

**Year 11 English (Advanced) student work sample – Grade C**

Please note: The following work sample has been transcribed for readability. To assist with grading, spelling and grammatical errors have not been corrected and appear as written.

The ideology of the American Dream has produced a simple idea that everyday Americans have something to strive for; hope, freedom, equality and material prosperity. *American Beauty*, directed by Sam Mendes explores this concept but twists the initial idea and questions whether the American Dream has lost its meaning. Sally Field an Academy Award winning actress, also challenges the American Dream and whether it is becoming a danger to the American way of life.

Well-expressed and clear introduction

“Frightened for the American Dream”

Sally Field expresses her confusion and cautious view of the American Dream. Field begins to give her opinion on the American Dream as she says it is “to have possibilities, to be safe, to have possibilities” the use of repetition on ‘possibilities’ shows how she has a strong emotion towards the American Dream as well as the repetition of “have” and “be” gives a concrete effect, giving the American Dream a physical effect, something that can be obtained. Field later questions how the American Dream has changed and is now spiralling into a dangerous path. Changing from one idea to another “once was” using past tense shows a sense of change within the idea and as she says “you can be whatever you want to be” was the initial idea of the American Dream but now is becoming something different. Requesting leadership and using a Historical figure to illustrate what she means “we need leadership...we need Abraham Lincoln” engages the listener to consider the devastating affects of slavery and how the United States President Abraham Lincoln abolished this, a metaphor to compare two time periods is used to show the effect in which the American Dream has now become. Sally Field tries to illustrate how the American Dream has become more like a competition in material possession.

Describes the content of the listening stimulus with some attempt at analysis

Attempts to make meaningful links between ideas in the listening stimulus and the film *American Beauty*

Sam Mendes engages his audience to consider a blanket-like concept which is the American Dream. Through dialouge, camera techniques, music and characterization through *American Beauty*. *American Beuty* scrutinises this idea of hard work can lead to a perfect lifestyle typically seen with a nuclear family, large sunburn house and an acceptable car. Mendes depicts his idea of how the American Dream and believe it has become more like an expectation and of greed. Mendes channels a message within the dysfunctional family, the Burnhams’ and as we “look closer” we see the idea of the American Dream is becoming more of a danger as the idea of material prosperity becomes brainwashing. Carolyn Burnham is introduced into the movie as a miserable, self-accomplished and material obsessed women. In the opening scene where she is introduced, she is gardening. Lester her husband narrates in the background and gives a brief description of her and her appearence “her matching gloves...shoes...you think that was an accident?” A rhetorical question engages the audience in looking closer into Carolyn and shows how for gardening has a particular matching outfit. She is also seen holding a rose intently with precision looking for inperfections. The camera angle

Variable control of language and structure mars the discussion

Relevant description of this scene needs to link to the question

is a high angel shooting up towards her as she holds it giving her a sense of superiority.

In the couch scene, Lester and Carolyn are shot in a level mid shot showing them as equals as they are becoming intimate. In the moment they are about to kiss a non-genetic style of music plays that adds to the romantic affect of the scene. Carolyn ruins the scene abruptly as she says “Lester your going to spill beer on the couch” the tone disrupts the power balance and shows Carolyns material obsession and chooses this over an intimate moment.

Some discussion of key features of the text but a more definitive link to the concepts required

A concluding paragraph summarising ideas would enhance the response

## Grade Commentary

Anni has demonstrated a sound knowledge and understanding of the concept of the American Dream and its representation in two texts. At times, Anni relies on recount to illustrate her ideas rather than analysis of textual features. Stronger links between the texts and more consistent links to the question would also have enhanced this response.

Anni’s response, on balance, demonstrates characteristics of work typically produced by a student performing at a grade C standard.