Jessie Bilyea

2nd Hour; Jorgenson

English 12

American Dream

 Every one’s vision of the American Dream is different, in my opinion it depends on how high someone’s standards are. Mine, however was to be successful and happy. Thirty years later, I have a wonderful husband and children, and I have a great job teaching first graders at our local elementary school in a small town in Oklahoma. It took some difficulties to get to where I am now, but if I say so myself, it was well worth the wait.

 I once saw a documentary called, Hidden America: Children of the Mountains, it was about people trying to achieve their goals and dreams. Among those people was Sean Grim, he was in high school and lived out of his truck to get away from his deprived family. He thought if he got away from them he wouldn’t pick up their bad habits of drinking and doing drugs. Sean was the only one who graduated in his family and was the star quarter back in their town’s football team. He went to college and played football, but he had to drop out because he couldn’t afford it. I admire Sean for making it through high school when no one else cared, and even though he didn’t make it through college, he still did as much as he could. It made me realize that I should never give up on myself because other people out there would do anything to be where I am now.

 After I graduated from Grand Valley State University, I was struggling to find a teaching job. I almost lost my determination when I saw a video on YouTube about a man named Ted Williams. It was about a homeless guy who had an outstanding radio voice. I was so shocked that he had no job, or family, or anything for that matter. The next day as I was getting ready to go meet up with some friends, he was on Good Morning America! He talked about why he was homeless and he said that he started to do drugs and began to drink, therefore that led to him losing his job. I remember almost a year later he was sober and a successful radio speaker. Ted eventually got a girlfriend and had a life coach that helped him stay sober. I think highly of Ted because he never gave up. He confronted his problems and challenged himself to overcome his obstacles.

 Another example of a person who achieved the American Dream was Lady Gaga. Lady Gaga didn’t let others influence the way she acted, or dressed. She never gave up being successful, and didn’t settle for less than what she deserved. Gaga is out of the ordinary and wants people to accept her, and does her best to influence others to do the same. She also teaches kids to let go of insecurities, and not to judge other people for who they are. She made me realize not to let other people change me, or influence the way I act. Lady Gaga is an inspiring woman, and many people judge her for what she sings or what she wears. She taught me to be myself and to do what makes me happy, just like she did.

 In *The Great Gatsby*, by F. Scott Fitzgerald, Jay Gatsby started out with nothing. His dream was just like everyone else’s in the story: wealth, popularity, and love. Gatsby met Daisy at a young age, whom he fell in love with but he didn’t meet her social standards. Years later he became wealthy and moved across the bay from her and her husband, Tom. Gatsby would throw extravagant parties for people he didn’t even know hoping she would show up. He would also tell people he graduated from Oxford University in England, when really he dropped out and became a criminal to gain wealth. Once Gatsby finally met her standards he did everything within his power to get Daisy back. In the end he dies, but he did everything he could to achieve his American Dream. It showed me to never give up for what I want in life, and to do everything in my power to accomplish my own dreams.

 Lastly in the book, *Grapes of Wrath*, by John Steinbeck, the Joad family struggles to survive the dust bowl and they go on a journey to California to find work and a new home to live in. However, the journey is tougher than what they think, as well as finding a job. Along the way, grandpa and grandma couldn’t survive the drive and many times they often had to stop and sell their belongings just for a gallon of gas or food. Also some times, the family wanted to split up but Ma Joad wouldn’t allow that to happen. She stood up for herself and her family through tough times. I respect Ma Joad for never giving up for what she wanted. Her American Dream was to be wealthy and to keep her family together. Ma Joad gives support to the family and carries most of the burden. In the end they eventually have enough money to buy some food and clothes. This book made me realize that I am lucky for what I have and to never give up. It also teaches me that family is more important than money.

 In conclusion, the American Dream isn’t all about money, it’s about family and love for one another. Sean Grim followed his dreams and did what was right in his eyes. Ted Williams quit drinking and doing drugs to be a successful radio speaker. They both pushed their limits to be what they wanted in life. Lady Gaga also let go of insecurities and teached people not to judge, her American Dream was to be successful and to inspire others. Jay Gatsby and Ma Joad also have the same dream: to be wealthy. Gatsby strived for Daisy’s attention and the Joads just wanted to have a home to live in and be happy in. No matter what the American Dream is, if a person works for it and puts forth effort like each of these people did, they will get closer and closer to what they want in life; therefore achieving their outlook on the American Dream, just like I did.