

**Lesson title:** Exploring The American Dream

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**Appropriate for Grade Levels:** 11th

**US History Standard(s)/CCSS(s):**

*2.0 Nation Building and Development:* Students understand the people, events, ideas, and conflicts that lead to the evolution of nations, empires, distinctive cultures, and political and economic ideas.

*3.0 Social Responsibility and Change:* Students understand how social ideas and individual action lead to social, political, economic, and technological change.

*4.0: International Relationships and Power:* Students understand the interaction and interdependence of nations around the world. Students understand the impact of economics, politics, religion, and culture on international relationships.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1* Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2* Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7* Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a problem.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9* Integrate information. From diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.10* By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend history/Social Studies texts in the grades 11-CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently.

**Discussion Question(s):** What is the American Dream? How do individuals go about achieving it? What barriers might be encountered?

**Discussion Engagement Strategy:** whole class, pairs, small groups, Socratic seminar

**Student Readings/sources:**

-Video: *A Date With Your Family*, directed by Edward C. Simmer (United States: Simmel-Meservey, 1950). Available at <http://archive.org/details/DateWith1950>.

-Video: "Ward's Problem," *Leave It To Beaver*, season 2, episode 3, directed by Norman Tokar (October 16, 1958: Los Angeles: Universal Studios, 2006). Available on Netflix.

-Excerpt from *Ladies' Home Journal*, 1950: "Young Mothers"

-"Up From The Potato Fields", *Time* 56 (3 July 1950)

-"If I Knew You Were Coming I'd've Baked A Cake", 1950, by Al Hoffman, Bob Merrill, and Clem Watts

- “I’m a Woman”, 1963, Peggy Lee, Capitol Records
- 1950s PowerPoint, [www.pptpalooza.net/PPTs/AHAP/1950sAmericanCulture.ppt](http://www.pptpalooza.net/PPTs/AHAP/1950sAmericanCulture.ppt)
- Classroom textbooks
- Other relevant teacher provided materials

**Description of student writing assignment and criteria or rubric used for assessment of student writing:** using information and ideas gleaned from the lesson and discussions, students will answer the discussion questions. For an extended assignment, students will research an issue or era in US history and answer the discussion questions, using primary sources to support their responses. Effective student responses for both writing assignments should include a five paragraph essay that effectively answers the questions. For the extended assignment students must use at least three primary sources which are cited in a bibliography.

**Total Time Needed:** 115 minutes minimum, 195 minutes if videos and writing assignment are all completed in class.

### **Lesson Outline:**

*Pre-lesson assignment:* students are to create a collage. On the left side of the paper, students should use images that identify how they see themselves and what is unique about themselves. On the right, students should utilize that identify their ultimate life goals. For both, students should seek out images that depict their values and beliefs, occupations, education, family structure, hobbies and interests, possessions, appearance, etc. Note: this activity could be done at any time prior to this lesson, perhaps even as a start-of-year ice-breaker, and used throughout the year as a reference or starting point for various connections through history. For example, these collages could be connected to gender roles during the Civil War or to 19th century consumerism by identifying occupations or objects that demonstrate those concepts. It is suggested that students include a write-up explaining their choices, particularly if this assignment is done far in advance of this lesson, so students don't forget why they made specific choices. In this or other lessons, it may be appropriate for students to explain how their choices may have changed over the course of the school year.

*time: 5-10 minutes*

*Discussion:* students discuss their collages, explaining what they need to do to get from where they are now to where they want to be. Time may vary based on if collages have been used in other lessons. This discussion could take place as a whole class, if it is the first time the collages are being used, or in pairs or small groups if students are familiar with the content of various collages.

Teacher: monitoring/encouraging discussion

Students: discussing/sharing collages

*Time: 5 minutes*

*Warm-up:* What is the "American Dream", and how is it achieved?

Students may or may not be familiar with this phrase. Let them struggle with it if necessary. Students' responses should be written on the graphic organizer.

Teacher: monitoring students' writing

Students: thinking, writing responses of a few sentences

*Time: 5-10 minutes*

*Discussion:* discuss students' responses - whole class

Teacher: monitoring discussion

Students: participating in and listening to discussion, revising or improving responses as needed.

*Time: video 1, 10 minutes; video 2, 25 minutes; discussion 10-15 minutes Primary source analysis Part I videoanalysis:*

Students view and take notes on graphic organizer:

—"A Date With Your Family", video 1

—"Ward's Problem", video 2

Note: if classroom time is a problem, the videos can be assigned as homework.

Part II: discussion - class discusses the videos, their responses and impressions, revisit the warm-up question: how does it apply to these videos. Does the warm-up change their responses to the videos, or vice-versa, and why?

Teacher: monitoring viewing and discussion

Students: watching videos, recording responses, discussing

*Time: 10 minutes*

*Brainstorm.* Using the graphic organizer, students brainstorm/web what they know or think they know about the 1950s (they may or may not have done relevant textbook reading by this point).

Use of key words and bullet points is acceptable, such as "Cold War" or "poodle skirts". Students first work individually (4 minutes), then in pairs (3 minutes), then in a whole-class discussion

Teacher: monitoring brainstorm, prompting students

Students: working independently and collaboratively to brainstorm ideas

*Time: 20 minutes*

*Primary Source reading and analysis:* students read the article from *Ladies' Home Journal*, "Young Mother", 1956 and examine the lyrics from "If I Knew You Were Coming I'd've Baked A Cake", and "I'm a Woman". There are seven speaking parts in the article, so the class can be divided into groups of seven or this can be done whole-class with the expectation that students who do not participate in this part of the activity carry more of the discussion. Accommodation: Dr. Montague has only one short part, Mrs. Townsend speaks twice, and Miss Hickey has 13 very short lines throughout the article, so these parts might be good for specific students. The teacher can also choose to rotate the speaking parts through the entire class for full participation, as what matters is what the mothers in general are doing, not what each specific mother is doing. *Analysis:* during and after the reading students should be completing the appropriate section in the graphic organizer. The song lyrics can be read individually, as a class, or by listening to the song. The teacher should check for understanding with a discussion of the text and the student responses.

Teacher: monitoring reading, assisting students as needed, monitoring discussion

Students: reading out loud, following text, completing graphic organizer, discussing

*Time: 30 minutes*

*Preliminary Research:* Individually or in pairs, students should explore the relevant sections in their textbook to identify issues of the 1950s, *Time's* article about Levittown, "Up From The

Potato Fields", and various slides from Samantha Pojer's 1950's PowerPoint at [www.historyteacher.net](http://www.historyteacher.net). Additional readings can be supplemented by the teacher based on student readiness and materials available, for example, sections from David Halberstam's *The Fifties*, videos such as PBS's documentary *The Murder of Emmett Till*, song lyrics, etc. Based on the textbook structure and materials used, the teacher may want to assign specific topics or sections, or allow students to take their own notes. As they research, students should again be looking for indicators of the "American Dream" and what people did to achieve and/or access it.

Teacher: monitoring, assisting students

Students: researching, making discoveries regarding Civil Rights, the Cold War, new forms of communication, white flight, suburbanization, car culture, fast food, rock and roll, Korean War, Truman, Eisenhower, McCarthyism, HUAC, segregation/desegregation, civil disobedience, Brown v. Board of Education, Rosa Parks, television.

*Time: 30 minutes*

*Socratic Seminar.* Based on the videos, readings, primary source analysis, and textbook research, the class will now conduct a Socratic Seminar asking again "what is the American Dream and what are individuals doing to achieve it?" Students' responses should include a variety of topics and they should also be addressing the barriers to achieving the dream.

Teacher: monitoring students, checking responses, assisting the discussion, ensuring participation and eliminating monopolization.

Students: listening, participating, taking notes

*Time: 30 minutes in class or homework assignment*

*Writing assignment:* students will write a 5-paragraph essay answering the question "what is the American Dream, and what did people do to achieve it?" Students are required to reference the primary sources used in the lesson as the evidence for their response as well as the knowledge gained in the various classroom, brainstorming, and Socratic discussions.

Teacher: monitoring writing, providing guidance

Students: pre-writing, writing, editing

**Rubric:**

	4	3	2	1	0
Essay structure is a traditional 5-paragraph essay or other school-accepted format	Meets requirement	Introduction and/or concluding paragraphs exist but are weak	Essay lacks at least one paragraph	Essay lacks at least two paragraphs and/or paragraph structure is weak	Essay lacks more than two paragraphs
Essay references classroom material in all paragraphs	At least three unique pieces of evidence are used throughout the essay	At least three unique pieces of evidence are used, but at least one connection is unclear	Essay uses only two pieces of evidence within or throughout essay	Essay uses only one piece of evidence within or throughout essay	Evidence is lacking or connections are unclear
Essay answers the three discussion questions: What is the American Dream? How is it achieved? What are the barriers?	All three questions are clearly answered.	All three questions are answered; responses might be murky on one or two.	Two questions are answered.	One question is answered.	Response is not clear or is not relevant to the questions.

*Extended assignment:*

*Research paper:*

Students select one era or issue in American history and, using relevant primary sources that they select, explain the "American Dream" relevant to this era, what people did to achieve that dream and how this dream compares with the 1950s American Dream. Students may use the primary sources examined in the lesson plus the knowledge gained in the various classroom, brainstorming, and Socratic discussions. The portion of their response concerning the research they conduct must include a discussion to the barriers that prevented people from achieving the dream, at least three primary sources, and a bibliography.

**Rubric:**

	4	3	2	1	0
Essay structure is a traditional 5-paragraph essay or other school-accepted format	Meets requirement	Introduction and/or concluding paragraphs exist but are weak	Essay lacks at least one paragraph	Essay lacks at least two paragraphs and/or paragraph structure is weak	Essay lacks more than two paragraphs
Essay references classroom material in all paragraphs	At least three unique pieces of evidence are used throughout the essay	At least three unique pieces of evidence are used, but at least one connection is unclear	Essay uses only two pieces of evidence within or throughout essay	Essay uses only one piece of evidence within or throughout essay	Evidence is lacking or connections are unclear
Essay references additional primary sources	At least three unique pieces of evidence are used throughout the essay	At least three unique pieces of evidence are used, but at least one connection is unclear	Essay uses only two pieces of evidence within or throughout essay	Essay uses only one piece of evidence within or throughout essay	Evidence is lacking or connections are unclear
Essay answers the three discussion questions: What is the American Dream? How is it achieved? What are the barriers?	All three questions are clearly answered.	All three questions are answered; responses might be murky on one or two.	Two questions are answered.	One question is answered.	Response is not clear or is not relevant to the questions.
Essay connects 1950s to a different era and answers the three discussion questions	The American Dream for the selected era is discussed, the discussion questions are clear, and the era is clearly compared and contrasted to the 1950s	The American Dream for the selected era is discussed, but discussion questions and/or comparisons and contrasts might not be clear.	At least one discussion question is omitted for the selected era and/or comparisons and contrasts are unclear.	At least two discussion questions are omitted for the selected era and comparisons and/or contrasts are omitted.	A different era is not discussed, the discussion questions are not addressed for this era, and/or comparisons and/or contrasts are omitted.
A bibliography or Works Cited is included in the appropriate school-approved format	All sources, at least for the selected era, are included and cited properly	All sources, at least for the selected era, are included and cited, but the proper format is not used	At least one source is uncited	At least two sources are uncited	More than three sources are missing or no bibliography or Works Cited is attached

**Additional sources used in writing this lesson plan:**

Dunak, Karen, "Teaching the Many Americas of the 1950s", *OAH Magazine of History*, vol 26, No. 4, pp. 13-16, October 2012.

## The American Dream

*Warm-up:* What does “The American Dream” mean to you? How is it achieved?

*Part 1: videoanalysis*

<b>Questions</b>	<b>"A Date With Your Family"</b>	<b>"Ward's Problem"</b>
1. What is/are the issues?		
2. Describe the action throughout this video.		
3. Who are the characters and how do they interact?		
4. How would you describe these individuals and their families?		
5. What are the settings?		
6. Other observations you have made about these videos.		
7. How are the issues resolved?		
8. How realistic/relevant is this to your perceptions of the time period and to today?		
9. Combined response: based on these videos, what is the American Dream and what do individuals do to achieve it?		

10. Are there barriers to achieving the American Dream? What are they? Who might experience them? How can they be overcome?

*Part II: Brainstorming:* In this section, list, brainstorm, or web what you know or think you know about the 1950s. This is a timed activity, so work quickly.

*Part III:* "Young Mothers", "If I Knew You Were Coming I'd've Baked A Cake", and "Because I'm A Woman". Based on the reading and the lyrics, answer the following questions:

1. Why is the *Ladies' Home Journal* (LHJ) interviewing these women?
2. Who are the interviewers? What evidence in the text supports this?
3. Who are the interviewees? What evidence in the text supports this?
4. What do the mothers do with their time? What evidence in the text supports this?
5. What do the mothers want or need? What evidence in the text supports this?
6. Did the mothers answer LHJ's question? Why or why not? What evidence in the text supports this?
7. In what ways does the "Cake" song support or refute what the mothers are saying? What message(s) does this song provide?
8. In what ways does the Peggy Lee song support or refute what the mothers are saying? Support your response with evidence from the article and the song. Does this song support or refute the Cake song, and what is your evidence for this? How do your responses change if you realize the Peggy Lee song was written in 1963 and not in the 1950s?

*Part IV: Preliminary Research.* Take notes of the issues and your observations from the textbook and other provided material. Remember to focus on the American Dream, who is achieving it, and the barriers to achieving it. Note relevant page numbers and sections.



*Part V: Socratic Seminar.* Take notes on students responses, suggestions, and your thoughts regarding the American Dream, who is achieving it, and the barriers to achieving it.

1 Ladies Home Journal, "Young Mother"  
2 (1956)[http://wps.ablongman.com/wps/media/objects/31/32177/primarysources1\\_29\\_1.html](http://wps.ablongman.com/wps/media/objects/31/32177/primarysources1_29_1.html)  
3

4 Mrs. Gould: As editors and parents we are extremely interested in this whole problem. The  
5 welfare of our society depends upon the type of children you young mothers and others like you  
6 are able to bring up. Anything that affects the welfare of young families is most crucial, and I do  
7 feel that the young mother, any young mother in our day, should get far more general recognition  
8 and attention than she does--not so much for her own sake as for society as a whole, or just out  
9 of sheer common sense.

10  
11 Miss Hickey: And understanding. I think there is a lack of understanding, too. Since it would  
12 take all day to tell what a busy woman does all day . . . how about your high points?  
13

14 Mrs. Petry: I would say in the morning--breakfast and wash time. I put the breakfast out, leave  
15 the children to eat it and run into the bathroom--that is where the washer is--and fill it up. I come  
16 back into the kitchen and shove a little in the baby's mouth and try to keep the others eating.  
17 Then I go back in the bathroom and put the clothes in the wringer and start the rinse water. That  
18 is about the end of the half-hour there. I continue then to finish the wash, and either put them out  
19 or let them see one program they like on television, and then I go out and hang the wash up.  
20

21 Miss Hickey: You put that outside?  
22

23 Mrs. Petry: Yes. Then I eat.  
24

25 Mrs. Gould: Can you sit down and eat in peace? Are the children outdoors at that time or  
26 watching television?  
27

28 Mrs. Petry: They are supposed to be outside, but they are usually running in and out. Somebody  
29 forgot something he should have eaten, or wants more milk, or a toy or something. Finally I lock  
30 the screen door. I always read something while I'm eating--two meals a day I read. When my  
31 husband isn't there, and if I am alone, or maybe just one child at the table, I read something  
32 quick. But I time it. I take no more than half an hour for eating and reading.  
33

34 Miss Hickey: You work on schedule quite a bit. Why do you do that?  
35

36 Mrs. Petry: Because I am very forgetful. I have an orange crayon and I write "defrost" on the  
37 refrigerator every now and then, or I forget to defrost it. If I think of something while I am  
38 washing, I write it on the mirror with an eyebrow pencil. It must sound silly, but that is the only  
39 way I can remember everything I have to do. . . .  
40

41 Miss Hickey: Mrs. Ehrhardt, your quietest half-hour?  
42

43 Mrs. Ehrhardt: I would say . . . that when I go out to take the wash in. There is something about  
44 getting outdoors--and I don't get out too often, except to hang out the wash and to bring it in. I  
45 really enjoy doing it. If it is a nice day, I stand outside and fold it outdoors. I think that is my  
46 quietest hour.

47  
48 Miss Hickey: How often do you and your husband go out together in the evening?  
49  
50 Mrs. Ehrhardt: Not often. An occasional movie, which might be every couple of months or so, on  
51 an anniversary. This year is the first year we celebrated on the day we were married. We were  
52 married in June. We always celebrated it, but it might be in July or August.  
53  
54 It depends on our babysitter. If you cannot get anyone, you just cannot go out. I am not living  
55 near my family and I won't leave the children with teenagers. I would be afraid it might be a little  
56 hectic, and a young girl might not know what to do. So we don't get out very often. . . .  
57  
58 Miss Hickey: Let us hear about Mrs. Petry's recreation.  
59  
60 Mrs. Petry: Oh, I went to work in a department store that opened in Levittown. I begged and  
61 begged my husband to let me work, and finally he said I could go once or twice a week. I lasted  
62 for three weeks, or should I say he lasted for three weeks.  
63  
64 Mrs. Gould: You mean you worked in the daytime?  
65  
66 Mrs. Petry: Three evenings, from six until nine, and on Saturday.  
67  
68 Mrs. Gould: And your husband took care of the children during that time?  
69  
70 Mrs. Petry: Yes, but the third week, he couldn't stand it anymore, Saturday and all. In fact, I  
71 think he had to work that Saturday, so I asked if I could just come in to the store during the  
72 week. My husband was hoping they would fire me, but they didn't. But I could see that it wasn't  
73 really fair to him, because I was going out for my own pleasure.  
74  
75 Mrs. Gould: In other words, your working was your recreation.  
76  
77 Mrs. Petry: Yes, and I enjoyed it very much.  
78  
79 Miss Hickey: Why did you feel you wanted to do this?  
80  
81 Mrs. Petry: To see some people and talk to people, just to see what is going on in the world. . . .  
82  
83 Miss Hickey: How about your shopping experiences?  
84  
85 Mrs. McKenzie: Well, I don't go in the evening, because I cannot depend on Ed being home; and  
86 when he is there, he likes to have me there too. I don't know. Usually all three of the children go  
87 shopping with me. At one time I carried two and dragged the other one along behind me in the  
88 cart with the groceries. It is fun to take them all. Once a man stopped me and said, "Lady, did  
89 you know your son is eating hamburger?" He had eaten a half- pound of raw hamburger. When  
90 corn on the cob was so expensive, my oldest one begged me to buy corn on the cob, so I splurged  
91 and bought three ears for thirty-nine cents. When I got to the check-out counter, I discovered he  
92 had eaten all three, so he had to pay for the cobs.

93

94 Miss Hickey: You go once a week?

95

96 Mrs. McKenzie: Once a week or every ten days now, depending on how often I have the use of  
97 the car. That day we usually go to the park, too. . . .

98

99 Miss Hickey: Tell us about your most recent crisis.

100

101 Mrs. McKenzie: I had given a birthday party for fifteen children in my little living room, which  
102 is seven by eleven. The next morning my son, whose birthday it had been, broke out with the  
103 measles, so I had exposed fifteen children to measles, and I was the most unpopular mother in  
104 the neighborhood.

105

106 He was quite sick, and it snowed that day. Ed took Lucy sleigh riding. Both of them fell off the  
107 sled and she broke both the bones in her arm.

108

109 Mrs. Gould: Did she then get the measles?

110

111 Mrs. McKenzie: She did, and so did the baby. . . . My main problem was being in quarantine for  
112 a month. During this time that all three had measles and Lucy had broken her arm, we got a  
113 notice from the school that her tuberculin test was positive--and that meant that one of the adults  
114 living in our home had active tuberculosis. It horrified me. I kept thinking, "Here I sit killing my  
115 three children with tuberculosis." But we had to wait until they were over their contagion period  
116 before we could all go in and get x-rayed.

117

118 Miss Hickey: And the test was not correct?

119

120 Mrs. McKenzie: She had had childhood tuberculosis, but it was well healed and she was all right.  
121 About eight of ten have had childhood tuberculosis and no one knows it.

122

123 Mrs. Gould: It is quite common, but it is frightening when it occurs to you. Were your children  
124 quite sick with measles?

125

126 Mrs. McKenzie: Terribly ill.

127

128 Mrs. Gould: They had high temperatures?

129

130 Mrs. McKenzie: My children are a great deal like my father. Anything they do, they do to  
131 extreme. They are violently ill, or they are as robust as can be. There is no in-between. . . .

132

133 Dr. Montagu: There is one very large question I would like to ask. What in your lives, as they are  
134 at present, would you most like to see changed or modified?

135

136 Mrs. Ehrhardt: Well, I would like to be sure my husband's position would not require him to be  
137 transferred so often. I would like to stay in place long enough to take a few roots in the  
138 community. It would also be nice to have someone help with the housework, but I don't think I

139 would like to have anyone live in. The houses nowadays are too small. I think you would bump  
140 into each other. Of course, I have never had any one in, so I cannot honestly give an opinion.

141

142 Mrs. Townsend: At the present time, I don't think there is anything that I would like to change in  
143 the household. We happen to be very close, and we are all very happy. I will admit that there are  
144 times when I am a little overtired, and I might be a little more than annoyed with the children,  
145 but actually it doesn't last too long. We do have a problem where we live now. There aren't any  
146 younger children for my children to play with. Therefore, they are underneath my heels just  
147 constantly, and I am not able to take the older children out the way I would like to, because of  
148 the two babies.

149

150 Miss Hickey: You have been in how many communities?

151

152 Mrs. Townsend: I have lived in Louisiana, California, New York, and for a short period in  
153 Columbia, South Carolina. . . .

154

155 Miss Hickey: Mrs. Petry, what would you change?

156

157 Mrs. Petry: I would like more time to enjoy my children. I do take time, but if I do take as much  
158 time as I like, the work piles up. When I go back to work I feel crabby, and I don't know whether  
159 I'm mad at the children, or mad at the work or just mad at everybody sometimes.

160

161 I would also like to have a little more rest and a little more time to spend in relaxation with my  
162 husband. We never get to go out together, and the only time we have much of a conversation is  
163 just before we go to bed. And I would like to have a girl come and do my ironing.

164

165 I am happy there where we live because this is the first time we have stayed anywhere for any  
166 length of time. It will be two years in August, and it is the first home we have really had. That is  
167 why my husband left the Navy. I nearly had a nervous collapse, because it seemed I couldn't  
168 stand another minute not having him home and helping, or not helping, but just being there.

169

1 "If I Knew You Were Coming I'd've Baked A Cake", 1950, by Al Hoffman, Bob Merrill, and  
2 Clem Watts

3

4 Well, well, well, look who's here.

5 I haven't seen you in many a year.

6 If I knew you were comin' I'd 've baked a cake, baked a cake, baked a cake.

7 If I knew you were comin' I'd 've baked a cake.

8 How-ja do. How-ja do, How-ja do.

9

10 Had you dropped me a letter I'd 've hired a band, grandest band in the land.

11 Had you dropped me a letter I'd 've hired a band and spread the welcome mat for you.

12

13 Now I don't know where you came from

14 'cause I don't know where you've been.

15 But it really doesn't matter

16 grab a chair and fill your platter

17 and dig dig dig right in.

18

19 If I knew you were comin' I'd 've baked a cake, hired a band, goodness sake.

20 If I knew you were comin' I'd 've baked a cake.

21 How-ja do. How-ja do. How-ja do.

22

23 If I knew you were comin' I'd 've baked a cake, baked a cake, baked a cake.

24 If I knew you were comin' I'd 've baked a cake.

25 How-ja do. How-ja do, How-ja do.

26

27 Had you dropped me a letter I'd 've hired a hall, great big hall, band and all.

28 Had you dropped me a letter I'd 've hired a hall and spread the welcome mat for you.

29

30 Now I don't know where you came from

31 'cause I don't know where you've been.

32 But it really doesn't matter

33 grab a chair and fill your platter

34 and dig dig dig right in.

35

36 If I knew you were comin' I'd 've kept the pot, coffee pot nice and hot.

37 If I knew you were comin' I'd 've baked a cake.

38 How-ja do. How-ja do. How-ja do.

39 "I'm A Woman", 1963, Peggy Lee

40

41 I can wash out 44 pairs of socks and have 'em hangin out on the line

42 I can starch & iron 2 dozens shirts 'fore you can count from 1 to 9

43 I can scoop up a great big dipper full of lard from the drippins can

44 Throw it in the skillet, go out & do my shopping, be back before it melts in the pan

45 'Cause I'm a woman! W-O-M-A-N, I'll say it again

46

47 I can rub & scrub this old house til it's shinin like a dime

48 Feed the baby, grease the car, & powder my face at the same time

49 Get all dressed up, go out and swing til 4 a.m. and then

50 Lay down at 5, jump up at 6, and start all over again

51 'Cause I'm a woman! W-O-M-A-N, I'll say it again

52

53 If you come to me sickly you know I'm gonna make you well

54 If you come to me all hexed up you know I'm gonna break the spell

55 If you come to me hungry you know I'm gonna fill you full of grits

56 If it's lovin you're likin, I'll kiss you and give you the shiverin' fits

57 'Cause I'm a woman! W-O-M-A-N, I'll say it again

58

59 I can stretch! a greenback dollar bill from here to kingdom come!

60 I can play the numbers pay the bills and still end up with some!

61 I got a twenty-dollar gold piece says there ain't nothing I can't do

62 I can make a dress out of a feed bag and I can make a man out of you

63 'Cause I'm a woman! W-O-M-A-N, I'll say it again 'Cause I'm a woman! W-O-M-A-N, and that's  
64 all.

65

66

67

68

69

70

71

1950s powerpoint: <http://www.pptpalooza.net/PPTs/AHAP/1950sAmericanCulture.ppt>

1 "Up From The Potato Fields".

2 <http://lhs.loswego.k12.or.us/z->

3 [hoppesk/APHIR/Quarter3/documents/socialchangeandcontainmentathome.pdf](http://hoppesk/APHIR/Quarter3/documents/socialchangeandcontainmentathome.pdf)

4  
5 On 1,200 flat acres of potato farmland near Hicksville, Long Island, an army of trucks sped  
6 over new-laid roads. Every 100 feet, the trucks stopped and dumped identical bundles of lumber,  
7 pipes, bricks, shingles and copper tubing - all as neatly packaged as loaves from a bakery. Near  
8 the bundles, giant machines with an endless chain of buckets ate into the earth, taking just 13  
9 minutes to dig a narrow, four-foot trench around a 25-by-32 ft. rectangle. Then came more  
10 trucks, loaded with cement, and laid a four-inch foundation for a house in the rectangle.

11  
12 After the machines came the men. On nearby slabs already dry, they worked in crews of two  
13 and three, laying bricks, raising studs, nailing lath, painting, sheathing, shingling. Each crew did  
14 its special job, then hurried on to the next site. Under the skilled combination of men and  
15 machines, new houses rose faster than Jack ever built them; a new one was finished every 15  
16 minutes.....

17  
18 Levittown is known largely for one reason: it epitomizes the revolution which has brought  
19 mass production to the housing industry. Its creator, Long Island's Levitt & Sons, Inc., has  
20 become the biggest builder of houses in the U.S. The houses in Levittown, which sell for a  
21 uniform price of \$7,900, cannot be mistaken for castles. Each has a sharp-angled roof and a  
22 picture window, radiant heating in the floor, 12-by-16 ft. living room, bath, kitchen, two  
23 bedrooms on the first floor, and an "expansion attic" which can be converted into two more  
24 bedrooms and bath. The kitchen has a refrigerator, stove and Bendix washer; the living room a  
25 fireplace and a built-in Admiral television set....

26  
27 The influence of Levitt & Sons on housing goes much further than the thresholds of its own  
28 houses. Its methods of mass production are being copied by many of the merchant builders in the  
29 U.S., who are putting up four of every five houses built today. It is such mass production on one  
30 huge site which is enabling U.S. builders to meet the post-war demand and to create the biggest  
31 housing boom in U.S. history....

32  
33 At war's end, when the U.S. desperately needed 5,000,000 houses, the nation had two choices:  
34 the Federal Government could try to build the houses itself, or it could pave the way for private  
35 industry to the job, by making available billions in credit. The U.S. wisely handed the job to  
36 private industry, got 4,000,000 new units built since the war, probably faster and cheaper than  
37 could have been done any other way.

38  
39 The Government has actually spent little cash itself. By insuring loans up to 95% of the value  
40 of a house, the Federal Housing Administration made it easy for a builder to borrow the money  
41 with which to build low-cost houses. The Government made it just as easy for the buyer by  
42 liberally insuring his mortgage. Under a new housing act signed three months ago, the purchase  
43 terms on low-cost houses with Government-guaranteed mortgages were so liberalized that in  
44 many cases buying a house is now as easy as renting it. The new terms: 5% down (nothing down  
45 for veterans) and 30 years to pay. Thus an ex-G.I. could buy a Levitt house with no down  
46 payment and installments of only \$56 a month.



47 The countless new housing projects made possible by this financial easy street are changing  
48 the way of life of millions of U.S. citizens, who are realizing for the first time the great American  
49 dream of owning their own home. No longer must young married couples plan to start living in  
50 an apartment, saving for the distant day when they can buy a house. Now they can do it more  
51 easily than they can buy a \$2,000 car on the installment plan.  
52

53 Like its counterparts across the land, Levittown is an entirely new kind of community.  
54 Despite its size, it is not incorporated, thus has no mayor, no police force, nor any of the other  
55 traditional city officers of its own. It has no movies, no nightclubs and only three bars (all in the  
56 community shopping centers.)  
57

58 And Levittown has very few old people. Few of its more than 40,000 residents are past 35; of  
59 some 8,000 children, scarcely 900 are more than seven years old. In front of almost every house  
60 along Levittown's 100 miles of winding streets sits a tricycle or a baby carriage. In Levittown, all  
61 activity stops from 12 to 2 in the afternoon; that is nap time. Said one Levittowner last week,  
62 "Everyone is so young that sometimes it's hard to remember how to get along with older people."  
63

64 The community has an almost antiseptic air. Levittown streets, which have such fanciful  
65 names as Satellite, Horizon, Haymaker, are bare and flat as hospital corridors. Like a hospital,  
66 Levittown has rules all its own. Fences are not allowed (though here and there a home-owner has  
67 broken the rule). The plot of grass around each home must be cut at least once a week; if not, Bill  
68 Levitt's men mow the grass and send the bill. Wash cannot be hung out to dry on an ordinary  
69 clothesline; it must be arranged on rotary, removable drying racks and then not on weekends or  
70 holidays....  
71

72 Actually, Levittown's uniformity is more apparent than real. Though most of their incomes  
73 are about the same (average: about \$3,800), Levittowners come from all classes, all walks of life.  
74 Eighty percent of the men commute to their jobs in Manhattan, many sharing their transportation  
75 costs through car pools. Their jobs, as in any other big community, range from baking to  
76 banking, from teaching to preaching. Levittown has also developed its own unique way of  
77 keeping up with the Joneses. Some Levittowners buy a new house every year, as soon as the new  
78 model is on the market....  
79

80 The most frequent criticism of Levittown and most other projects like it, is that it is the "slum  
81 of the future." Says Bill Levitt: "Nonsense." Many city planners agree with him, because they  
82 approve of Levittown's uncluttered plan and its plentiful recreational facilities. Nevertheless, in  
83 helping to solve the housing problem, Levittown has created other problems: new schools,  
84 hospitals, and sewage facilities will soon be needed; its transportation is woefully inadequate,  
85 even by Long Island standards....

## Sample Essay for Basic Assignment

The American Dream means different things to different people. It might mean having the freedom to do what you want, to be able to voice your opinion and vote, or to own the same things your neighbors have. At first glance, the American Dream in the 1950s appeared focused on ideal families, lifestyles, and possessions. Once we dig beneath the surface, however, we see that the American Dream, like Americans themselves, is diverse, complex, and not so easy to capture.

For some, the American Dream might be the perfect family in the perfect home in the perfect neighborhood. If you were a GI, fighting for the American Way and living the American Life, getting the right home in the right neighborhood might not be that difficult if developments like Levittown appealed to you. The Cleaver family learned the American Dream was making sure you kept your commitments to one another, and our other Hollywood family learned that working together to make a simple outing happen was all it took for the dream to be real. Not a GI? Don't like being told when to cut your grass or hang out your washing? Finding your night job makes it difficult to spend time with your kids? Single parent? Sorry, this American Dream isn't for you, at least according to the mass-produced mass culture of the 1950s.

For others, the American Dream involved dad working, mom staying at home to take care of the kids. It worked for the Cleavers, right? What about our "Young Mothers"? If some of them see getting a job as recreation, a break away from the demands of home, is staying at home a dream or a nightmare? If I knew you were coming, I would have baked a cake, ordered the band, cleaned the house, and hung out all those pairs of socks (wait, it's Saturday, I can't do that). On second thought, I'd like to see you help out with all this than expect me to do it on our own. Our singers make it sound so easy, but apparently it's a skill only a woman can master because she's been doing it for so long. If you're looking to meet other people's needs and demands, this is the dream for you. If you're looking to be fulfilled by making your own choices, keep looking.

Was the American Dream about fitting in to the stereotypes such as the Man in the Gray Flannel Suit and the woman as housewife? Kinsey shattered some of those illusions through his reports on sexuality and his claims that premarital and extramarital sex were common; not quite what the Cleavers had in mind. Yet Americans themselves were fascinated by breaking the stereotype, as seen by James Dean and Marlon Brando. However, if you didn't fit the professional mold, if you were a blue-collar worker, your American Dream went the way of your job when you were replaced by automation, and if your beliefs or lifestyles differed from the norm, you were a communist, not a rebel.

Mass media and mass culture pushed one American Dream, that of the perfect family in the perfect neighborhood driving their perfect car and watching their perfect television. However, the variety of popular entertainment included science fiction, rock and roll, and movies that glorified the rebel; the Cleavers might have a hard time explaining this to the kids or planning a family outing to see Elvis Presley. While access to the suburban white collar American Dream was outside the reach of many minorities, the American Dream was more elusive and more individualized than the stereotypes portrayed.

## Sample Essay for Extended Assignment

While the Roaring Twenties were a time of living life at a fast pace, its postwar era mirrored that of the 50s in several ways. The American Dream in the 1920s included more freedom for women, and the use of new technologies and labor saving devices in the home, in some ways mirroring what people in the 1950s were seeking. Like the 1950s, barriers to achieving the dream included the color of your skin and your nationality.

Women in the 1920s might have been shocked to find out that their counterparts three decades later tended to be stay-at-home mothers and homemakers. Where did those daring girls go who were bobbing their hair, hitching up their hemlines, and smoking and partying? Yet even during this time, many single girls who were out living the fast life lived in respectable boarding houses that kept strict rules such as curfews, no alcohol or men in the rooms, and the girls had to get and maintain respectable jobs such as shop clerks and telephone operators. Society's expectations meant that many of these girls would enjoy the bright lights and big cities for a while, but just as they bobbed their hair, traditional gender roles meant that many of these same girls would eventually bob their lifestyles and settle down to be wives and mothers.

In those homes, women did learn to appreciate new labor-saving devices such as washing machines, electric stoves and irons, radios, gramophones, and telephones. The acquisition of these items meant you were affluent, or that you at least had access to the easy credit so many stores and manufacturers made available. The barrier to achieving the dream of owning the latest technology was your ability to pay: one family sold their stove to make the car payment, and later purchased another stove on credit. Cars were affordable and meant more freedom for men, women, and children, but it still took another three decades for our true car culture to emerge.

Meanwhile, blacks are prevented from being entertained at the same clubs where they perform and immigrants are singled out as socialists and anarchists. Blacks in the 1950s, such as Rosa Parks, retaliated with civil disobedience; in the 1950s they created their own clubs. In both eras they had to deal with Jim Crow laws. Socialists and communists, real or accused, dealt with persecution and prosecution, such as Sacco and Vanzetti in the 1920s and the McCarthy hearings in the 1950s.

In the 1920s women seem ready to stretch their wings, but traditional expectations and the hardships of the Great Depression and World War II make it impossible for many women to break their traditional roles. Americans strive for the acquisition of items to make their lives easier and their homes more attractive, but do so in the 1920s at the cost of credit. People who are different are singled out and harassed, at a minimum, and are prevented from doing the things that would help them fit in.