

The American Dream then and now

Possible answers and solutions

1. Outline the reasons Schwarzenegger gives for leaving his home country of Austria.
(Comprehension)

| Aspects of the assignment | Phrases from the text you could have highlighted | Notes in the margin: your own words/paraphrases (Use your dictionary!) |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| reasons for leaving Austria | <p>“When I was a boy the Soviets occupied part of Austria. I saw their tanks in the streets.” (ll.13–14)</p> <p>“I remember the fear we had when we had to cross into the Soviet sector.” (ll.14–15)</p> | After World War II he was confronted with communism when part of Austria was controlled by the Soviet army. |
| | <p>“It was common belief that the Soviet soldiers could take a man out of his own car and ship him back to the Soviet Union as slave labor.” (ll.16–18)</p> <p>“I remember how scared I was that the soldiers would pull my father or my uncle out of the car and I would never see them again.” (ll.21–23)</p> | <p><i>Childhood memories:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – living in fear of the army – being afraid of being separated from one's family – feeling of helplessness |
| | <p>“As a kid I saw socialist – the socialist country that Austria became after the Soviets left.” (ll.26–27)</p> | From his point of view, the situation in Austria did not improve very much after the Soviet occupation had ended. |
| | <p>“In school, when the teacher would talk about America, I would daydream about coming here.” (ll.29–30)</p> <p>“I would sit there and watch for hours American movies, transfixed by my heroes, like John Wayne.” (ll.30–32)</p> | As a boy he was attracted by the Wild West and its heroes, whom he knew from films. |
| | <p>“Everything about America seemed so big to me, so open, so possible.” (ll.32–33)</p> | America appeared attractive because, unlike his small home country, it offered vast open spaces and wonderful opportunities. |
| | <p>“Then I heard Nixon speak. He was talking about free enterprise, getting the government off your back, lowering the taxes and strengthening the military.” (ll.40–42)</p> | America, especially the Republicans, promised to give him the chance to make his dreams come true, e.g. to be financially successful. |

Task 1 aims at the content of the text (*Anforderungsbereich 1*).

Outline means that you have to give the main features, structure or general principles of a topic, without minor details. The topic is mentioned in the assignment: reasons for leaving Austria. Make sure you use your own words. Your English-English dictionary will help you to do so. Avoid quotations but add some line reference in brackets: (l.X) or (ll.X–Y).

2. Analyse how he makes his speech effective. Pay special attention to rhetorical devices and the way in which he tries to establish a friendly relationship to his audience. (*Analysis*)

| Aspects of the assignment | Phrases from the text you could have highlighted/ could quote | Your explanation/analysis |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| relationship to the audience | "My fellow Americans" (l.1) | The speaker addresses the audience directly and tries to show them that he is one of them. |
| | <i>Paragraphs dealing with his past:</i> "When I was a boy ..." (ll.13–18) "As long as I live – ..." (ll.6–9) | He tells them two anecdotes from his past to bridge the gap between them (little Austrian boy who is scared of foreign soldiers/ becoming an American citizen). |
| | "I walked around with the American flag around my shoulder ..." (ll.8–9) | He appeals to their sense of patriotism by mentioning the American flag. |
| rhetorical devices | "scrawny boy" – "Governor" (l.2+l.3) "socialism" (l.39) – "free enterprise" (l.40) "fear" (l.14) – "dreams" (l.35) "empty pockets" – "full of dreams" (l.35) | He makes use of antithesis to stress the difference between his old life in Austria and his new life in America. |
| | "dream" (l.5, l.29, l.35) "proud" (l.8, l.10, l.11) | Repetition of key words makes the speech emphatic. |
| | "That is an immigrant's dream! It's the American Dream." (l.5) | He uses an image which stands for a whole range of positive ideas, e.g. freedom, individuality, success etc. |
| | "... full of dreams, full of determination, full of desire." (ll.35–36) | Enumeration is combined with anaphora and alliteration to give emphasis |

Task 2 aims at the formal elements of the speech (*Anforderungsbereich 2*).

Analyse means that you have to describe and explain in detail certain aspects and/or features of the speech. Two of these aspects are mentioned in the assignment: rhetorical devices and the relationship to the audience. Short quotations from the text might be necessary. Never give your opinion in this *Anforderungsbereich*.

3. a) Arnold Schwarzenegger claims that what he has achieved is “an immigrant’s dream. It’s the American Dream” (l.5). Comment on this statement taking into consideration what you know about the American Dream. (*Evaluation: comment*)
- *Possible thesis:* Arnold Schwarzenegger is the embodiment of the American Dream.
 - Evidence:* His achievements reflect different elements of the American Dream:
 - His rise from a poor Austrian boy to a famous Hollywood star illustrates the economic dream of success and prosperity: from rags to riches.
 - His election as Governor of California shows that personal dreams of self-fulfilment can still come true in America.
 - Background information about the American Dream (→ see Fact file):
 - Origin of the term: coined by James Truslow Adams in 1931; idea itself goes back to early settlers who left Europe for political, religious and economic reasons.
 - Elements of the Dream: freedom, individualism, optimism, hard work, progress, patriotism.

3. b) Imagine you are an immigrant and have just listened to Schwarzenegger’s speech. Write a letter to a friend in which you talk about this speech and refer to Schwarzenegger’s political background. (*Evaluation: re-creation of text*)

Your text should

- follow the rules for writing an informal letter.
- introduce the writer and make up details about him/her (e.g. where he/she comes from, naïve/informed ...) and the reasons why he/she is writing
- be connected to ideas/issues put forward by Schwarzenegger in his speech

a) either you agree:

- you see America as a country where “you can make it” (e.g. a career like Schwarzenegger’s) and can live in freedom ...
- you support American patriotism and the international role of the United States in peacekeeping

b) and/or you disagree:

- you can say that you are not sure what kind of policies Schwarzenegger pursues
- he generalises a lot in his speech (uses phrases like “so possible” and “so open”...)
- you can point out, for example, that, although he is praising the amount of possibilities for everybody, poverty, unemployment etc. still exist in the United States.

You could start like this:

3rd August 2007

Dear friend (or name),

Last night Schwarzenegger gave a speech at the Republican National Convention.

The way he talked about everybody’s chance to live according to one’s dreams inspired me to write you a letter ...

Task 3 a) aims at an evaluation of the text (*Anforderungsbereich 3*).

Comment means that you are expected to state clearly your opinion and to support your views with evidence. In this assignment the topic in question is the American Dream in general and Arnold Schwarzenegger’s achievements in particular.

Task 3 b) aims at an evaluation of the text by reflecting on its topic in a different type of text (*Anforderungsbereich 3*).

That means that you are expected to observe the conventions of the new type of text (here: informal letter).