

## Emergence of the American Identity

### Overview

Students will explore the question “What is an American?” through both historical and modern lenses, discussing how the concept of American identity and the “American Dream” has evolved over time. Through a power point presentation, class discussion, reading historical and modern interpretations, and completing an art project, students will gain an understanding of the emergence of an American identity.

### Courses

American History: The Founding Principles, Civics and Economics  
 American History I

### NC Essential Standards for the Founding Principles, Civics & Economics

- FP.C&G.1.1- Explain how the tensions over power and authority led America’s founding fathers to develop a constitutional democracy (e.g., mercantilism, salutary neglect, taxation and representation, boycott and protest, independence, American Revolution, Articles of Confederation, Ben Franklin, George Washington, John Adams, Sons of Liberty, etc.)
- FP.C&G.1.4 - Analyze the principles and ideals underlying American democracy in terms of how they promote freedom (i.e. separation of powers, rule of law, limited government, democracy, consent of the governed / individual rights –life, liberty, pursuit of happiness, self-government, representative democracy, equal opportunity, equal protection under the law, diversity, patriotism, etc.
- FP.C&G.1.5 - Evaluate the fundamental principles of American politics in terms of the extent to which they have been used effectively to maintain constitutional democracy in the United States (e.g., rule of law, limited government, democracy, consent of the governed, etc.
- FP.C&G.4.2 - Explain how the development of America’s national identity derived from principles in the Declaration of Independence, US Constitution and Bill of Rights (e.g., inalienable rights, consent of the governed, popular sovereignty, religious and political freedom, separation of powers, etc.)

### North Carolina Essential Standards for American History I

- AH1.H.1.2 - Use historical comprehension.
- AH1.H.1.3 - Use historical analysis and Interpretation.
- AH1.H.2.1 - Analyze key political, economic, and social turning points from colonization through Reconstruction in terms of causes and effects (e.g., conflicts, legislation, elections, innovations, leadership, movements, Supreme Court decisions, etc.)
- AH1.H.2.2 - Evaluate key turning points from colonization through Reconstruction in terms of their lasting impact (e.g., conflicts, legislation, elections, innovations, leadership, movements, Supreme Court decisions, etc.).
- AH1.H.4.1 - Analyze the political issues and conflicts that impacted the United States through Reconstruction and the compromises that resulted (e.g., American Revolution, Constitutional Convention, Bill of Rights, development of political parties, nullification, slavery, states’ rights, Civil War)
- AH1.H.4.2 - Analyze the economic issues and conflicts that impacted the United States through Reconstruction and the compromises that resulted (e.g., mercantilism, Revolutionary era taxation, National Bank, taxes, tariffs, territorial expansion, Economic “Panics”, Civil War.)
- AH1.H.5.1 - Summarize how the philosophical, ideological and/or religious views on freedom and equality contributed to the development of American political and economic systems through Reconstruction (e.g., natural rights, First Great Awakening, Declaration of Independence, transcendentalism, suffrage, abolition, “slavery as a peculiar institution”, etc

- AH1.H.8.1 - Analyze the relationship between innovation, economic development, progress and various perceptions of the “American Dream” through Reconstruction (e.g., inventions, Industrial Revolution, American System, etc.).

### Essential Questions

- When and why did European colonists in the New World begin to think of themselves as “Americans?”
- How did historical events such as colonization; the French and Indian War; British taxation; the Revolutionary War; and the First and Second Continental Congress contribute to the emergence of an American identity?
- In what ways did documents such as the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, state constitutions, and the US Constitution evidence the emergence of an American identity?
- How did J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur answer his posed question, “What is an American?”
- What groups throughout history have struggled with American identity or have been ostracized from the “American Dream”?
- How has the sense of American identity changed over time?

### Materials

- “Emergence of the American Identity Power Point,” available in Carolina K-12’s Database of K-12 Resources (in PDF format)
  - To view this PDF as a projectable presentation, save the file, click “View” in the top menu bar of the file, and select “Full Screen Mode”
  - To request an editable PPT version of this presentation, send a request to [CarolinaK12@unc.edu](mailto:CarolinaK12@unc.edu)
- *What Is an American?* by J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur; reading and discussion questions attached
- *I Hear America Singing* by Walt Whitman; poem attached
- *Let America Be America Again* by Langston Hughes; poem attached
- *What Is an American?* by Edward L. Hudgins; article attached
- Excerpt from Barack Obama’s Primary Acceptance Speech; attached
- Billboards Across America; assignment attached

### Duration

60-90 minutes (this lesson can be broken up over two days if desired)

### Procedure

#### Warm-Up: What is an American?

1. As a warm-up, project slide 1 of the “Emergence of the American Identity Power Point,” available in Carolina K-12’s Database of Civic Resources (in PDF format), which asks students to complete the phrase, “An American is...” Once students have had a few silent moments to respond, ask them to share their thoughts out loud. Compile their comments on the board or chart paper under the title, “American.” After all comments have been exhausted, further discuss:
  - How would you characterize this list? (What various aspects of American life do the comments highlight? What comments would you classify as positive? As negative? )
  - When do you think people here began to think of themselves as “Americans?” (Teachers may want to review a bit of history at this point with students, reminding them of the Native populations who lived in North America before European explorers and colonists came to this land. Also discuss the different types of immigrants who colonized North America, the various areas they came from, and the various beliefs/goals they came with.)
  - How do you think the sense of what is American, or identification with America, has changed over time? (Discuss the concepts of identification, patriotism, nationalism, etc.)
  - Does the public’s pride or lack of pride for country change at particular times? (Discuss points such as unpopular wars, hard economic times, points where our country has rallied together, etc.)

- Do you think our responses to the brainstorm would have been different were we living in the 1700s? Explain. Do you imagine that any of our responses would have been similar? Explain.

### **Emergence of American Identity**

2. Tell students that today’s lesson will be about exploring the emergence of the American identity. Many people call themselves “American” without really thinking about what that means or when such an identity became common in North America. Tell students to look at this process of American identification, they must go back to colonial times. Continue with the power point, using slides 3-11 as a basis for class discussion regarding the emergence of American identity. Teachers may want to have students take notes while discussing.

### **J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur: What is an American?**

3. On slide 12 of the power point, introduce students to Crèvecoeur. Either individually or in partners, have students read and discuss the attached “What is an American” handout and discussion questions. Once students are finished, have them report back their thoughts to the class and further discuss:
  - When Crèvecoeur poses and answers the question, “What then is the American, this new man?” does he leave any groups of people out? (Hopefully students will note groups such as Native Americans, slaves, etc.) How would you feel about this writing if you were a Native American? Slave? Woman? Free Black? Would you agree? Disagree? Have another response?
  - Consider Crèvecoeur’s statement that “The American ought therefore to love this country much better than that wherein either he or his forefathers were born.” How might an enslaved person brought to America feel about this statement? If you were a Native American, how would you respond to Crèvecoeur?
    - Explain that this letter is only one of several Crèvecoeur wrote in “Letters from an American Farmer.” He did address Native Americans in other letters and seemed to have an interesting relationship with them - seeing them as less civilized than some white men, yet better than other white men.
    - Slavery was already a contentious issue by the time that Crèvecoeur wrote his letters, and yet only one of his letters slightly dealt with the issue. He did condemn the act and the mindset of colonists who he felt were ignoring an issue that was a defining issue for this new country.
  - Crèvecoeur says, “Here the rewards of his industry follow with equal steps the progress of his labour...” Do you feel this is true of America today? If you work hard, will you be equally rewarded for your labor? Explain. Would your answer change if you were considering this same statement’s application to the 1700s?
  - Studying Crèvecoeur is a good reminder to us all that unless you have Native American ancestry, you or someone in your family at some point was an immigrant to this country (whether by choice or by force.) What is thus ironic about the immigration debate today? Which of Crèvecoeur’s comments are relevant or can apply to immigration today?
  - Crèvecoeur says that “The American is a new man, who acts upon new principles; he must therefore entertain new ideas, and form new opinions.” Do you agree? Does this definition apply to Americans in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Explain.
  - Has our concept today of “American” evolved from Crèvecoeur’s definition? In what ways?

### **“The American Dream”**

4. Continue on to slide 13 and ask students to discuss their understanding of what the “American Dream” entails. After sharing the historical perspective of the American Dream on slide 14, show students the political cartoon on slide 15 and ask them to share their interpretations:
  - What do you see here?
  - What message is the artist trying to convey?
  - How does this cartoon illustrate a transition in the understanding of or feeling towards the “American Dream?”

### **Evolution of American Identity and the “American Dream”**

5. Again, discuss with students how the sense of American identity and the American Dream are constantly evolving – while some aspects may remain the same, other aspects and perceptions alter. To explore this further, tell students that they are going to work in groups and examine another person’s thoughts regarding American identity and/or the American Dream. Pass out the attached “Billboards Across America” assignment sheet and go over it with students.
6. Divide students into groups of four, review group work behavior, and let each group know where in the room to meet. (Teachers can also omit the role of Responder and have students work in groups of three.) Once groups are divided, assign one of the attached readings to each group and give a copy of that reading to each group member. It is this reading that their billboard will be based on. (Four readings are attached; more than one group can work on the same reading, or teachers can include additional readings of their own choosing.) Let students know how much time they have to complete the assignment; at least 30 minutes is recommended for the reading, discussion, and billboard completion.
7. Once students have completed their billboards, hang all billboards around the room and allow students to complete a preliminary viewing/gallery walk. (Teachers may want to consider hanging billboards in response to the same reading together. Teachers may also want to consider instructing the Responders to stand by their group’s billboard and answer any questions students may have as they view the work.) Give students time to view the various billboards then return to their seats and discuss:
  - Which billboard (other than your own) did you find most interesting, intriguing, etc., and why?
  - Do you see any representations of American identity or the American dream that are similar to what you created for your author? Explain. Do you see any representations that are different? Explain.
  - Which billboard do you think Crèvecoeur would most like and why?
8. Next, go through each reading with the entire class. Teachers should begin by having a volunteer read one of the four writings. Next, allow the Presenter from each group who dealt with that reading to summarize their discussion as well as share their interpretation of the billboard. Allow other students to ask any questions of the Responder. If different groups working on the same reading had different interpretations, discuss this as well. Continue this same process until each of the four readings have been read aloud and summarized. After all students have presented, discuss:
  - What similarities did you hear between these various thoughts on American identity and the American dream?
  - What differences did you hear?
  - Do you think any of these men would agree with another’s interpretation? If so who and why?
  - Do you yourself agree with any of these interpretations? Explain. If not, why not?
  - In terms of American identity and the American Dream, what changes? What stays the same?
9. Finally, draw students’ attention back to their initial thoughts regarding, “An American is...” and instruct them to reread what they wrote. Give the class a few final minutes to add to or alter their initial warm-up based on what they have learned throughout the lesson.

**What Is an American?**  
**J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur**

What attachment can a poor European emigrant have for a country where he had nothing? The knowledge of the language, the love of a few kindred as poor as himself, were the only cords that tied him: his country is now that which gives him land, bread, protection, and consequences: *Ubi panis ibi patria*, ["where there is bread, there is my country"] is the motto of all emigrants. What then is the American, this new man? He is either an European, or the descendant of an European, hence that strange mixture of blood, which you will find in no other country. I could point out to you a family whose grandfather was an Englishman, whose wife was Dutch, whose son married a French woman, and whose present four sons have now four wives of different nations. *He* is an American, who, leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds. He becomes an American by being received in the broad lap of our great *Alma Mater*. Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world. Americans are the western pilgrims, who are carrying along with them that great mass of arts, sciences, vigour, and industry which began long since in the east; they will finish the great circle. The Americans were once scattered all over Europe; here they are incorporated into one of the finest systems of population which has ever appeared, and which will hereafter become distinct by the power of the different climates they inhabit. The American ought therefore to love this country much better than that wherein either he or his forefathers were born. Here the rewards of his industry follow with equal steps the progress of his labour; his labour is founded on the basis of nature, *self-interest*; can it want a stronger allurements? Wives and children, who before in vain demanded of him a morsel of bread, now, fat and frolicsome, gladly help their father to clear those fields whence exuberant crops are to arise to feed and to clothe them all; without any part being claimed, either by a despotic prince, a rich abbot, or a mighty lord. Here religion demands but little of him; a small voluntary salary to the minister and gratitude to God; can he refuse these? The American is a new man, who acts upon new principles; he must therefore entertain new ideas, and form new opinions. From involuntary idleness, servile dependence, penury, and useless labour, he has passed to toils of a very different nature, rewarded by ample subsistence.-This is an American....

**Source:**

From M. G. J. de Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer* (Philadelphia: Matthew Carey, 1793), 46-47.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Discussing *What Is an American?***

1. For what reasons, according to Crèvecoeur, have emigrants come to America and grown attached to the country?
2. Summarize Crèvecoeur's answer to his own question: What is an American?
3. Crèvecoeur's writing is given credit as helping create the "American identity". In what ways does his writing do this?
4. Crèvecoeur claims that in America, "individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men..." What historical evidence can you note that proves this statement? Alternatively, what historical evidence refutes this statement?
5. In your opinion, is "melting pot" an accurate description of America today? Why or why not? If not, what would be a better descriptor and why?
6. If someone posed this question to you today (What is an American?) how would you respond?
7. What connections from Crèvecoeur's 1793 thoughts can you make to immigration today? Explain.

# I Hear America Singing

by Walt Whitman (1819–1892)

I HEAR America singing, the varied carols I hear;  
Those of mechanics—each one singing his, as it should be, blithe and strong;  
The carpenter singing his, as he measures his plank or beam,  
The mason singing his, as he makes ready for work, or leaves off work;  
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat—the deckhand singing on the steamboat deck;  
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench—the hatter singing as he stands;  
The wood-cutter's song—the ploughboy's, on his way in the morning, or at the noon intermission, or at sundown;  
The delicious singing of the mother—or of the young wife at work—or of the girl sewing or washing—Each singing what belongs to her, and to none else;  
The day what belongs to the day—At night, the party of young fellows, robust, friendly,  
Singing, with open mouths, their strong melodious songs.

5

## Let America Be America Again

by Langston Hughes , 1938

Let America be America again.  
Let it be the dream it used to be.  
Let it be the pioneer on the plain  
Seeking a home where he himself is free.

(America never was America to me.)

Let America be the dream the dreamers dreamed--  
Let it be that great strong land of love  
Where never kings connive nor tyrants scheme  
That any man be crushed by one above.

(It never was America to me.)

O, let my land be a land where Liberty  
Is crowned with no false patriotic wreath,  
But opportunity is real, and life is free,  
Equality is in the air we breathe.

(There's never been equality for me,  
Nor freedom in this "homeland of the free.")

*Say, who are you that mumbles in the dark?  
And who are you that draws your veil across the stars?*

I am the poor white, fooled and pushed apart,  
I am the Negro bearing slavery's scars.  
I am the red man driven from the land,  
I am the immigrant clutching the hope I seek--  
And finding only the same old stupid plan  
Of dog eat dog, of mighty crush the weak.

I am the young man, full of strength and hope,  
Tangled in that ancient endless chain  
Of profit, power, gain, of grab the land!  
Of grab the gold! Of grab the ways of satisfying need!  
Of work the men! Of take the pay!  
Of owning everything for one's own greed!

I am the farmer, bondsman to the soil.  
I am the worker sold to the machine.  
I am the Negro, servant to you all.  
I am the people, humble, hungry, mean--  
Hungry yet today despite the dream.  
Beaten yet today--O, Pioneers!  
I am the man who never got ahead,  
The poorest worker bartered through the years.

Yet I'm the one who dreamt our basic dream  
In the Old World while still a serf of kings,  
Who dreamt a dream so strong, so brave, so true,



That even yet its mighty daring sings  
In every brick and stone, in every furrow turned  
That's made America the land it has become.  
O, I'm the man who sailed those early seas  
In search of what I meant to be my home--  
For I'm the one who left dark Ireland's shore,  
And Poland's plain, and England's grassy lea,  
And torn from Black Africa's strand I came  
To build a "homeland of the free."

The free?

Who said the free? Not me?  
Surely not me? The millions on relief today?  
The millions shot down when we strike?  
The millions who have nothing for our pay?  
For all the dreams we've dreamed  
And all the songs we've sung  
And all the hopes we've held  
And all the flags we've hung,  
The millions who have nothing for our pay--  
Except the dream that's almost dead today.

O, let America be America again--  
The land that never has been yet--  
And yet must be--the land where *every* man is free.  
The land that's mine--the poor man's, Indian's, Negro's, ME--  
Who made America,  
Whose sweat and blood, whose faith and pain,  
Whose hand at the foundry, whose plow in the rain,  
Must bring back our mighty dream again.

Sure, call me any ugly name you choose--  
The steel of freedom does not stain.  
From those who live like leeches on the people's lives,  
We must take back our land again,  
America!

O, yes,  
I say it plain,  
America never was America to me,  
And yet I swear this oath--  
America will be!

Out of the rack and ruin of our gangster death,  
The rape and rot of graft, and stealth, and lies,  
We, the people, must redeem  
The land, the mines, the plants, the rivers.  
The mountains and the endless plain--  
All, all the stretch of these great green states--  
And make America again!

## **What Is an American?**

by Edward L. Hudgins, July 3, 1998

We celebrate July Fourth as the day the Declaration of Independence created the United States. But in my heart I also honor July 15. On that day in 1930 Giustino DiCamillo, my grandfather, arrived here with my grandma, aunts and an uncle to start their lives as Americans. My mom was born the next year.

I never had the chance to hear my grandpop's deepest thoughts about his extraordinary journey and rich, long life, which ended when I was fairly young. But one way I can understand his character, and the character of my country, is to reflect on the question, "What is an American?"

An American is anyone who loves life enough to want the best that it has to offer. Americans are not automatically satisfied with their current situation. My grandpop wanted to be more than a poor, landless tenant farmer, no better off than his ancestors. Americans look to more than the next meal; they look to the future, the long term, a better tomorrow.

An American is anyone who understands that to achieve the best in life requires action, exertion, effort. Americans aren't idle daydreamers; they take the initiative. Fortune did not fall into my grandpop's hands. He had traveled to America several times before 1930 to find work, establish himself, and make it possible to bring over the family. He toiled for years to achieve his dream, but achieve it he did.

An American is anyone who understands the need to use one's mind and wits to meet life's challenges. How would grandpop secure the money necessary for his first trip to America? Where would he find a job and a place to stay? You don't need college to know that you have to use your brain as well as your brawn to make your way in America.

The principles of this country are no mere abstractions; they are written in the hearts of all true Americans.

An American is anyone who understands that achieving the best in life requires risks. Immigrants have no assurance of success in a new land with different habits, institutions and language. They leave friends, relatives and familiar places, often risking their lives to cross oceans and hostile country to reach their new homes. But they, like all Americans, understand that the timid achieve nothing and forgo even that which sustains us through the worst of times: hope.

The nature of Americans explains the precious opportunity that has drawn millions to these shores. The Declaration states that all men are endowed "with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

Americans seek economic prosperity, leaving behind the resentment in other countries that is aimed at those who better their material condition. Throughout the world and throughout history, millions of individuals have endured poverty with dignity. But there is no inherent dignity in poverty. Individuals came to America to farm their own farms and run their own enterprises. My grandpop found work on streetcar lines so he could buy a house and provide a better life for his family.

Americans seek personal liberty, to live as they see fit, to worship as they please. Americans seek freedom from the use of power wielded arbitrarily by whoever holds the political sword. My grandpop no doubt did not want to be at Mussolini's mercy.

The Declaration -- and the Constitution that followed it -- created a political regime for individuals who wished to be united with their countrymen not essentially by a common language, ethnic background, or other accident of birth. Americans are united by a love of liberty, respect for the freedom of others and an insistence on their own rights as set forth in the Declaration.

Unfortunately, the American spirit has eroded. Our forebears would look with sadness at the servile and envious character of many of our citizens and policymakers. But the good news is that there are millions of Americans around the world, living in every country. Many of them will never make it here to the United States. But they are Americans, just as my grandpop was an American before he ever left Italy. And just as millions discovered America in the past, we can rediscover what it means to be an American. The principles of this country are no mere abstractions; they are written in the hearts of all true Americans. And it is the spirit of America, the spirit of my grandfather, that we should honor on July Fourth.

[http://www.cato.org/pub\\_display.php?pub\\_id=5867](http://www.cato.org/pub_display.php?pub_id=5867)

## Excerpt from Barack Obama's Primary Acceptance Speech, 8/28/2008

[http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/28/us/politics/28text-obama.html?\\_r=1&pagewanted=print](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/28/us/politics/28text-obama.html?_r=1&pagewanted=print)

Four years ago, I stood before you and told you my story, of the brief union between a young man from Kenya and a young woman from Kansas who weren't well-off or well-known, but shared a belief that in America their son could achieve whatever he put his mind to.

It is that promise that's always set this country apart, that through hard work and sacrifice each of us can pursue our individual dreams, but still come together as one American family, to ensure that the next generation can pursue their dreams, as well. That's why I stand here tonight. Because for 232 years, at each moment when that promise was in jeopardy, ordinary men and women -- students and soldiers, farmers and teachers, nurses and janitors -- found the courage to keep it alive.

We meet at one of those defining moments, a moment when our nation is at war, our economy is in turmoil, and the American promise has been threatened once more.

Tonight, more Americans are out of work and more are working harder for less. More of you have lost your homes and even more are watching your home values plummet. More of you have cars you can't afford to drive, credit cards, bills you can't afford to pay, and tuition that's beyond your reach. These challenges are not all of government's making. But the failure to respond is a direct result of a broken politics in Washington...

America, we are better than these last eight years. We are a better country than this.

This country is more decent than one where a woman in Ohio, on the brink of retirement, finds herself one illness away from disaster after a lifetime of hard work. We're a better country than one where a man in Indiana has to pack up the equipment that he's worked on for 20 years and watch as it's shipped off to China, and then chokes up as he explains how he felt like a failure when he went home to tell his family the news.

We are more compassionate than a government that lets veterans sleep on our streets and families slide into poverty... that sits on its hands while a major American city drowns before our eyes.

Tonight, tonight, I say to the people of America, to Democrats and Republicans and independents across this great land: Enough. This moment...this election is our chance to keep, in the 21st century, the American promise alive.

...

What -- what is that American promise? It's a promise that says each of us has the freedom to make of our own lives what we will, but that we also have obligations to treat each other with dignity and respect.

It's a promise that says the market should reward drive and innovation and generate growth, but that businesses should live up to their responsibilities to create American jobs, to look out for American workers, and play by the rules of the road.

Ours -- ours is a promise that says government cannot solve all our problems, but what it should do is that which we cannot do for ourselves: protect us from harm and provide every child a decent education; keep our water clean and our toys safe; invest in new schools, and new roads, and science, and technology.

Our government should work for us, not against us. It should help us, not hurt us. It should ensure opportunity not just for those with the most money and influence, but for every American who's willing to work.

That's the promise of America, the idea that we are responsible for ourselves, but that we also rise or fall as one nation, the fundamental belief that I am my brother's keeper, I am my sister's keeper. That's the promise we need to keep. That's the change we need right now.

...

Change happens -- change happens because the American people demand it, because they rise up and insist on new ideas and new leadership, a new politics for a new time. America, this is one of those moments.

...This country of ours has more wealth than any nation, but that's not what makes us rich. We have the most powerful military on Earth, but that's not what makes us strong. Our universities and our culture are the envy of the world, but that's not what keeps the world coming to our shores. Instead, it is that American spirit, that American promise, that pushes us forward even when the path is uncertain; that binds us together in spite of our differences; that makes us fix our eye not on what is seen, but what is unseen, that better place around the bend.

That promise is our greatest inheritance. It's a promise I make to my daughters when I tuck them in at night and a promise that you make to yours, a promise that has led immigrants to cross oceans and pioneers to travel west, a promise that led workers to picket lines and women to reach for the ballot.

And it is that promise that, 45 years ago today, brought Americans from every corner of this land to stand together on a Mall in Washington, before Lincoln's Memorial, and hear a young preacher from Georgia speak of his dream.

The men and women who gathered there could've heard many things. They could've heard words of anger and discord. They could've been told to succumb to the fear and frustrations of so many dreams deferred.

But what the people heard instead -- people of every creed and color, from every walk of life -- is that, in America, our destiny is inextricably linked, that together our dreams can be one.

"We cannot walk alone," the preacher cried. "And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead. We cannot turn back."

America, we cannot turn back... not with so much work to be done; not with so many children to educate, and so many veterans to care for; not with an economy to fix, and cities to rebuild, and farms to save; not with so many families to protect and so many lives to mend. America, we cannot turn back. We cannot walk alone.

At this moment, in this election, we must pledge once more to march into the future. Let us keep that promise, that American promise, and in the words of scripture hold firmly, without wavering, to the hope that we confess.

Group Members: \_\_\_\_\_

## Billboards Across America



Your group has been assigned a reading that addresses the concept of the American Dream or American identity.

- Determine who in your group will fill each of the following roles:**
  - **Facilitator:** \_\_\_\_\_ leads the discussion of the reading as well as offers own thoughts regarding the author's intent; assists in design and creation of bill board
  - **Art Director:** \_\_\_\_\_ offers thoughts throughout the discussion of the reading; leads the brainstorming process for the billboard and ensures all group members contribute to the final product
  - **Presenter:** \_\_\_\_\_ takes notes during the discussion of the reading while still offering own thoughts; summarizes the group's discussion and thoughts to the remainder of class; presents bill board for class viewing; assists in design and creation of bill board
  - **Responder:** \_\_\_\_\_ answers any questions from classmates regarding Presenter's summary or your group's billboard; offers thoughts throughout the discussion of the reading; assists in design and creation of bill board
- Read:** As individuals, carefully read the handout provided to you. As you read, mark the text:
  - Circle any words that are unfamiliar to you.
  - Underline any parts of the reading that you think are most important or that stick out to you; remember to pay particular attention to how this reading addresses American identity or the American Dream.
  - If you are confused by any part of the reading, write a question mark by that line or section. You can also write out questions in the margins.
  - If anything surprises you, evokes a strong emotional response from you, presents an idea you agree with, etc. you can write an exclamation mark or other symbol by the line or section,
  - If a particular thought pops in your head that connects to the reading, write it in the margins.
- Discuss:** After you have finished the reading, your group's Facilitator will lead your group through discussing the following questions. The Presenter should take detailed notes on the answers your group shares. Everyone should contribute ideas to the discussion.
  - What are your first impressions of this reading and/or the author? What was most striking or interesting to you?
  - How does this reading characterize the American identity and/or the American Dream?
  - Do you agree or disagree with this characterization and why?
  - What phrases from this passage do you think are most important? Choose one phrase that you feel best explains the authors attitudes towards the American identity and/or American Dream.
  - How does this author's ideas compare to Crevecoeur's ideas about what an American is?
  - What year was this written? Do you feel the concept of American identity and/or the American Dream has altered since this passage was written? Explain.
  - Do you feel the author leaves out any important details in his description of American identity or the American Dream? Explain.
- Create a Billboard:** The US Department of Transportation has initiated an American billboard campaign with the goal of getting numerous artistic representations and opinions regarding American identity and the American Dream put on billboards across the states. Imagine that the author of the writing assigned to you has been asked to design a bill board answering the question, "What is an American?" Discuss how you think your author would respond to this question and why, then brainstorm how he might represent

this visually on a billboard. Create a rough draft on a sheet of paper. Once your idea is finalized, create your final product on the paper provided. Remember, the final product should be a representation of what you think the author of your reading would create in response to this question – the billboard thus may not reflect your own opinions. Your final billboard must:

- Contain text (may be as simple as a phrase (consider the phrase your group chose as most important from the passage); can also be more detailed sentences)
- Contain pictures
- Show your author’s visual answer to “What is an American?”
- Can be literal or abstract
- Be creative and show that time/effort was put into its creation
- Contain work from all group members
- Be presented to classmates

**Notes:**