

## The Journey to “The American Dream”

There are many things that do not have concrete definitions, which is why some debates are never settled. There are many different ways to look at some situations, and out of 100 people, every one of them could have a different definition for what it means to be an American. William Zinsser’s definition is being able to succeed in your life the way you want to, not by the way that is expected of you. J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur defines it as someone who uses new ideas and opinions. John McCain believes that an American loves and serves his country. That is only three different authors, and they each have completely different ideas.

Zinsser believes that every person has the right to succeed on his own (Zinsser ¶ 14), but once again, the definition of success can be taken many different ways. While one person might have big dreams of becoming a celebrity that walks down red carpets in Hollywood, another person’s idea of what success is to them could simply mean buying their own house and raising a family there. Success simply means to accomplish a goal that someone sets for themselves, it can be anything someone wishes. As long as you are accomplishing your own goals, no one can tell you that you are not successful, because you are doing exactly what you set out to achieve.

To be an American means to live by new laws, work to improve the country, and act upon new principles (Crèvecoeur ¶ 1). Some argue that immigrants should receive the same rights that American citizens do, but others argue against this free luxury. Not that they should be treated like pests and kicked out, but immigrants should at least be required to learn English because it will only benefit them, considering that English is the primary language in America.

Just as there are requirements that must be met to get a job, there should be requirements that allow you to live here. Immigrants should be required to begin the process of becoming an American citizen in order to get any kind of job in America. If you are not working to improve the country, or contributing to it in any way, why should you receive the same benefits that come with being an American citizen? McCain insists, “Patriotism is a love and a duty, a love of country expressed in good citizenship” (McCain ¶ 1). John McCain believes that citizens should get involved and work for their country. If you want the privileges that come with being an American, you should make the effort to become a citizen. In this quote, McCain preaches that “happiness is greater than comfort” (McCain ¶ 8), and that we will only be happy when we learn to put ourselves aside and serve our country. This calls out immigrants that are doing nothing to become American citizens because the work is a burden or isn’t worth it to them.

Immigrants are not offered the same opportunities that citizens are given, which makes it harder for them to achieve to the extent, and with the same speed as American citizens do. When America began, technically everyone was an immigrant, and they were welcomed. America still provides access to “The American Dream,” but it can be much more challenging for immigrants to achieve it. Immigrants are not welcomed as they once were when America was young, so they must work even harder than an American citizen to reach their “American Dream.”

Since America's beginning, it has been labelled as a "refuge" and a place of opportunity for anyone. Throughout the years, this idea has been defined as "The American Dream". In the eyes of society, "The American Dream" often means to become extremely wealthy, but its definition can vary greatly, depending on each individual's opinion of what it means. When children are young, they are often asked what they want to be when they grow up. Many of the girls will say that they want to be a singer/actress/celebrity, while many of the boys will say that they want to be a firefighter/cop/race car driver. At that age, that is their "American Dream," but as they grow, and the activities they enjoy change, so can their "American Dream." If one single person can change their definition of "The American Dream" several times throughout their lifetime, then it is virtually impossible to set a definition of it for everyone in America.

While Zinsser believes that "The American Dream" is being able to create your own path to success (Zinsser ¶ 11), Crèvecoeur thinks it means being able to start over and flourish as citizens of America (Crèvecoeur ¶ 1). Both authors would be working towards different goals to reach their versions of what "The American Dream" is to them. Zinsser could teach children from a young age that embracing their individuality is acceptable, and encourage them to pursue their own path to success. Crèvecoeur could motivate others to make a fresh start for themselves, and rebuild their lives better than before. There is no set path to the top (Zinsser ¶ 12), everyone must find their way to each of their "American Dreams".

Many come to America in search of religious freedom, which is why our first amendment protects against the discrimination of any religion. People also come to America for the opportunity to become prosperous and successful. While this is what "The American Dream" was originally associated with, some believe that America does not provide access to it anymore. With each year, it seems that "The American Dream" gets harder and harder to achieve, but it is still possible.

Crèvecoeur states, "here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men" (Crèvecoeur ¶ 3). America began by immigrants being invited from all around the world to come settle in the new land. American citizens are given a lot, but there is also a lot that is expected from the average American. "The right to fail is one of the few freedoms that this country does not grant its citizens" (Zinsser ¶ 3). Although we are given many of the resources needed to succeed, there is little forgiveness for failure, and we are taught from a young age to fear failure of any kind.

In this generation, high school students are often scorned for bringing home anything less than a "B" because getting into higher ranking colleges gets more difficult every year, so they need a high GPA. Students that take on AP and Honors classes are labelled as "smart," making the students that take regular classes seem mediocre. While the student taking advanced classes may be a bit more prepared for college than the student that took regular classes, they are both equally capable of getting into a college and graduating. The road to "The American Dream" has

proven to be a challenge, and it is no easier now than it was before. Just because it is hard, does not mean it is impossible.

Although the thought of failure is terrifying to this generation, “failure isn’t fatal” (Zinsser ¶ 6). If you don’t reach your “American Dream” on the first try, that doesn’t mean you never will. It’s okay to change your mind. If your goals change, you will go down a different path, and maybe you will succeed this time. The opportunities are endless and everyone can become successful. Hold true to who you are, and work to achieve your goals. When you learn from your mistakes, you can progress further than ever before, and attain “The American Dream.” Finish school, go to college, get that dream job, meet new people, buy a house, start a family, whatever will get you to where you want to go. Finish what you start, and don’t settle until you’re satisfied with who you have become. You are an American, find your “American Dream.”