

## Summer Reading Assignment

### Honors English 3

From early settlers such as the Pilgrims and Puritans, to contemporary Americans such as you and I, we have all searched and yearned for the "American Dream". This term was first used by James Truslow Adams in his book *Epic of America*. He writes, "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 their 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 of position."

The idea of this American Dream has had a variety of interpretations in literature, some of which you will find listed below. Your summer reading assignment will be in multiple parts. Each selection in your summer reading focuses on some aspect of the American Dream. Pay particular attention to how the author or speaker handles the theme of the American Dream. Please refer to the chart below for details on your assignments.

<b>Part 1: Shapiro Article</b>	<b>Part 2: Novel</b>	<b>Part 3: Poems and Short Passages</b>	<b>Part 4: Essay</b>
Directions: Read the attached article, <i>American Dream Faces Harsh New Reality</i> by Ari Shapiro. You will also need to answer the attached questions.	Directions: Choose one novel from those listed below. Please read carefully as you will be citing evidence from this novel for an essay. You will need to find a pdf of the novel, purchase a copy, or check out a copy from the public library.	Directions: Read each of the short poems and passages listed below. You will need to cite at least one of these in your essay.	Directions: Once you have finished the novel, write a six paragraph essay regarding one character's pursuit of the American Dream. Use the attached template to guide you. Each paragraph should use at least two pieces of properly cited evidence to support your answer. Additionally, you are to make reference to at least one of the short selections you have read as well.

## Novel Choices:

- As these are higher level novels, you may expect both mature language and content in portions of the novel. Please be aware of this when making your novel selection.
1. The Absolute True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Alexie Sherman  
Bestselling author Sherman Alexie tells the story of Junior, a budding cartoonist growing up on the Spokane Indian Reservation. Determined to take his future into his own hands, Junior leaves his troubled school on the rez to attend an all-white farm town high school where the only other Indian is the school mascot.
  2. The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain  
The novel's preeminence derives from its imaginative recreation of the boyhood adventures along the Mississippi River, its inspired characterization, the author's remarkable ear for dialogue, and the book's understated development of serious underlying themes such as natural man vs civilized society, the evils of slavery, and the innate value and dignity of human beings, and other topics.
  3. The Joy Luck Club by Amy Tan  
Two generations of Chinese-American women share their stories of family, loss, love, life, and plenty of other themes in one of the most notable examples of immigrant literature. Despite differing motivations for crossing the Pacific, the mothers still perpetuate the theme of starting over in America and hoping to take advantage of the available opportunities. As one can probably assume, the transition proves smoother for some than others, illustrating a number of possible outcomes.

## Poems and Short Passages: You must read all five of these.

1. *Let America be America Again* \_ by Langston Hughes  
<https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/let-america-be-america-again>
2. *The American Dream is Dead*  
<https://www.powerpoetry.org/poems/american-dream-dead>
3. *The Egg* by Sherman Anderson  
[https://oa-shared.s3.amazonaws.com/static/pdf/Anderson\\_The\\_Egg.pdf](https://oa-shared.s3.amazonaws.com/static/pdf/Anderson_The_Egg.pdf)
4. *America and I* by Anzia Yezierska  
<https://natickenglish.wikispaces.com/file/view/America+and+I.pdf>
5. *Paul's Case* by Willa Cather  
<https://americanliterature.com/author/willa-cather/short-story/pauls-case>

# American Dream Faces Harsh New Reality

By Ari Shapiro  
From Npr.Org 2012

*In this article from 2012, three years after the economic recession, Ari Shapiro of NPR's Morning Edition interviews Americans about their feelings about the American Dream. As you read, consider how America has changed over time, and how our ideas about the American Dream have evolved.*

- [1] The American Dream is a crucial thread in this country's tapestry, woven through politics, music and culture.

Though the phrase has different meanings to different people, it suggests an underlying belief that hard work pays off and that the next generation will have a better life than the previous generation. But three years after the worst recession in almost a century, the American Dream now feels in jeopardy to many.

The town of Lorain, Ohio, used to embody this dream. It was a place where you could get a good job, raise a family and comfortably retire.

"Now you can see what it is. Nothing," says John Beribak. "The shipyards are gone, the Ford plant is gone, the steel plant is gone." His voice cracks as he describes the town he's lived in his whole life.

- [5] "I mean, I grew up across the street from the steel plant when there was 15,000 people working there," he says. "My dad worked there. I worked there when I got out of the Air Force. It's just sad."



*"The Family at Attercliffe" is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.*

## Uniquely American

The American Dream is an implicit contract that says if you play by the rules, you'll move ahead. It's a faith that is almost unique to this country, says Michael Dimock of the Pew Research Center.

"When Germans or French are asked the same questions about whether it's within all of our power to get ahead, or whether our success is really determined by forces outside our control, most German and French respondents say, 'No, success is really beyond our control,'" Dimock says.

In the wake of the recession,<sup>1</sup> that sentiment is now growing in this country.

"I think the American Dream for the average man doesn't exist any more," retiree Linden Strandberg says on a recent visit to the Smithsonian American History museum in Washington, D.C.

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<sup>1</sup> 1. [Economic] Recession: A period of economic decline in which industry slows and jobs are scarce.

In 2009, President Obama looked back across those decades as he took the oath of office. He described his inauguration as a fulfillment of the American Dream, where “a man whose father less than 60 years ago might not have been served at a local restaurant can now stand before you to take a most sacred oath.”

While Obama embodies the American Dream in a powerful and specific way, this is a theme that every president and would-be president adopts in some fashion.

On the campaign trail, GOP presidential candidate Mitt Romney talks about how his father grew up poor. “Only in America could a man like my dad become governor of a state where he once sold paint from the trunk of his car,” he says.

- [25] “Only in America” is a universal phrase in domestic politics. The challenge for politicians today is to convince Americans that the phrase still applies — that hard work and dedication still guarantee success.

## Skepticism Grows

That faith is faltering, especially among the poor, says pollster Dimock. “Lower income whites and lower income African-Americans are more skeptical about the American Dream. Higher income blacks are pretty optimistic about the American Dream, as are higher income whites.”

As cynical as this may seem, the numbers suggest that the people most likely to believe in the American Dream today are those who’ve already attained it.

“There’s a certain truth to that,” Dimock says. “There are people struggling. And what you’re seeing especially right now are people who feel like they played the game the right way, like they did what they were supposed to do, and the rules they thought they could play by and be OK have changed on them somehow.”

Economic statistics validate those feelings. According to the Census Bureau, an average man working full time made 10 percent less money last year than he did a decade ago.

- [30] The question for this country is, can the dream be restored? And if it can’t, what does that mean for our identity as Americans? Or, as the poet Langston Hughes put it, “What happens to a dream deferred?”

*“American Dream Faces Harsh New Reality” from [NPR.org](http://NPR.org), © 2012, National Public Radio. Reprinted with permission, all rights reserved.*

## **Informational Text Reading Assignment Text-Dependent Questions**

**Directions:** For the following questions, please respond in complete sentences.

1. Based on the information in the article, what is the American Dream?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. PART A: What can you conclude about the American Dream based on the section titled, "Skepticism Grows"?

PART B: Copy a piece of evidence from the text to support your answer to Part A.

### **Discussion Questions**

**Directions:** Respond to the following questions using complete sentences. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion. Support ALL answers with evidence from the text as appropriate and/or personal knowledge.

1. Do you agree that the American Dream is in jeopardy? In America, does hard work equal success? Explain your answer.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How does a person become successful in America? Explain your answer.

## Summer Reading Assignment

### Essay Information

#### Introductory Paragraph

- Attention getter/Opening
- Brief summary of novel (including title and author) and introduction to the character on which you will focus.
- Thesis Statement: Provide a clear, concise, debatable statement that shares your interpretation of this character's pursuit of the American Dream.

#### Body Paragraph # 1

- Topic Sentence that answers this question: **What is the character's vision of the American Dream?**
- Textual Evidence and Analysis

#### Body Paragraph # 2

- Topic Sentence that answers this questions: **How does this character pursue/attempt to achieve this dream?**
- Textual Evidence and Analysis

#### Body Paragraph # 3

- Topic Sentence that answers these questions: **What problems or obstacles does this character face in his or her pursuit of the American Dream? Why do these obstacles exist?**
- Textual Evidence and Analysis

#### Body Paragraph # 4:

- Topic Sentence that answers these questions: **Is this character successful in achieving their American Dream? To what extent? What evidence is there for this success or lack of success?**
- Textual Evidence and Analysis

#### Conclusion Paragraph:

- Restatement of Thesis
- Review of Support for Thesis

## Summer Reading Parent Acknowledgement

Due: Thursday May 17th

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

I am aware that my child has received a copy of the Honors English Summer Reading assignments. I acknowledge that these assignments are due to Mrs. Mosley no later than August 10<sup>th</sup>, regardless of whether my child is taking English in the fall or spring. I understand that my child must complete these assignments in order to remain in the Honors section of the course and to receive Honors credit.

Additionally, I will ensure that my child obtains a copy of the required reading through purchase of the novel, digital download, or through checkout at the public library. If I have any questions, I may reach Mrs. Mosley via email at [cmosley@beargrasscharter.org](mailto:cmosley@beargrasscharter.org).

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_