

THE AMERICAN WAY OF LIFE: PATH TO PARADISE OR HIGHWAY TO HELL?



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1. Tasks



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- 1.) Explore and analyse the material in groups.
 - 2.) Prepare a short presentation of 5 minutes using the material. You are free to add your own thoughts. Present your results to the other groups.



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- 3.) Discuss the following statement: "To achieve Sustainable Development, the US has to find a new American Way of Life."

2. Material

The American Way of Life (William Herberg)

The American Way of life is individualistic, dynamic, and pragmatic. It affirms the supreme value and dignity of the individual; it stresses incessant activity on his part, for he is never to rest but is always to be striving to "get ahead" it defines an ethic of

self-reliance, merit, and character, and judges by achievement: "deeds, not creeds" are what count. The "American Way of Life" is humanitarian, "forward-looking", optimistic. Americans are easily the most generous and philanthropic people in the world, in terms of their ready and unstinting response to suffering anywhere on the globe. The American believes in progress, in self-improvement, and quite fanatically in education. But above all, the American is idealistic. Americans cannot go on making money or achieving worldly success simply on its own merits; such "materialistic" things must, in the American mind, be justified in "higher" terms, in terms of "service" or "stewardship" or "general welfare"... And because they are so idealistic, Americans tend to be moralistic; they are inclined to see all issues as plain and simple, black and white, issues of morality.

Old and new American dream

The old American Dream ... was the dream of the Puritans, of Benjamin Franklin's "Poor Richard"... of men and women content to accumulate their modest fortunes a little at a time, year by year by year. The new dream was the dream of instant wealth, won in a twinkling by audacity and good luck. [This] golden dream ... became a prominent part of the American psyche only after Sutter's Mill.

The American life is killing you

If you're in the same boat as the typical American, your dilemma might look something like this: You're enduring some type of chronic illness, over-stressed and rushed, unrewarding job, little or no savings, greatly in debt, fat mortgage, two vehicles in the driveway with a 5 or 7-year loan on each, lots of gadgets and toys to keep you occupied, huge TV, little free time for yourself due to your career and a demanding spouse, weekends filled with church and/or senseless entertainment, and a bathroom cabinet heavily stacked with pharmaceutical tic tacs to help cope with the emptiness of it all.

This is probably you and it's OK. This is considered normal in America. You are a success. You've achieved the American Dream. Your obedience and education and hard work have paid off. Congratulations. But the problem is that you're miserable and

shallow and quite possibly unhealthy and a little dispirited and you'll likely die of either heart disease, cancer, diabetes, Alzheimer's, or suicide in the not so distant future — statistically speaking. [...]

Despite living in the richest country on the planet with a gargantuan military (and budget) to keep you so-called “safe,” you're frightened and unhappy more than ever before. Seems your material abundance and chronic hustle and “good citizen” ideals have done nothing for your happiness or well-being. [...]

Photo: World's highest standard of living.



There is no way like the american dream. 1937 Louisville, Kentucky. Margartet Bourke-White.

Photo: House is on fire (Meme)

WE SPEND BILLIONS OF DOLLARS SEARCHING FOR LIFE ON OTHER PLANETS



AND TRILLIONS OF DOLLARS KILLING THE LIFE ON THIS ONE.

Video: [Consumerism: The American way of life.](#)

The video shows overconsumption by American consumerism. It criticises the American economy and advertisement techniques that leads to overconsumption and shows the effect it has on people, their lives and human interactions.