

## Defining the American Dream

**I. DEFINITION:** In 1931 James Truslow Adams defined the American Dream as “life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement” regardless of social class or circumstances of birth.

Most Americans acknowledge the American Dream as an integral part of our culture, but still have difficulty defining it. Nearly all would include vast monetary wealth as an aspect of the dream, but just as many would include more universally accessible goals such as a home and family.

What does the American Dream mean to YOU?

Below is a partial list of concepts many would associate with the American Dream. Your group must first brainstorm ideas to try to get a complete picture of the American Dream. Think about the evolution of the dream as you brainstorm – what was it in the past as well as the present (Early American Period through to Today).

<b>Abstract concepts of The American Dream. Can you think of a couple more to add to the list?</b>	<b>What do these abstract ideas look like? List specifics below. Think about the Past &amp; Present!</b>	<b>Are there any limitations to the dream? List those below. Think about the Past &amp; Present!</b>
<b>Success</b>		
<b>Family</b>		
<b>Home</b>		
<b>Security</b>		
<b>Wealth</b>		

**II. RANKINGS** Next, in your group, rank the following list of “things” that you believe to be important factors in obtaining the American Dream (1 = the most important.) Then, explain why you have ranked the top three in their respective spots.

\_\_\_\_\_ Hard work

\_\_\_\_\_ Birthright

\_\_\_\_\_ Spiritual happiness

\_\_\_\_\_ Ownership

\_\_\_\_\_ Education

\_\_\_\_\_ Race

\_\_\_\_\_ Gender

\_\_\_\_\_ Positivity

**III. ASSOCIATIONS** How do the pictures you’ve been given define the “idea” of the American Dream today? What connections to your definitions do you see? Make notes on the photos.

