Grade 11 Unit 1 EA 2 Synthesizing the American Dream

Score: Exemplary

With no knowledge of the English language, my grandfather, Olav Kaldestad, immigrated to The United States with a dream and in search for an opportunity to achieve a successful job and provide an even better future for his family. Coming from a poor childhood in a different country came with struggles. He overcame those hardships and worked hard to provide for his family and sent all three of his children through college and they have achieved their American Dream as well. As proved by my grandfather, there is an American Dream. The American Dream is an idea that America gives the opportunity for anyone to succeed, however success itself is defined by the individual. The accessibility of this idea that was once the pinnacle of living in America is being challenged, but should it be? The American Dream is still accessible because those who strive for their own idea of happiness can achieve it and those who take advantage of the wealth of opportunities available can reach their dream, but because it has changed to be focused on money, for those who wealth alone is the dream, it may not be accessible to all.

The American Dream is still accessible because all Americans have a right to have their own idea of happiness and those who strive for it can achieve it. In the Declaration of Independence, it states that all Americans are granted “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” (Declaration of Independence 59). This guarantees that all Americans are free to live their life the way they want to and that includes having their own dream and idea of happiness and are able to pursue it in America. In his “Keynote Address to the 2004 Democratic National Convention,” Obama calls America “a beacon of freedom and opportunity” (Obama 78). Obama demonstrates that in America, not only can we dream. Not only can happiness be our own. But we can pursue our dreams and happiness by striving for it through the opportunities provided by America. The idea that it is feasible for anybody to achieve the dream can be shown through wealth not being necessary in order to achieve the American Dream.
The American Dream is still accessible because no matter the status of wealth there is always an opportunity to succeed. In his speech, Obama claims that “you don’t have to be rich to achieve your potential” (Obama 79). The American Dream is designed to be achievable for all. Although money can be a great advantage and there might be some struggles without it, the opportunity to achieve the American Dream is still there. Some people may say that because they are not born into a wealthy family and come from a rough area where opportunity is limited they can’t achieve. This is giving up on the dream. Life can be hard without money but you have to take advantage of the opportunities provided in America and work hard to succeed what you can. In William Zinsser’s essay “The Right to Fail” he says “Don’t be afraid to fail” (Zinsser 81). Nothing should get in the way of achieving the American Dream. Not money. Not fear of failure. Not because one's parents gave up on it. Nothing. One man born into poverty gives up and falls into the circle of failure of his ancestors while another man born into poverty works hard and finds success in the American Dream. Although it helps, wealth is not necessary in order to take an opportunity provided in America and achieve the American Dream.

However, if the dream and one defines success as wealth, it may not be accessible to all. In Hansberry’s play, “A Raisin in the Sun,” Mama says “once upon a time freedom used to be life--now it’s money” (Hansberry). The Dream has changed. Due to this, some say it is no longer alive and that “the American Dream is a bygone thing” (Wallechinsky 58). This may only be true if your dream is too large or to become wealthy because money is not and should not be the dream because that makes it inaccessible for all. For those whose dream is solely money, it may not be accessible because not everyone can be wealthy but an opportunity to succeed is always provided in america. There is more to success than money. The Dream isn’t inaccessible, but not everyone can be wealthy.
Olav Kaldestad didn’t let his poor childhood or entrance to a foreign country stop him from working hard to achieve his potential and he is proof that the American Dream is accessible. We tend to lay back waiting for the opportunity to knock on our front door but opportunities must be searched for and taken advantage of. The American Dream is still accessible for those who strive for it, but if the dream is solely wealth, it cannot be available for all.
Score: Exemplary

Annotation:

This Exemplary student essay shows all the characteristics of a successful essay on a complex topic. The introduction is especially strong with an engaging story of success leading logically to a clear and effective thesis that includes a claim with a qualification. Evidence from sources is built into every developmental paragraph and is smoothly and clearly integrated into the logical development of ideas. The first support paragraph cites both the Declaration of Independence and Obama’s speech as evidence of the importance of opportunity in accessing the American Dream. Then the essay goes on to introduce the topic of wealth as a possible barrier to achieving success, setting the reader up for the next paragraph of refutation of this counterclaim that making money is an important aspect of the dream by ultimately saying, “There is more to success than money.” The conclusion is exceptional that it comes back around to the story of Olav Kaldestad and uses his story to reaffirm that opportunity, unlike wealth, is available and accessible to all. The voice of this essay is powerful, particularly in his use of the story of Olav, and the syntax has real intimations of elegant syntactical constructions such as “Nothing should get in the way of achieving the American Dream. Not money. Not fear of failure. Not because one’s parents gave up on it. Nothing.” In this case, command of conventions detracts a bit, but the rhetorical power is unmistakable.
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Score: Proficient

We understand what the American Dream was like historically when this country was founded, but is it still alive in today’s society and generation? The American Dream today can be defined as having the freedom to pursue happiness and putting in accountability and effort into one’s work in order to achieve financial stability as given by our constitution. But the question is: Does the U.S. provide access to the American Dream today? I affirm that America still provides access to the American Dream because we all can give effort in our work, pursue our own knowledge, and seize any opportunity that is given to us.

To achieve to the American Dream, we must be willing to put in the hard work and dedication in order to acquire what we yearn. As stated in president Franklin D. Roosevelt’s speech, “Address on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Statue of Liberty,” he states “They not only found freedom in the New World, but by their effort and devotion, they made the New World’s freedom safer, richer, more far-reaching, more capable of growth” (Roosevelt 10). His statement clarifies that we the people, are the New World of this young founding country and we are made to support the idea of the American Dream by using our capabilities to shape our fortune. Therefore with our devotion for work hard, we are able to benefit ourselves and help the success of other American citizens as well. The speech, “Keynote Address to the 2004 Democratic National Convention Given by Barack Obama,” focuses on the greatness of the possibilities America will give you, along with his personal background story. “The people I meet in small towns and big cities… know they have to work hard to get ahead and they want to” (Obama 79). He claims that citizens from various areas of the U.S. have a sense of understanding that hard work is present in getting ahead in today’s norm. “It is that fundamental belief- I am my brother’s keeper, I am my sisters keeper- that makes this country work. It’s what allows us to pursue our individual dreams, yet still come together as a single American family” (80). Again, he mentions the effort that
is not only put into our own individual American Dream, but others around you benefit too.

Pursuing knowledge and getting educated is very crucial in today’s role in the American Dream. Currently with this diverse freedom of knowledge, any dreams can reached if you take advantage of what sources you have. “They imagined me going to the best schools in the land, even though they weren’t rich, because in a generous America you don’t have to be rich to achieve your potential (79).” Barack Obama explains in his personal story that his father and mother had seeked their opportunities to give their son a larger dream. Now the 44th president of the U.S., he stands that America has blessed us freedoms and opportunities to access the right to study or learn. Also, he states that “you don’t have to be rich to achieve your potential,” which defines that the American Dream is not based off of money. There are some negatives to the Dream that being wealthy is a necessity when it shouldn’t be. “Happiness goes to the man who has the sweet smell of achievement. He is our national idol, and everybody else is our national fink” (Zinsser 81). This quote from William Zinsser who wrote the essay “The Right to Fail,” explains his own opinion of a treason about America. Briefly he explains that an American who is at the top of the ladder is highly praised, while Americans who may have failed out is not granted. An American who has faced challenges achieving this triumful Dream by giving up or failing may not meet their individual acquirement of their Dream which isn’t bad in itself. Nor is an American who well-to-do and ahead of the Dream automatically good. Wealth is an unsuitable factor and a huge misconception of the dream. Personally, the Dream is an individual choice, and when choose to withstand it, we persevere and cope through it’s challenges.

Opportunities are quite present in this free nation and is a luxury resource to us American citizens. As an American, our motives are to seize opportunities when given, in order to give ourselves potential. The story America and I written by Anzia Yezierska, tells a story of a young Russian immigrant who wanted to be Americanized in the country. She seizes the opportunity to live with the wealthy american family who gave her a sense of the American world. “I should be thankful to associate with ‘Americans’
“My great chance to learn to be a civilized being” (17). She is appreciative of these motives given to her which provides an example of a big key factor to the Dream: Pursuit of Happiness. Even though she is fairly new to America with no income, her desire to live with Americans is what shows fulfilment to be apart of the Dream. Beneatha from the film A Raisin in the Sun, claimed “I want to make a difference” (Hansberry). She shows her ambition being a soon to be doctor, as she endures hardship through a family financial crisis. Beneatha takes her opportunity by attending school and is positive of who she wants to be. The pursuit of happiness is a choice in this imperfect world where there are many hardships and it is our decision to take on what opportunity comes to us.

There are struggles for some Americans that just quite aren't meeting their standard of the American Dream. Some say it's impossible. Some say it's inaccessible. Some say it's hard to achieve. Some might find it practical and can maneuver through the barriers to accomplish their goals. The Dream is obtained when work, knowledge, and power of opportunity are being perceived through an American. But what really matters is one choosing to fulfil our own Dream and striving to meet our own standard.
Score Proficient

Annotation:

This mid-range Proficient exemplar is characterized by an adequate organizational structure that develops a central claim while acknowledging at least one counterclaim. The introduction and conclusion are adequate and establish a logical organization. The clear organization is rooted in a clear thesis that drives the development of ideas in the paragraphs that follow. Each paragraph has a clear topic sentence, and quoted source material is by and large smoothly integrated into the logic of the paragraph. Explanatory commentary accompanies evidence and attempts connect the source material to the writer’s position in a logical way. The paragraph on “pursuing knowledge” contains an attempt to deal with a counterclaim by saying that success and wealth is a “misconception of the dream.” Some syntactical awkwardness as in the sentence, “Now the 44th president of the U.S.[Obama], he stands that America has blessed us freedoms and opportunities to access the right to study or learn,” makes for some confusion in the logical development of ideas, but in general, the use of language demonstrates an academic style and suitable voice, and errors do not seriously interfere with meaning.
Immigration has been a major impact on American citizens dreams since the late 1800’s-1900’s involving approximately ten-million immigrants entering the United States. This has stirred up rancorous attitudes from Americans because immigrants seek their dreams here, letting immigrants have a little more attention than American citizens do. To live the American Dream would be to live in peace with no worries about money, safety, hunger or loss... money is a strong factor in this dream to most leading to the fact of the American Dream to be implausible. American Dreams are becoming distant when it comes to immigration, wealth and ones self belief.

America has been a land of opportunities for individuals across the world for centuries. America has been benevolent enough to give immigrants life here, but, generosity can give the glory of a new life to one person, and a morose life to another person following up lost dreams. To demonstrate, In Barack Obama's speech "Keynote Address to the 2004 Democratic National Convention" Barack persuades "[Barracks parents] imagined me going to the best schools in the land, even though they weren't rich, because in a generous America you don't have to be rich to achieve your potential" (Obama 79). Illegal immigrants have impacts on the American Dream because they do not have as many advantages for the workplace and support which takes support away from americans searching for their American Dream. Look at Barack and his family for instance, they discovered more achievable opportunities and Barack succeeded tremendously becoming the President of the United States being rare for most people, but not everyone is observed. Following up, “Roberto Acuna Talks About Farm Workers” by Studs Terkel, he explains in a poem the struggle of working towards the dream "If we had proper compensation we wouldn’t have to be working seventeen hours a day and following the crops...Being a migrant, it tears your family apart. You get in debt. You leave the area penniless. The children are the ones hurt the most. They go to school three months in one place and then on to another...Right here your childhood is taken away. So when they grow up, they’re looking for this childhood they have lost"
(Terkel 77). Every man and women in the world does not always get the chance to live
the “perfect life” because they have a lack of money, it is the reason immigrants go for
our country because it is the money pot. But money is not the true love people so dearly
desire in romantic movies, it is to a majority of people, the difference between life and
death. Yet one can make the effort to think, to think before an action and to think
whether or not the outcome is going to be a benefit to receive money, or a bullet to the
chest.

Sadly, money is a chance of luck. Not everyone is born equal, some are born into
life with a silver spoon in their mouth, and some are born into dirt. Interestingly, This is a
lamentable situation towards the American dream because it is a fifty fifty shot at a
“perfect life.” In the poem “Europe and America” by David Ignatow iis creative with the
comparison of feelings amongst money “While I am bedded upon soft green money that
grows like grass. Thus, between my father who lives on a bed of anguish for his daily
bread, and I who tear money at leisure by the roots” (Ignatow 66). The interesting use of
diction “anguish” which means severe mental or physical pain, struggling with money is
expedient for the other use of diction “leisure” meaning use of free time for enjoyment,
by the comparing money environments. American dreams are affected by the ways
governments rule bills, rent, or any type of money collecting hounds are interested in
because it drains and puts oneself into serious debt. For this purpose, “A Raisin In the
Sun” by Lorraine Hansberry calibrates a situation involving a family with multiple needs
“I got to go [to work]. We need the money…Somebody would of thought my children
done all but starved to death the way they talk about money here late…(thoughtfully,
and suddenly very far away): Ten thousand dollars- sure is wonderful. Ten thousand
dollars”(Hansberry 71). Money. Money. Money. This is a very important key to the
American Dream which is very well known, but it is extremely hard to get for many
reasons such as the wrong people being in charge of who deserves the help, who
deserves the peace and who deserves the happiness. The use of repeating “ten
thousand dollars” is this statement is to evoke the strong meaning and hope that's in the
future of life changing money.
For one to carry the strong characteristic of self-belief, belief can be cajoled into the minds of many individuals who believe in a more satisfying future but not everyone believes they are capable of achieving the American Dream. In particular, Belief is expressed in the poem “Africa to America” by Phillis Wheatley by letting there be a savior in our faults “T’was mercy brought me from my Pagan land, Taught my benighted soul to understand That there’s a God, that there’s a Saviour too: Once I redemption neither sought nor knew”(Wheatley 65). The point of view the writer has when writing this essay is believing that there can be a new life beyond the golden door, even though oneself from a different land struggles and wants life in America, can achieve their American Dream yet that being done, destroys others. Humans like to think the world needs to revolve around humans and only humans and their lives, but truly land, the air we breathe, the clothes on our bodies, the warmth around us is all paid for. To conclude, Joseph Bruchac is his poem “Ellis Island” he galvanized the way one has witnessed changes in lands “Like millions of others, I too come to this island, nine decades the answer of dreams...lands invaded when the land became owned, Lands of those who followed the changing moon”(Bruchac 64). Belief of following “the changing moon” gives hope to having a better land of happiness when one has been destroyed. The American dream can be futile to most people in this world because of the way lands are “owned” and make life more complicated for people to live.

Overall, the American Dream can be rancorous from most citizens point of views because everyone has struggled with life challenges during most of their lives. Not every human in the world can live the American Dream, because not every person can accomplish these goals. The American Dream is to be successful, safe, wealthy and happy with people who are loved and joined together. Life is not just a construction site waiting to be planned, it is not feasible. Life is a interesting novel that needs to be written day by day one step at a time. Certain ways immigration, wealth and self-belief impact the American Dream are main problems in society today because every minute of every day someone becomes homeless and penitent.
Score: Emerging

Annotation:

Everything about this essay, its use of language, structure, and especially the development of ideas point to an Emerging effort. Although this is a multi-paragraph essay that aims to develop its ideas fully, the inability to present a clear thesis and the supporting ideas to develop it, keeps this essay from moving into the Proficient band. Organization follows a development in which three ideas are presented and developed as elements of the American Dream, but it does not clearly follow the organization of an argument with a claim and counterclaims. The essay attempts a thesis, but because it is so awkwardly stated, it does not come across as clear or effective so that each paragraph lacks a clear topic sentence that connects it to the central idea of the essay. The development of the first supporting paragraph is characteristic of the problems of this essay. The essay tries to point out the complex reality of immigrants trying to achieve the American Dream, the “glory of a new life…”, but actually doesn’t quite make a clear statement of the idea with explanatory commentary. Use of transitions is present (“To demonstrate” and “Following up”), but they do not enhance movement from one idea to the next smoothly or logically. And though evidence from sources is proffered, it needs more substantive commentary to explain the relationship between the source evidence and the claim that some immigrants achieve “glory of a new life” and some “a morose life.” Near the end of the first body paragraph the essay seems to begin another point, but in fact is trying to establish a transition to the next paragraph about money, but it needs to be more succinct and to the point. The next two paragraphs suffer from the same lack of clarity; ideas are disconnected and the evidence does not always seem relevant, and the analysis of sources indicates they were not clearly comprehended or analyzed, as in the analysis of the Phyllis Wheatley poem. In all cases, the quoted source material is not successfully integrated into a logical presentation of ideas. The diction in this essay is characterized by experimentation rather than successful use, as in the use of “expedient” and “morose,” “galvanize,” and “rancorous.” Syntax is also characterized by unevenness of expression and errors make
sentences confusing and hard to follow. This is an essay in which the reader has to do a great deal of work to make meaning.
Does the dream still survive? For many of those who live in modern times don’t reconsider the fact how their descendants migrated to the Americas, “…on its way to the island of the tall woman, green…” (bruchac line 8-9). To rephrase the cite, Ellis Island is the island they are sailing towards from several eastern countries, the tall women in green is the statue of liberty bringing the feeling of freedom among each other. However The Preamble to the Constitution of the United States state the commitment of the people to perform a perfect union under the constitution for the United States of America.

For those living the dream without confronting the struggle of sailing towards Ellis Island as dreadful for a kid to live a life in solitary, “…while I am bedded upon soft green money… who lives on a bed of anguish for his daily bread…” (Ignatow line 5 and 8). For that reason, freedom is the power to have basic civil rights among people. For instance, the chance of having life line opportunities for youth is a freedom that yet is not justified among many children. For those who work to maintain a decent home for a family and security for loved ones with and having special privileges, “I am not worried on a daily basis about being ‘discovered’ and deported along with, or away from my family” (Kivel #2), being judge for our skin color is nothing new nor old, however this is a main privilege taken for account in Southern California. In like manner, the amendment IV gives the people the right to secure any unreasonable searches unless it comes across a probable cause to issue a Warrant. Patriotism can bring together the American Dream to stand against injustice for the love of the country emphasized in good citizenship, “The patriot honors the duties, the loyalties, the inspirations and the habits of mind that bind us together as Americans” (McCain 3), in like manner there just not the requirements of having to be at service 24/7 but to find happiness among each other and be at peace and have the freedom to do what one loves. To stand up against your freedom is beyond bravery towards one self.
To let America Be America again is to seek happiness among each other. Nonetheless to be at peace and establish a home for all with posterity and the approval of everyone’s patriotic acts. A home where he himself is free in the people’s well-being. That is to say, America is depending on one’s self-discipline to make endure the American dream.
Score: Incomplete

Annotation:

This essay qualifies as Incomplete because of its basic lack of organization and an inability to settle upon a central claim that is supported with evidence from a variety of sources. The lack of command of language further detracts from any attempt to develop ideas successfully. Despite an opening rhetorical question that seems to signal an introductory paragraph that establishes the topic, the essay never presents an answer that might lead to a supportable claim. For this reason, the single paragraph of development does not contain support for a claim nor any counterclaims. There is an attempt to provide textual evidence from a variety of sources, though the evidence is jumbled and never finds a convincing hold on a central idea. It seems to be a mishmash of ideas that represent an idea of what the American Dream may be. The last paragraph is confusing and does not bring the essay to a satisfactory conclusion. The language of the essay is limited and contains many lapses in diction and syntax, making it ineffective and difficult to follow. This essay would benefit from a thoughtful response to the opening question.