

American Literature

SYBA.SEM-IV

Literary Terms

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AMERICAN DREAM

- American Dream is considered as one of the popular issues or terms of American literature.
- The issue came into discussion in colonial period and developed in the 19th century.
- Meanwhile North American Continent was discovered, capitalist economy and Westward movement were established and the social values of Americans were also slowly designed.
- All these characteristics influenced the concept of American Dream.

According to the Webster, An American Social ideal that emphasizes on egalitarianism and material prosperity.

“Egalitarianism” is a belief that throws a light on human equality in respect to social, political, and economic rights and privileges. And denies all kinds of inequalities among people.

- Term The American Dream is coined by James Truslow Adams in his book “Epic of America” in which he says that “it is a dream of land in which life should be better, richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement”.

- Thereafter, Adam says that it is not the dream of having motor cars and high wages but equal.
- it is a dream of equal social order in which every man and woman shall have equal status and opportunities.
- They will get this status by their capacity and not by birth and social position.
- In the American Dream, the social barriers which hampers growth of the people.
- Or it is a major obstacle of getting goal of life.
- In the old civilization these barriers were favorable to particular class rather than an ordinary human being.
- The concept is developed by collective values of people.
- These values and principles are concerned with individual person, self-actualization and self-reliance where every individual is able to fulfill his dream of getting a good position in the society by his hard-work.

- The dream is not about the past of the country or people but about the future of the people. Adams Says in his book “Epic of America”.
- Like Adams, Jim Cullen gives a stress on the American Dream as it is not a journey about wealth or material things, but rather a quest for personal fulfillment and a vision for self-actualization”- *American Dream: A Short History of an Idea That Shaped a Nation* (2003),
- American dream is medium of binding people of America in one chain or keep them together as a nation.
- To get American dream, one must requires political and economic freedom, law of property rights. Without them, inhabitants are not able to achieve success and confidence of happy life.

- In short, American dream offers equal opportunity of social advancement and equal freedom to all the Americans, does not matter where h/she is born in America or to Immigrants.
- Reference of American Dream lies in the declaration of American Independence.
- It was Thomas Jefferson who first laid down the view of American Dream like “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”
- He believed that it is an American nation gives equal opportunity to individual progress and achievement.
- The Great Gatsby and Death of the salesman