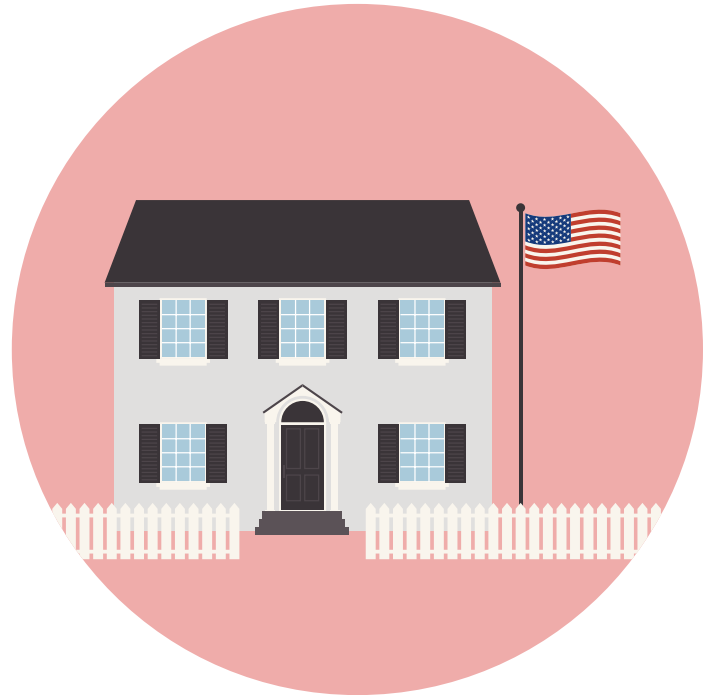


The American Dream

Pre-Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. What is your definition of “The American Dream”?
2. How has the American dream changed since the 1930s?
3. What do you think the expression “from rags to riches” means?



B. Vocabulary Preview

Match up as many words and meanings as you can.

Check this exercise again after seeing the words in context on page 2.

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| ___ 1. from rags to riches | a) the basis or beginning of something |
| ___ 2. epic | b) to declare that something is true |
| ___ 3. origin | c) to do anything possible to achieve a goal |
| ___ 4. foundation | d) from a state of poverty to a state of wealth |
| ___ 5. in pursuit of | e) a government's issues and relations with another country |
| ___ 6. claim | f) a big adventure (also a narrative story or poem about one) |
| ___ 7. put food on the table | g) not honest or trustworthy |
| ___ 8. necessity | h) in search of |
| ___ 9. materialistic | i) to be able to afford to feed one's family |
| ___ 10. do whatever it takes | j) something you need for survival (e.g., water, food) |
| ___ 11. corrupt | k) caring a lot about owning things (e.g., expensive clothes and cars) |
| ___ 12. foreign affairs | l) one's birthplace or family background |

Reading

THE AMERICAN DREAM

From rags to riches

1. Are you living “The American Dream”? This ideal came from a book by historian James Truslow Adams titled *The **Epic** of America* (1931). According to the American dream, every hardworking US citizen, regardless of **origin**, has an equal opportunity to achieve success and lead a happy life.
2. The Declaration of Independence is the **foundation** of the American dream. It states that all Americans deserve to be treated equally and have the right to “Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.” For centuries, people worldwide have moved to the US **in pursuit of** a better life for themselves and their families.
3. Many immigrants **claim** they are already living the American dream. They have a home, a job, and schools for their children to attend. They aren’t rich, but they have the **necessities** of life. These people don’t consider themselves **materialistic**. Having food, shelter, and freedom is a dream come true to them.
4. Others claim the American dream is dead. They work two jobs just to **put food on the table**. They don’t have the time or energy to go after their dreams. On the other hand, they will **do whatever it takes** to keep their kids’ dreams alive.
5. Many blame the loss of the dream on politicians and big corporations that fund political campaigns. Some even call US politicians **corrupt**. Has the US government forgotten the values it was founded on? Others blame foreigners and foreign nations. If America worried less about **foreign affairs**, would more US citizens be living the dream?

“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.”

—James Truslow Adams

Comprehension

Discuss these questions in pairs, and write the answers in your notebook.

1. Why does the reading mention James Truslow Adams's book?

2. What is paragraph two mainly about?

3. Why do many immigrants claim they are already living the American dream?

4. For those who have given up hope of achieving the American dream, what hope do they still hold onto?

5. Why do some people blame politicians for the loss of the American dream?

Vocabulary Review

A. Understanding Vocabulary

Which word from page 1 is described in the sentence?

#	Sentence	Word
1	The refugees need food, shelter, and clothing.	
2	Pay \$1,000 if you have to. Bring home that painting!	
3	A strong marriage is built on love and respect.	
4	We are fighting another nation's war.	
5	The police are looking for a white male with a red hoodie.	
6	<i>The Odyssey</i> is a long poem about a Greek hero's adventure.	
7	The witness said she saw the red car speed away from the accident.	
8	Some months we barely have enough money for groceries.	
9	The government officials paid people to vote for their party.	
10	All my mom cares about is having the latest handbags and shoes.	

B. Complete the Sentences

Complete the sentences using vocabulary from page 1.
You may need to change the word forms.

- I lost my job. I don't know if I'm going to be able to _____.
- The neighbors _____
that we need to pay for half of the fence, even though we don't want one.
- The leader is _____. He steals taxpayers' money to pay his own bills.
- I'm _____ of a better job. I don't make enough money to cover the necessities.
- I don't know what his family's _____ is. He might be from Spain or Mexico.

Grammar Review

POSSESSIVE PUNCTUATION

A. Reference

PLURAL NOUNS ENDING IN -S

The apostrophe is used in English to indicate possession. We add 's to a singular noun and add just ' to a plural noun ending in -s.

- The ball is in the dog's bed. (*We have one dog. It has a bed.*)
- The ball is in the dogs' bed. (*We have two dogs that share a bed.*)

Note:

If the plural noun doesn't end in -s, then simply add 's to the word (e.g., *the women's dresses*).

SINGULAR NOUNS ENDING IN -S

Add 's to a singular noun ending in -s, just as you would any other singular noun.

- The bus's window is broken.
- My boss's car was stolen.
- John Adams's book was famous.*

***Last Names**

If a family's last name ends in -s, -ch, or -z, and you are referring to more than one person in the family, add -es after the final letter before the apostrophe. This makes it easier to pronounce.

- The Adamses' dog is staying with us this weekend. (last name *Adams*)
- The Sanchezes' car is in our driveway. (last name *Sanchez*)

Grammar Review cont.

B. Practice

Write the possessive form of each word in parentheses on the lines below.

1. When will you have more _____ shoes?
(men)
2. What time is the _____ concert?
(kids)
3. Is this your school _____ last stop?
(bus)
4. I think this is the _____ dressing room.
(actresses)
5. Let's find out where your _____ homeroom is.
(class)
6. Have you read James _____ book?
(Adams)

Discussion

1. How materialistic are you compared to your close friends and family members?
2. Many define the American dream as the ability to start out poor and end up rich. Is this harder than it used to be in America?
3. Are you more financially stable than your parents were at your age? Explain why you think this is the case.
4. How likely is it that you will achieve your own definition of the American dream in your lifetime?

Critical Thinking

IN PAIRS OR SMALL GROUPS

According to a recent poll by the media, people shift their definition of the American dream during difficult times.

During a recession, do you think people are more likely to say they have achieved the dream or not?

Explain your reasoning. Then watch the video by *The New York Times* called “Defining the American Dream” in Ellii’s blog post titled “The American Dream: Video Challenge.” Discuss the video.

Selfie Video Challenge

Watch the video in Ellii’s blog post titled “The American Dream: Video Challenge.” Then complete the sentence below in a selfie video. Use a mobile device or computer camera and explain your definition (1–2 minutes).

“To me, the American dream is ... ”

Submit your video to your teacher and share it with your classmates.

Listening

Fill in the blanks as you listen to the recording.

THE AMERICAN DREAM

From rags to riches

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2. The Declaration of Independence is the _____ of the American dream. It states that all Americans deserve to be treated equally and have the right to “Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.” For centuries, people worldwide have moved to the US _____ a better life for themselves and their families.
3. Many immigrants _____ they are already living the American dream. They have a home, a job, and schools for their children to attend. They aren’t rich, but they have the _____ of life. These people don’t consider themselves _____. Having food, shelter, and freedom is a dream come true to them.
4. Others claim the American dream is dead. They work two jobs just to _____. They don’t have the time or energy to go after their dreams. On the other hand, they will _____ to keep their kids’ dreams alive.
5. Many blame the loss of the dream on politicians and big corporations that fund political campaigns. Some even call US politicians _____. Has the US government forgotten the values it was founded on? Others blame foreigners and foreign nations. If America worried less about _____, would more US citizens be living the dream?

Answer Key

LESSON DESCRIPTION:

In this lesson, students read about “The American Dream” and discuss how they would define it. Includes punctuation practice using apostrophes with words ending in -s.

LEVEL: Int

TIME: 1.5 – 2 hours

TAGS: discussion, US, American, American Dream, dream, materialism, immigration, immigrant, wealth, possessive

Pre-Reading

A. WARM-UP QUESTIONS

Have students work in small groups or as a class.

B. VOCABULARY PREVIEW

- | | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|
| 1. d | 3. l | 5. h | 7. i | 9. k | 11. g |
| 2. f | 4. a | 6. b | 8. j | 10. c | 12. e |

Reading (and/or Listening)

Read individually, in small groups, or as a class. Discuss the quote. You can also play the listening as your students read along. A gap-fill version of the reading is available on page 8. Help your students with vocabulary and expressions that they are unfamiliar with.

Comprehension

- The reading mentions James Truslow Adams because he wrote the book that first mentioned “The American Dream.”
- Paragraph 2 is mainly about the Declaration of Independence.
- Many immigrants claim that they are already living the American dream because they have food, shelter, and freedom.
- They hope their kids will achieve their dreams.
- Some people say politicians are corrupt and have forgotten the founding values of America.

Vocabulary Review

A. UNDERSTANDING VOCABULARY

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. necessities | 6. epic |
| 2. do whatever it takes | 7. claimed |
| 3. foundation | 8. put food on the table |
| 4. foreign affairs | 9. corrupt |
| 5. in pursuit of | 10. materialistic |

B. COMPLETE THE SENTENCES

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| 1. put food on the table | 4. in pursuit of |
| 2. claim | 5. origin |
| 3. corrupt | |

Grammar Review

A. REFERENCE

Review our editor’s tips for teaching possessive with words ending in -s: <https://ellii.com/blog/forming-the-possessive-of-words-ending-in-s> We also have a Writing in English lesson on How to Use an Apostrophe: <https://ellii.com/lessons/writing-in-english/1832-how-to-use-an-apostrophe>

B. PRACTICE

- | | | |
|----------|---------------|------------|
| 1. men’s | 3. bus’s | 5. class’s |
| 2. kids’ | 4. actresses’ | 6. Adams’s |

(continued on the next page...)

Answer Key cont.

Discussion

Answers will vary.

Can be done individually or in small groups or pairs.

Critical Thinking

Place students in groups. Introduce the topic from a magazine article about how the definition of the American dream shifts during difficult times. You can show the article to higher level students: http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/08/us/08dreampoll.html?_r=0

After students share their own opinions, watch *The New York Times* video called "National: Defining the American Dream," found in this blog post: <https://ellii.com/blog/the-american-dream>

Selfie Video Challenge

Share the video with your students. You can find it in our blog post: <https://ellii.com/blog/the-american-dream>

After you watch the video, have your students create a selfie video. They can complete this sentence: "To me, the American dream means _____." Then they should discuss the topic for one to two minutes.

For tips on assigning and submitting selfie videos in the ELL classroom, check out our blog post: <https://ellii.com/blog/selfie-videos-ell>

Listening

1. Epic, origin
2. foundation, in pursuit of
3. claim, necessities, materialistic
4. put food on the table, do whatever it takes
5. corrupt, foreign affairs

SPELLING NOTE:

This lesson shows the American spelling of the word *Neighbors*. Most other English-speaking countries spell it this way: *Neighbours*. Make it a challenge for your students to find this word in the lesson and see if they know the alternate spelling.