

American dream synthesis

[Art & Culture](#), [American Dream](#)



Kyrie Staab Mrs. Wieseman Hon. English 10 Dec. 18, 2012 Is Our American Dream Fading Away? The attainability and very existence of the American dream has been debated for many years. As the economy, politics, and social standings change, so do the expectations and beliefs about what the American dream should be and how one should go about achieving it. The main question involved in this debate is not so much whether the dream is alive or dead, but whether America's dream can ever be fully realized.

Even the most skeptic of men and women cannot deny that although the dream may be blurring around the edges, it is still very much alive in the minds and hearts of the people. For generations, the American dream has retained its basic definition: "Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness". Immigrants to America-at least in years past-cling to this dream, hoping to find a better, happier, more secure life. One woman tells the story of a Russian family coming to live in the US in a BBC news article in March of 2011: "... the American Dream meant liberty. But Isabel says it promised even more. 'The Dream is to work, to have a home, to get ahead, you can start as a janitor and become owner of the building. '" For almost everyone, the dream has been the same. In the novel *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck, the two main characters, Lennie and George, share the desire to have a home: a small, safe place to call their own. This same dream has pushed generations of men and women to work hard to reach their goals despite social and economic obstacles.

In a Los Angeles Times article in 2011, Gregory Rodriguez says practically the same thing. "The dream is the glue that keeps us all together. It's the vague promise that our lot will get better over time that gives us the

patience to endure whatever indignities we suffer at the moment. " In the novel, George especially encounters obstacles while trying to achieve both his and Lennie's dream. However, the promise of a secure, happy, quiet life for himself and his friend encourages him to continue his work.

Yes, it is unfortunately true that as time goes on, less and less people seem to believe that the American Dream is attainable. However, the reason for this may be because we have already achieved the original dream, but continue to expect more and more from a badly damaged economy. In the 60s Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. 's expression of the American Dream emphasized universalequalityand compassion, and racial equality within our own borders. In a lecture to college students in 1964, King states that " If the American Dream is to be a reality we must develop a world perspective. He explains this by quoting John Donne and saying, " No man is an island entire of itself every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main... Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee. " Looking at today's society, it would appear that this dream has, at least in part, been achieved. All people have the opportunity to earn a home, happiness, and security. At this point, the only thing stopping people from achieving theirdreamsare themselves.

In John Steinbeck's essay " Paradox and Dream" he says that "... we are a restless, a dissatisfied, a searching people... we seem to be in a state of turmoil all the time, both physically and mentally. " When Steinbeck goes on to say that the American Dream has very little to with reality in everyday life, he demonstrates how society prevents citizens from being satisfied when

their dream is fulfilled. Is it possible that the expectations attached to the American Dream are unrealistic?

Given today's economy, the standards and expectations people have assigned to the American Dream do make it more difficult to achieve. In *Of Mice and Men*, George and Lennie's dream, though very simple and basic by today's standards, was unrealistic, given Lennie's handicaps. George's dream is far more achievable with Lennie gone, even though Lennie is part of that dream. This example illustrates how the amount of effort one is willing to put into achieving their dream has changed. People today are not as willing to accept more realistic standards for their dreams.

This is different even from just three years ago, when Katharine Q. Seelye said in her article "What Happens to the American Dream in a Recession?" that "Even though their economic outlook is worse, more people are saying they have either achieved the dream or expect to do so..." She then quotes Barry Glassner, a professor of sociology: "'You want to hold on to your dream even more when times are hard', he said. 'And if you want to hold on to it, then you better define it differently.'" In her article, Seelye states that "people are shifting their definition of the American Dream... fewer people are pegging their dream to material success and more are pegging it to abstract values." If people today were to adopt this point of view, far many more citizens would achieve their dream. While standards and expectations change, the essential roots of the American Dream remain the same. The dream of having a prosperous, safe, happy life drives citizens to achieve more and improve themselves and the country. As long as these basic beliefs are held by even one citizen, the dream still lives. Works Cited Kay,

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