

# The American Dream - Hopes and Realities



Name:

Date:

## Principle of the American Dream

The American Dream is the belief that anyone, regardless of background, can achieve success and prosperity through hard work and determination.

**Example:** A person from a humble background becoming a successful entrepreneur.

## Listen to the story of this immigrant



### Audio Content

To listen to audio content just scan the QR code and listen to it on the digital worksheet.

<https://to-teach.ai/worksheet/lksrwwdqFzp3bAPreQxM>

## Answer the questions about the monologue.

Why did Johann leave Hamburg to come to America?

Johann left Hamburg due to the stifling political climate and lack of opportunities, seeking freedom and prosperity in America.

What does Johann hope to achieve by opening a small shop in America?

Why does Johann feel both excitement and fear upon arriving in America?

What does Johann hope for his children in America?

What does Johann's belief in the promise of America represent?

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## Reality Check: The Evolution of the American Dream

The notion of the American Dream has been a cornerstone of American ethos since it was popularized by James Truslow Adams in 1931. Originally, it promised a land where life would be better and richer for everyone, irrespective of their birth circumstances. Fast forward to the 21st century, and the dream has evolved into a pursuit of material wealth and upward mobility. According to a 2020 poll, 54% of American adults believed the American Dream was attainable, while 28% thought it was not. Notably, younger generations and minority groups are less optimistic about its attainability.

Despite the decline in social mobility and rising income inequality, the American Dream persists, largely due to its deep-rooted cultural significance. The dream is embedded in the Declaration of Independence, which states that "all men are created equal" with an inalienable right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." This ethos has been a rallying cry for various social movements, from women's rights to civil rights, reinforcing its enduring appeal. However, evidence indicates that social mobility in the United States is lower than in many European countries, particularly the Nordic countries.



*Liberty Enlightening the World (the Statue of Liberty) in New York Harbor was the first view of the United States for many immigrants during the mid-19th to the early 20th century. In this role, it signified new opportunities for becoming American, and evolved into a symbol of the American Dream. Source: GaMeRuInEr at English Wikipedia*

Historically, the dream has served as a powerful motivator for immigrants and citizens alike. In the 19th century, many Germans fleeing the failed 1848 revolution found the United States to be free from the hierarchical constraints of Europe. This sense of freedom and opportunity has been a key factor in the dream's longevity. Yet, American exceptionalism often overlooks the hardships faced by many, including slavery, Native American genocide, and discriminatory violence. Critics argue that the dominant culture's focus on materialism and consumerism has distorted the dream's original intent.

In recent decades, the American Dream has faced significant challenges. Wealth inequality has surged; data from the Congressional Budget Office shows that the top 1% of households now hold more wealth than the bottom 90% combined. Moreover, the labor movement, once a pillar of the middle class, has weakened, with only 10% of American workers being union members in 2024, down from 20% in 1983. Despite these obstacles, the dream remains a potent symbol of hope and aspiration, continually adapted to reflect the changing realities of American life.

**Discuss whether you believe Johann, the protagonist from the text, achieved his American Dream. Additionally, explore why the concept of the American Dream continues to be a powerful and enduring ideal.**

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