

Year 11 English (Advanced) student work sample – Grade C

Please note: The following work sample has been transcribed for readability. To assist with grading, spelling and grammatical errors have not been corrected and appear as written.

Over time, the ideology of the American Dream has changed and has become one of entrapment and danger. The film American Beauty by Sam Mendes conveys this danger of being entrapped by the so called American Dream. A speech made by Sally Field, talked about how the American Dream is about possibilities, but how today, this Dream has become dangerous. Both these texts show the dangers towards the American Dream.

Sound introductory statement linking the concept to the set text and stimulus material

To understand some of the dangers, understanding of what the American Dream use to encompass, and what is conveyed through American Beauty is essential. In the past, the Dream was one of endless possibilities, and was to become “whatever you want to be”, as said in the speech. However now this individualised idea of the Dream has been generalised to a Dream such as what is emphasised in American Beauty.

Some confusion in this further attempt to state a thesis

This generalisation has raised a false sense of achievement of the American dream. This danger is due to the generalisation of the dream, and can is very hard to notice. Lester Burnham in Beauty is a prime example of this dangerous entrapment of what he believed was the American Dream. Lester being the Narator of this film, he tells the responders that he feels “sedated” within his American Dream. This “sedation” is conveyed on a personal level due to the Naration, and he is refering to this false sense of security. Lester has everything that todays dream wants: a family, a well payed job, a nice house. Due to the missing perpose of what the dream is meant to be, he woke up, out of a “twenty year coma”. The reason why this dream is dangerous is because it is very hard to notice when you falsly believe you are living the American Dream.

Refers to set text to justify ideas; however, the evidence tends to be descriptive

The whole original idea of the American Dream is to achieve “your own personal goals” to live a happy life, but again this Dream has been twisted into a materialistic ideal that leads people to be happy fasly through prosperity. The Burnham family shows this clearly through the akwardness in their meaningful family relationships and caused a rift which allowed Lester to see through the danger of entrapment within the Dream. Carolyn’s dream formed into a strive for prosperity, so that they can be happy through achieving wealth. This is conveyed in the loungeroom scene with Lester, when Carolyn prevents intimacy due to a possibility of Lester spilling beer over the “italian silk” couch. This emphasised her idea of her American Dream of “conveying an image of success” and prosperity to be happy. Carolyn does not allow herself for other possibilities and restricts herself to material worth. After Lester’s ‘wake up call’, he foils Carolyn by disregarding all the modern ideaolgies of the American Dream, and turning it on its head. In the same scene, Lester explains this dangerous entrapment to Carolyn when he said he said “this isn’t living”. Carolyn denies this statement again showing the responders that she does not want to hear about this false Dream she believes in. Lester starts to enjoy life, starting to open up his own Dream to which follow the original ideology to enjoy life. It’s this ability to deny the Dream and achieve the goals

Communicates ideas in a clear and relevant manner

Sound analysis of characters’ perception of the dream

Brief alternative perception of the American Dream

at the same time that shows us how dangerous it can be to drive people into a false sense of safety and into a false Dream. In the authorless speech, this same ideology of striving to open up possibility to be safer supports Lester's individual Dream that he began towards the end of the film.

Attempts to discuss links between texts

Unfortunately, for those who have already entrapped, its very hard to get out of it. American Beauty does exaggerate Lesters' ability to get out of him, however it does show the responders that by sticking at it, you can get anywhere you wish. In the film, Lester does this by being very ignorant towards Carolyn. He does this when he argues with Carolyn in bed, however afterward he smiles. It was this smile that conveyed his self confidence in his own success to 'break out" of the Dream he was living in. This is foiled by Carolyn as she was having an affair with Buddy King the competitor real estate agent, but still believes in her Dream. At the time though with the akward realisation by Lester, Carolyn starts to 'wine' and moan, being very sorry, as if they still had emotions towards each other. If it were easy to get out of this dream, she could have just kept it to herself, but due to the feeling of entrapment, she couldn't do it, and this is another danger for the American Dream.

Narration of events rather than analysis

Rellationships make it particularly hard to break out of it. Lester and Carolyn has a daughter and the common problem of their growing up and education often prevents this breakout. This is seen in the Burnham family through Carolyn's love for her daughter. This is also seen in the modern world today and its extremely hard to break out of it.

Limited discussion of family relationships

There are many dangers which the modern American Dream is under. The possibility of entrapment is high, and is very hard to notice. Once you have noticed, the dream is hard to get out of.

Brief and somewhat incongruent conclusion

Grade Commentary

Xiang has displayed a sound understanding of the Area of Study, 'The American Dream'. Throughout the response, Xiang occasionally describes events rather than analyses them, particularly with reference to the listening stimulus. Xiang has demonstrated the ability to select and integrate relevant information from the text although selected evidence does not always show understanding of the film medium.

Xiang's response, on balance, demonstrates characteristics of work typically produced by a student performing at a grade C standard.