

## Threads & Themes Grade 7, Unit 3, Investigation 2 Summative Assessment

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

### PASSAGE 1

#### ***The Three American Dreams***

(1) The American Dream. The phrase surfaces, like a familiar refrain, in classrooms and political speeches, in advertisements and song lyrics. It has the sound of something as old as the country itself. But the phrase has a specific beginning. A historian named James Truslow Adams first used it in 1931, in a book called *The Epic of America*, and nearly a century later, what Adams actually wrote still surprises readers who think they already know what the phrase means.

(2) Adams was writing during the deepest years of the Great Depression. Unemployment had climbed to almost one worker in four, and public trust in the country's economic promises had collapsed. In that setting, Adams insisted on a definition of the American Dream that was broader than money or property. The American Dream, he wrote, was "that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for every man, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement." The phrase, he explained, did not mean "motor cars and high wages." It named a "social order" in which each person might grow to the "fullest stature" of his or her capacity, no matter what "circumstances of birth or position" they came from.

(3) Readers in 1931 met the phrase with a complicated welcome. Some heard in it a credible statement of what the country had always been at its best, even when current conditions suggested otherwise. Others, standing in bread lines or watching family farms fail, heard a promise the country had already broken. Adams had given his readers less a slogan than a yardstick, a standard against which the nation's actual performance could be measured.

(4) After the Second World War, the meaning of the phrase began to narrow. Returning soldiers bought homes on credit guaranteed by federal loans, new suburbs rose on former farmland, and factories turned out appliances and cars at a scale the country had not seen before. In the public imagination, the American Dream came to mean ownership: a house, a car, a lawn, and a set of household goods were seen as universal signs of success. This postwar version preserved part of what Adams meant, but it quietly dropped the rest. Gone was his insistence on opportunity "regardless of birth or position." Gone was his larger argument about social order. What remained was mainly the dream of a comfortable standard of living.

(5) Two decades into that narrower reading, the civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. reclaimed the phrase and returned it to its earlier weight. Standing at the Lincoln Memorial in August of 1963, King spoke of the Dream as a promise not yet kept. "In a sense," he said, "we have come to our nation's capital to cash a check." He described the country's founding documents as a "promissory note" that "every American was to fall heir" to: a note promising

life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. King argued that America had not paid this debt and that for millions of its citizens the note had come back marked “insufficient funds.” The extended metaphor—Dream as check, nation as debtor—gave the phrase a moral edge that the postwar version had dulled.

(6) In the decades since, researchers studying economic mobility have asked whether the Dream, defined as the fair chance that children will earn more than their parents, still holds for most Americans. Their findings have been mixed. Some measures of opportunity have narrowed, while others have widened, and the answer depends heavily on where a child grows up and on which version of the Dream is being measured. What remains steady is the phrase itself—still repeated, still invoked, still meaning different things in different contexts.

(7) Adams, writing in the Depression, meant one thing. People in the postwar suburbs repeated it to mean another. King, speaking at the Lincoln Memorial, reached back into the phrase and pulled from it a third meaning. A reader today who hears or uses the phrase *the American Dream* inherits all three of those meanings at once, left to decide which one is being called up.

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## ITEMS — PASSAGE 1

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### Item 1

**According to “The Three American Dreams,” how did James Truslow Adams define the American Dream?**

- A) as a social order in which each person could grow to the fullest stature of his or her capacity
- B) as the belief that hard work would restore economic stability and end the Great Depression
- C) as the chance that children would earn more money than their parents had earned before them
- D) as the promise of a comfortable standard of living that included motor cars, high wages, and home ownership

### Item 2

Read this sentence from “The Three American Dreams.”

Adams had given his readers less a slogan than a yardstick, a standard against which the nation’s actual performance could be measured.

**What does the word yardstick suggest about the phrase Adams created for his readers?**

- A) It suggests the phrase served as a tool for evaluating the country’s progress.
- B) It suggests the phrase encouraged people to believe the country had already succeeded.
- C) It suggests the phrase served as a way to unify people around a shared national identity.

D) It suggests the phrase served as a way to remind people of the country's founding principles.

### Item 3

In paragraph 4 of "The Three American Dreams," the author writes that parts of Adams's original idea were "quietly dropped."

**What does this phrase suggest about the author's point of view on the postwar version of the American Dream?**

- A) The author shows that the postwar version fully reflected Adams's original definition.
- B) The author suggests that the postwar version reduced the original idea by leaving out important elements.
- C) The author believes the postwar version improved the American Dream by making it more realistic.
- D) The author argues that the postwar version had little effect on how people understood the American Dream.

### Item 4

Read this sentence from paragraph 4 of "The Three American Dreams":

In the public imagination, the American Dream came to mean ownership: a house, a car, a lawn, and a set of household goods were seen as universal signs of success.

**Based on your knowledge of the root uni-, what does universal most nearly mean in this context?**

- A) limited to one specific group
- B) difficult for most people to achieve
- C) recognized as the same by everyone
- D) changing depending on personal preference

### Item 5

**How does the extended metaphor in paragraph 5 of "The Three American Dreams" MOST contribute to King's argument?**

- A) It proves through financial records that the nation owes money to its citizens.
- B) It shows that King believed the American Dream was no longer worth working toward.
- C) It frames the nation's broken promises as a debt that is owed and has not yet been paid.
- D) It compares King's economic situation to the economic situation of most Americans in 1963.

### Item 6

Select the **TWO** details from “The Three American Dreams” that **BEST** support the author’s argument that the meaning of the American Dream has shifted over time.

- A) Adams first used the phrase in 1931, in a book called The Epic of America.
- B) King described the American Dream as connected to the nation’s founding ideals.
- C) Researchers studying economic mobility have asked whether the Dream still holds for most Americans.
- D) Unemployment had climbed toward one worker in four during the deepest year of the Great Depression.
- E) After World War II, the American Dream came to mean ownership, including a house, a car, a lawn, and household goods.

#### Item 7

Which statement **BEST** expresses a central idea of “The Three American Dreams”?

- A) The American Dream has lost its meaning over time due to major historical events.
- B) The same phrase can carry different meanings depending on who uses it and when it is used.
- C) Researchers have proven that the American Dream was never a realistic promise for most citizens.
- D) People have disagreed about whether the American Dream has been fulfilled.

#### Item 8

Read paragraph 4 from “The Three American Dreams.”

Now read how this moment might be presented in a documentary film:

**NARRATOR** (steady, reflective): After World War II, the meaning of the American Dream began to narrow.

[Black-and-white footage of identical suburban houses lined in rows. Families mow lawns, children ride bikes, and cars fill driveways.]

**NARRATOR:** For many Americans, success came to mean ownership—homes, cars, and household goods.

How does the documentary film version **MOST** strengthen the author’s idea in paragraph 4?

- A) By showing rows of similar houses and daily life, it helps viewers see how the American Dream became more uniform and focused on material ownership.
- B) By showing families enjoying their homes and neighborhoods, it emphasizes why the American Dream was appealing to many people.
- C) By focusing on everyday life in suburban neighborhoods, it suggests that the American Dream included many different goals.

D) By highlighting the growth of suburbs, it shows that more Americans were able to achieve the American Dream than before.

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## PASSAGE 2

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### *The Borrowed Book*

(1) The brass bell over the door had not rung in an hour. Ida sat behind the counter and counted envelopes into bundles of twenty-five, her hands moving steadily while her mind drifted. The shop smelled of old wood, of paper, and of the faint sweetness of the cedar pencils that had sat untouched in the glass display case since August. Upstairs, her father was shifting the furniture again, as though rearranging the rooms might make them feel less empty—they had sold some of her grandmother’s furniture the year before after the markets crashed and had not been able to replace it.

(2) At last, the bell rang, and Miss Halverson from the high school library stepped in with a book tucked against her arm. She had lived with them for a year after the crash, and they had helped pay for her college tuition until the money ran out. Miss Halverson asked for a box of cream envelopes. While Ida wrapped the envelopes, Miss Halverson set her book down to count coins. Its maroon cover was worn at the corners, and a strip of cardstock marked a page. When Miss Halverson left, she left the book behind.

(3) Ida waited a few minutes to be certain the librarian was not coming back. Then she lifted the book and turned to the marked page. It described a young woman who had not gone to the college she had hoped to attend and who, at forty, remembered the years between what she had wanted and what she had been permitted to do. Ida read the paragraph twice, then closed the book and set it beside the register.

(4) Her father came down the back stairs in his slippers. He looked at the book but did not ask about it. He stood next to Ida and watched her finish the last bundle. Then, still not looking at her, he said her mother’s evening class had let out and she would be home soon. He said it quietly, as though announcing a small victory.

(5) The bell rang again and Ida’s mother came in with her books under her arm. She set her books down next to the maroon library book. Her eyes stopped on it.

(6) “Miss Halverson’s?” she asked.

(7) Ida nodded. “She left it. I was going to take it back in the morning.”

(8) Frances picked up the book and opened it to the paper bookmark. She read the paragraph at the top of the page twice. When she closed the book, she looked at her husband.

(9) “Arnold,” she said. “Miss Halverson has been thinking about college again.”

(10) Arnold Kern did not raise his voice. “We have already talked about that.”

- (11) “We have,” Frances said. “But she is twenty-one. She is still thinking about it.”
- (12) “She cannot go back, Frances. Not this year. The shop cannot pay for it anymore, and it may not pay for anything much longer.”
- (13) “Then what have we been working for?” Frances laid her hand on the textbooks she had carried in from her night class. “If not for her, then what?”
- (14) “I do not want her to plan on something we cannot promise.” Arnold said it to the pencils in the display case, not to his wife. “I do not want her building a life on a plan that could fail.”
- (15) “And I do not want her future to be another thing we give up,” Frances said.
- (16) Ida did not speak while her parents spoke. She reached under the counter for the small box she kept for herself and slid Miss Halverson’s bookmark into one of the envelopes. On the front she wrote, in careful capital letters, MISS HALVERSON—BOOK LEFT OCT. 14. She set the envelope on top of the book. Her mother stopped speaking. Her father watched too.
- (17) Outside, a truck passed on Main Street. Ida counted the last envelope into the bundle and set it on the stack. She would return the book in the morning but would not tell Miss Halverson what she had read. She placed one hand briefly on the cloth cover of the book as though committing its memory to her own heart and then reached for the next stack of envelopes and began to count.

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## ITEMS — PASSAGE 2

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### Item 9

**How does the setting of the Kern family stationery shop in 1933 contribute to the conflict in “The Borrowed Book”?**

- A) It shows that the family has already sold important belongings, making the parents disagree about what else they can afford to lose.
- B) It shows that the family’s work and home life are closely connected, making the argument about money feel personal.
- C) It shows that the family is focused on improving the shop rather than thinking about college.
- D) It shows that the shop is struggling financially, which affects the family’s ability to make plans.

### Item 10

Read these sentences from paragraph 4 of “The Borrowed Book.”

Then, still not looking at her, he said that her mother’s evening class had let out and she would be home soon. He said it quietly, as though announcing a small victory.

**What does the phrase a small victory MOST nearly suggest in this sentence?**

- A) The father believes he has solved a small problem facing the family.
- B) The father is trying to hide how worried he is about the family's situation.
- C) The father is attempting to make the news seem more important than it is.
- D) The father feels a sense of relief about something small in a difficult situation.

**Item 11**

**Which detail from "The Borrowed Book" BEST shows that Ida understands the conflict between her parents about Miss Halverson's future?**

- A) Ida decides she will return the book and will not tell Miss Halverson what she has read.
- B) Ida slides Miss Halverson's bookmark into an envelope while her parents are arguing.
- C) Ida writes "MISS HALVERSON—BOOK LEFT OCT. 14" on an envelope and sets it on the book.
- D) Ida reads the paragraph about a woman who had not gone to the college she had hoped to attend.

**Item 12**

Read this sentence from "The Borrowed Book."

"And I do not want her future to be another thing we give up," Frances said.

**What does the phrase give up suggest that the word lose would NOT?**

- A) that Frances and Arnold have no control over what happens to Miss Halverson's future
- B) that Miss Halverson's future has already been taken away before this moment in the story
- C) that Frances and Arnold have decided to sacrifice Miss Halverson's future on purpose
- D) that the loss of Miss Halverson's future would be sudden and unexpected

**Item 13**

**Select the TWO details from "The Borrowed Book" that BEST show how Frances's perspective on Miss Halverson's future DIFFERS from Arnold's.**

- A) Frances continues the conversation about college, while Arnold tries to avoid discussing it further.
- B) Frances reads the marked page in the library book, while Arnold does not ask about the book on the counter.
- C) Frances repeats her point during the conversation, while Arnold speaks quietly and avoids looking directly at her.
- D) Frances points out that Miss Halverson is still young and thinking about college, while Arnold insists that she cannot go this year.
- E) Frances emphasizes the importance of working toward Miss Halverson's future, while Arnold does not want her to depend on a plan they cannot guarantee.

**Item 14**

Read this sentence from “The Borrowed Book.”

She placed one hand briefly on the cloth cover of the book as though committing it to her heart and then reached for the next stack of envelopes and began to count.

**What does the word committing MOST nearly mean as it is used in this sentence?**

- A) saving something meaningful in memory
- B) giving something away to another person
- C) making a promise to complete a task
- D) putting something in a specific place

**Item 15**

**Which statement BEST expresses a central theme of “The Borrowed Book”?**

- A) People must sometimes keep their hopes private in order to avoid disappointing others.
- B) Economic hardship can make it difficult for families to support the goals they care about most.
- C) Reading about others’ experiences can influence how people think about their own futures.
- D) People often misunderstand the sacrifices others make on their behalf.

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## ITEMS — CROSS-TEXT (Compare “The Three American Dreams” and “The Borrowed Book”)

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**Item 16**

Both “The Three American Dreams” and “The Borrowed Book” are set during or describe the Great Depression of the 1930s.

**Which statement BEST describes how the two passages portray this period differently?**

- A) “The Three American Dreams” presents the Depression as a time when people questioned the meaning of the American Dream, while “The Borrowed Book” presents it as a time when families tried to maintain a sense of normal life.
- B) “The Three American Dreams” describes the Depression as a period of limited opportunity, while “The Borrowed Book” describes it as a time when new opportunities became available to individuals.
- C) “The Three American Dreams” focuses on how the Depression shaped national ideas about opportunity, while “The Borrowed Book” shows how it affected the daily decisions of one family.
- D) “The Three American Dreams” shows how the Depression affected people’s beliefs, while “The Borrowed Book” shows how it affected people’s emotions.

**Item 17**

**What idea is emphasized in BOTH “The Three American Dreams” and “The Borrowed Book”?**

- A) Achieving success depends on individual effort alone.
- B) People can usually overcome challenges if they remain hopeful.
- C) Hard work leads to success, even during difficult times.
- D) Economic conditions can limit people’s ability to reach their goals.

**SPELLING**

**Item 18**

Write the spelling word you heard:

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**Item 19**

Write the spelling word you heard:

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**Item 20**

Write the spelling word you heard:

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**Item 21**

Write the spelling word you heard:

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**Item 22**

Write the spelling word you heard:

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