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In his article “Keeping the American Dream Alive”, Meacham effectively crafts the text to reveal his argument regarding the American Dream, mainly that it has become unreachable. Through his article, Meacham portrays the contrast between the current and past state of affairs. He argues that the American Dream is no longer an idea that is attainable, and that it is “slipping away”. Through the medium of a Time’s article he hopes to reach a generation of people that he believes is most concerned about the future “for their children”. In the text, Meacham uses the rhetorical devices of ethos to gain the reader’s trust, metaphors and imagery to clarify his argument, and logos to convince the reader that the present attainability of the American Dream has changed.

In the article, Meacham cites numerous examples from credible sources that accentuate his argument by showing various perspectives on the American Dream and its relation to the life of a nation. For example, Meacham cites the government’s statement that prices have generally increased, while income has remained relatively the same. This example supports Meacham’s argument that, because prices have increased, people are unable to maintain the same economic status as they were in the past. His definition of middle class, given by the U.S. Department of Commerce, defines middle-class by its aspirations. The reader becomes more receptive to his claim that the aspiration of a “better, richer, and happier” life is less attainable as of the present. Meacham’s citation of numerous sources such as Roosevelt’s old rector, further gains him credibility because his sources are well-known figures in American history.

Meacham uses the “peaks and the valleys of the centuries” as a metaphor for civilization, measured by its economic and social aspects. He uses this imagery in order to explain that,

although there has been a general trend in the “upward” direction, we currently rest in a low point in civilization. By comparing the heights and prosperity attained in the “shadow of the Crash” with the current “crisis”, Meacham persuades the reader that civilization itself has changed in accordance with his cyclical metaphor.

By crafting his article with examples from history, Meacham uses deductive reasoning and implications to lead the reader to the conclusion that the American Dream is no longer alive. He begins the article by stating that economic inequality will lead to the end of the American Dream, and then continues further to show that this inequality is in fact the case, shown by a high unemployment rate. He shows that while the term “American Dream” is new, the idea remains the same, and by doing this he convinces the reader that these aspirations are not new, and is therefore subject to the same patterns shown in the history of civilization. By showing that the middle-class status, defined by its aspirations, has become more difficult to achieve, he shows that progress toward a certain ideal cannot always be made.

Through the inclusion of the rhetorical techniques of logos, ethos, and metaphors, Meacham is able to create a more effective argument. By writing from a historical viewpoint, he portrays the American experience as constantly changing and subject to the same difficulties as other civilizations. Through this past perspective, he conveys his belief that the American Dream is something that may be “slipping away”, because the problems that we face today are different than those of the past, and therefore cannot be dealt with in the same way.