paragraphs 1-19</b> Take notes on how Westover develops claims related to the American Dream.</p>

that I am a model of resilience, an “inspiration.” Which is a nice thing to be told, so I say thank you. But every so often someone takes it a bit further, and says something to which I do not have a response. I’m told, “You are living proof of the American dream, that absolutely anything is possible for anybody.”

[6] But am I? Is that what the story means?

[7] After being tired, here’s what I remember most about being poor: a pervasive sense of costly trade-offs. Of course you had to take the maximum number of credits, because tuition was expensive; of course you had to pick up that second job, that extra shift, that third side hustle raking leaves or mowing lawns or shoveling snow. The only question I ever asked was how soon could they pay.

[8] The architecture of my life was defined by money, meaning its absence, right down to the alarm blaring at 3:40 a.m. The night shift paid a dollar more, \$6.35 an hour instead of \$5.35. Never mind that my roommates blasted music until midnight, so that on a typical night, I got around three hours of sleep; never mind that I was dozing through my lectures, or that I spent the entire winter with a raspy cough and string of unexplained sinus infections. It was a dollar more! The math was straightforward and decisive.

[9] My college ambitions nearly came to an abrupt end in my sophomore year. Blinding pain in my lower jaw turned out to be a rotting nerve. I needed a root canal and \$1,600 to pay for it. I decided to drop out. My plan was to hitch a ride to Las Vegas, where my brother was working as a long-haul trucker, and to get a job working at the In-N-Out Burger across the street from his trailer.

[10] Then, a leader at my church pulled me aside and insisted that I apply for a Pell Grant, a federal program that helps poor kids pay for college. Days later a check arrived in the mail for \$4,000. I had never seen that much money, could not wrap my brain around the amount. I didn’t cash it for a week, afraid of what possession of such a sum might do to me. Then the throbbing in my jaw motivated me to take a trip to the bank. I got the root canal. For the first time, I purchased the required textbooks for my classes. There was money left over, more than a thousand dollars, so I quit the cafeteria and swapped the night for the day shift. I stopped sleeping through my classes; the cough dried up, the infections cleared.

[11] The day I cashed that check is the day I became a student. It’s the day the current of my thoughts shifted from obsessively tracking the balance of my bank account, down to the dime, to obsessively tracking my coursework. It was an experience not of wealth but of security, and with security, the freedom to ask questions about what I wanted from my life. What did I enjoy doing, or thinking about? What was I good at? I started seeking out and studying books outside the required reading; I took courses that were not required, for the simple reason I was interested in them, and I had the time.

[12] Every decision I made from that moment on was a function of that check. In those desperate years a few thousand dollars was enough to alter the whole course of my life. It contained a universe. It allowed me to experience for the first time what I now know to be the most powerful advantage of money, which is the ability to think of things besides money. That’s what money does. It frees your mind for living.

[13] It’s tempting to tell my story in the way people want me to. I would love to be the hero, and say that it’s all about hard work and determination, the white-knuckled triumph of the human will. But if I put my ego aside, I know that’s not the case. I entered college in 2004. I attended Brigham Young University, a private college heavily subsidized by the Mormon Church. Tuition was \$1,640 a

semester. This was before the housing crisis, when it was possible to find a shared room in a shabby apartment for just \$190 a month. What these numbers meant, in real terms, was that it was possible for me to work my way through college.

[14] I could make enough to cover tuition by bagging groceries for \$5.35 an hour during the summers. Back then, the nearly \$3,000 I needed for two semesters seemed staggering, and it necessitated me saying the words “Paper or plastic?” an unthinkable number of times. But it was possible. Without family money, without cultural advantages. It was a thing that could be done, if only just, if you really wanted it.

[15] For kids today from poorer backgrounds, the path I took through education no longer exists. The numbers are not imaginable — not if your parents are truckers or farmers or cleaners or cabdrivers, maybe the hardest-working people in our country. According to the U.S. Department of Education, in the last three decades, tuition at four-year colleges has more than doubled, even after you adjust for inflation. A 2019 report by the Institute for Higher Education Policy tells us that at some state flagship schools (not fancy private schools, just regular four-year public universities), low-income students are asked to cover some \$80,000 beyond what they can afford. Even at B.Y.U., one of the most affordable four-year colleges in the country, tuition has nearly doubled since I graduated.

[16] A Pell Grant was my first taste of financial security. Now even a full grant would be wholly inadequate, because of the rising costs of tuition and housing. When the program was established 50 years ago, the largest grant covered 79 percent of the costs to attend a four-year public college. Today it covers just 29 percent. It’s not enough. What that grant offered me — security, peace of mind, a space in which to consider, for the first time, what sort of life I wanted — it no longer offers.

[17] To poor kids today, we present a no-win scenario. We shout shrilly that they must get a college degree, because without one they can’t hope to compete in the globalized economy, but even as we say it, we doubt our own advice. We know that we are asking them to bury themselves in debt at a moment when it is very uncertain what kind of job they will be able to get or how long it will take them to repay the loans. We know it, and they know it. For them, the American dream has become a taunt. Perhaps my story is proof not of the persistence of the American dream but of its precarity, even its absence.

[18] The solutions are multitude. We could restore funding to public universities and insist that they operate as public utilities, rather than as strictly profit-driven businesses. We could increase Pell grants and reform student debt. If we were more ambitious, we could tackle the supreme inequality that, in recent decades, has disfigured every fact and facet of social and political life.

[19] For my part, I will begin by telling my own story differently — by discarding that fashionable old fable that reduces any tale of success to one of grit and diligence. I will admit that, to be frank, it was an easier time, and things were better. Our institutions were better. Perhaps that is what the story is about, inasmuch as it is about anything. There is the one thing I learned when I cashed that check: that people cannot always be resilient, but a country can.

## Close Reading

**Directions:** Reread or refer back to the section(s) indicated. Then answer the questions with your group. *10 minutes*

**START** at PARAGRAPH 5.

**STOP** at the end of PARAGRAPH 10.

1. What is the relationship between the rhetorical questions Westover poses in paragraph 6 and the details that follow in paragraphs 7-8? **[RI.6]**

**START** at PARAGRAPH 13.

**STOP** at the end of PARAGRAPH 16.

2. How does Westover's use of data contribute to her overall argument? **[RI.8]**

## Independent Practice

**Directions:** Answer the multiple choice questions for “I am Not Proof of the American Dream.” 5 minutes

1. What is the purpose of paragraphs 1-2? **[RI.5]**
- A. to establish how exhausting it is to be a working student in America
  - B. to suggest that anyone can work as hard as Westover did
  - C. to reveal what it takes to achieve the American Dream
  - D. to evoke sympathy for Westover’s situation

2. Read the following sentences from paragraph 17. **[RI.4]**

*“We know that we are asking them to bury themselves in debt at a moment when it is very uncertain what kind of job they will be able to get or how long it will take them to repay the loans. We know it, and they know it. For them, the American dream has become a taunt.”*

What is the *best* meaning of the word “taunt” as it is used in the excerpt?

- A. disgrace
  - B. myth
  - C. nightmare
  - D. promise
3. What is Westover’s overall purpose in the essay? **[RI.6]**
- A. to persuade readers that the American Dream does not exist
  - B. to reveal the problems that Pell grants create for students today
  - C. to refute what many believe about the American Dream with her own experience
  - D. to argue that all students should receive Pell grants to make the American Dream possible
4. Which statement *best* supports Westover’s claim that assistance is necessary to achieve the American Dream? **[RI.8]**
- A. “I had never seen that much money, could not wrap my brain around the amount. I didn’t cash it for a week, afraid of what possession of such a sum might do to me.” (Paragraph 10)
  - B. “Every decision I made from that moment on was a function of that check. In those desperate years a few thousand dollars was enough to alter the whole course of my life.” (Paragraph 12)
  - C. “I would love to be the hero, and say that it’s all about hard work and determination, the white-knuckled triumph of the human will. But if I put my ego aside, I know that’s not the case.” (Paragraph 13)
  - D. “Back then, the nearly \$3,000 I needed for two semesters seemed staggering, and it necessitated me saying the words “Paper or plastic?” an unthinkable number of times. But it was possible.” (Paragraph 14)

## Practice

**Directions:** Answer the short response prompt for "I am Not Proof of the American Dream." *15 minutes*

**PROMPT:** How does Westover develop her claim that her story is "not proof of the persistence of the American dream but of its precarity"? **[RI.2, RI.8]**

Also, make sure to incorporate relevant unit vocabulary in your writing.

# The American Dream is Real. I'm Living Proof

Angel Eduardo

## About this Text

Angel Eduardo is a writer, musician, and visual artist based in New York City. In this opinion essay, he shares his family's experiences in order to make an argument about the American Dream and what it means to be American. **As you read, take notes how Eduardo develops claims related to the American Dream.**

INDEPENDENT READING	NOTES
<p>[1] I am the product of the American Dream.</p> <p>[2] There was a time when that notion wasn't soaked in cynicism and meant something to people. It must have meant something to my father, who left a budding career as an oral surgeon in the Dominican Republic and, rather than start dental school all over again, quickly got a technician's license here so he could support us. It must have also meant something to my mother, who left the only home she'd ever known to emigrate to New York City, where she would give birth to me: their first-generation American son, born the day my father secured his visa to join us for good.</p> <p>[3] I was an infant when we lived in someone's attic and my parents worked to make ends meet. I was two when we moved into a New York City apartment and my father ran a dental laboratory out of the spare bedroom. I was five when he opened his business in the Washington Heights neighborhood of Upper Manhattan. And I was seven when we moved into a house in a New Jersey suburb, where we would enjoy a quiet street, a backyard pool, and endless possibility. Over the next twenty years, my father's business thrived. My mother became a schoolteacher with a master's in bilingual education. My siblings and I lived comfortable lives, privileged enough to entertain creative pursuits without worry. Things were far from perfect, but on just about anybody's scorecard, my parents had won.</p> <p>[4] Through all of this, neither of them ever spoke a word about the American Dream, but they didn't have to; they lived it with every move they made. Despite the struggle and the risk, they chose to try their luck because they believed in the possibility of building something better—and they succeeded.</p> <p>[5] I'm living proof of that.</p> <p>[6] American exceptionalism often gets a bad rap, and, depending on how you define it, much of it is deserved. There's enough bad behavior and poor performance in the past two decades of our nation's history alone to obliterate any notions of America being exceptional at anything, or to anyone. But there are</p>	<p><b>Paragraphs 1-15</b> Take notes on how Eduardo develops claims related to the American Dream.</p>

<sup>1</sup> **Cynicism** (*noun*): skepticism, doubt or mistrust

<sup>2</sup> the belief that the United States is either distinctive, unique, or exemplary compared to other nations

ways in which America is truly singular, and they are what fuels the American Dream.

[7] Unlike other countries, ours was founded upon ideas—an ideal. Despite themselves, the Founders crafted something that had the power to transcend them and their countless flaws (which, much to the chagrin of many patriots, cannot all be waved away with appeals to their being “men of their time”). They failed in many ways, but their ideas didn’t. The ideas improved and evolved, outliving and outgrowing their creators. The ideas lit a fire—one that rages in each of us as we struggle together to more closely embody them and become something more innovative, more unique, and more beautiful than the Founders could have—or would have—ever imagined.

[8] Of course, there is a sense in which being American is akin to being Japanese, say, in that we’re referring to a place of birth, a chunk of land, a flag, and a set of laws to which you must adhere. But to be Japanese is, first and foremost, to be a people. It is an ethnic identification. Americans are by design many peoples

brought together by a unifying set of ideas. That diversity and those ideas are what set America apart, and as a result there is a deeper, more resonant sense in which anyone can be an American—whether they ever set foot on our shores or not. The moment someone espouses those founding ideas—that we are equal before the law, that we are endowed with inalienable rights, that we have both freedom of and freedom from religion, that liberty, free inquiry, and freedom of <sup>3</sup>

expression are sacrosanct —that person becomes an American. You can live your entire life in Uzbekistan, South Korea, or Peru, but if you hold those ideas in your head and heart and follow them in word and deed, you are America.

[9] No other country I know of can make that claim. No amount of study or assimilation or Japanophilia will ever make you Japanese—but one idea can make you American.

[10] That is the power of ideas and the boundless potential of a nation founded upon them.

[11] By that same token, it is possible to be American and not be American. You may have citizenship by birth, and you may have legal claims to this land that foreigners do not, but if you don’t uphold the ideas upon which this nation was founded, you are forsaking your birthright and putting those ideas in peril. In fact, there are undocumented immigrants living here right now that may be more American than you are or I am, because they believe in the American Dream in a way that we cannot. America must be earned. It must be fought for and <sup>4</sup>

preserved. It is the bequest of all who have that fire raging inside of them, kindled by those founding ideas. America’s history, terrible and tumultuous as it is, is ultimately about immigration, integration, evolution, and unification under <sup>5</sup>

the aegis of those ideas. Many natural born citizens—me included—are at a perpetual risk of forgetting this. But people like my parents, who saw the ideal from afar and risked everything to achieve it, can remind us what the American Dream truly means.

[12] Much like its founders, and much like ourselves, our country falls short in <sup>6 7</sup> many ways. We are too often arrogant and infantile, petulant and obtuse,

<sup>3</sup> **Sacrosanct** (*adjective*): too important or valuable to be interfered with

<sup>4</sup> **Bequest** (*noun*): legacy

<sup>5</sup> protection

<sup>6</sup> **Petulant** (*adjective*): childishly bad-tempered

<sup>7</sup> **Obtuse** (*adjective*): annoyingly insensitive

myopic and solipsistic. We have often failed to live up to our ideal, and we will continue to for as long as we are here. But the beauty of the American project is its capacity for self-correction. Its principles are so well-formulated that even opposition to those principles is protected by them. We live in a country where burning its flag simply cannot be a sign of disrespect to America, no matter what the burner intends, because the act itself reifies the ideas the flag symbolizes. That is beautiful. That is powerful. That is the exceptionalism that matters. We must continue working to deserve America—to strive to improve ourselves, to believe in the possibility of building something better, to create a “more perfect union.”

[13] Union being the operative word there.

[14] The late, great George Carlin<sup>10</sup> once said, “it’s called the American Dream because you have to be asleep to believe it.” Perhaps so—but you have to be wide awake to make it come true.

[15] Just ask my parents.

"The American Dream is Real. I'm Living Proof" first published on Center for Inquiry by Angel Eduardo. Copyright © 2021. Used by permission of Author. All rights reserved.

<sup>8</sup> **Myopic** (*adjective*): lacking imagination, foresight, or intellectual insight

<sup>9</sup> **Solipsistic** (*adjective*): selfish and self-centered

<sup>10</sup> an American stand-up comedian, actor, author, and social critic

## Close Reading

**Directions:** Reread or refer back to the section(s) indicated. Then answer the questions with your group. *10 minutes*

**START** at PARAGRAPH 6.

**STOP** at the end of PARAGRAPH 7.

1. What criticism does Eduardo address in these paragraphs? Is his counterclaim effective? Explain why or why not.

[RI.5]

**START** at PARAGRAPH 11.

**STOP** at the end of PARAGRAPH 12.

2. In paragraph 11, Eduardo says that “America must be earned.” How does this sentence contribute to his overall argument in this section? [RI.5]

## Independent Practice

**Directions:** Answer the multiple choice questions for “The American Dream is Real. I’m Living Proof.”

5 minutes

1. What is the purpose of paragraph 3? [RI.5]
  - A. to show how long and difficult the journey can be to achieve the American Dream
  - B. to encourage readers to take a chance on the American Dream
  - C. to suggest that achieving the American Dream takes sacrifice
  - D. to praise the achievements of the author’s parents
  
2. What is the *best* meaning of “obliterate” as it is used in the following passage in paragraph 6? [RI.4] *“There’s enough bad behavior and poor performance in the past two decades of our nation’s history alone to obliterate any notions of America being exceptional at anything, or to anyone.”*
  - A. dismiss
  - B. forget
  - C. inspire
  - D. support
  
3. Which statement *best* supports Eduardo’s thoughts about American exceptionalism? [RI.1]
  - A. “...there is a sense in which being American is akin to being Japanese, say, in that we’re referring to a place of birth, a chunk of land, a flag, and a set of laws to which you must adhere.” (Paragraph 8)
  - B. “there are undocumented immigrants living here right now that may be more American than you are or I am, because they believe in the American Dream in a way that we cannot.” (Paragraph 11)
  - C. “Much like its founders, and much like ourselves, our country falls short in many ways.” (Paragraph 12)
  - D. “We must continue working to deserve America—to strive to improve ourselves, to believe in the possibility of building something better, to create a “more perfect union.” (Paragraph 12)

4. Which statement best describes the central idea of the text? **[RI.2]**

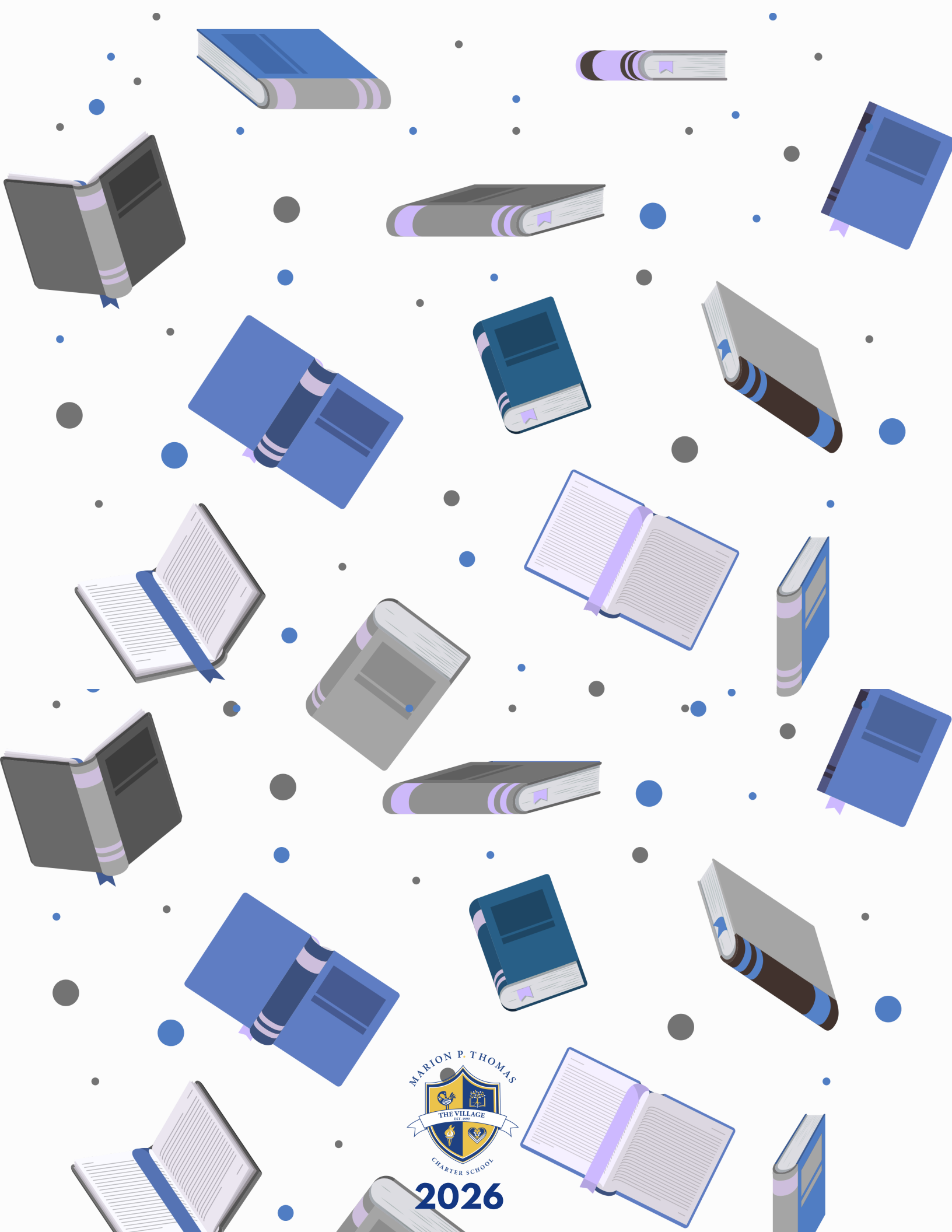
- A. America's poor behavior has erased its exceptional reputation.
- B. The American Dream is only possible for those who believe in it.
- C. America's founding ideas and capacity for improvement make it exceptional.
- D. America is exceptional because it is welcoming to people from other countries.

## Independent Practice

**Directions:** Answer the short response prompt for "The American Dream is Real. I'm Living Proof." 15 minutes

**PROMPT:** What does Eduardo mean when he says, "there are ways in which America is truly singular"? How does this develop a central idea about the American Dream? **[RI.2]**

Also, make sure to incorporate relevant unit vocabulary in your writing.



**2026**