American Dreamers

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American Dreamers:
Using atypical examples to teach the American Dream

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Summer 2013
Part I: Quest for the American Dream by Prohibition Era Racketeers

The pursuit of the American Dream is often times associated with homesteaders and immigrants, but a new breed emerged after the 18th Amendment was passed in 1919. Prohibition, powered by the Volstead Act, led the way for organized crime to enter American cities in order to produce, traffic and sell alcohol in addition to other types of illegal activities in the depression and interwar period. The collaboration of anti-Prohibition activities, such as racketeering, gambling and prostitution, allowed for an illegal rendition of rags to riches, thus the American Dream. A prime example of this can be seen throughout the life of Alphonse Gabriel "Al" Capone as he rose up from the slums in New York City to create his empire in Chicago, creating monumental revenues of the time through the black market.

Historians and authors have many different outlooks on Al “Scarface” Capone. To some he was a menace to society as he turned political machines into his puppets. Other claim him to be an economic genius, as in the time of the great depression, he was one of the richest men in the country. Regardless the thought interpretation of what he stood for, Capone achieved the American dream due to the passing of the 18th amendment.

Historians such as Jason Porterfield and Diana Stiuliuc attribute the American dream to the traditional meaning which usually pertains to homesteaders and immigrants. However, Laura Beshears, Michael Woodwiss, and Andrew Cohen claim that prohibition had done nothing but birthed a new, illegal rendition of the American dream.

Jason Porterfield, author of *The Homestead Act of 1862: a primary source history of the settlement of the American heartland in the late 19th century*, argues for one of the original meanings of the American dream. Porterfield stakes his claim that Homesteaders
are those who went west of the Mississippi to stake their claim of 160 acres of land to be
cultivated in accordance with the Homestead Act of 1862, passed by President Abraham
Lincoln in promotion of Manifest Destiny. This gave those on the East coast the
opportunity to create a better life for themselves by taking a risk and using hard work and
determination to possibly reach fortune on their farms.¹

Historian Diana Stiuliuc goes through the American dream as a historical context.
She starts off by claiming that “The mythic meaning of America as an embodiment of a
new paradise on earth that would fulfill all human aspirations and dreams existed before
Columbus.” She goes through the American timeline giving examples of “American
dreams have been materialized in facts: the discovery and exploration, the settlement of
the frontier, the invention of the steam engine, the building of railroads and bridges, the
motion picture camera, the perfection of space rockets, etc.”²

She then goes onto explain post-Columbian European immigrants view of the
new world, which expands vaguely to today’s example. “From the Puritan enterprise and
their dream of religious freedom and a good life to present day American dreams of home
ownership and attaining success.”³ She claims the American dream is embedded in one
of the most American documents and that after the Revolution; Americans used it as
propaganda to all, as it promised hope and liberation from tyranny. “The most significant
part that still survives in the cultural memory and which underpins the American dream is
the opening clauses of the second paragraph: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident that

¹ Jason Porterfield. The Homestead Act of 1862 : a primary source history of the
settlement of the American heartland in the late 19th century. New York: Rosen Central
Primary Source, 2005.
² Stiuliuc, Diana. "The American Dream as the Cultural Expression of North American
³ Stiuliuc, 363.
all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable
Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.”

Stiuliuc, on the topic of immigration, claims that the American dream is “the
creed of all immigrants that came to the New World and a sort of moving force” and
hope for immigrants to prosper in America. She argues that the American dream is more
of propaganda for the nation. It provides a motto or slogan within its many examples.
“The American dream is a narrative of a collective or individual experience that shapes
and distinguishes the American nation.”

As commonly believed, the true achievers of the American dream at the time of
Capone and his American Dream typically reflect the lives of who achieved in big
business. Among those in the 1920’s who achieved it, legally, reflect the lives J.P.
Morgan, John D. Rockefeller, Henry Ford or George Eastman. All of these men rose up
through the ranks and brought their businesses into power throughout the Gilded Age and
into the Industrial Age. Other Historians agree that Capone, illegally, did the same thing
as these prosperous Americans.

In 2010, Laura Beshears, a historian of The Journal of American Culture wrote
“Prohibition, supposedly created to prevent drinking, presented gangsters with an
opportunity to profit from illegal bootlegging. Beshears also stated that by the roaring
twenties, crime “became as organized and structured as most legitimate businesses…
because gangsters took their economic role to be the provision of goods and services that
society demanded, even though supplying those goods and services was against the

4 Stiuliuc, 365.
5 Stiuliuc, 364.
6 Laura Beshears. "Honorable Style in Dishonorable Times: American Gangsters of the
Similarly to how the flapper’s of the 1920’s signified the changes in society, mobster’s businesslike appearance “spoke to the rampant growth of organized crime in major American cities during the Jazz Age.” She then attributed the link between the 18th amendment and revenue. “Much of this crime hinged on the passing of prohibition in 1920, and many gangsters made good money from bootlegging and racketeering for over a decade, as prohibition was not repealed until 1933.”

Beshears’ most important declaration however, states that the gangsters of this time period were in fact an example of the American dream. “Forging their way to the top through hard work, even though it was criminal, gangsters ironically achieved the American dream: success and wealth through effort and persistence.”

Michael Woodwiss of History Today stakes his claim on the argument that illegal forms of profitable crime existed in America long before the Declaration of Independence was written. He stated that piracy and smuggling were notable features of the colonial experience and that crime syndicates that organized gambling and prostitution were often times run by politicians that wanted to “carve out their illegal fortunes.” Woodwiss also stated that bootlegging presented second generation southern and eastern European immigrants that were Jews, Italians, Sicilians, Poles, Slavs and others with opportunities to “climb the criminal hierarchy, many of whom accepted this as a form of occupation.”

He also comments that “Prohibition created a vast new market for illegal goods and

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7 Beshears, 200.
8 Beshears, 197.
9 Beshears, 201.
11 Woodwiss, 8.
services and, in bootlegging a brand new industry.”  

This gave young men in juvenile gangs an opportunity to prosper, much more rapidly than their parents had in their occupation. Woodwiss notes that Al Capone made his fortunes by combining “legal and semi-legal” businesses such as, breweries, distilleries, warehouses, fleets of trucks and boats, nightclubs, gambling houses, horse and race tracks, brothels” and others into what would become an “industry” producing a yearly income of millions of dollars.

Interestingly the author claims that this was successful because of Capone’s relations to Chicago’s City Hall and officials at all levels, ultimately granting him immunity.  

Historians cite many reasons for the passing of the 18th Amendment to the United States Constitution, which prohibited the sale, manufacture, and transportation of intoxicating liquors. While some historians claim that it was an attempt to cleanse society, others go further in depth and provide other insights to how this legislation was passed, and then repealed over a decade later. Historians of the Prohibition Era include American Federation of Labor, Samuel Gompers, and historians Nicholas Murray Butler, Richard Hamm, Mark Schrad, and Daniel Gilgoff. Many of them talk of the opportunities prohibition provided and others give their assessment of the effectiveness of the legislation.

Historians have argued that Prohibition was an attempt to shut down bars, in hopes that family members would return home after work or vacation on weekends with family rather than going to the local saloon. Gilgoff claims that prohibition did not hit these small bars the heaviest, but instead large scale hotels. “It's likely that Prohibition's most lasting damage to cocktail culture was the closure of America's premier hotel bars.

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12 Woodwiss, 8.
13 Woodwiss, 8.
Bartenders at New York’s Waldorf-Astoria and Algonquin had become celebrities by inventing new drinks with fresh ingredients and embarking on international tours. A lot of American bartenders packed up and went to London or Capri.”¹⁴ Many European countries had attempted prohibition but soon repealed it as mentioned by Mark Schrad.

Author, Mark Schrad, writes of the 18th amendment as “a successful anti-progressive initiative in the middle of the Progressive Era, the only constitutional amendment to circumscribe individual liberty (the Eighteenth), and the only amendment to nullify another (the Twenty-First).”¹⁵ Schrad believes that to fully understand the purpose of the Amendment you need to view “prohibition as only one of many alcohol policy options,” which included high license fees, excessive taxation, “state monopoly, and ‘Gothenburg systems’ of municipal dispensary and disinterested liquor control.”¹⁶

Schrad looks at why historians believe prohibition was proposed, at first it was a promotion of temperance during the repel movement. Looking back they realized it was something more significant. “In what quickly became accepted wisdom, prohibition was attributed to the reactions of rural, native-born Protestants to the increased urbanization and immigration of the early twentieth century.”¹⁷

He claims that there is a newer idea for it, large groups favoring the push for a sober America. Among these groups include the Anti-Saloon League (ASL), the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), and the Independent (later, International) Order of Good Templars (IOGT) for the adoption of prohibition. He also

¹⁶ Schrad, 437.
¹⁷ Schrad, 438.
claims that large groups helped in the repeal of the amendment, notable the Association Against the Prohibition Amendment and the Woman’s Organization for National Prohibition Reform.  

Schrad then explains his own beliefs, as America was conforming to European nations. “We must add the realization that prohibition was not a uniquely American phenomenon. When the Eighteenth Amendment and Volstead Act came into effect in 1920, the United States joined nine other European and North American countries and innumerable territories and colonial possessions with statutory prohibition.” He explains that by 1932, America was the only country to not have repealed its prohibition laws and, inevitably, America would conform to Europe again when it enacted the 21st amendment.

Schrad ends his argument by affirming that states enacted their own prohibition laws prior to the federal ban on liquor in many ways such as, “excise taxation; production and sales quotas; production, distribution, and sales monopolies; tax farming; restrictions on availability and advertising; individual rationing; licensing and local option; restrictive taxation; and finally statutory prohibition.” The few statewide prohibitions that were enacted faced the same types of criminal enterprises as the nation had, which Schrad attributed to the lack of enforcement and the monetary values and jobs that alcohol provided.

In Shaping the 18th Amendment, author Richard Hamm attributed Prohibition to help cause many of America’s problems. He points out that the largest problem was between the leading industries in America, and those who wanted to make the nation dry. Those who advocated for a dry nation wanted to lower taxes and clean up society in

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18 Schrad, 439.
19 Schrad, 439.
many forms. They believed that by sobering up America that families would become closer and more outgoing, as workers will come home and spend time at home rather than in saloons. “There was a close convergence between dry and vice-society ideas; for example, both movements believe in the words of Anthony Comstock, that ‘private interests must be subservient to the general interests of the community’ and that action was necessary to ‘prevent the moral diseases which led to misery and crime.’” Hamm doesn’t use only social reform context in his arguments, he adds in that interstate commerce regulation and federal tax structure the prohibition age.

Written around the time of the passing of the 18th Amendment, Ames Brown writes the reasoning for the passing of the bill. “It is not… a mere question of prevention of drunkenness and elimination of attendant evils.” She writes, “its phases are multifarious, comprising not only the practicability of remedies proposed by prohibitionists, anti-saloon leagues and model license associations, but also national and state revenues, relationship to political parties and constitutional inhibitions, discrimination between distilled liquors and comparatively harmless light wines and beers as affecting the public health, and many other which must be considered in the light of experience and common sense in a solution of the whole problem is to be found and applies successfully.” These ideas can be argued on both sides, as the American Federation of Labor helped to organize.

Samuel Gompers exposed his opinions of prohibition in 1924, specifically “The question as to the effect of the manufacture and sale of a beer with 2.75 percent in weigh,

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what influence it would have upon the enforcement of the Constitution, or a law passed in pursuance of that amendment.” The famous president of the American Federation of Labor answers that “I think I might answer in a sentence by saying that in my judgment it would transform the people of the United States from a whiskey drinking to a beer drinking people.” He furthers his argument by claiming that “I believe in the principles of freedom. I have had the word ‘freedom’ as my guiding spirit, the guiding spirit of whatever there is in my and of me, and that which I could do; a freedom within justice and the law; and I count it one of the sources of pride that from my early young manhood I have pretested again this movement of prohibition by law. You cannot make men sober by law.” Gompers then goes onto explains his reasoning for intoxication and need for prohibition, and how his causes in regulating labor have contributed to the nation’s sobriety. “I have endeavored with my associates to try and bring some degree of comfort and safety in the lives and the work of the great masses of the toiling people of America, so that, with better homes and better working conditions, and better standard of live and living, they would not require the artificial stimulants found in alcoholic drinks. The fact of satisfaction, not gluttonous nor bibulous but satisfaction physical and mental and spiritual.” Gompers continues “it is the long houred man or the loafer, whether he be rich or poor, who is drunk the drunk. The eight hour worker, the man who worked the normal work day, is not the habitual drunkard. It is the long houred worker who is having the spirit crushed out of him by his day’s labor, today who requires the artificial spirits to stimulate him.” As argued by Samuel Gompers, it is not those who the bill was out to

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23 Gompers, 25.
help create that was the problem and therefore the bill should be repealed, unfortunately for Gompers’ followers, it would take America another nine years to declare this.

In the 1924 version of *The Congressional Digest*, Gompers’ questioned “shall American Maintain Her Stand against Liquor?” Frederick W. Brill of the Brill Car Company in Philadelphia responded that “Prohibition has not fulfilled what its proponents have promised. It has not reduced taxed; and it has not increased the efficiency of the workman. The reason that it has not reduced taxes is because we are paying more taxes. The reason it has not increased the efficiency of the working man is because I know thousands of them. We employ some 3,000 normally.” Brill then recalls many worked at his plant having stomach troubles, “In our plant, and in other plants in Philadelphia… The universal opinion is that these stomach troubles are caused by the drinking of bad liquor.” He then answers the question “why do men drink bad liquor with, “because they can not get good liquor. That is the only answer I know. They want it, and you can not stop them from getting it.” Brill then goes on to explain how prohibition has forced the usage of poor quality, strong alcohol. “Before prohibition, there were saloons, one of two of them, adjacent to our works… If a man was drinking too much, we would give him a talking to. We had the drinking question, the drinking of strong liquor, pretty well in hand. Now we can not control it at all.”

Contrasting Gompers and Brill is Elbert H. Gary, the Chairman of the United States Steel Corporation. He argues that “There are always some persons who will object to the passage or enforcement of any penal or prohibitory law and, as a rule, they are the men who do the most talking on the subject. I have no hesitation in saying with emphasis

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24 Gompers, 24.
that the Volstead Act and State laws for prohibiting the manufacture and sale of
intoxicating liquors have been very beneficial to the industry of this country and to the
workmen connected with it and their families.” He backs his argument by claiming that
“The sale and use of automobiles has been largely increased by the fact that a large
majority of the workmen now prefer to take excursions with their families by automobile
instead of spending their time at saloons of other places and wasting their money in
practices that are physically injurious instead of beneficial.”25

Similarly to Gompers’ article, *The Congressional Digest* did another pro versus
con on the topic of America’s Policy of Banishing Liquor by Federal Action. In this
article, Nicholas Murray Butler, the President of Columbia University, takes the con
argument and states that it cannot be regulated or enforced. “The reason why the national
prohibition law is not enforced is that it cannot be enforced. The reason why it cannot be
enforced is that it ought not to have been passed. In its attempted forcipes interference
with the food and drink and medicine of the people, it is a form of oppression to which a
free people will never submit in silence. No liberal can possibly defend it. The unmoral
conditions which have followed the ratification of the 18th amendment are the direct and
natural results of its own immorality.”26

Prohibition did not fail because of its ideas, claims author Dan Gilgoff, it had
failed because of its timing and lack of enforcement. In his article, he exposes the amount
of attraction the thirty two thousand speak-easies that had been counted by the New York
Police Department by 1928 (recorded by off duty policemen). He claims that in “San

25 Gompers, 24.
26 Butler, N 1924, ‘America's Policy of Banishing Liquor by Federal Action. PRO',
*Congressional Digest*, 4, 1, pp. 22.
Francisco, New Orleans, Chicago, and other cities, where cops had grown accustomed to ducking into saloons after work and where politicians needed votes, enforcement was spotty. The market was booming in a post-World War I euphoria," and that because of the “waves of eastern and southern Europeans, who'd brought in more drinking." Gilgoff concludes his argument claiming it was simply just the “wrong time for Prohibition.”

Andrew Cohen, author of "The Racketeer's Progress: Commerce, Crime and the Law in Chicago, 1900-1940" in the Journal of Urban History writes about the response to the insubordination and neglect of law enforcement. The secretary of the Employers Association, Gordon Hostetter, invented the criminal category of racketeering. He defined a racket as a “scheme by which human parasites graft themselves upon and live by the industry of others, maintaining their hold by intimidation, force and terrorism.” The public defined a racket as “various forms of illicit enterprises such as bootlegging, prostitution and gambling.”

Regardless of the definition, racketeering “emerged in Chicago only in the 1920’s, at the intersection of prohibition era debates about gang violence, the legitimacy of labor unions and the morality of competition.” Originally racketeers were used to define beer runners, blackmailers and gunmen.”

The prohibition legislation was meant to deny these different claims but as many found out, those who were doing it only prospered from it. The business of racketeering, bootlegging and other brought on by prohibition only led to the empowerment of organized crime, a dangerous and brutal business.

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27 Gilgoff, 50.
29 Cohen, 576.
Capone’s underground empire had remarkable revenues of 70 Million dollars per year. They accomplished this revenue not only by collaborating different types of alcohol distribution, gambling, prostitution, and boss politics but also by eliminating competition. Capone was always concerned about competitors; and after all he was a ‘businessman’. Capone believed in monopoly amongst other gangs and would either offer to oversee their gang or eliminate them. Most organizations he would simply take over, others he would eliminate entirely and take their share of customers. Gang corruption in this era became so prevalent that the boundary “between the underworld and upper world became blurred.” Many law enforcement agents were too intimidated to make arrests because of fear and boss politics that took place in Chicago. The most notorious example of boss politics and removal of competition was Capone’s plot to take out Bug’s Moran, leader of Capone’s rival North Side Gang during the St. Valentine’s day Massacre of 1924.

In 2009, an article in History Today depicts one of the most notable actions of Capone’s gang. Often times associated as the most creative and brutal act, the Saint Valentine’s Day Massacre, was delivered by members of Capone’s gang. As the author mentions at the start of his article, “Prohibition in the United States gave a massive boost to crime. In Chicago in the 1920s gangs made fortunes from illegal liquor and the associated protection and vice rackets.” With money to make, it was obvious that leaders of these different gangs were hostile towards one another; after all it was a money and power driven occupation. “In 1924 a storm of violence broke out between the Italian-Sicilian mob led first by Johnny Torrio” and later by Al Capone “on the city's South Side

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30 Cohen, 583.
31 Beshears, 199.
and the Irish-Jewish crew under Dion O'Banion on the North Side.” These gang wars were reported as ‘the bootleg battle of the Marne’ by The Chicago Sun-Times as gang killings and gun battles shook the city.32

Though there was an attempted peace treaty in 1926, Capone was still determined to take over Chicago and becoming the most infamous criminal of his time and would do anything to get an edge. His rivals, the North Side Gang was led by O'Banion, who “was eventually succeeded… by George ‘Bugs’ Moran, an Irish gangster known more for muscle than brain power, who had no intention of submitting to 'them Sicilians'.” On February 13th, 1929, Bugs received a tempting phone call that informed him of a truckload of whisky had just arrived from Detroit, Michigan and he could have it at a bargain price. He ordered the whisky to be delivered at ten thirty the next morning “at the garage of the S.M.C. Cartage Company on North Clark Street, where he kept his bootlegging trucks.” Twenty minutes after the delivery, 5 men, two dressed as policemen, pulled up to the garage and exited a Cadillac disguised as a police car. “Eight minutes later, after loud rattling noises and what sounded like trucks backfiring,” two North Siders came out with their hands up, “shepherded by the third, and the two 'police officers' with guns in their hands, described by a witness as 'walking slow and easy-like'.” There were no immediate calls for the police, as it was assumed the men were apprehended. However, after “the men drove away, neighbors cautiously investigated and found a scene which would make headlines all over the country. Six dead men and another who was dying were lying on the concrete floor among scattered tires, pools of blood, chairs and shell casings at the foot of a wall.” Five of the six men killed belonged

to Moran’s North Side Gang. Had Moran arrived on time to the delivery, it would have only added to the success of the operation for Capone, who was not even in Chicago at the time.  

The results of the massacre for Moran were heavy, as he “managed to keep control of his territory for a while, but the North Side Gang never recovered and was soon taken over by an operation called the Chicago Outfit.” Capone, though not directly involved, grew attention by law enforcement, which would eventually lead to his demise. “He was convicted of income tax evasion in 1931 and sentenced to prison for 11 years. He died in 1947. Moran died in prison ten years later.” To exemplify the control that Capone possessed, the trial notes declared that “after long and complicated investigations, two Capone gunmen were accused of the killings and sent for trial, but one of them was murdered and the other was given an alibi by his girlfriend. He too was murdered later on.”

This infamous massacre may give a haunting view of the ruthlessness of prohibition era gang violence and the brutality one had done to a rival over a shipment of Whiskey. Historians argue over what kind of people they really were, especially the leaders.

Those who write of Capone give many different interpretation of what he was. Virgil Peterson, Laura Beshears and Thomas Reppetto and Richman give historical information about one of the most legendary and infamous gangsters in history. Marie

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33 Ibid, 10.
34 Ibid, 10.
Capone Deirdre gives an insightful look into her great uncles contributions to their family, as well we a more personal level look at Al Capone.

Michael Woodwiss writes that Al Capone rose from the slums of New York City to having property across the United States and prospered by creating a multi-million dollar ‘business.’ His rise from rags to riches came primarily because of the 18th Amendment to the Constitution. Al Capone broke all aspects of Prohibition, which included the production, sale, transportation, and possession of alcohol to achieve the unlawful rendition of American Dream. The Eighteenth Amendment brought organized crime in America to the forefront allowing the mobsters to make large sums of money as long as they could correlate different aspects of the operations together and utilize technology to stay one step ahead of the law, Capone achieved this and thus the American Dream.36

Alphonse Gabriel Capone grew up with eight siblings under his Italian immigrant parents in Brooklyn. Al quickly pursued his ‘career’ in organized crime. He joined his first gang almost immediately after being expelled from public school at age fourteen after assaulting a female teacher. Al Capone, like so many of the gangsters during the nineteen twenties and thirties, started their gang affiliations early and expanded them throughout their entire life creating alliances, enemies, and empires.37

Al Capone’s life as a gang member started while living in Brooklyn when he met Johnny Torrio. He was immediately attracted to the risk taking and powerful lifestyle associated with crime. He joined many organizations throughout his adolescence including The Junior Forty Thieves, The Bowery Boys, Brooklyn Rippers and the more

36 Woodwiss, 8.
37 Peterson, 37.
well-known Five Points Gang while still living in New York. It was at this time in his life where he was taught to racketeer and received the scar that would eventually give him the nickname, ‘Scarface.’ Capone acquired this name after he insulted a door lady at a night club, later when confronted by her brother, Frank Gallucio. Capone received three lacerations on his face. Ironically, Al Capone would later accept Gallucio as one of his many personal body guards.  

At the age of twenty four, Al ‘Scarface’ Capone left Brooklyn and moved to Chicago to reunite with Johnny Torrio to further conduct and expand their business. It was here that Capone realized the potential for bootlegging and other similar forms of anti-Prohibition related business because of Chicago’s close proximity with Canada. As Capone viewed Prohibition from a legal standpoint, “it only enticed the ideas for money to be made.” Soon Capone and Johnny Torrio would cooperate and accede to “Big Jim’s” gang when he stepped down.  

Historian Laura Beshears and Virgil Peterson go on to explain that in the time of Capone that power was everything and that money was power in the nineteen twenties, especially in the underground world. The power that Capone and Torrio had can be seen as they corrupted the mayoral election of Chicago by threatening voters at the polls. Capone had his puppet mayor, William Hale "Big Bill" Thompson voted in and the strength of the Torrio Capone alliance was clearly visible throughout Chicago. “Gangsters took control of cities with coercion and violence,” and this was how Capone

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38 Peterson, 36.  
39 Beshears, 197.  
40 Peterson, 31.
opened up government officials to allow his men to get away with illegal activities. \(^{41}\) It can be correctly assumed that Capone ran Chicago in more ways than just the underground because of the money he received from racketeering.

Capone was given the opportunity to rule his own empire when his business partner was imprisoned. Johnny Torrio was arrested after the Federal raid of the Sieben Brewery, which he was stock holder in May of 1924. This raid sparked a war with the rival North Side Gang, led at the time by Dean O'Banion, soon to be succeeded by Bugs Moran. Torrio fled back to Italy after he was shot at during one of the North Side Gang’s notorious drive-by-shootings, leaving Al Capone as the sole leader of the developing racketeering empire.

Al Capone considered himself and his organization not criminal but simply a businessman running a business that was meeting the needs of public demand. Many of the gangsters in this era viewed crime simply as an occupation, many believed this because of the lack of compliance that Prohibition received throughout the United States. These gang members believed that “by cloaking themselves in professional uniforms, gangsters of the Prohibition era demonstrated that they regarded crime as a legitimate business.” Capone is quoted stating his opinions on the legitimacy and legality of his business, “If I break the law, my customers, who number hundreds of the best people in Chicago, are as guilty as I am. The only difference between us is that I sell and they buy. Everybody calls me a racketeer. I call myself a business man. When I sell liquor, it’s a

\(^{41}\) Beshears, 200.
bootlegging. When my patron serves it on a silver tray on Lake Shore Drive, it’s hospitality.”  

A much different outlook on Al Capone is written by his grandniece, who was harassed, bullied, fired from her job, and left trying to hide her identity all because of her hated last name, Capone. “Al Capone got into some trouble in 1920 and had to leave Brooklyn. Johnny Torrio offered him the opportunity to come to Chicago and be his first lieutenant in his bootlegging business.” She is speaking of course of the Prohibition era during the roaring twenties as “Women were bobbing their hair and shortening their skirts. Jazz was coming into being and all of these pastimes revolved around the serving of alcohol. People in rural areas could make their own by building stills, but city residents needed someone to supply them, which is what Torrio provided.”  

Deirdre Marie Capone goes on to tell how Italians were discriminated against in Chicago and how Al Capone, traditionally thought of as a monster, took care of his family after moving to Chicago in hopes of a better life for them. “Al moved to Chicago with his wife Mae and son Albert (Sonny), his father Gabriel died suddenly, leaving my grandfather Ralph, who was married and had one son, my father Ralph.” Her father, who was the oldest, assumed the role as head of this family. “He was working as an accountant and suddenly he had to feed and take care of his mother and five siblings still at home. Al telephoned and said, ‘Ralph. I think there is an opportunity for us here in Chicago to make enough money to take care of everyone, but I can't do it without you. You are the businessman.’” Later, She recalls her grandfather, Ralph Capone, that Al was

42 Beshears, 201.
43 Capone, Deirdre Marie. 2012. ”REMEMBERING UNCLE AL (CAPONE, THAT IS).” USA Today Magazine 140, no. 2802: 52.
“running more than 300 different businesses—and he did it all without a cell phone, fax machine, or computer.” She also goes on to tell that both Al Capone and Ralph Capone donated $10,000 every month to the Chicago City Council to finance the soup kitchens after the 1929 stock market crash.  

Historian Daniel Richman writes a great overview of who Al Capone was as a historical figure and of his tax evasion trial. “In 1931, Al Capone was the leading mobster in Chicago. He had violated the Volstead Act on a massive scale, bribed a large fraction of Chicago officialdom, and murdered various criminal competitors.” His crimes were known not only on a local basis but on a nationwide scale, yet these crimes were hard to prove because of his wealth and mastery in politics, so much that “federal prosecutors charged Capone not with running illegal breweries or selling whiskey or even slaughtering rival mobsters, but with failure to pay his income taxes.”

The legal tactics that were involved in prosecuting Capone are still widely used in courtrooms today. Richman claims that it’s common to go after a criminal defendant for a small violation against government, as they had multiple in Capone’s trial, and then go after something smaller, and unrelated. The defense attorneys will then go after an unfair treatment. Richman then argues that by doing so, and accusing of a governmental crime, as in Capone’s case, will result in the government responding “that nonpayment of income taxes (or false statements, or mail fraud, or whatever the charged offense) is a

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44 Capone, 54.
legitimate crime, something for which any ordinary citizen might be prosecuted and punished if guilty.”

Peterson, Rickman and Cohen go on to explain the decline of Al Capone but Peterson goes on to explain his legacy. Scarface was a hard man for law officials to infiltrate, both because of his boss politics and his cover ups. The Bureau of Prohibition tried to convict Al Capone on multiple violations but could never acquire enough evidence for a conviction. Finally, Frank J. Wilson conducted an investigation into Capone's income tax violations and he was able to gain enough evidence to support a conviction. In 1931, Al Capone was indicted for violation of the Volstead Act and tax evasion. In the court room Capone thought he was going to be invincible. He tried to make a deal with the prosecution and offered multiple plea bargains. He also attempted to bribe the jurors but his plan was discovered by an investigator, Elliot Ness, and the jurors were swapped with those of another case. Capone was sentenced to eleven years in maximum security prison for tax evasion; the violations of the Volstead Act were dropped. He was first sent to a maximum security prison in Georgia but eventually transferred to Alcatraz, ‘The Rock,’ off the shore of San Francisco Bay. Here, there was no chance of operating his empire from within. It was here that Capone’s health would severely decline as a result of syphilis that he contracted as a child.

When his sentence ended, Al Capone he returned to Palm Island Florida, his health still on a steady decline due to neurosyphilis. This had caused him to surrender his role as gang leader but was still convinced that his arch rival, Bugs Moran, was still

46 Richman, 584.
47 Richman, 583.
48 Cohen, 580.
49 Richman, 616.
attempting to kill him. Due to his mental capacity, which doctors estimated the equivalent of a twelve year old, Capone may not have understood that Bugs had been imprisoned in Ohio. In late 1946, Al Capone suffered a stroke, which he survived initially but contracted pneumonia. These symptoms worsened and cardiac arrest ensued days later. At his home in Miami Beach Florida, surrounded by his wife and other loved ones, Alphonse Gabriel "Al" "Scarface" Capone passed away on January 24th 1947.

Virgil Peterson writes in her article "Chicago: Shades of Capone" about the relation between the alliances between Chicago’s First Ward politicians and the gambling leaders and brothel owners. She goes on to explain the corruption of the 1880’s gave birth to the infamous Capone Gang and the effects that it has today. Though the flashy and ostentatious appearance of gangsters in Al’s gang has changed their operations styles have not. “Of fifteen gang killing in the Chicago area in 1961, eight of the victims had connection with Capon’s syndicate gambling establishment and five were dealing with loan sharks.”

New technologies in weaponry aided the mobs to intimidate both law enforcement and their foes. Commonly weaponry of Prohibition era gangsters included Thompson 9mm submachine guns which gangsters utilized 50 round drum magazines so they could eliminate the need to reload in the middle of a firefight or drive-by. Another common modification to weaponry was the sawed off 12 gauge shotgun, this to make them easy to conceal and lighter to carry.

Peterson also writes that one of the shades of Capone included the power that bosses had over everyday people. Loan sharking was a way that gang member increased

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50 Peterson, 30.
51 Peterson, 37.
revenues from the main sources of income, gambling. It was reported that a small businessman of Cicero, Illinois “became indebted in the amount of $1,600 to a bookmaking establishment under the control of Sam ‘Mooney’ Giancana and other Capone-syndicate hoodlums.” The interest rates had this loan increased to $4,000 in twenty weeks, and “when he was unable to meet these payments, he was threatened with death unless he could produce the money by a specified date.”

Peterson also reveals other industries where they gangs weighed in heavily aside from gambling, alcohol markets, and brothels. The “restaurant association was only one of several trade associations in which Capone gangsters have exerted influence in those years”.

Attorneys that represented Capone’s members on multiple occasions helped to defend those in the food processing business as well. As “a number of important syndicate hoodlums have engages in the food industry.” Among those convicted was Joseph Siciliano, who was sentenced to serve a total of ten years for bribing a state food inspector. Invested in Siciliano’s meat company were four of the most notorious and powerful members of the Capone organization.

The automobile sales industry was also influenced by postmortem Capone gang leaders. The Sterling Harris Ford Agency in Chicago filed bankruptcy and soon lost 300 automobiles as well as documentation for them. “Many of the cars were found registered in the names of friends and associated of Capone-gang leaders.”

Another newer industry was also heavily influenced. “The Capone syndicate has been particularly interested in almost all phases of the coin-machine business. Though

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52 Peterson, 36.
53 Peterson, 35.
54 Peterson, 37.
banned in the City of Chicago, coin machines were allowed in surrounding counties and “Al Capone in the 1920’s is a dominant figure in the pinball, joke-box, and cigarette vending-machines business in the Chicago area.” 55 “The jukebox industry in Chicago has been under the domination of the Capone organization for several decades.” Thought they music players were manufactured by reputable firms, “the boxes are sold to distributorships which are often mob owned or controlled.” Capone’s mob had a part in the distribution of phonograph records to jukebox operations. 56

Historian Thomas Reppetto writes of Al Capone’s former “Five Points” gang of New York City. Another member that took advantage of the profits offered by prohibition was Salvatore “Lucky” Luciano. Although his operations in New York City did not make the revenues of Capone’s operations had in Chicago, it still provides evidence of how Prohibition sparked ways for small time gang members to accomplish the illegal version of the American Dream.

The profits made by the Five Points gang allowed them to further their business in organized crime. The Boss, Joe Masseria, ran his operations in his apartment overlooking Central Park, appointed Luciano top lieutenant because of Luciano’s familiarity with the streets, and the region and people, which made him such a prime candidate for the position. 57

To exemplify the hard work and risks that Luciano took to achieve the American dream other than the threat of the law, he was abducted at gunpoint, tortured and left to die in 1929. Luciano recalled being “hung by his thumbs from a tree” and tortured in

55 Peterson, 38.
56 Peterson, 39.
various ways. He recalls being lacerated with a razor blade, burned on the soles of his feet, being punched, kicked and rifle butted until he lost consciousness before was left for dead. When he gained consciousness in the early hours of the morning, he stumbled from the deserted beach on Staten Island where the vigilance took place and was taken to a hospital by a police officer. This near death encounter is where Salvatore Luciano received his nickname, “Lucky,” and rightfully so, as he was left for dead by his assailants.  

Historians cover a broad spectrum of reasons of why prohibition existed as well as how successful it was and how they reason and conclude its repeal. No matter the reason, those who took an economic advantage to distribute alcohol, and challenged law enforcement to sell the products and services the government deemed illegal, prospered in a ruthless game. They evaded the law by engaging in firefights, paying off with money, employing boss politics, or paying someone to admit guilt for them. To compare these types of men to those who went from rags to riches as typically thought of when achieving the American dream, such as Rockefeller or Ford during the Industrial and Gilded ages, some historians deem unrelated. However, there is a direct relation between this illegal rendition of the American and the Homesteaders of 1860 or the immigrants as traditionally thought of in American history, as can be seen through the life of Al Capone. Capone went from poor and distressed dropouts to one of the richest men during a time of economic downfall, owning over 300 businesses at once, and running one of the largest operations, and controlled a majority of Chicago’s politics.

58 Repetto.
The American Dream means different things to many people and can be perceived in many ways. Throughout America’s history this ethos of hard work, a new start, and perseverance has come to pay off those who have envisioned it. Yet, it is commonly taught only to our youth with association to immigrants and homesteaders. Yet this idea is why America was sought, was exploited, emancipated and has remained the land of opportunity. It should be explored in all major units of our history and taught to each of our students to see that it has always been and always will be an available and achievable goal.

From the Puritan Enterprise and their dream of religious freedom and a good life to present day American dreams of home ownership and attaining success, or the Hollywood fame and glory, the American dream, born in the collective imagination, lays the foundation of American culture and literature." 59 Although the American dream had long existed before, the term was coined by James Truslow Adams, in The Epic of America, published in 1931. “Adams extensively defines the American dream as:

That dream of a land in which life should be better and fuller and richer for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement. It is a difficult dream for the European upper classes to interpret adequately, and too many of us ourselves have grown weary and mistrustful of it. It is not a dream

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of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order
in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the
fullest stature of which they are innately capable and be recognized
by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous
circumstances of birth or position.”

“The American dream cannot be interpreted as a myth in the traditional sense of
the word, but as a metaphor of translation of the old cultural space to a new cultural
space.” Thus it is essential to understand and motivate today’s students that they too can
achieve their own American dream in their own times as it has been achieved in every
unit of their American History class.

According to McDougal Littell’s *The Americans*, United States history book, the
American Dream is not listed in the glossary or the index of the book. A commonly used
textbook leaves out something that has made America the land of possibility. It does,
however, lay out the story of America in sequential units that allow for a teacher to input
examples and stories of the American dream inside of it. *The Americans* text is
subcategorized into nine units:

Unit One, *American Beginnings to 1783* includes: Chapter 1: *Three Worlds Meet*,
Chapter 2: *The American Colonies Emerge*, Chapter 3: *The Colonies Come of Age* and
Chapter 4: *The War for Independence*.

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61 Știuliuc, 364.
Unit Two, 1781-1850, A New Nation, includes: Chapter 5: Shaping a New Nation and The Living Constitution, Chapter 6: Launching the New Nation, Chapter 7: Balancing Nationalism and Sectionalism, Chapter 8: Reforming American Society.

Unit Three, 1825-1877, An Era of Growth and Disunion, includes: Chapter 9: Expanding Markets and Moving West, Chapter 10: The Union in Peril, Chapter 11: The Civil War, Chapter 12: Reconstruction and Its Effects.

Unit Four, 1877-1917, Migration and Industrialization, includes: Chapter 13: Changes on the Western Frontier, Chapter 14: A New Industrial Age, Chapter 15: Immigrants and Urbanization, Chapter 16: Life at the Turn of the 20th Century.

Unit Five, 1890-1920, Modern America Emerges, includes: Chapter 17: The Progressive Era, Chapter 18: America Claims an Empire, Chapter 19: The First World War.


To make the American Dream a reality to students, and prove that it is still a very possible and attainable dream today it is essential to list at least one notable example, whether farfetched or common, of the American Dream in each unit of this book to exemplify the possibilities that Americans have to achieve anything that they desire no matter what they are provided with.

Starting with what Littell identifies as Unit one, *America’s Beginnings*, we can see the beginning of the American Dream. For Europeans, the first idea of a new start became a reality when America was still thought of as India. The Columbian Exchange soon brought in new goods to Europe. This evolved into settlements seeking religious freedom in the newly found land. There are small examples of the American dream that can be found in the early settlements but it is important to note that colonists together created it.

From the 1630’s onward, a major industry that helped establish America was the lumber industry. Lumber was extremely valuable and was sent to Europe or used to make ships, churches, houses, barns, and farm buildings, and to keep settlers warm. Lumber was also something that was free for the taking. The most expensive part of processing
lumber was transporting it, but softwoods could float down rivers. Oaks provided certain assets good for maritime use such as shipbuilding, building construction, or traded into the Caribbean. Cedars and chestnuts were good for outdoor sites and exposures. Cedars were also used for shingles, clapboards and fence posts. Pines, specifically white pines because of their height, were used as ship masts. These were valued so high because European trees did not have the height for a mass. They would either splice two trees together or needed to import it from Baltic forests increasing their value.62

Lumber as well as other commonly traded goods such as fur, corn, tobacco and beans kept the colonies profitable; and in a culminated effort, allowed America to be a colony of Great Britain.63

As the nation grew more successful, they sought their own identity. To be separated from a mother land. Some of America’s first settlers were successful enough to seek independence and no longer needed support from a superpower, a major article signified the inception of an independent America, and gave birth to the American Dream.

As Chapter 4, The War for Independence indicates an American identity brought in the inception of the American Dream, signified in Thomas Jefferson’s Declaration of Independence. This declaration proclaims that "all men are created equal" and that they are "endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights" including "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."64 This is the first written example of the American dream,

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62 William Cronon, Changes in the Land, 82-170.
64 The Americans, 109.
that everyone has an equal chance, opportunity, to do what they can in their lift to pursue what they choose.

Unit two, A New Nation, specifically Chapter 7, Balancing Nationalism and Sectionalism, the book discusses how the nation’s economy expanded because of the usage of resources and its material wealth. As the textbook explains, “In 1793, a British Immigrant named Samuel Slater had established in Pawtucket, Rhode Island the first successful mechanized textile factory in America. However, Slater’s factory and those modeled after it still only mass-produced one part of the textile, or finished cloth: thread.” The book then gives the first example of an American dream. “Then in 1813, three Bostonians revolutionized the American textile industry by mechanizing all the stages in the manufacture of cloth. Using plans from an English Mill, Frances Cabot Lowell, Nathan Appleton and Patrick Tracy Jackson build a weaving factory in Waltham Massachusetts, and outfitted it with power machinery. By 1822 Appleton and Jackson had made enough money to build a larger operation. The changes that their factory triggered in the town of Lowell- named after their deceased partner.” 65 This exemplified the changes wrought by the Industrial Revolution and how hardworking Americans could create their own fortunes.

The revolution to textile or industrial work may not have not have been possible, or at least would have been delayed if it weren’t for another successful American dream, that of Eli Whitney. In 1793, Whitney’s cotton engine had helped to set the South on a different course of development from the industrial North. The short-staple cotton was easier to grow but was time consuming to clean. The cotton gin made it possible for

65 The Americans, 213.
Southern farmers to grow and profit from cotton, which was in great demand in Britain and in the North. This machine provided an efficient way to extract the seeds from the cotton as a single machine could generate up to 55 pounds a day. “Armed with the cotton gin, poor, nonslaveholding farmers quickly claimed land in the area between the Appalachian and the Mississippi south of the Ohio to begin cultivating this cash-producing crop. Wealthier planters followed, bought up huge areas of land and then put an enormous slave labor force to work cultivating it. By 1820, this plantation system of farming had transformed Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama into a booming cotton Kingdom.”

Eli Whitney at age fourteen operated a nail manufacturing operation in his father's workshop during the Revolutionary War. He then worked as a teacher and farmer to save money for education. He graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Leicester Academy in 1792 and expected to study law at Yale but was unable to afford it. He then went to Georgia at the invitation of Revolutionary War hero Nathaniel Greene’s widow. Her second husband, Phineas Miller, a Yale Graduate, would become business partners with Eli Whitney. The invention did not get the fortune that they had intended but was enough for him to live well off.

One of the first immigrants to quickly climb the ranks in American politics became a founding father after rising from rags to become is our first Treasury Secretary, Alexander Hamilton. He was born a penniless bastard in the British West Indies and was hard working to help support himself. “Hamilton was orphaned at age 13 and went to

66 The Americans, 215.
work as a shipping clerk.” He was placed in charge of a shipping firm while the owners were absent. Impressed with his work ethic and abilities, a scholarship was given to him to travel to North America to further his education. He attended King’s College, now Columbia University, in New York.  

During the Revolution, because of his connections with New York patriots John Jay, he raised the New York Provincial Company of Artillery of sixty men in 1776, and was elected captain. Hamilton climbed up the ranks and became a Lieutenant Colonel and served as an aide and chief of staff to General George Washington.

After the war he got involved in the politics of the developing nation. Hamilton resigned his commission after the battle at Yorktown. He was elected to the Congress of the Confederation in 1782 as a representative of New York. He resigned from Congress the following year to practice law and was present in the 1783 Treaty of Paris, which ended the Revolutionary War.  

In the following years, he founded the Bank of New York, helped at the Annapolis Convention, and represented the State of New York at the Constitutional Convention, where he was not fully content with the Constitution but signed it regardless. He is most well-known, however, for his role in the Federalist Papers and serving in Washington’s Cabinet.

On September 11, 1789, President George Washington appointed Hamilton as the first United States Secretary of the Treasury. While in this office he founded the US Mint, Revenue cutter Service. Hamilton is often credited with assisting the splitting of

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67 The Americans, 184.
68 Rosane Rocher, 435.
69 The Americans, 183.
political parties as he was well known for being a Federalist, having the opposite ideals of the next President, Thomas Jefferson.

These two different parties grew such animosity towards one another that it resulted with Hamilton dead. On July 11, 1804 Vice President Aaron Burr faced off against Hamilton in a duel on the banks of the Hudson River in New Jersey. Burr’s shot hit Hamilton while Hamilton’s missed thought to have hit a tree branch above Burr. Mortally wounded and partially paralyzed, Hamilton ferried back to New York where he died the next day. 70

Unit Three, 1825-1877, An Era of Growth and Disunion, specifically Chapter 11, The Civil War, and Chapter 12: Reconstruction and Its Effects, is a great place to begin discussing the Robber Barons in American history, starting with one of the earliest and most significant, The Commodore, Cornelius Vanderbilt.

Vanderbilt’s story is one of many rags-to-riches sagas so depicting the American dream. Born in 1794 on Staten Island to a struggling family of farmers, the young Vanderbilt received a meager education and entered the business world as a teenager, after dropping out of school at age eleven. He became the owner of a ferry company in New York, between Staten Island and Manhattan. “There were obstacles on the road to riches for America’s first great corporate tycoon. Through luck, intelligence, perseverance, and enormous self-control he became heavily involved with the inland water trade.” 71

“The original robber baron was a self-made steamboat magnate who mastered the dynamics of the emerging railroad industry, challenged the financier Jay Gould in the New York money markets, and built the first true corporate conglomerate in U.S. history. Vanderbilt’s steamboat companies attacked established carriers on lucrative routes from New York City to first Albany and then Boston, San Francisco, and Europe; the management techniques Vanderbilt developed in these ventures allowed him to out compete established rail carriers as well.”

After the outbreak of Civil War, Vanderbilt left the steamship business he started at the age of 16, sold most of his ships to the Union Navy and started his career as a railroad tycoon. In a number of short campaigns, he acquired the New York & Harlem, the Hudson River and the New York Central railroads and consolidated them into a single system that stretched from New York to Buffalo. He later acquired the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern and connected his railways into Chicago. In the process he built himself a fortune of over 105 million dollars and became the richest man in the world at the time.

Unit Four, 1877-1917, Migration and Industrialization, specifically Chapter 14: A New Industrial Age, Chapter 15: Immigrants and Urbanization, and Chapter 16: Life at the Turn of the 20th Century all have very significant examples of successful American dreamers. Section three of Chapter fourteen, titled Big Business and Labor, and highlights a few of the most notable examples such as John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie.

Carnegie was born in Scotland to penniless parents, emigrated to America in 1848, at age 12. When he was eighteen, he “worked his way up to become private secretary to the local superintendent of the Pennsylvania Railroad. One morning, Carnegie single-handedly relayed messages that unsnarled a tangle of freight and passenger trains. His boss, Thomas A. Scott rewarded Carnegie by giving him a chance to buy stock. Carnegie’s mother mortgaged the family home to make the purchase possible. Soon Carnegie received his first dividend.”

The money he had made from his stocks enabled him to quit his job at the Pennsylvania Railroad. In 1873 he entered the steel business after touring a British steel mill. By 1899, the Carnegie Steel Company steel surpassed any in Great Britain. His business flourished because of his constant desire to manufacture products as cheap as possible. He did so by incorporating new machines and accounting systems that allowed him to track and monitor costs. Another major move he made was allowing his associates to buy stocks and encouraging competition amongst them. Carnegie took over as much of the steel industry as possible by buying out suppliers: the coal fields, iron mines, ore freighters, railroad lines. By doing so it allowed him to produce steel much cheaper than his steel competitors, which he usually bought out or shut down. Carnegie sold his steel company in 1901 for $480 million to J.P. Morgan, who created U.S. Steel.

In the text there is a side note under a picture of Carnegie claims that, “Nineteenth-century Industrialist Andrew Carnegie gave money to build public libraries, hoping to help other write their own rags-to-riches stories.”

73 *The Americans*, 447.
74 *The Americans*, 448.
Another large industrialist, who epitomized the American dream, was John Davison Rockefeller. He was born July 8, 1839 in Richford New York but grew up in Cleveland. Young Rockefeller did his share of the regular household chores and earned extra money raising turkeys, selling potatoes and candy and eventually lending small sums of money to neighbors. His “father was a flashy peddler of phony cancer cures with a unique approach to raising children. ‘I cheat my boys every chance I get…. I want to make ‘em sharp.’”\textsuperscript{75} Despite his father being a cheat and absent for a majority of his childhood, John D. was well-behaved, serious and studious and went on to study bookkeeping at college. He made $.50 per day at his first bookkeeping job, and donated a small percentage of his wages to charity. He made a larger profit in the wholesale foodstuffs industry and then built an oil refinery in 1863. Recognizing the need for cheaper lighting oil than that extracted from whales, Rockefeller exploited his chemist partners to create kerosene.

He was well-positioned to take advantage of post-war prosperity and the great expansion westward, fostered by the growth of railroads and an oil-fueled economy. He borrowed heavily, reinvested profits, adapted rapidly to changing markets, and fielded observers to track the quickly expanding industry. Standard Oil grew to become one of the largest shippers of oil and kerosene in the country. The railroad tycoons fought over trafficking his oil. Soon Standard Oil became a monopoly and controlled nearly all of the American refineries. Rockefeller controlled an empire that included 20,000 American wells, 4,000 miles of pipeline, 5,000 tank cars, and over 100,000 employees.

\textsuperscript{75} The Americans, 448.
“In 1870, Rockefeller’s Standard Oil Company of Ohio processed two or three percent of the country’s crude oil. Within a decade it controlled 90 percent of the refining business. Rockefeller reaped huge profits by paying his employees extremely low wages and driving his competitors out of business by selling his oil at a lower price that it costs to produce it. Then when he controlled the market, he hiked prices far above original levels.”

When Standard Oil broke up Rockefeller’s worth was estimated at around 900 million dollars. At the peak of his business however he became the world’s richest man and the first American worth more than a billion dollars. When compensating inflation, he is often regarded as the richest man in history.

Rockefeller, like Carnegie, gave back to the community. 500 million dollars was donated to the Rockefeller foundation, which provided funds to create the University of Chicago and their medical institute that helped find a cure for yellow fever.

Unit Five, 1890-1920, Modern America Emerges, includes Chapter 17: The Progressive Era. One notable muckraker and one of the most well-known author helped to spark this revolution in America. His book helped to create the Food and Drug Administration, and pass the Pure Food and Drug Act and Meat Inspection Act. Upton Sinclair’s The Jungle transformed American life as he exploited and disgusted Americans by educating them on the quality of meat they were getting and achieved the American dream in the process.

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76 The Americans, 449.
77 The Americans, 448.
Upton Beall Sinclair was born September 20, 1878 and grew up as an average American kid. He grew up in New York City, the son of poor parents. His father was an alcoholic that was not around too much. In response his mother sheltered him, which resulted in their separation and dislike for one another. Barely into his teens, he began writing weekly boy's adventure tales in dime novels, jokes and magazine articles in boy's weekly and pulp magazines. This helped to support him while he attended City College of New York.

“Upton Sinclair’s chief aim in writing *The Jungle* was to expose the shocking conditions that immigrant workers endured. The public, however, reacted even more strongly to the novel’s revelations of unsanitary conditions in the meatpacking industry… *The Jungle* prompted a federal investigation that resulted in the passage of the Meat Inspection Act in 1906.”78

Sinclair's first novel, *Springtime and Harvest* published in 1901, did not sell. Neither did his second, third or fourth novels. Sinclair fell into depression after his only child, David, nearly died of pneumonia. He grew increasingly distant from his newlywed wife, Meta, and suggested that the two practice celibacy. Frustrated, Sinclair wrote a "Letter to the World" with hysterical self-pity, "You may sneer ... but you will live to blush for that sneer." 79

Looking for a new start and hope, the young writer looked for something to give him a chance. He found it in the revolutionary doctrine of socialism. Sinclair wrote

78 *The Americans*, 533.
79 Blackwell, Jon. "1906: Rumble over 'The Jungle.'"
socialist propaganda and made socialist friends, among them writer Jack London and wealthy eccentric George Herron. With the help of an allowance from Herron, Sinclair went off to work on his latest project—a novel about the Civil War.\(^{80}\)

In May of 1903, Sinclair moved to Princeton for three years because the university possessed the second-largest Civil War collection in the country. He disliked the area and later wrote, "The families ... contained drunkards, degenerates, mental or physical defectives, semi-idiots, victims of tuberculosis or venereal disease and now and then a petty criminal,"\(^{81}\) However, the novel, *Manassas*, was a modest success, enabling him to buy a 60-acre farm of his own and move into an actual house with his wife and son instead of a canvas tent.

Sinclair then read of a meat-packing strike in Chicago, and knew he had a good plot for the first great socialist novel. In 1904, Sinclair wandered the Chicago stockyards or “packing town” for two months. He socialized with the highly underpaid immigrants in their tenements and learned how they’d been mistreated and ripped off, working 12 hour days for minimal pay.

Then Upton returned back to Princeton to write *The Jungle* inside a hand-built, 18-by-16-foot cabin. He worked on the story of Jurgis Rudkus, a fictional Lithuanian immigrant working in Packingtown. Sinclair “wrote with tears and anguish, pouring into

\(^{80}\) Blackwell, Jon. "1906: Rumble over 'The Jungle.'"  
\(^{81}\) Blackwell, Jon. "1906: Rumble over 'The Jungle.'"
the pages all the pain that life had meant to me." He later said, "For three months I worked incessantly."82

Coincidentally enough, the Jungle is about an immigrant’s attempt to reach the American dream. Jurgis saw his chance of the American dream dissipate and turn into a nightmare as his job hauling steer carcasses in the stockyards left him injured and unable to support his family. He then loses his job when he gets into an altercation with his wife’s boss. He then loses the wife to disease and his son later on. After a few trips to prison and other failed jobs, Jurgis finds rebirth upon joining the socialist movement, and the book closes with a socialist orator shouting: "Organize! Organize! Organize! ... CHICAGO WILL BE OURS!"83

_The Jungle_’s content was so stirring, melodramatic and political that five publishers found it too hot to handle and turned the novel down. Sinclair persisted and got Doubleday to publish it in February 1906. It became instantly famous, and acclaimed as the most revolutionary piece of fiction of the age. In London, future Prime Minister Winston Churchill said the book "pierces the thickest skull and most leathery heart."

United States President Theodore Roosevelt sent his own agents to Chicago to investigate whether meat packing was as bad as Sinclair described. The reporting agents said that the conditions were worse.

President Roosevelt invited Sinclair to the White House to solicit his advice on how to make inspections safer. By June 30, 1906, Congress had passed the Pure Food and

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82 Blackwell, Jon. "1906: Rumble over 'The Jungle."
83 (http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/jungle/summary.html)
Drug Act, cracking down on unsafe food and patent medicines, and the Meat Inspection Act which established mandatory inspection of livestock (cattle, sheep, goats, equines, and swine) before and after slaughter. It also authorizes the USDA to enforce sanitation standards in processing plants and slaughterhouses.

Upton Sinclair was now more infamous and richer than ever anticipated. He made 30 thousand dollars in the winter of 1906-07, just months after publication. He then moved to California where he made two unsuccessful attempted for Congress on the Socialist ticket. The first in 1920 for the House of Representatives and again in 1922 for the Senate. He did not stop there, in 1934, running for governor on a revolutionary Democratic platform called "End Poverty in California" or EPIC, as it became better known as. 84

Unit Six, 1919-1940, The 1920s and the Great Depression, includes Chapter 21: The Roaring Life of the 1920s, Chapter 22: The Great Depression Begins. These two chapters give rise to one of the largest, most unique example, one that is illegal yet still illustrate and exemplify examples for the possibility of rags to riches. A new breed of dreamers emerged after the 18th Amendment was passed in 1919. Prohibition, powered by the Volstead Act, led the way for organized crime to enter American cities in order to produce, traffic and sell alcohol in addition to other types of illegal activities in the depression and interwar period. The collaboration of anti-Prohibition activities, such as racketeering, gambling and prostitution, allowed for an illegal way for rags to riches. A prime example of this can be seen throughout the life of Alphonse Gabriel "Al" Capone

84 Blackwell, Jon. "1906: Rumble over 'The Jungle.'"
as he rose up from the slums in New York City to create his empire in Chicago, creating monumental revenues of the time through the black market.

Alphonse Gabriel Capone grew up with eight siblings under his Italian immigrant parents in Brooklyn. Al quickly pursued his ‘career’ in organized crime. He joined his first gang almost immediately after being expelled from public school at age fourteen after assaulting a female teacher. Al Capone, like so many of the gangsters during the 1920’s and 30’s, started their gang affiliations early and expanded them throughout their entire life creating alliances, enemies, and empires.  

Al Capone’s life as a gang member started while living in Brooklyn when he met Johnny Torrio. He was immediately attracted to the risk taking and powerful lifestyle associated with crime. He joined many organizations throughout his adolescence including The Junior Forty Thieves, The Bowery Boys, Brooklyn Rippers and the more well-known Five Points Gang while still living in New York. It was at this time in his life where he was taught to racketeer and received the scar that would eventually give him the nickname, ‘Scarface.’ Capone acquired this name after he insulted a door lady at a night club, later when confronted by her brother, Frank Gallucio. Capone received three lacerations on his face.  

At the age of twenty four, Al ‘Scarface’ Capone left Brooklyn and moved to Chicago to reunite with Johnny Torrio to further conduct and expand their business. It

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85 Peterson, 37.
86 Peterson, 36.
was here that Capone realized the potential for bootlegging and other similar forms of anti-Prohibition related business because of Chicago’s close proximity with Canada.  

Capone saw himself not as a criminal but as a businessman, stating “If I break the law, my customers, who number hundreds of the best people in Chicago, are as guilty as I am. The only difference between us is that I sell and they buy. Everybody calls me a racketeer. I call myself a business man. When I sell liquor, it’s a bootlegging. When my patron serves it on a silver tray on Lake Shore Drive, it’s hospitality.”

Capone believed in monopoly amongst other gangs and would either offer to oversee their gang or eliminate them. Most organizations he would simply take over, others he would eliminate entirely and take their share of customers. Gang corruption in this era became so prevalent that the boundary “between the underworld and upper world became blurred.” Many law enforcement agents were too intimidated to make arrests because of fear and boss politics that took place in Chicago.

The power that Capone and Torrio had can be seen as they corrupted the mayoral election of Chicago by threatening voters at the polls. Capone had his puppet mayor, William Hale "Big Bill" Thompson voted in and the strength of the Torrio Capone alliance was clearly visible throughout Chicago.

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87 Beshears, 197.
88 Beshears, 201.
89 Beshears, 199.
90 Peterson, 31.
91 Beshears, 200.
Capone’s underground empire had remarkable revenues of 70 Million dollars per year.\textsuperscript{92} They accomplished this revenue not only by collaborating different types of alcohol distribution, gambling, prostitution, and boss politics but also by eliminating competition.

Simply put, Al Capone rose from the slums of New York City to having property across the United States and prospered by creating a multi-million dollar ‘business.’ His rise from rags to riches came primarily because of the 18\textsuperscript{th} Amendment to the Constitution. Prohibition brought organized crime in America to the forefront allowing the mobsters to make large sums of money as long as they could correlate different aspects of the operations together and utilize technology to stay one step ahead of the law, Capone achieved this and thus the American Dream.\textsuperscript{93}

\textit{Unit Seven, 1931-1960, World War II and its Aftermath, The Postwar Boom} brought in the term suburbs. The book defines them as, “small residential communities surrounding cities.”\textsuperscript{94} Since World War II, Americans have invested much of their newfound wealth in suburbia. It has promised a sense of space, affordability, family life and upward mobility. As the population of suburban sprawl has exploded in the past 50 years, so too has the suburban way of life become embedded in the American consciousness.\textsuperscript{95}

\textsuperscript{92} Cohen, 583.
\textsuperscript{93} Woodwiss, 8.
\textsuperscript{94} The Americans, 841.
\textsuperscript{95} The Americans, 841.
The text then gets into how this changed the way Americans moved out of the city, therefore needing a new way to travel to and from work. “Suburban living made owning a car a necessity.” To help accommodate these travelers, two Scottish / Irish immigrant brothers, Maurice and Richard created one of the most successful franchises in history. In 1953, The McDonald brothers began their successful restaurant chain.

The story of McDonald’s, since 1955, begins “when entrepreneur Ray Kroc opened his first stand in Des Plaines and began spreading the McDonald brothers’ self-service system and golden arches nationwide. The visibility of McDonald’s as the most successful of the franchise chains has drawn academic and critical attention as a social and iconographic phenomenon.”

The brothers’ company now serves approximately 58 million customers daily in over 199 countries. They employ over 1.5 million people in their 35 thousand operating franchised restaurants. Before his death, Richard ate the ceremonial 50 billionth hamburger of the company in 1984, after operating the company for only 31 years.

Unit Eight, 1954-1975, Living with Great Turmoil, includes Chapter 29: Civil Rights, and Chapter 31: An Era of Social Change. It is within these chapters that one of the most monumental speeches in American history took place. The seventeen minute, I have a Dream Speech was delivered on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial on August 27,

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96 The Americans, 852.
98 Hess, 60.
99 The Americans, 848.
1963 by one of the largest Civil Rights leaders in American history. Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. advocated for the American dream for all African Americans.

“Born Michael Luther King, Jr., King had to adjust to a new name in 1934. In that year his father – Rev Michael King, Sr.—returned home from a trip to Europe where he had toured the site where Martin Luther had begun the Protestant Reformation. Upon his return home, the elder King changed his and his son’s names to Martin. Like Luther, the younger King became a reformer. In 1964, he won the Nobel peace prize. Yet there was a side of King unknown to most people—his inner battle to overcome his hatred of white bigots. As a youth, he has once vowed ‘to hate all white people.’ As leader of the civil rights movement, King said all Americans had to be freed: ‘Negroes from the bonds of segregation and shame, white from the bonds of bigotry and fear.’”

Martin Luther King Jr. was born on January 15, 1929, in Atlanta, Georgia. He questioned a lot of Christianity’s claims, despite later joining the seminary and becoming a minister. By 1954, at the age of twenty-five, King became pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama.

In the wake of Rosa Park’s arrest, NAACP leader E. D. Nixon helped to coordinate a bus boycott in Montgomery. This would include many prominent members of the African American community. “They elected the pastor… Martin Luther King, Jr., to lead the group. An ordained minister since 1948, King had just earned a Ph. D in theology from Boston University. ‘Well, I’m not sure I’m the best person for the position,’ King confided to Nixon, ‘but if no one else is going to serve, I’d be glad to

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100 *The Americans*, 912.
try.’”\textsuperscript{101} King then gave a speech, “There comes a time when people get tired of being trampled over by the iron feet of oppression… I want it to be known --that we’re going to work with grim and bold determination—to gain justice on the buses in this city. And we are not wrong… if we are wrong—the Supreme Court of this nation is wrong. If we are wrong—God Almighty is wrong… If we are wrong—justice is a lie.” This resulted in African Americans filling a lawsuit and for 381 days refused to ride the buses in Montgomery. \textsuperscript{102}

During King’s 13\textsuperscript{th} jailed sentence, he wrote a letter, commonly known as the \textit{Letter from Birmingham Jail} that stirred up even more which encouraged others to keep moving on to pursue legal channels for social change in America.

"We will win our freedom because the sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of God are embodied in our echoing demands...when these disinherited children of God sat down at lunch counters they were in reality standing up for what is best in the American dream and for the most sacred values in our Judeo-Christian heritage, thereby bringing our nation back to those great wells of democracy which were dug deep by the founding fathers in their formulation of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence."

His biggest movement however was at the conclusion of the March on Washington. On August 27, 1963 King delivered his seventeen minute, \textit{I have a Dream} Speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. This was a heavy straw on the camel’s

\textsuperscript{101} \textit{The Americans}, 910.  
\textsuperscript{102} \textit{The Americans}, 911.
back, and epitomized what King stood for on making the American dream attainable for African Americans.

“I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal.’ … I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character… I have a dream that one day the state of Alabama… will be transformed into a situation where little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls and walk together and sisters and brothers.” 103

Two weeks after the speech was given, four young Birmingham girls were killed after a drive-by-bombing in their church. Two months after President John F. Kennedy was assassinated; President Lyndon Johnson continued his successor’s promise to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1964. 104

Planning another march on Washington, this time for the poor, he addressed a crowd in Memphis, “I may not get there with you but… we as a people will get to the promise land… I’m not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the lord.” The next day James Earl Ray shot and killed Dr. King as he stood on his hotel balcony.

Robert Kennedy gave a eulogy for King. “For those of you who are black—considering the evidence that there were white people who were responsible—you can be

103 The Americans, 920.
104 The Americans, 920-921.
filled with the bitterness, with hatred and a desire for revenge. We can move in that
direction as a country… black people amongst black, white people amongst white, filled
with hatred towards one another. Or we can make an effort, as Martin Luther King did, to
understand and comprehend and to replace that violence, that stain of bloodshed that had
spread across our land with an effort to understand with compassion and love.”

Unit Nine, 1968-2004, Passage to a New Century, includes Chapter 32: An Age
of Limits, Chapter 33: The Conservative Tide and Reagan and the Cold War, Chapter 34:
The United States in Today's World, Epilogue: Issues for the 21st Century. Within this
unit, there are many examples that can be used. Two hippies that created one of the
largest ice cream companies call Ben and Jerry’s, One of the richest men in the world,
Bill Gates. One that students are most familiar with, having likely used or own one of his
company’s products may be especially important.

Steven Paul Jobs was a bastard born to two college students that were forced to
put him up for adoption, requesting he be adopted by college educated couple. He was
adopted by Paul and Clara Jobs and moved out to Mountain View California from San
Francisco.¹⁰⁶

During his high school years he met with friends Steve Wozniak and Bill
Fernandez, who shared similar interests in computers. Jobs sought to continue this in
college.

¹⁰⁵ The Americans, 927.
¹⁰⁶ Isaacson, Walter, "Steve Jobs".
Steve Jobs sought higher education but his parents could not afford it. He dropped a majority of his classes and eavesdropped on others at Reed College in Portland Oregon. He later took up a job at Atari but left for India in an attempt to find himself. He returned with a new appearance and nothing else. He returned to Atari where he did very well and worked with childhood friends Steve Wozniak to create smaller more compressed chips. Their love for technology helped them create a box that allowed for free long distance calling, the first invention they were able to sell. They created a circuit board company called Apple Computer Company.  

Wozniak created the Apple I single handedly. Jobs voted to start production and with help from other engineers and Pepsi’s CEO, they started production of computer and other electronics.

Business boomed for Apple. They combined other companies inventions, such as Xerox’s mouse interface, to create the Macintosh computer. In 1984, they aired a commercial in the Superbowl. Jobs then bought what would become Pixar from Lucasfilms and the successful Toy story was the premier production. Jobs returned his focus to Apple, and created new operating system, Mac OS X, as well as new electronics such as the IPod, IPhone and IPad.  

He rose to riches throughout his lifetime. In 2003, Jobs discovered that he had a neuroendocrine tumor, a rare but operable form of pancreatic cancer. Job’s wealth at the time of his resignation from Apple, due to his medical problems, was around 8.3 billion

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107 Isaacson, Walter, "Steve Jobs".
108 Isaacson, Walter, "Steve Jobs".
dollars according to *Forbes* because of the shares he owned in Apple and Disney Pixar, making him the forty second wealthiest American.\(^{109}\)

These examples of the American dream are just some of the examples that teachers can show students that through hard work, determination that anyone, in any situation has the ability to rise up, against the odds and become whatever they want. As many of these examples show, poverty stricken, raised by a single parent, uneducated have all been able to overcome that and do something great both for themselves, their families and their country. It is a shame that a common textbook does not use the term American dream, yet it does give some excellent examples of it. Therefore, it is up to the teacher to provide and explain that the opportunity is always there for the students to make their own future and to achieve what they envision for themselves is a good life.

Part III: Incorporating the American dream into 11th grade curriculum

My intention with this project is to provide students with multiple atypical examples of the American dream. The primary objectives of teaching these in an 11th grade US history class are so; (1) student see the importance of the American dream for themselves and understand its impact more thoroughly, (2) students practically understand that no matter what the times are like, there is always a way to succeed and (3) teachers can stay organized and keep a continuous system going within each and every unit and use comparisons between.

These mini lessons are only to take 5-40 minutes and are meant to just include the example and compliment the lesson / unit with a personal example with someone who lived, and succeeded in that given time. All of these examples will also serve as a reminder to students of what was happening during that unit and can provide transitioning between units.

These will all be followed up by using the biographical “Americans Dreamers” sheets (Page 3) complete with a creative writing assignment. Students will keep these in a designated part of their binder that they can reference when in need of outside information. At the end of the course, students will be asked to seek out their own American dream with what they think is changing and create a plan to be successful.

After each lesson there will be an explanation of the lesson plan. This will include why this person is being talked about, when it would be taught, why it benefits students or a more thorough explanation of the time frame with relevance to the American dream.
American Dreamer

Name: ____________________________

Unit _____________________________  ___Typical  ___ Non-Typical

Time Frame: _________________________

Early life: _________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

Opportunity / Dream: _____________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

Known for today: _________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

Importance to me: _________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
Extra Credit: Using the information provided, make a creative writing biography of the American Dreamer. Examples include but are not limited to: Raps, songs, poems, diary entries, newspaper articles…). You may use this or a separate sheet of paper.
Unit one, America’s Beginnings

American Dreamer: John Rolfe
Duration: 25-30 minutes

Mini lesson: Explain American Dream form. Then watch the video America the Story of US - Episode one: Rebels (from 0:00-19:00) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k0TNz0VCc9Y. During the video, have students fill out American Dreamers for John Rolfe. Be sure to show maps after video.

Things to note: He was a former English farmer that found a way to sustain Jamestown. He planted tobacco and made $1 Million in today’s money. He also married Pocahontas (use for connection)

Essential question: Why is North America sought after? Be sure to tie this into the American dream and search of god, glory and gold as well as opportunity, land, vast untapped natural resources.

Standards covered: 1 (History of the US / NY), 2 (World History), 3 (Geography), 4 (Economics)
Unit one, *America’s Beginnings*

This mini lesson would be included within the first unit while discussing why coming to America and about the status of Europe – mainly England and why people were willing to leave everything they knew behind for a new land. Then raise the question “what do you bring with you and why?” Ultimately this lesson would speak to the various opportunities America beholds for those willing to accept and overcome the challenges.

The video shows great visuals and a wealth of knowledge about this topic and its importance. I think it would be most beneficial to have students watch the video after talking about the objectives of the lesson as earlier stated. The video does a good job of summarizing and visualizing what the Americas were like as settlers were arriving and the hardships they had faced. The *American dreamers* worksheet (page 3) could easily be explained and completed during this video following the life of John Rolfe. Moreover, it also shows a generic example of the American dream- something to be compared to when we get into more complex and irregular case studies.
Unit two, *A New Nation*

American Dreamer: **Eli Whitney**  
Duration: 20 minutes (30 max)

Mini lesson: Create a KWL chart on plantation farming in the south and how Eli Whitney’s American Dream changed it. Start out by referring back to John Rolfe’s dream and the southern economy. From there list what students already know about Eli Whitney on board and talk about the effects it could have on farming – does it increase or decrease need for slaves if it does the work for them? Use these resources if little information is known:

http://inventors.about.com/od/cstartinventions/a/cotton_gin.htm  
http://web.mit.edu/invent/iow/whitney.html  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x93yp4ZZjTI

At the end, have students complete the American Dreamers sheet and creative writing on the back as if they were a salesman for the cotton engine. (Advertisement flyer, brochure, Business proposition…)

American Dreamer: **Alexander Hamilton**  
Duration: 10-15 minutes

Another mini-lesson to include in the founding fathers section is about the life of Alexander Hamilton. This is a biographical rap of his life performed by Lin-Manuel Miranda at the White House Poetry night. Allow it to be played at first without any hand-outs. The second (and third time if necessary) have the students fill out the *American Dreamers* sheet.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WNFf7nMIGnE

Standards covered: 1 (History of the US / NY), 4 (Economics), 5 (Civics, Citizenship and Government)
Unit two, *A New Nation*

This first lesson of Eli Whitney would be introduced when discussing the differences between the north and south in regards to exports and life styles. (Another example could be brought up of the textile mills in Boston). It is very important to show the importance of crops in the early stages of the American story and how those who worked hard were able to excel. (This also foreshadows the differences between North and South)

The Alexander Hamilton Rap is a unique way to give biographical information and life of a person. It perfectly and interestingly describes the major events of Hamilton’s life and his pursuit of the American Dream. This opens up possibilities to other ways of teaching and students should create songs, raps, poems or other creative writing styles to learn and have fun doing so. There are more than enough examples during this song to complete the form.
American Dreamer: **Cornelius Vanderbilt**
Duration: 40 Minutes

Mini lesson: Have students watch the episode of *Men Who Built America*: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H9Gq-eKO6SQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H9Gq-eKO6SQ) On Vanderbilt. (This video series also includes other tycoons such as Rockefeller, Morgan, Carnegie, Ford Edison, and Westinghouse). Once video is completed check for understanding and go over any needed details / clarify how Vanderbilt was successful in monopolizing. Create a Venn diagram comparing Vanderbilt’s success in the North to Eli Whitney’s success in the South.

Standards covered: 1 (History of the US / NY), 4 (Economics)
While discussing the major differences between the industrial north and the agricultural south (or in Reconstruction), it would be a prime time to introduce the Robber Barons in American history. I would start with one of the earliest and most significant, The Commodore, Cornelius Vanderbilt. This could also be used in contrast to that of Eli Whitney, who benefitted from southern agriculture. This will start to develop the students understanding that depending on where you live there is always potential to become great and that different parts of the country offer different resources. These are the beginnings of the industrialization unit which we will compare Vanderbilt to Rockefeller, Ford and Carnegie.
American Dreamer: **John D. Rockefeller**  
Duration: 50 minutes

Mini lesson: Discuss the evolution of lighting / heating from whale oil and wood to crude oil to electric. Be sure to include the smell, shipping costs, health effects… and the need for a more efficient lighting / heating system. Then begin the video on the man who built an empire by exploiting this need in *The Men Who Built America*: on J.D. Rockefeller. Before filling out the movie guide, ensure student’s understanding of his upbringing: quote from his father about cheating his sons “so they will never be cheated.” Home life growing up in slums of Cleveland to the growth of his that included 20,000 American wells, 4,000 miles of pipeline, 5,000 tank cars, and over 100,000 employees.

American Dreamer: **Andrew Carnegie**  
Duration: 50 Minutes

Mini lesson: Watch *The Men Who Built America: Carnegie*. Be sure to include his upbringing in Scotland to penniless parents how he immigrated to America in 1848, at age 12. Watch the entire episode and compare Carnegie to Rockefeller’s industry and how they worked together and then against one another.

American Dreamer: **Henry Ford**  
Duration: 60 Minutes

It is important to note that students know more about Ford than the others in this unit. What most important is his rise from immigrant family farm to being one of the most richest and successful men in America.

Mini Lesson: Watch *The Men Who Built America*: Henry Ford and have students fill out sheet. For the writing section of the American Dreamers sheet, have students create a vision of what industry / life would be like without the assembly line and how does this change economics (think of labor costs).

**UNIT SUMMARY**: To conclude this unit, create a 3 way Venn diagram to compare and contrast the three industrialists that include their upbringing, parent’s occupation, business style, and biggest impact.

Standards covered: 1 (History of the US / NY), 3 (Geography), 4 (Economics)
Unit Four, Migration and Industrialization

Being within the unit of Migration and Industrialization it is important to include the men who helped boomed this movement in American economics and society. Other clips from The Men Who Built America can be played but these are the most important three as they show more typical versions of the American Dream from unexpected odds as Vanderbilt was the only one who was born in the trade.
American Dreamer: **Upton Sinclair**  
Duration: 35 minutes

Mini Lesson: After discussing the famous muckraker and *The Jungle*’s impact on society, students should get into five small groups and research the life of Sinclair. The small groups will research one of the following parts (assigned) and present them: growing up / family, education writing, after the book was published, how it impacted the rest of his life. The groups will then share their findings in chronological order and fill out their sheets during and after the presentations. If anything is left out, be sure to include the following information:

Things to include: He was born poor in NYC, his father was an alcoholic, mother was overly sheltering. He wrote short stories to support himself through City College of New York. His first 4 novels failed resulted in a disappointing start to his writing career. His son had a near death experience forcing Upton to fall deep into depression. His successful novel allowed him to buy a farm and move out of the city. He then learned of meat packing strikes in Chicago and wanted to write about poor immigrant labor and living conditions. After the Jungle was published, Presidents Theodore Roosevelt invited Sinclair to the Whitehouse to solicit advice on cleaning up the meat industry. He made 30 thousand dollars in the winter of 1906-07, just months after publication. Later in life he had a failed socialist political run in California.

Standards covered: 1 (History of the US / NY), 2 (World History), 4 (Economics),
Unit Five, *Modern America Emerges*

We learn about the impact of Sinclair’s *The Jungle*, but we never know that it was intended to be socialist propaganda and to shed light upon the poor immigrant working conditions in the booming cities. This mini lesson could be introduced between the two units (Immigration and Modern America). It highlights that your intentions of bringing good to one subject can assist another. It is also a reminder to never give up, as his multiple failed attempts, family relations and other misfortune happened to him, he kept writing and found success and made a huge impact on America.

This mini lesson could also be taught interdepartmental with English as they study the time frame of Sinclair’s lifetime.
American Dreamer: Al “Scarface” Capone
Duration: 75 minutes

Mini Lesson:
Have students independently read my research (part 1) that I would crop into a biographical story of Capone’s life. The students will independently fill out American Dreamers sheet. Then students should watch a short biography: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BpKCXjynbvo. Then compare this with the modern drug trade and watch the first 15 minutes of the documentary of Killing Pablo (Escobar) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6_9gUd67zw8.

As a class we will draw quick connections to what students know about modern times (drug trade etc.) to see how the 1920/30’s were a change of times from formality to modern society (dance clubs, drinking, sex…)

For the creative writing section, students are to write a letter (as if they are Pablo) to Al Capone, explaining how he was his role model and idolizes him. Students must include 2 points about the changing times (class discussion), two similarities in their “business” and two differences between the two.

Standards covered: 1 (History of the US / NY), 3 (Geography), 4 (Economics), 5 (Civics, Citizenship and Government)
During the 1920’s the times are changing, flappers are dancing, alcohol is flowing and the night life is booming. In an attempt to clean up society there is an amendment to the Constitution that bans the production, transportation and distribution of alcohol. Prohibition did all but clean up society but rather took it underground and opened the door for big business to provide the illegal substance. The purpose of this mini lesson is to reinforce the idea to students that there are atypical versions of success. The setting and characters from this could be changed to modern times to depict the war on drugs that is happening presently.

Capone is a true rags-to-riches story, despite the illegal fortunes he made, he embodies the American dream as he was kicked out of school at sixteen and became one of the richest and powerful men in America.
Unit Seven, *World War II and its Aftermath*

American Dreamers: **Brothers Maurice “Mac” and Richard “Dick” McDonald**

Duration: 15 minutes

**Mini lesson:**
- Talk about the changing pace of Americans, everything is moving on the fly and this created the need for a way to skip the sit down meal.
- Show maps of urban sprawl (Phoenix, San Bernardino) (it being possible by Ford) and what opportunity it lies for entrepreneurs. Compare Ford’s assembly line to fast food and the express ordering system.

Standards covered: 1 (History of the US / NY), 3 (Geography), 4 (Economics)
While talking about urban sprawl and “a car in every garage” plan, it is important to talk about the need for more on-the-fly lifestyle required a drive thru fast food restaurant. The McDonald’s Brothers found success by creating a restaurant that didn’t require being waited on. In Ray Kroc’s mind it would soon revolutionize the way people ate in the new fast paced style of living. Today McDonald’s is one of the most identifiable logo and well known company worldwide.
American Dreamers: **LaNada Boyer**
Duration: 30-40 minutes

Mini Lesson: Students are to study the occupation of Alcatraz by Native Americans in their fight for civil rights in 1969. They will watch a short documentary [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZQ_KM-h_A9g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZQ_KM-h_A9g) on the occupation. They will then look up details about the occupation and its background using any websites they want as long as they are credible or scholarly. They will then create a Newspaper article or online blog about it. Half of the students will write their article from the viewpoint of the government and the others from the viewpoint of the Native Americans. Those who wish to read their articles aloud may do so.

Standards covered: 1 (History of the US / NY), 5 (Civics, Citizenship and Government)
While discussing civil rights it is important to note that it was not just African Americans who were being oppressed but Native Americans as well. This seldom known event was created and envisioned by law abiding students and served as a reminder to the federal government to rule within their own laws (after breaking hundreds of treaties with Native American tribes). This event eventually led to talks between tribes and government and settled a lot of long lasting disputes between the two.
Unit Nine, *Passage to a New Century*

American Dreamer: **Steve Jobs**  
Duration: 15 minutes

Mini lesson: Tell students that they are to identify the person while the teacher reads his biography (while censoring his name and not using clear giveaways). Once students figure out who it is I will re-read the biography as they fill out the sheet. Then students will use their iPhone / iPod (If applicable) to create a history of Apple Inc. or a project on their stocks. Students can use any credible or scholarly website or publication for this project.

American Dreamer: **The Students**

Mini Lesson: Students must identify a change in their culture compared to that of which they have studied. (Ideas can be cell phone / social media, alternative energy…) They must then create a system that they would use to try to use it for their own American Dream. They must reference at least two others that have been studied and one that has not been studied. They can present their information however they please with a minimum of 15 minutes.

Standards covered: 1 (History of the US / NY), 4 (Economics)
Many students likely use one or more apple products but know little about the company. They are one of few electronics companies based in America. Recently Apple has expanded its role from mac computers to other devices, absorbed other companies, and is one of the largest electronic companies. At Job’s resignation Forbes estimated his value around 8.3 billion dollars. His rags to riches story and the troublesome early life he has proved to modern students that the American dream is not of the past but is very much a modern and attainable reality. It is important to look at his company’s stock value especially since the release of the iPod, iPhone and iPad.

The student’s American Dream is to be set up to help them see what changes are coming in America and how they can take advantage of it. Since one of the three main objectives of this is to inspire students to seek and seize opportunity, it is only by practicing it that they can succeed as others have done before them.
The American dream has been forgotten in today’s U.S. history textbooks despite many examples listed in each unit. Due to this absence it is now quintessential for teachers to portray this to their students so that they can understand the importance of the American dream for themselves. All of the aforementioned names have, in some way, changed our lives and will continue to long into the future. The more examples we can give of American dreamers, the better we suit and influence our students to become dreamers themselves. With each transition that America has gone through, there has been someone who has made a name for themselves and altered our history by quickly adapting and prospering from that change. Beginning with the early settlers in Jamestown to the late Steve Jobs, all have taken what opportunity they had, and seized the moment to make or do something great.

Each of these mini lessons has been designed to incorporate the NYS standards for social studies as well as many other educational tactics. Literacy is used in the extra credit portion and readings. Many integrate technology both to assist the teacher and the students. These are just some of the small benefits to integrating these mini lessons into a lesson plan.

These also serve as a guide for students to see what other kind of outside information was happening outside of the textbook and normal social studies curriculum. Studying these examples can prove also worthwhile for students as they are required to use “outside information” on their exams (regents, A.P. and IB). Having studied these examples it can not only serve as an outside example but could also remind students of something else that had been going on in that timeframe. Students will likely make
personal connections to these (Native American protest at Alcatraz, Steve Jobs, McDonalds etc.)

The greatest benefit to studying these as high school students is because they soon will no longer be in high school, and opportunity will knock. Being properly equipped with this prior knowledge can do nothing less than give them the confidence necessary, with knowing so many that have done so before them, to dream. Being taught that America is always changing, they too will have the opportunity should they know what to look for and how to exploit their resources. In the final “American Dreamers” it is the students themselves that will be envisioning a possibility for their own dream. They will identify changes that are happening in their lives and gives them a chance to try to seize this opportunity. In turn this could inspire students to ultimately seek that path in life and give them direction for where to go after graduation.

Using this system can benefit teachers, new or tenured, in many ways. It not only gives them a chance to develop and implement a creative and fun lesson style, but they are all designed to be short, so if it does not go to plan the entire lesson will not be impacted greatly. Another benefit it reaps is that it is an “extra” and can be used as time filler for a miscalculated timing of a lesson. It can also be used to introduce each unit and serve as an organizational or transitional tool for students and teachers alike.

This type of mini lessons that stretch throughout the course can also be used to teach other things that the teacher wants the students to know or students want to learn more about such as; Local history, New York history, how technology alone has altered the unit of study... Aside from social studies, this style can be integrated into any subject as mini lessons, and all benefit from having it.