

INSTRUCTIONAL TASK 20 MODEL

TASK 20 SAVE THE LAST WORD

STEP 1: *Select text(s) for students to examine.*

THE AMERICAN DREAM
(FROM: THE AMERICAN DREAM—COLLECTION #11003)
by Anthony Brandt
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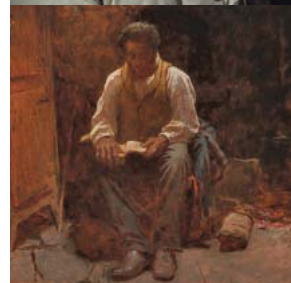
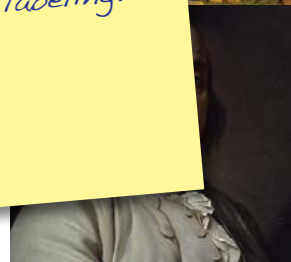
Citation/labeling?

...Perhaps the best way to define the American Dream is as a kind of origin myth. The Romans have Romulus and Remus, the English Brutus and his survivors from the fall of Troy; even new nations sometimes develop extrahistorical explanations for who they are and how they got that way. One thinks of the “Australian Legend,” the “French-Canadian Spirit. We have the American Dream. The name somehow defines us, grants us an identity. But it is not really a myth of origins. That we cannot have; our beginnings are too recent, too factual, too diverse to admit of mythologizing. What we have instead is a myth of the future. Our meaning lies not in who we are but in whom we shall become. Such a myth is necessarily vague and without specific content; to be too specific would entail setting limits to the Dream, reducing the range of possibilities, and the governing idea is that we are—America is—all possibility...

STEP 2: *Students read the text(s) without stopping.*

STEP 3: *Students re-read the text, selecting three sentences that particularly stand out. The sentences are recorded along with explanations for selection.*

1. The name somehow defines us, grants us an identity – this stands out because it sets up the difference between the American identity ‘myth’ from those of other nations/societies
2. Our meaning lies not in who we are but in whom we shall become. Unlike other countries who have legends about how their society started (often incorporating magical or mythical elements like Remus and Romulus, Americans always look to the future to define themselves, possibly because our culture is made up of so many diverse cultures?
3. Such a myth is necessarily vague and without specific content; to be too specific would entail setting limits to the Dream, Again, a uniquely (and sometimes belittled) characteristic of “Americans” is our ability to “dream big” and not set limits on what is possible for our nation....



INSTRUCTIONAL TASK 20 MODEL (continued)

STEP 4: *Divide the students into groups of three, labeling one student A, one B, and the other C. Invite “A”s to read one of their selected sentences. Then ask students B and C discuss the sentence.*

Examples of discussion questions include:

- a. What do they think it means?
- b. Why do they think these words might be important?
- c. To whom?

After several minutes, ask the A students to read their explanation, thus having “the last word.” This process continues with each student sharing.

STUDENT A

1. The name somehow defines us, grants us an identity—this stands out because it sets up the difference between the American identity “myth” from those of other nations/societies.

STUDENT B

I agree in part, but, we do have some “myths” in our society though...what about Paul Bunyon? Also, aren’t some ideas about things like “The American West?” sort of a myth? What about Horatio Alger? Abraham Lincoln and his log cabin....

STUDENT C

Yes, but think about how many different myths are part of American culture...also, they are all kind of based on this idea of the future... Go West, Young Man, explore your possibilities kind of thing.