

## Previewing the Unit

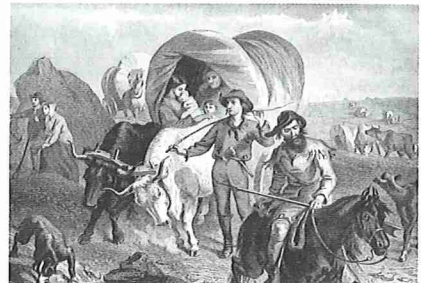
Before reading a unit (or chapter) in a textbook, it is a good idea to preview the contents page and think about the topics that will be covered. This will help you understand how the unit is organized and what it is going to be about.

Read the contents page for Unit 4 on page 154 and do the following activities.

### Chapter 7: A History of American Values

In this chapter you are going to read about some traditional American values in business and in everyday life.

**A** At the end of the nineteenth century, the United States was on its way to becoming the most powerful nation in the world. Look at the pictures below. What do you see? What values might these scenes suggest?



**B** Consider the texts that you have read and the pictures above of the United States in the nineteenth century. Then discuss the following question with a group of classmates: What was responsible for the United States' success?

### Chapter 8: American Values Today

In this chapter, you are going to learn how some traditional American values are connected to life in the United States today.

**A** Read this list of generalizations that have been made about the United States and Americans.

- The United States is a land of opportunity, where anyone can succeed.
- Americans believe in hard work.
- Your family background is not important in the United States.
- Everything moves fast in the United States; you have to move fast, too.
- Everyone is equal in the United States.

**B** Work with a partner or small group and discuss these questions.

1. Have you heard these generalizations before? If so, which ones have you heard?
2. Do you think some of these generalizations are true? Which ones? Why or why not?

# Chapter 7

## A History of American Values

### PREPARING TO READ

#### Increasing reading speed **R**

**A** Review the strategies for increasing your reading speed on page 77.

**B** Read "The Roots of American Values," using the strategies.

1. Before you begin, enter your starting time: \_\_\_\_\_
2. After you finish, enter your finishing time: \_\_\_\_\_

**C** Calculate your reading speed.

Number of words in the text (785) ÷

Number of minutes it took you to read the text =

Reading speed \_\_\_\_\_

Your goal should be about 150–180 words per minute.

**D** Check your reading comprehension. Answer these questions. Do not look at the text.

1. Check (✓) the items that are basic American values according to the text.

- \_\_\_ a. hard work
- \_\_\_ b. the importance of religion
- \_\_\_ c. the importance of your family's position in society
- \_\_\_ d. self-reliance
- \_\_\_ e. individual rights
- \_\_\_ f. self-discipline
- \_\_\_ g. the belief that good things will happen
- \_\_\_ h. the equality of all individuals
- \_\_\_ i. the importance of money

2. Read the statements about the text. Write *T* (true) or *F* (false) for each statement.

- \_\_\_ a. The authors of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution got their ideas for these documents from European traditions.
- \_\_\_ b. In its early days, the United States did not have a strong class system.
- \_\_\_ c. The settlers who came to the United States saw endless natural resources.
- \_\_\_ d. The values that the text discusses are only American. People from other countries do not share these values.



## Reading 1

### THE ROOTS OF AMERICAN VALUES

There are consistent themes in many areas of social and political life in the United States as well as in the personal behavior and attitudes of its citizens. These themes are a reflection of fundamental American values. These values, which have their origins in the early history of the country and the people who settled it, fall into four basic categories. First, Americans have a deep belief in the basic equality of all individuals. They believe that all people should have an equal chance to succeed and that everyone should have an equal say in what happens in their country. Indeed, this is at the root of the American idea of democracy. Along with this belief in equality, Americans strongly value hard work, ambition, and self-reliance. Related to this idea is the basic value of individualism: a belief in the power of individuals to control their own lives. Traditionally, Americans have believed that their success depends on their own decisions and efforts, not on luck or their connections to people with power. Finally, Americans are optimistic. They believe they can improve their own lives but also that they can make the world a better place. They are willing to take risks to do so.

Certainly, these values are not exclusively American, but there are historical reasons for the presence of these consistent themes in American society, and they have consequences in public and private life. The founders of the nation, the men who wrote the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, put their egalitarian beliefs into these documents. They believed in the fundamental equality of all men and that individuals should be judged by their achievements. At that time in Europe, family background and class were more important than individual achievement. If you were from an upper-class family, your world was secure and comfortable; if you were poor, you had little chance of success. The men who established the nation's first government wanted the United States to be different. This belief that the United States is in some way exceptional and that it has special responsibilities or a special place in the world has persisted in the imagination of many Americans.

In the New World, settlers founded a society without a strong class system that would limit their dreams. They believed the only limit on their dreams was their own ambition and effort. Many of the first settlers were Protestants, who shared a belief in the power of hard work and self-discipline. They believed these were ways of improving themselves in the eyes of God, who would reward them for this discipline. This attitude toward life is sometimes referred to as the "Protestant work ethic." However, this attitude was shared by immigrants of many different backgrounds and religions. All of them were eager to work hard to achieve success in their new country.

The combination of these two values has important implications:  
45 If you believe that you are as good as anyone else and that you can  
succeed as a result of your own efforts, you are also likely to believe  
that you have the ability to control your own future. In the eighteenth  
century, this belief in the power and importance of individuals –  
referred to as *individualism* – was not common. Many people believed  
50 that they had little control over their own lives. The rebellion against  
this perspective was apparent in many aspects of Americans' lives, in  
their desire to make their own choices, their wish for privacy, and their  
wish for others, including the government, to stay out of their lives.

Finally, the settlers came to a land that seemed to have endless  
55 resources. There were forests full of wood, rich lands for farming, and  
abundant animal life for hunting. Later, they found gold, silver, and  
other minerals under the ground. This natural wealth encouraged the  
optimism of early Americans and made them feel confident of success  
in their new country.

60 All of these circumstances came together to make American  
society different from the societies that preceded it. Because of their  
faith in the basic equality of all human beings and the equality of  
opportunity in America, the early settlers and the founders of the  
country believed that individuals could and should control their own  
65 lives. This idea – that with hard work and courage, all people can  
achieve success – is often called “the American Dream.” This view  
has positive and negative  
implications. On one hand,  
Americans believe that  
70 individuals are responsible  
for their own success; on  
the other hand, they also  
tend to believe that those  
who fail have not worked  
75 hard enough. However,  
they don't see failure as an  
end; there is always a  
second chance and a way  
forward if you keep trying.





## AFTER YOU READ

### 1 Preparing for a test **A**

Taking notes can help you prepare for a test. You have learned different ways to take notes, including highlighting, making a chart, and making an outline. There is no one right way to take notes; you should choose a way that works best for you. Here are some guidelines for using notes to prepare for a test.

- Take notes using a method of your choice. Remember that you can use a variety of methods for the same text.
- Review your notes and decide how the information could be organized into central themes or points.
- In a separate document, organize the information in your notes in the themes you have chosen.
- Use your organized notes to predict test questions.

- A** Skim the reading and consider how to take notes on the text. Can you chart key ideas with dates and descriptions? Can you outline or highlight major and minor details?
- B** Reread the text carefully and take notes. Use one or more of the techniques that you have learned.
- C** Review your notes and organize the information into themes or main ideas. Some themes that you might use for this text are listed below. You may decide to add others.
- Belief in equality
  - Work ethic
  - Individualism
  - Abundant resources and optimism
  - “The American Dream”
- D** Now use your notes to predict test questions.
1. For each of your themes, predict one test question. Use a variety of question types. (Review “Understanding Test Questions” on page 44 if necessary.)
  2. Exchange questions with a partner, and give an oral response to your partner’s questions.
  3. Compare your questions in a small group. If your questions were similar, you probably did a good job of predicting test questions.

## 2 Understanding key terms

**A** Match the key terms with their definitions. Write the correct letter in the blank.

- |                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| ___ 1. values          | a. the ability to make yourself do things that you should do even when you don't want to do them |
| ___ 2. risks           | b. hopefulness and belief that good things will happen   |
| ___ 3. self-discipline | c. the strong desire to become powerful or successful at something                               |
| ___ 4. individualism   | d. beliefs about what is right and wrong and what is important in life                           |
| ___ 5. egalitarianism  | e. actions or situations that might turn out badly   |
| ___ 6. self-reliance   | f. the belief that all people are equally important  |
| ___ 7. optimism        | g. the belief in the importance of the individual and personal independence                      |
| ___ 8. ambition        | h. the ability to succeed without the help or support of others                                  |

**B** Complete the sentences. Use the key terms from Step A.

1. The settlers were famous for their \_\_\_\_\_. They lived alone in the wilderness and rarely asked for help from their neighbors.
2. The men who wrote the Constitution supported \_\_\_\_\_, that is, the fundamental equality of all men.
3. Many new Americans had to take \_\_\_\_\_ in their efforts to make a new life. Some found success; some failed.
4. The immigrants who came to the United States were filled with \_\_\_\_\_ about starting a new life in a new country.
5. An important element in the success of many business and political leaders is their strong \_\_\_\_\_. They have a powerful desire to succeed.
6. Many Americans believe that hard work and \_\_\_\_\_ are the keys to success. Many new Americans have done work they do not like in order to succeed.
7. Americans' belief in \_\_\_\_\_ means they think people should make their own choices. It also means that each person's independence is very important.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ such as hard work and self-discipline were especially typical of the Christians who were the majority in the first waves of immigrants.

### 3 Noun + infinitive phrases

Phrases that include the noun/noun phrase + infinitive form are very common in academic writing. When infinitives are linked with certain nouns, they can be used to express goals, opportunities, and abilities, for example:

Immigrants had <sup>noun</sup> a *chance* <sup>infinitive</sup> *to start* new lives.

The protesters fought for <sup>noun phrase</sup> *the right of all citizens* <sup>infinitive</sup> *to vote*.

Nouns that are frequently used with infinitives include:

(in)ability	desire	opportunity	responsibility
attempt	effort	power	right
chance	need	refusal	wish

**A** Find one noun/noun phrase + infinitive form in these paragraphs in the text. Circle the noun or noun phrase and underline the infinitive.

1. Paragraph 1
2. Paragraph 1
3. Paragraph 4
4. Paragraph 4

**B** Read the sentences. Find the noun/noun phrase + infinitive form. Circle the noun and underline the infinitive.

1. All people should have an equal chance to succeed.
2. The Constitution gives Congress the power to create courts.
3. It seemed to be a land of endless opportunity for someone with a good idea and the willingness to take a risk.
4. A fundamental value is the right of individuals to make their own decisions.
5. Many settlers believed it was their destiny to populate the land from one coast to the other.
6. Native Americans believed they had a responsibility to care for the land.



**C** Choose two of the nouns listed below and use each in a sentence about the United States, Americans, or American culture or history. Use noun + infinitive phrases in your sentences.

ability    duty    responsibility  
chance    effort    right

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### 4 Applying what you have read **R**

Proverbs and sayings illustrate basic values and ways of behaving in a culture. Understanding the proverbs of a culture can deepen your understanding of that culture.

**A** Discuss the meaning of these proverbs with your classmates. Look up words you don't know.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The early bird gets the worm.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. God helps those who help themselves.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Idle hands are the devil's workshop.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The show must go on.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Today is the first day of the rest of your life.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. There is no free lunch.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Little strokes fell mighty oaks.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. If life hands you lemons, make lemonade.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Where there's a will, there's a way.

**B** Read these descriptions of values. Match the values to the proverbs in Step A. Write the letter of the value in the correct blank above. Some proverbs may illustrate more than one value.

- a. the importance of hard work and discipline
- b. the importance of continuing to try even though there are challenges and problems
- c. the need for independence and self-reliance
- d. optimism about the future

**C** Discuss similar proverbs that you know from other cultures. What values do they illustrate?