

The American Dream means different things to many people and can be perceived in many ways. Throughout America's history this ethos of hard work, a new start, and perseverance has come to pay off those who have envisioned it. Yet, it is commonly taught only to our youth with association to immigrants and homesteaders. Yet this idea is why America was sought, was exploited, emancipated and has remained the land of opportunity. It should be explored in all major units of our history and taught to each of our students to see that it has always been and always will be an available and achievable goal.

From the Puritan enterprise and their dream of religious freedom and a good life to present day American dreams of home ownership and attaining success, or the Hollywood fame and glory, the American dream, born in the collective imagination, lays the foundation of American culture and literature.”<sup>1</sup> Although the American dream had long existed before, the term was coined by James Truslow Adams, in *The Epic of America*, published in 1931. “Adams extensively defines the American dream as:

That dream of a land in which life should be better and fuller and richer for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement. It is a difficult dream for the European upper classes to interpret adequately, and too many of us ourselves have grown weary and mistrustful of it. It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the

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<sup>1</sup> Ştiuliuc, Diana. 2011. "The American Dream as the Cultural Expression of North American Identity." *Philologica Jassyensia* 7, no. 2: 363.

fullest stature of which they are innately capable and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position.”<sup>2</sup>

“The American dream cannot be interpreted as a myth in the traditional sense of the word, but as a metaphor of translation of the old cultural space to a new cultural space.”<sup>3</sup> Thus it is essential to understand and motivate today’s students that they too can achieve their own American dream in their own times as it has been achieved in every unit of their American History class.

According to McDougal Littell’s *The Americans*, United States history book, the American Dream is not listed in the glossary or the index of the book. A commonly used textbook leaves out something that has made America the land of possibility. It does, however, lay out the story of America in sequential units that allow for a teacher to input examples and stories of the American dream inside of it. *The Americans* text is subcategorized into nine units:

Unit One, *American Beginnings to 1783* includes: Chapter 1: *Three Worlds Meet*, Chapter 2: *The American Colonies Emerge*, Chapter 3: *The Colonies Come of Age* and Chapter 4: *The War for Independence*.

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<sup>2</sup> Ştiuliuc, Diana. 2011. "The American Dream as the Cultural Expression of North American Identity." *Philologica Jassyensia* 7, no. 2: 363.

<sup>3</sup> Ştiuliuc, 364.

Unit Two, 1781-1850, *A New Nation*, includes: Chapter 5: *Shaping a New Nation and The Living Constitution*, Chapter 6: *Launching the New Nation*, Chapter 7: *Balancing Nationalism and Sectionalism*, Chapter 8: *Reforming American Society*.

Unit Three, 1825-1877, *An Era of Growth and Disunion*, includes: Chapter 9: *Expanding Markets and Moving West*, Chapter 10: *The Union in Peril*, Chapter 11: *The Civil War*, Chapter 12: *Reconstruction and Its Effects*.

Unit Four, 1877-1917, *Migration and Industrialization*, includes: Chapter 13: *Changes on the Western Frontier*, Chapter 14: *A New Industrial Age*, Chapter 15: *Immigrants and Urbanization*, Chapter 16: *Life at the Turn of the 20th Century*.

Unit Five, 1890-1920, *Modern America Emerges*, includes: Chapter 17: *The Progressive Era*, Chapter 18: *America Claims an Empire*, Chapter 19: *The First World War*.

Unit Six, 1919-1940, *The 1920s and the Great Depression*, includes: Chapter 20: *Politics of the Roaring Twenties*, Chapter 21: *The Roaring Life of the 1920s*, Chapter 22: *The Great Depression Begins*, Chapter 23: *The New Deal*

Unit Seven, 1931-1960, *World War II and its Aftermath*, includes: Chapter 24: *World War Looms*, Chapter 25: *The United States in World War II*, Chapter 26: *Cold War Conflicts*, Chapter 27: *The Postwar Boom*.

Unit Eight, 1954-1975, *Living with Great Turmoil*, includes: Chapter 28: *The New Frontier and the Great Society*, Chapter 29: *Civil Rights*, Chapter 30: *The Vietnam War Years*, Chapter 31: *An Era of Social Change*.

Unit Nine, 1968-2004, *Passage to a New Century*, includes: Chapter 32: *An Age of Limits*, Chapter 33: *The Conservative Tide and Reagan and the Cold War*, Chapter 34: *The United States in Today's World*, Epilogue: *Issues for the 21st Century*.

To make the American Dream a reality to students, and prove that it is still a very possible and attainable dream today it is essential to list at least one notable example, whether farfetched or common, of the American Dream in each unit of this book to exemplify the possibilities that Americans have to achieve anything that they desire no matter what they are provided with.

Starting with what Littell identifies as Unit one, *America's Beginnings*, we can see the beginning of the American Dream. For Europeans, the first idea of a new start became a reality when America was still thought of as India. The Columbian Exchange soon brought in new goods to Europe. This evolved into settlements seeking religious freedom in the newly found land. There are small examples of the American dream that can be found in the early settlements but it is important to note that colonists together created it.

From the 1630's onward, a major industry that helped establish America was the lumber industry. Lumber was extremely valuable and was sent to Europe or used to make ships, churches, houses, barns, and farm buildings, and to keep settlers warm. Lumber was also something that was free for the taking. The most expensive part of processing

lumber was transporting it, but softwoods could float down rivers. Oaks provided certain assets good for maritime use such as shipbuilding, building construction, or traded into the Caribbean. Cedars and chestnuts were good for outdoor sites and exposures. Cedars were also used for shingles, clapboards and fence posts. Pines, specifically white pines because of their height, were used as ship masts. These were valued so high because European trees did not have the height for a mast. They would either splice two trees together or needed to import it from Baltic forests increasing their value.<sup>4</sup>

Lumber as well as other commonly traded goods such as fur, corn, tobacco and beans kept the colonies profitable; and in a culminated effort, allowed America to be a colony of Great Britain.<sup>5</sup>

As the nation grew more successful, they sought their own identity. To be separated from a mother land. Some of America's first settlers were successful enough to seek independence and no longer needed support from a superpower, a major article signified the inception of an independent America, and gave birth to the American Dream.

As Chapter 4, *The War for Independence* indicates an American identity brought in the inception of the American Dream, signified in Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence. This declaration proclaims that "all men are created equal" and that they are "endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights" including "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."<sup>6</sup> This is the first written example of the American dream,

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<sup>4</sup> William Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 82-170.

<sup>5</sup> *The Americans*. Evanston, IL: McDougal Littell, 2008, 29.

<sup>6</sup> *The Americans*, 109.

that everyone has an equal chance, opportunity, to do what they can in their lift to pursue what they choose.

Unit two, *A New Nation*, specifically Chapter 7, *Balancing Nationalism and Sectionalism*, the book discusses how the nation's economy expanded because of the usage of resources and its material wealth. As the textbook explains, "In 1793, a British Immigrant named Samuel Slater had established in Pawtucket, Rhode Island the first successful mechanized textile factory in America. However, Slater's factory and those modeled after it still only mass-produced one part of the textile, or finished cloth: thread." The book then gives the first example of an American dream. "Then in 1813, three Bostonians revolutionized the American textile industry by mechanizing all the stages in the manufacture of cloth. Using plans from an English Mill, Frances Cabot Lowell , Nathan Appleton and Patrick Tracy Jackson build a weaving factory in Waltham Massachusetts, and outfitted it with power machinery. By 1822 Appleton and Jackson had made enough money to build a larger operation. The changes that their factory triggered in the town of Lowell- named after their deceased partner." <sup>7</sup> This exemplified the changes wrought by the Industrial Revolution and how hardworking Americans could create their own fortunes.

The revolution to textile or industrial work may not have not have been possible, or at least would have been delayed if it weren't for another successful American dream, that of Eli Whitney. In 1793, Whitney's cotton engine had helped to set the South on a different course of development from the industrial North. The short-staple cotton was easier to grow but was time consuming to clean. The cotton gin made it possible for

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<sup>7</sup> *The Americans*, 213.

Southern farmers to grow and profit from cotton, which was in great demand in Britain and in the North. This machine provided an efficient way to extract the seeds from the cotton as a single machine could generate up to 55 pounds a day. “Armed with the cotton gin, poor, nonslaveholding farmers quickly claimed land in the area between the Appalachian and the Mississippi south of the Ohio to begin cultivating this cash-producing crop. Wealthier planters followed, bought up huge areas of land and then put an enormous slave labor force to work cultivating it. By 1820, this plantation system of farming had transformed Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama into a booming cotton Kingdom.”<sup>8</sup>

Eli Whitney at age fourteen operated a nail manufacturing operation in his father's workshop during the Revolutionary War. He then worked as a teacher and farmer to save money for education. He graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Leicester Academy in 1792 and expected to study law at Yale but was unable to afford it. He then went to Georgia at the invitation of Revolutionary War hero Nathaniel Greene's widow. Her second husband, Phineas Miller, a Yale Graduate, would become business partners with Eli Whitney. The invention did not get the fortune that they had intended but was enough for him to live well off.

One of the first immigrants to quickly climb the ranks in American politics became a founding father after rising from rags to become is our first Treasury Secretary, Alexander Hamilton. He was born a penniless bastard in the British West Indies and was hard working to help support himself. “Hamilton was orphaned at age 13 and went to

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<sup>8</sup> *The Americans*, 215.

work as a shipping clerk.” He was placed in charge of a shipping firm while the owners were absent. Impressed with his work ethic and abilities, a scholarship was given to him to travel to North America to further his education. He attended King’s College, now Columbia University, in New York.<sup>9</sup>

During the Revolution, because of his connections with New York patriots John Jay, he raised the New York Provincial Company of Artillery of sixty men in 1776, and was elected captain. Hamilton climbed up the ranks and became a Lieutenant Colonel and served as an aide and chief of staff to General George Washington.

After the war he got involved in the politics of the developing nation. Hamilton resigned his commission after the battle at Yorktown. He was elected to the Congress of the Confederation in 1782 as a representative of New York. He resigned from Congress the following year to practice law and was present in the 1783 Treaty of Paris, which ended the Revolutionary War.<sup>10</sup>

In the following years, he founded the Bank of New York, helped at the Annapolis Convention, and represented the State of New York at the Constitutional Convention, where he was not fully content with the Constitution but signed it regardless. He is most well-known, however, for his role in the Federalist Papers and serving in Washington’s Cabinet.<sup>11</sup>

On September 11, 1789, President George Washington appointed Hamilton as the first United States Secretary of the Treasury. While in this office he founded the US Mint, Revenue cutter Service. Hamilton is often credited with assisting the splitting of

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<sup>9</sup> *The Americans*, 184.

<sup>10</sup> Rosane Rocher, 435.

<sup>11</sup> *The Americans*, 183.

political parties as he was well known for being a Federalist, having the opposite ideals of the next President, Thomas Jefferson.

These two different parties grew such animosity towards one another that it resulted with Hamilton dead. On July 11, 1804 Vice President Aaron Burr faced off against Hamilton in a duel on the banks of the Hudson River in New Jersey. Burr's shot hit Hamilton while Hamilton's missed thought to have hit a tree branch above Burr. Mortally wounded and partially paralyzed, Hamilton ferried back to New York where he died the next day.<sup>12</sup>

Unit Three, 1825-1877, *An Era of Growth and Disunion*, specifically Chapter 11, *The Civil War*, and Chapter 12: *Reconstruction and Its Effects*, is a great place to begin discussing the Robber Barons in American history, starting with one of the earliest and most significant, The Commodore, Cornelius Vanderbilt.

Vanderbilt's story is one of many rags-to-riches sagas so depicting the American dream. Born in 1794 on Staten Island to a struggling family of farmers, the young Vanderbilt received a meager education and entered the business world as a teenager, after dropping out of school at age eleven. He became the owner of a ferry company in New York, between Staten Island and Manhattan. "There were obstacles on the road to riches for America's first great corporate tycoon. Through luck, intelligence, perseverance, and enormous self-control he became heavily involved with the inland water trade."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Chernow, Ron. *Alexander Hamilton*. New York: Penguin Press, 2004.

<sup>13</sup> Grant, H. Roger. 2011. "The First Tycoon: The Epic Life of Cornelius Vanderbilt." *Journal Of American History* 98, no. 2: 544.

“The original robber baron was a self-made steamboat magnate who mastered the dynamics of the emerging railroad industry, challenged the financier Jay Gould in the New York money markets, and built the first true corporate conglomerate in U.S. history. Vanderbilt's steamboat companies attacked established carriers on lucrative routes from New York City to first Albany and then Boston, San Francisco, and Europe; the management techniques Vanderbilt developed in these ventures allowed him to out compete established rail carriers as well.”<sup>14</sup>

After the outbreak of Civil War, Vanderbilt left the steamship business he started at the age of 16, sold most of his ships to the Union Navy and started his career as a railroad tycoon. In a number of short campaigns, he acquired the New York & Harlem, the Hudson River and the New York Central railroads and consolidated them into a single system that stretched from New York to Buffalo. He later acquired the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern and connected his railways into Chicago. In the process he built himself a fortune of over 105 million dollars and became the richest man in the world at the time.

Unit Four, 1877-1917, *Migration and Industrialization*, specifically Chapter 14: *A New Industrial Age*, Chapter 15: *Immigrants and Urbanization*, and Chapter 16: *Life at the Turn of the 20th Century* all have very significant examples of successful American dreamers. Section three of Chapter fourteen, titled *Big Business and Labor*, and highlights a few of the most notable examples such as John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie.

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<sup>14</sup> Mead, Walter Russell. 2009. "The First Tycoon: The Epic Life of Cornelius Vanderbilt." *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 5: 153

Carnegie was born in Scotland to penniless parents, emigrated to America in 1848, at age 12. When he was eighteen, he “worked his way up to become private secretary to the local superintendent of the Pennsylvania Railroad. One morning, Carnegie single-handedly relayed messages that unsnarled a tangle of freight and passenger trains. His boss, Thomas A. Scott rewarded Carnegie by giving him a chance to buy stock. Carnegie’s mother mortgaged the family home to make the purchase possible. Soon Carnegie received his first dividend.”<sup>15</sup>

The money he had made from his stocks enabled him to quit his job at the Pennsylvania Railroad. In 1873 he entered the steel business after touring a British steel mill. By 1899, the Carnegie Steel Company steel surpassed any in Great Britain. His business flourished because of his constant desire to manufacture products as cheap as possible. He did so by incorporating new machines and accounting systems that allowed him to track and monitor costs. Another major move he made was allowing his associates to buy stocks and encouraging competition amongst them. Carnegie took over as much of the steel industry as possible by buying out suppliers: the coal fields, iron mines, ore freighters, railroad lines. By doing so it allowed him to produce steel much cheaper than his steel competitors, which he usually bought out or shut down. Carnegie sold his steel company in 1901 for \$480 million to J.P. Morgan, who created U.S. Steel.<sup>16</sup>

In the text there is a side note under a picture of Carnegie claims that, “Nineteenth-century Industrialist Andrew Carnegie gave money to build public libraries, hoping to help other write their own rags-to-riches stories.”

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<sup>15</sup> *The Americans*, 447.

<sup>16</sup> *The Americans*, 448.

Another large industrialist, who epitomized the American dream, was John Davison Rockefeller. He was born July 8, 1839 in Richford New York but grew up in Cleveland. Young Rockefeller did his share of the regular household chores and earned extra money raising turkeys, selling potatoes and candy and eventually lending small sums of money to neighbors. His “father was a flashy peddler of phony cancer cures with a unique approach to raising children. ‘I cheat my boys every chance I get.... I want to make ‘em sharp.’”<sup>17</sup> Despite his father being a cheat and absent for a majority of his childhood, John D. was well-behaved, serious and studious and went on to study bookkeeping at college. He made \$.50 per day at his first bookkeeping job, and donated a small percentage of his wages to charity. He made a larger profit in the wholesale foodstuffs industry and then built an oil refinery in 1863. Recognizing the need for cheaper lighting oil than that extracted from whales, Rockefeller exploited his chemist partners to create kerosene.

He was well-positioned to take advantage of post-war prosperity and the great expansion westward, fostered by the growth of railroads and an oil-fueled economy. He borrowed heavily, reinvested profits, adapted rapidly to changing markets, and fielded observers to track the quickly expanding industry. Standard Oil grew to become one of the largest shippers of oil and kerosene in the country. The railroad tycoons fought over trafficking his oil. Soon Standard Oil became a monopoly and controlled nearly all of the American refineries. Rockefeller controlled an empire that included 20,000 American wells, 4,000 miles of pipeline, 5,000 tank cars, and over 100,000 employees.

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<sup>17</sup> *The Americans*, 448.

“In 1870, Rockefeller’s Standard Oil Company of Ohio processed two or three percent of the country’s crude oil. Within a decade it controlled 90 percent of the refining business. Rockefeller reaped huge profits by paying his employees extremely low wages and driving his competitors out of business by selling his oil at a lower price than it costs to produce it. Then when he controlled the market, he hiked prices far above original levels.”<sup>18</sup> When Standard Oil broke up Rockefeller’s worth was estimated at around 900 million dollars. At the peak of his business however he became the world's richest man and the first American worth more than a billion dollars. When compensating inflation, he is often regarded as the richest man in history.

Rockefeller, like Carnegie, gave back to the community. 500 million dollars was donated to the Rockefeller foundation, which provided funds to create the University of Chicago and their medical institute that helped find a cure for yellow fever.<sup>19</sup>

Unit Five, 1890-1920, *Modern America Emerges*, includes Chapter 17: The Progressive Era. One notable muckraker and one of the most well-known authors helped to spark this revolution in America. His book helped to create the Food and Drug Administration, and pass the Pure Food and Drug Act and Meat Inspection Act. Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle* transformed American life as he exploited and disgusted Americans by educating them on the quality of meat they were getting and achieved the American dream in the process.

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<sup>18</sup> *The Americans*, 449.

<sup>19</sup> *The Americans*, 448.

Upton Beall Sinclair was born September 20, 1878 and grew up as an average American kid. He grew up in New York City, the son of poor parents. His father was an alcoholic that was not around too much. In response his mother sheltered him, which resulted in their separation and dislike for one another. Barely into his teens, he began writing weekly boy's adventure tales in dime novels, jokes and magazine articles in boy's weekly and pulp magazines. This helped to support him while he attended City College of New York.

“Upton Sinclair’s chief aim in writing *The Jungle* was to expose the shocking conditions that immigrant workers endured. The public, however, reacted even more strongly to the novel’s revelations of unsanitary conditions in the meatpacking industry... *The Jungle* prompted a federal investigation that resulted in the passage of the Meat Inspection Act in 1906.”<sup>20</sup>

Sinclair's first novel, *Springtime and Harvest* published in 1901, did not sell. Neither did his second, third or fourth novels. Sinclair fell into depression after his only child, David, nearly died of pneumonia. He grew increasingly distant from his newlywed wife, Meta, and suggested that the two practice celibacy. Frustrated, Sinclair wrote a "*Letter to the World*" with hysterical self-pity, "You may sneer ... but you will live to blush for that sneer." <sup>21</sup>

Looking for a new start and hope, the young writer looked for something to give him a chance. He found it in the revolutionary doctrine of socialism. Sinclair wrote

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<sup>20</sup> *The Americans*, 533.

<sup>21</sup> Blackwell, Jon. "1906: Rumble over 'The Jungle.'"

socialist propaganda and made socialist friends, among them writer Jack London and wealthy eccentric George Herron. With the help of an allowance from Herron, Sinclair went off to work on his latest project a novel about the Civil War.<sup>22</sup>

In May of 1903, Sinclair moved to Princeton for three years because the university possessed the second-largest Civil War collection in the country. He disliked the area and later wrote, 'The families ... contained drunkards, degenerates, mental or physical defectives, semi-idiots, victims of tuberculosis or venereal disease and now and then a petty criminal,'<sup>23</sup> However, the novel, *Manassas*, was a modest success, enabling him to buy a 60-acre farm of his own and move into an actual house with his wife and son instead of a canvas tent.

Sinclair then read of a meat-packing strike in Chicago, and knew he had a good plot for the first great socialist novel. In 1904, Sinclair wandered the Chicago stockyards or "packing town" for two months. He socialized with the highly underpaid immigrants in their tenements and learned how they'd been mistreated and ripped off, working 12 hour days for minimal pay.

Then Upton returned back to Princeton to write *The Jungle* inside a hand-built, 18-by-16-foot cabin. He worked on the story of Jurgis Rudkus, a fictional Lithuanian immigrant working in Packingtown. Sinclair "wrote with tears and anguish, pouring into

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<sup>22</sup> Blackwell, Jon. "1906: Rumble over 'The Jungle.'"

<sup>23</sup> Blackwell, Jon. "1906: Rumble over 'The Jungle.'"

the pages all the pain that life had meant to me." He later said, "For three months I worked incessantly."<sup>24</sup>

Coincidentally enough, the *Jungle* is about an immigrant's attempt to reach the American dream. Jurgis saw his chance of the American dream dissipate and turn into a nightmare as his job hauling steer carcasses in the stockyards left him injured and unable to support his family. He then loses his job when he gets into an altercation with his wife's boss. He then loses the wife to disease and his son later on. After a few trips to prison and other failed jobs, Jurgis finds rebirth upon joining the socialist movement, and the book closes with a socialist orator shouting: "Organize! Organize! Organize! ... CHICAGO WILL BE OURS!"<sup>25</sup>

*The Jungle's* content was so stirring, melodramatic and political that five publishers found it too hot to handle and turned the novel down. Sinclair persisted and got Doubleday to publish it in February 1906. It became instantly famous, and acclaimed as the most revolutionary piece of fiction of the age. In London, future Prime Minister Winston Churchill said the book "pierces the thickest skull and most leathery heart." United States President Theodore Roosevelt sent his own agents to Chicago to investigate whether meat packing was as bad as Sinclair described. The reporting agents said that the conditions were worse.

President Roosevelt invited Sinclair to the White House to solicit his advice on how to make inspections safer. By June 30, 1906, Congress had passed the Pure Food and

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<sup>24</sup> Blackwell, Jon. "1906: Rumble over 'The Jungle.'"

<sup>25</sup> (<http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/jungle/summary.html>)

Drug Act, cracking down on unsafe food and patent medicines, and the Meat Inspection Act which established mandatory inspection of livestock (cattle, sheep, goats, equines, and swine) before and after slaughter. It also authorizes the USDA to enforce sanitation standards in processing plants and slaughterhouses.

Upton Sinclair was now more infamous and richer than ever anticipated. He made 30 thousand dollars in the winter of 1906-07, just months after publication. He then moved to California where he made two unsuccessful attempted for Congress on the Socialist ticket. The first in 1920 for the House of Representatives and again in 1922 for the Senate. He did not stop there, in 1934, running for governor on a revolutionary Democratic platform called "End Poverty in California" or EPIC, as it became better known as.<sup>26</sup>

Unit Six, 1919-1940, The 1920s and the Great Depression, includes Chapter 21: *The Roaring Life of the 1920s*, Chapter 22: *The Great Depression Begins*. These two chapters give rise to one of the largest, most unique example, one that is illegal yet still illustrate and exemplify examples for the possibility of rags to riches. A new breed of dreamers emerged after the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment was passed in 1919. Prohibition, powered by the Volstead Act, led the way for organized crime to enter American cities in order to produce, traffic and sell alcohol in addition to other types of illegal activities in the depression and interwar period. The collaboration of anti-Prohibition activities, such as racketeering, gambling and prostitution, allowed for an illegal way for rags to riches. A prime example of this can be seen throughout the life of Alphonse Gabriel "Al" Capone

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<sup>26</sup> Blackwell, Jon. "1906: Rumble over 'The Jungle.'"

as he rose up from the slums in New York City to create his empire in Chicago, creating monumental revenues of the time through the black market.

Alphonse Gabriel Capone grew up with eight siblings under his Italian immigrant parents in Brooklyn. Al quickly pursued his 'career' in organized crime. He joined his first gang almost immediately after being expelled from public school at age fourteen after assaulting a female teacher. Al Capone, like so many of the gangsters during the 1920's and 30's, started their gang affiliations early and expanded them throughout their entire life creating alliances, enemies, and empires.<sup>27</sup>

Al Capone's life as a gang member started while living in Brooklyn when he met Johnny Torrio. He was immediately attracted to the risk taking and powerful lifestyle associated with crime. He joined many organizations throughout his adolescence including The Junior Forty Thieves, The Bowery Boys, Brooklyn Rippers and the more well-known Five Points Gang while still living in New York. It was at this time in his life where he was taught to racketeer and received the scar that would eventually give him the nickname, 'Scarface.' Capone acquired this name after he insulted a door lady at a night club, later when confronted by her brother, Frank Gallucio. Capone received three lacerations on his face.<sup>28</sup>

At the age of twenty four, Al 'Scarface' Capone left Brooklyn and moved to Chicago to reunite with Johnny Torrio to further conduct and expand their business. It

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<sup>27</sup> Peterson, 37.

<sup>28</sup> Peterson, 36.

was here that Capone realized the potential for bootlegging and other similar forms of anti-Prohibition related business because of Chicago's close proximity with Canada.<sup>29</sup>

Capone saw himself not as a criminal but as a businessman, stating "If I break the law, my customers, who number hundreds of the best people in Chicago, are as guilty as I am. The only difference between us is that I sell and they buy. Everybody calls me a racketeer. I call myself a business man. When I sell liquor, it's a bootlegging. When my patron serves it on a silver tray on Lake Shore Drive, it's hospitality."<sup>30</sup>

Capone believed in monopoly amongst other gangs and would either offer to oversee their gang or eliminate them. Most organizations he would simply take over, others he would eliminate entirely and take their share of customers. Gang corruption in this era became so prevalent that the boundary "between the underworld and upper world became blurred." Many law enforcement agents were too intimidated to make arrests because of fear and boss politics that took place in Chicago.<sup>31</sup>

The power that Capone and Torrio had can be seen as they corrupted the mayoral election of Chicago by threatening voters at the polls.<sup>32</sup> Capone had his puppet mayor, William Hale "Big Bill" Thompson voted in and the strength of the Torrio Capone alliance was clearly visible throughout Chicago.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Beshears, 197.

<sup>30</sup> Beshears, 201.

<sup>31</sup> Beshears, 199.

<sup>32</sup> Peterson, 31.

<sup>33</sup> Beshears, 200.

Capone's underground empire had remarkable revenues of 70 Million dollars per year.<sup>34</sup> They accomplished this revenue not only by collaborating different types of alcohol distribution, gambling, prostitution, and boss politics but also by eliminating competition.

Simply put, Al Capone rose from the slums of New York City to having property across the United States and prospered by creating a multi-million dollar 'business.' His rise from rags to riches came primarily because of the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution. Prohibition brought organized crime in America to the forefront allowing the mobsters to make large sums of money as long as they could correlate different aspects of the operations together and utilize technology to stay one step ahead of the law, Capone achieved this and thus the American Dream.<sup>35</sup>

*Unit Seven, 1931-1960, World War II and its Aftermath, The Postwar Boom* brought in the term suburbs. The book defines them as, "small residential communities surrounding cities."<sup>36</sup> Since World War II, Americans have invested much of their newfound wealth in suburbia. It has promised a sense of space, affordability, family life and upward mobility. As the population of suburban sprawl has exploded in the past 50 years, so too has the suburban way of life become embedded in the American consciousness.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Cohen, 583.

<sup>35</sup> Woodwiss, 8.

<sup>36</sup> *The Americans*, 841.

<sup>37</sup> *The Americans*, 841.

The text then gets into how this changed the way Americans moved out of the city, therefore needing a new way to travel to and from work. “Suburban living made owning a car a necessity.”<sup>38</sup> To help accommodate these travelers, two Scottish / Irish immigrant brothers, Maurice and Richard created one of the most successful franchises in history. In 1953, The McDonald brothers began their successful restaurant chain.<sup>39</sup>

The story of McDonald’s, since 1955, begins “when entrepreneur Ray Kroc opened his first stand in Des Plaines and began spreading the McDonald brothers’ self-service system and golden arches nationwide. The visibility of McDonald’s as the most successful of the franchise chains has drawn academic and critical attention as a social and iconographic phenomenon.”<sup>40</sup>

The brothers’ company now serves approximately 58 million customers daily in over 199 countries. They employ over 1.5 million people in their 35 thousand operating franchised restaurants.<sup>41</sup> Before his death, Richard ate the ceremonial 50 billionth hamburger of the company in 1984, after operating the company for only 31 years.

Unit Eight, 1954-1975, *Living with Great Turmoil*, includes Chapter 29: *Civil Rights*, and Chapter 31: *An Era of Social Change*. It is within these chapters that one of the most monumental speeches in American history took place. The seventeen minute, *I have a Dream Speech* was delivered on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial on August 27,

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<sup>38</sup> *The Americans*, 852.

<sup>39</sup> Alan Hess, "The Origins of McDonald's Golden Arches," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 45, no. 1 (1986): 60.

<sup>40</sup> Hess, 60.

<sup>41</sup> *The Americans*, 848.

1963 by one of the largest Civil Rights leaders in American history. Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. advocated for the American dream for all African Americans.

“Born Michael Luther King, Jr., King had to adjust to a new name in 1934. In that year his father – Rev Michael King, Sr.—returned home from a trip to Europe where he had toured the site where Martin Luther had begun the Protestant Reformation. Upon his return home, the elder King changed his and his son’s names to Martin. Like Luther, the younger King became a reformer. In 1964, he won the Nobel peace prize. Yet there was a side of King unknown to most people—his inner battle to overcome his hatred of white bigots. As a youth, he has once vowed ‘to hate all white people.’ As leader of the civil rights movement, King said all Americans had to be freed: ‘Negroes from the bonds of segregation and shame, white from the bonds of bigotry and fear.’”<sup>42</sup>

Martin Luther King Jr. was born on January 15, 1929, in Atlanta, Georgia. He questioned a lot of Christianity’s claims, despite later joining the seminary and becoming a minister. By 1954, at the age of twenty-five, King became pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama.

In the wake of Rosa Park’s arrest, NAACP leader E. D. Nixon helped to coordinate a bus boycott in Montgomery. This would include many prominent members of the African American community. “They elected the pastor... Martin Luther King, Jr., to lead the group. An ordained minister since 1948, King had just earned a Ph. D in theology from Boston University. ‘Well, I’m not sure I’m the best person for the position,’ King confided to Nixon, ‘but if no one else is going to serve, I’d be glad to

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<sup>42</sup> *The Americans*, 912.

try.”<sup>43</sup> King then gave a speech, “There comes a time when people get tired of being trampled over by the iron feet of oppression... I want it to be known --that we’re going to work with grim and bold determination—to gain justice on the buses in this city. And we are not wrong... if we are wrong—the Supreme Court of this nation is wrong. If we are wrong—God Almighty is wrong... If we are wrong—justice is a lie.” This resulted in African Americans filing a lawsuit and for 381 days refused to ride the buses in Montgomery. <sup>44</sup>

During King’s 13<sup>th</sup> jailed sentence, he wrote a letter, commonly known as the *Letter from Birmingham Jail* that stirred up even more which encouraged others to keep moving on to pursue legal channels for social change in America.

"We will win our freedom because the sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of God are embodied in our echoing demands...when these disinherited children of God sat down at lunch counters they were in reality standing up for what is best in the American dream and for the most sacred values in our Judeo-Christian heritage, thereby bringing our nation back to those great wells of democracy which were dug deep by the founding fathers in their formulation of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence."

His biggest movement however was at the conclusion of the March on Washington. On August 27, 1963 King delivered his seventeen minute, *I have a Dream Speech* on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. This was a heavy straw on the camel’s

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<sup>43</sup> *The Americans*, 910.

<sup>44</sup> *The Americans*, 911.

back, and epitomized what King stood for on making the American dream attainable for African Americans.

“I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal.’... I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character... I have a dream that one day the state of Alabama... will be transformed into a situation where little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls and walk together and sisters and brothers.”<sup>45</sup>

Two weeks after the speech was given, four young Birmingham girls were killed after a drive-by-bombing in their church. Two month after President John F. Kennedy was assassinated; President Lyndon Johnson continued his successor’s promise to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1964.<sup>46</sup>

Planning another march on Washington, this time for the poor, he addressed a crowd in Memphis, “I may not get there with you but... we as a people will get to the promise land... I’m not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the lord.” The next day James Earl Ray shot and killed Dr. King as he stood on his hotel balcony.

Robert Kennedy gave a eulogy for King, “For those of you who are black— considering the evidence that there were white people who were responsible—you can be

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<sup>45</sup> *The Americans*, 920.

<sup>46</sup> *The Americans*, 920-921.

filled with the bitterness, with hatred and a desire for revenge. We can move in that direction as a country... black people amongst black, white people amongst white, filled with hatred towards one another. Or we can make an effort, as Martin Luther King did, to understand and comprehend and to replace that violence, that stain of bloodshed that had spread across our land with an effort to understand with compassion and love.”<sup>47</sup>

Unit Nine, 1968-2004, Passage to a New Century, includes Chapter 32: An Age of Limits, Chapter 33: The Conservative Tide and Reagan and the Cold War, Chapter 34: The United States in Today's World, Epilogue: Issues for the 21st Century. Within this unit, there are many examples that can be used. Two hippies that created one of the largest ice cream companies call Ben and Jerry's, One of the richest men in the world, Bill Gates. One that students are most familiar with, having likely used or own one of his company's products may be especially important.

Steven Paul Jobs was a bastard born to two college students that were forced to put him up for adoption, requesting he be adopted by college educated couple. He was adopted by Paul and Clara Jobs and moved out to Mountain View California from San Francisco.<sup>48</sup>

During his high school years he met with friends Steve Wozniak and Bill Fernandez, who shared similar interests in computers. Jobs sought to continue this in college.

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<sup>47</sup> *The Americans*, 927.

<sup>48</sup> Isaacson, Walter, "Steve Jobs".

Steve Jobs sought higher education but his parents could not afford it. He dropped a majority of his classes and eavesdropped on others at Reed College in Portland Oregon. He later took up a job at Atari but left for India in an attempt to find himself. He returned with a new appearance and nothing else. He returned to Atari where he did very well and worked with childhood friends Steve Wozniak to create smaller more compressed chips. Their love for technology helped them create a box that allowed for free long distance calling, the first invention they were able to sell. They created a circuit board company called Apple Computer Company.<sup>49</sup>

Wozniak created the Apple I single handedly. Jobs voted to start production and with help from other engineers and Pepsi's CEO, they started production of computer and other electronics.

Business boomed for Apple. They combined other companies inventions, such as Xerox's mouse interface, to create the Macintosh computer. In 1984, they aired a commercial in the Superbowl. Jobs then bought what would become Pixar from Lucasfilms and the successful *Toystory* was the premier production. Jobs returned his focus to Apple, and created new operating system, Mac OS X, as well as new electronics such as the IPod, iPhone and IPad.<sup>50</sup>

He rose to riches throughout his lifetime. In 2003, Jobs discovered that he had a neuroendocrine tumor, a rare but operable form of pancreatic cancer. Job's wealth at the time of his resignation from Apple, due to his medical problems, was around 8.3 billion

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<sup>49</sup> Isaacson, Walter, "Steve Jobs".

<sup>50</sup> Isaacson, Walter, "Steve Jobs".

dollars according to *Forbes* because of the shares he owned in Apple and Disney Pixar, making him the forty second wealthiest American.<sup>51</sup>

These examples of the American dream are just some of the examples that teachers can show students that through hard work, determination that anyone, in any situation has the ability to rise up, against the odds and become whatever they want. As many of these examples show, poverty stricken, raised by a single parent, uneducated have all been able to overcome that and do something great both for themselves, their families and their country. It is a shame that a common textbook does not use the term American dream, yet it does give some excellent examples of it. Therefore, it is up to the teacher to provide and explain that the opportunity is always there for the students to make their own future and to achieve what they envision for themselves is a good life.

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<sup>51</sup> "Forbes 400 Richest Americans". *Forbes*. September 2011.

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