

The American Dream

Key elements include:

- liberty
- independence (abolition of class structure)
- competition
- equality (justice)
- hard work (ambition, perseverance)
- success

One's prosperity depends upon one's own abilities and hard work, not on a rigid class structure (as in Europe). In general, the American dream can be defined as being the opportunity and freedom for all citizens to achieve their goals and become wealthy and renowned if only they work hard enough.

And today ...

"It's called the American dream because you have to be asleep to believe it."

George Carlin

"The American Dream has run out of gas. The car has stopped. It no longer supplies the world with its images, its dreams, its fantasies. No more. It's over. It supplies the world with its nightmares now: the Kennedy assassination, Watergate, Vietnam ..."

J. G. Ballard

The American Dream

What is the American dream?

A unitary definition does not exist—the American dream probably has a different meaning to every US citizen. For some it is the dream of freedom and equality, for others it is the dream of a fulfilled life or even the dream of fame and wealth.

In general, the American dream can be defined as being the opportunity and freedom for all citizens to achieve their goals and become rich and famous if only they work hard enough.

History of the American dream

The first settlers hoped for freedom of religion; in their home countries they had been persecuted because of their religious and political views. Bad living conditions in Europe and the hope for better living standards in America attracted more and more settlers to migrate to the new world. The booming US industry during the first half of the 20th century caused the myth “from rags to riches”.

The American dream today

Today’s role of the American dream is a matter of discussion. Some think that the American dream is still a viable element today, for others it is only an illusion.

The American dream focuses on the success of the individual (not the wellbeing of the whole population). On the one hand, this has advantages, e.g. lower taxes, little interference of the state. On the other hand, the same advantages are disadvantageous for society: there is no social fund for the poor and there is no serious interest in important issues like environmental protection etc.

Discussions on the American dream

The American dream is often a topic for essays or debates. The questions raised are usually:

Is the American dream still alive?

Is the American dream still working?

Is the American dream still worth pursuing?