

## ESSAY B

**“America our past, present, and future: Who we are, how did we get to this point, and what does our future hold?”**

“We dare not forget that we are the heirs of that first revolution.” (John F. Kennedy) America has had a relatively short history compared to that of other countries, but nevertheless we have had quite the journey. Our country has faced a variety of hardships from a rocky revolution to a terrible recession and everything in between, but we have successfully overcome these challenges shaping our country into the nation we know and love today. We have emerged from every crisis a little stronger, and a little wiser, surprising the world again and again with our resilience. If this country could only remember what it means to be an American, we will be able to come together to overcome these tough times. It is important that American’s understand our past and how it made us who we are today. Only then will we be able to proceed into a successful future.

Some of our countries greatest achievements were born out of our greatest tragedies. Our country was born in the midst of a revolution, a break away from one of the world’s largest and most powerful countries, Great Britain. It was then that our American pride first emerged. We fought many a battle, only to be thwarted by the sophisticated, well honed, and impressive British army, but with a cause worth fighting for, the Americans came out on top. We fought for ideals like liberty, and justice, while the British army only wished to enforce its power from across the sea. Our country faced many hardships during our early years including the process of drawing up our Constitution, the very same document that governs us to this day. How intelligent and wise our founding fathers were to create this living document,

subject to change and additions in order to help our country grow and become one of the greatest forces the world has ever seen. In our early years, our country faced complete destruction as the Civil War broke out and we had brother fighting against brother in the bloodiest of battles. This is where our country found its strength. It was an uphill battle, but the reconstruction period allowed for Americans to pick up the pieces and start anew with bigger and better ideals in mind. Our country has taken part in its fair share of wars, and we have lost many a man and woman in order to remain a nation free from tyranny, and oppression endeavoring to save other countries from this same terrible fate.

We have faced a terrible depression and one of the worst recessions the world has ever seen. Americans are resilient, however. We adapt, evolve, and make an effort to become better every day. It is the American way; we never give up, and will never stop fighting to remain the world's only remaining super power. A strong sense of pride brought about this country, some of the world's most intelligent and innovative leaders laid its foundation, tragedy and destruction threatened to overcome our nation, but instead Americans became stronger, we fought back, making our country tougher than ever before. We would do well to remember that "This nation will remain the land of the free only so long as it is the home of the brave." (Elmer Davis) Our country has seen some hard times these past few years, but we are fighting our way back to the top just as generations of brave Americans have before us.

Once one understands their past, it is interesting to see how those roots have created their identity. After better understanding America's past it begs the question; what does it mean to be an "American"? Who have we become as a nation? When I

asked a collection of some of my University's finest these very questions, I received a variety of answers. One young woman replied "Being an American means that no one is going to look down on you for having big dreams, for wanting to make something out of yourself, regardless of your situation." Another said simply "It means being free to make your own choices." Still another explained that "The most important aspect of being an American, to me, would be the freedom I have to express myself through my words, style of dress, my religion, or my political beliefs without the fear of being punished or cast out." The entire group agreed that being an American means taking pride in our country, paying respect to the honorable men and women who fight to protect our rights, and making the most out of every opportunity we have to pursue our dreams and express ourselves. One wise woman once noted that "If you take advantage of everything America has to offer, there's nothing you can't accomplish." (Geraldine Ferraro) Our country has had an impressive history infused with so many challenges and difficult dilemmas that have shaped the mold of what it is to be an American.

Understanding our past and who we are today is half the battle; however, it is imperative that Americans begin planning for the future. Though we have fought our way back from a terrible recession we are still in the midst of one of America's worst economic downturns since the Great Depression. Our country is facing high rates of unemployment, a housing market in crisis, and a seemingly never ending mountain of debt. We are in the middle of a presidential election and voters are looking for a leader that will act on his campaign platform rather than relying on it to just win the election. Today, our country is at a cross roads, but one thing is for certain: Failure is not an option. My generation is willing to take on the challenges our nation is facing, but we need leadership from those who know and understand our nation's systems better than the back of their hand. It will take the new and the old coming together to integrate innovative ideas with iron clad standards and systems that have stood the

test of time. It is time for many generations to become one in order to work towards one common goal. There is no right and wrong, newer is not always better, and tradition is not always a guarantee. Hybridization rather than wholesale change is what our country needs right now. It will take tremendous effort, tough decisions, and most importantly some serious economic reform, but I know we can take this country back to the top. My generation is prepared to take on these challenges so long as our entire country as a whole is prepared to bring back some of that American pride, prepared to reawaken the American dream, and push behind us to restore the United States back to its former glory. Our nation has proved time and time again that we can overcome any obstacle by coming together and rallying behind one collective goal.

“Then join hand in hand, brave Americans all! By uniting we stand, by dividing we fall.”

(John Dickinson)

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