First Semester In-Class Writing Final

by Dean Gladish

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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.

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FINAL GRADE

GENERAL COMMENTS

Instructor

71 /80

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EXPOSITION (20%)   0 / 5

The text sets up a story by introducing the event/conflict, characters and setting.

EXCEPTIONAL (5)	The text creatively engages the reader by setting out a well-developed conflict, situation, or observation. The text establishes one or multiple points of view and introduces a narrator and/or complex characters.
SKILLED (4)	The text engages and orients the reader by setting out a conflict, situation, or observation. It establishes one or multiple points of view and introduces a narrator and/or well-developed characters.
PROFICIENT (3)	The text orients the reader by setting out a conflict, situation, or observation. It establishes one point of view and introduces a narrator and/or developed characters.
DEVELOPING (2)	The text provides a setting with a vague conflict, situation, or observation with an unclear point of view. It introduces a narrator and/or underdeveloped characters.
INADEQUATE (1)	The text provides a setting that is unclear with a vague conflict, situation, or observation. It has an unclear point of view and underdeveloped narrator and/or characters.

DEVELOPMENT (20%)   0 / 5

The story is developed using dialogue, pacing, description, reflection and multiple plot lines.

EXCEPTIONAL (5)	The text demonstrates sophisticated narrative techniques, such as engaging dialogue, artistic pacing, vivid description, complex reflection, and multiple plot lines to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
SKILLED (4)	The text demonstrates deliberate use of narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
PROFICIENT (3)	The text uses narrative techniques, such as dialogue, description, reflection, that illustrate events and/or characters.
DEVELOPING (2)	The text uses some narrative techniques, such as dialogue or description that merely retells events and/or experiences.
INADEQUATE (1)	The text lacks narrative techniques and merely retells events and/or experiences.

ORGANIZATION (20%)   0 / 5

The text follows a logical sequence of events.

EXCEPTIONAL (5)	The text creates a seamless progression of experiences or events using multiple techniques--such as chronology, flashback, foreshadowing, suspense, etc.--to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole.

SKILLED (4)	The text creates a smooth progression of experiences or events using a variety of techniques--such as chronology, flashback, foreshadowing, suspense, etc.--to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole.
PROFICIENT (3)	The text creates a logical progression of experiences or events using some techniques--such as chronology, flashback, foreshadowing, suspense, etc.--to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole.
DEVELOPING (2)	The text creates a sequence or progression of experiences or events.
INADEQUATE (1)	The text lacks a sequence or progression of experiences or events or presents an illogical sequence of events.

STYLE (20%)   0 / 5

The text uses sensory language and details to create a vivid picture of the events, setting, and characters.

EXCEPTIONAL (5)	The text uses eloquent words and phrases, showing details and rich sensory language and mood to convey a realistic picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.
SKILLED (4)	The text uses precise words and phrases, showing details and controlled sensory language and mood to convey a realistic picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.
PROFICIENT (3)	The text uses words and phrases, telling details and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.
DEVELOPING (2)	The text uses words and phrases and telling details to convey experiences, events, settings, and/or characters.
INADEQUATE (1)	The text merely tells about experiences, events, settings, and/or characters.

CONCLUSION (20%)   0 / 5

The text provides a conclusion that follows from the course of the narrative. The conclusion provides a reflection on or resolution of the events.

EXCEPTIONAL (5)	The text moves to a conclusion that artfully follows from and thoughtfully reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.
SKILLED (4)	The text builds to a conclusion that logically follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.
PROFICIENT (3)	The text provides a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.
DEVELOPING (2)	The text provides a conclusion that follows from what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.
INADEQUATE	The text may provide a conclusion to the events of the narrative.