

ENGELSK B

Torsdag den 20. august 2009

Kl. 09.00 – 14.00

2. delprøve

STX092-ENB2

Answer either A or B

A

The texts in Section A focus on the American Dream. Write a paper (700-1000 words) in which you answer the following questions. Answer the questions separately.

1. Give an outline of how the American Dream is interpreted in texts 2, 3 and 4.
2. Compare language, tone and style in texts 1 and 2.
3. Taking your starting point in one of the texts, argue for your own attitude to the American Dream.

Texts

1. "What is the American Dream", a background essay from *The Library of Congress Learning Page* website, 2002.
2. Arnold Schwarzenegger, "Arnold Schwarzenegger Recalls Lessons From 25 Years as a U.S. Citizen – Learn English, Participate in Politics, and Give Back", a comment from *U.S. News & World Report* website, 2008.
3. Anya Kamenetz, "Whose American Dream Is It, Anyway?", an article from *Yahoo! Finance* website, 2008.
4. David Wallechinsky, "Is the American Dream Still Possible?", an article from *Parade* website, 2006.

B

Write an essay (700-1000 words) in which you analyse and interpret Margaret Murphy's short story "Low Visibility". Your essay must include the following points:

- a characterization of Laura and her marriage
- the riots in the street
- the way the story is structured
- the ending
- the title

Text

Margaret Murphy, "Low Visibility", a short story, 2008.

A

TEXT 1

The Library of Congress

What is the American Dream?

The term was first used by James Truslow Adams¹ in his book *The Epic of America* which was written in 1931. He states: "The American Dream is that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller 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 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."

¹⁰ In the United States' Declaration of Independence, our founding fathers: "...held certain truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable² Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness." Might this sentiment be considered the foundation of the American Dream?

¹⁵ Were homesteaders³ who left the big cities of the east to find happiness and their piece of land in the unknown wilderness pursuing these inalienable Rights? Were the immigrants who came to the United States looking for their bit of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, their Dream? And what did the desire of the veteran of World War II – to settle down, to have a home, a car and a family – tell us about this evolving Dream? Is the
²⁰ American Dream attainable by all Americans? Would Martin Luther King⁴ feel his Dream was attained? Did Malcolm X⁵ realize his Dream?

Some say that the American Dream has become the pursuit of material prosperity – that people work more hours to get bigger cars, fancier homes, the fruits of prosperity for their families – but have less time to enjoy their prosperity. Others say that the American
²⁵ Dream is beyond the grasp of the working poor who must work two jobs to insure their family's survival. Yet others look toward a new American Dream with less focus on financial gain and more emphasis on living a simple, fulfilling life.

Thomas Wolfe⁶ said, "... to every man, regardless of his birth, his shining, golden opportunity ... the right to live, to work, to be himself, and to become whatever thing his man-
³⁰ hood and his vision can combine to make him."

(2002)

¹ American historian (1878-1949).

² that cannot be taken away from you.

³ U.S. citizens given a piece of land by the government in the late 19th century.

⁴ civil rights leader (1929-1968).

⁵ political activist (1925-1965).

⁶ American novelist (1900-1938).

TEXT 2

Arnold Schwarzenegger

Arnold Schwarzenegger Recalls Lessons From 25 Years as a U.S. Citizen – Learn English, Participate in Politics, and Give Back

Twenty-five years ago this week, I became a United States citizen. I will always remember Sept. 16, 1983, as one of the greatest days of my life.

Like other newcomers to this country, I came here for my shot at the American Dream. Growing up in a small village in Austria, where if I worked hard I might be fortunate enough to follow in my father's footsteps and become a policeman, I knew America was the Promised Land. It was the place to go if you wanted your dreams to come true.

With hard work and determination, and because the American people were so generous and welcoming, I have succeeded beyond my wildest imagination.

I understand the immigrant yearning for freedom and opportunity. But I also believe immigrants have a responsibility to America as well. It is not enough to come here and take the best this nation has to offer without giving something back. To truly succeed as an American citizen, you have to do more.

First, learn the English language and blend into the American culture, even as you honor and remain proud of your own heritage. I don't say learn the language out of any sense of etiquette or duty. Do it so you can participate fully in the life of the nation and make the most of living in this country.

I came here in 1968 speaking only a little English. To make it in business and Hollywood, I knew I had to take English lessons, speech lessons, accent-removal lessons – anything to improve my chances of success. And I happily did it all.

Second, participate in the political process. In Austria, I was surrounded by countries like Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia where citizens did not have the right to vote. So I have always been keenly aware that this right should not be taken for granted. But too many Americans do.

Democracy is not a spectator sport. To keep it strong and to effect real change, you have to be involved. Learn about some of the sacrifices Americans have made over the years to build and preserve the greatest democracy in history. Hundreds of thousands of Americans have died defending freedom. If you visit just one Civil War battlefield or learn about World War II, it's hard to take for granted the right to vote.

Finally, give something back. Many immigrants come from cultures where service is not
30 stressed. I was no different. In fact, it was not until I met my wife, Maria, and her parents,
Sargent and Eunice Kennedy Shriver, that I discovered the true value of service.

They started so many programs that helped millions of people, from Special Olympics to
the Peace Corps, Job Corps, and Head Start. Before I knew it, I was spending time with
kids from the Special Olympics. That made me feel so good, I was soon working in after-
35 school programs to give kids safe choices when the bell rang at the end of the day. I
became chairman of the President's Council on Fitness and Sports and traveled around the
nation talking to students about staying healthy by exercising and eating right.

I had the ultimate opportunity to give something back to California when I was elected
governor in 2003. To promote service around our state and nation, I created the first
40 cabinet-level position for service and volunteering, calling on the next president and other
governors to do the same.

There are so many great immigrants who have performed outstanding public service for
this nation that I could fill this entire column with a list of their names. Madeleine Albright
and Henry Kissinger became great secretaries of state. Andrew Grove built Intel into a
45 high-tech powerhouse. Max Frankel moved to America from Germany and went on to run
the *New York Times*. Albert Einstein also came here from Germany. The list goes on and
on.

These were immigrants who came here for the American Dream, but they were not look-
ing for handouts. They did not ask only what they could get from their new country. They
50 also asked what they could give to it.

Not everyone can become Albert Einstein, but as Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Anybody
can be great, because anybody can serve."

Pitch in a few hours every week at a soup kitchen, clean up a local park or riverbed, men-
tor a child, or coach a youth sports team. Give something back, and not only will you lift
55 up others, but you will lift yourself up, too. When you do these things, you will learn what
I learned when I became a citizen: Once you're in, other than being able to run for presi-
dent, you have all the same rights as descendants of those who came here on the May-
flower⁷.

There is no second-tier citizenship. You are an American, period. With hard work, learn-
60 ing English, and getting involved, there is no limit on what you can achieve.

(2008)

⁷ a ship that carried pilgrims from England to America in 1620.

TEXT 3

Anya Kamenetz

Whose American Dream Is It, Anyway?

A recent *USA Today* poll showed that, given the worsening economy, high prices for energy, and the housing crisis, Americans are more pessimistic about their lives than at any time in the past half-century. Most worrisome is that just 45 percent believe their children will be better off financially than they are, which caused reporter David Lynch to ask if the American Dream was, if not dead, then at least wounded.
[...]

But what about the most fundamental assumption of the American Dream, the idea that standards of living, as measured by money and ownership of material things, ought to keep rising steadily year after year, generation after generation? That one is looking to be on the shakiest ground of all.

- 10 First of all, by most measures, our country has long since passed the point where adding more income and more stuff will make us happier. Once a nation has a per capita income above \$12,000, for example, there is little correlation between wealth and happiness.

And in the U.S., researcher Daniel Gilbert found, once an individual passes \$50,000 a year in income, more money has little effect on his or her happiness on average.

- 15 In fact, not surprisingly, the top earners have far less free time than the poorest fifth of Americans, and their average mood is not much better.

Secondly, indications are mounting that the planet just can't take all this constantly increasing driving and shopping and fast-food eating. If the entire world consumed the way Americans do (China and India are the most obvious examples of countries headed in this direction), we would need six Earths full of resources.
20

So for those of you who, like me, hope to be living another 60, 70, or 80 years in this unique nation, it might be time to ask: What is our new American Dream? If it's not a house, a car, a lawn, a lifetime of job security, and a constantly rising standard of living, what are we looking for? What should we be looking for?
[...]

25 Time, Not Stuff

Young people prize flexibility with their time. More likely to be raised by working mothers than any generation in history, we've seen the tradeoffs and don't want to fall into the

“two-income trap” where both partners work more and more hours, barely seeing each other or their kids, just to keep up with the Joneses.

- ³⁰ Both young men and young women say over and over in employment surveys that they want time to take care of their families and their health, to be involved in their communities, and to “have a life.”

As we weather this economic downturn, I predict that even more young people are going to choose – or be pushed into – a smaller-scale, downshifted lifestyle where they make do
³⁵ with less stuff and trade more money for more time.
[...]

A New New Deal⁸

This part is more political than personal. The old American Dream included a social safety net that provided a baseline of security. As noted, this is no longer being provided adequately by employers or the government.

- ⁴⁰ Young people are the largest and fastest-growing group of Americans without health insurance, we lack access to pension plans, and the future of programs like Social Security and Medicare is threatened by current budget positions. Young Americans in polls hold a more favorable view of government solutions than older Americans, and we are calling for new government investments in portable, flexible benefits that will restore the
⁴⁵ social safety net while controlling rising costs.

These are scary times. But after Hurricane Katrina hit my hometown of New Orleans, I learned from the courage of people struggling to rebuild. I saw that pessimism is a luxury for easy times, while optimism is a necessity for times like these. The new American Dream may be smaller and less flashy than your father’s Oldsmobile, but it’s more sustainable – and maybe it can take us farther.

(2008)

⁸ New Deal was a programme begun by U.S. President Roosevelt in the 1930s to end the Great Depression.

TEXT 4

David Wallechinsky

Is the American Dream Still Possible?

The traditional American Dream is based on the belief that hardworking citizens can better their lives, pay their monthly bills without worry, give their children a start to an even better life and still save enough to live comfortably after they retire. But many average Americans are struggling – squeezed by rising costs, declining wages, credit-card debt
 5 and diminished benefits, with little left over to save for retirement. [...]

Does the dream survive? Do most Americans still believe they can forge better lives for themselves?

PARADE surveyed more than 2,200 Americans, of whom fully 84% described themselves as belonging to the middle class, regardless of where they live (living costs are
 10 higher in some regions) or the size of their household.
 [...]

Most of those interviewed display qualities common to American success stories: determination, flexibility, pragmatism, willingness to work hard and especially self-reliance. Almost three-quarters of the middle-class respondents surveyed say they take responsibility for their own financial destiny and believe that they will succeed or fail based on
 15 their own efforts. Still, many are downsizing their dreams.

Shelly Comer, 43, of Dos Palos, Calif., is a divorced mother of three who also takes care of a friend of her oldest child, Michelle. She is going into debt so that Michelle can go to college. Shelly has worked her whole life – as a receptionist, janitor, preschool teacher and activities director at a hospital. Recently, she became a registered nurse and now works
 20 the night shift in obstetrics at another hospital. Her annual income is \$70,377.

Michelle, 19, is a freshman at the University of California at Merced. She says she is concerned about the financial burden her education is placing on her family: "In order to meet our expected family contribution, my mother had to borrow the entire amount of her share." For her part, Michelle earned six small scholarships, two of which are renewable
 25 for next year, and took out a federal loan. She also works 16 hours a week in the financial aid office at the university.

Shelly has a retirement plan through the hospital. "But I have nothing saved for me," she says. "I'm putting it all into the kids, so that they can succeed in school. Our parents did everything for us, and I hope to do the same for my kids. I don't count on anyone else to
 30 help us get to where we want to go. It's all up to me and my family. And I trust in God to help us."

(2006)

B

Margaret Murphy

Low Visibility

John is watching TV, one hand on the remote control, the other on her thigh. She keeps very still.

The news is on – always a serious business, but tonight it is momentous. A car burns in the centre of the road. Thirty or forty people have gathered, most are armed, some wear masks; on the other side, the police form a nervous line behind plastic shields. The mob hold on to their stones, their bottles and half-bricks, content, for the moment, to hurl abuse.

“Scum,” John says.

A flash of something white and orange shoots high into the night, over the burning car, spiralling as it falls, a looping script of flame and smoke. The bottle smashes at the feet of the police cordon and fire leaps, a splash of heat, a puddle of flame, curling around the edges of the shields, prying at the chinks in their defences. They shuffle back a few steps and the crowd roars in triumph.

“What are they protesting about?” John demands. “Their own shitty lives?”

She wishes she could protest, but has forgotten how.

Every muscle in her body trembles with the effort of keeping still.

John digs his fingers into her thigh and she bites her lip, but doesn’t move, and after a few seconds the pressure decreases, leaving only a dull throb.

She wasn’t always like this. Once, she was a girl who could set a room to laughter. He wanted her for her spirit and energy, her exuberance. He thought that her good humour would seep into him, breaching the walls of his defences, that happiness was something that could be absorbed, as a plant takes in water, by osmosis. But he hadn’t the intelligence for wit or the disposition for contentment, so he held her too tight, his hostage and his shield, squeezing the joy out of her until there was none left.

She barely noticed the change, but gradually she stopped feeling the sting of outrage, the injustice of his unkind words, his indiscriminate criticisms. By slow degrees she began to expect them, like the dripping tap he never fixed, constant, insistent, the white noise of their marriage.

The slaps and shoves that at first shocked her, became something to be expected; they reshaped her, moulding her into something less distinct, more insubstantial.

He has always been good with his hands.

“Vermin,” he says, and she feels the pressure of his fingers, testing for a tender spot, finding the bone. She winces in anticipation of the pain and he feels the movement, notices her. Turns his head and she feels his gaze on her.

“Did you say something?”

She shakes her head – just enough so he knows she didn’t mean to interrupt, not so much he might think her adamant in her denial. But she can’t stop her breathing, the rise and fall of her chest.

"Nothing to contribute?"

40 Her heart flutters in her chest.

"No sharp insights into the situation?"

She is wordless, stripped of language, of the liberty of expression. She doesn't know the right thing to say, because he changes the rules each time. So she says nothing. It's safer – less painful. [...]

45 It is warm – barbecue weather. Perhaps it is the heat, or perhaps the rage of the mob satiates him, for John settles back on the sofa and for a time, forgets she is there. His hand does not forget, though: as violence leaps like sparks from a forest fire, setting up plumes of smoke across the city, he hurts her. Twists and kneads, probing, bruising her flesh. Better this, she thinks, than his fist or his elbow. Better that he hurts her absent-mindedly, as
50 a man might puncture and tear at the rim of a polystyrene cup. It comforts her that there is no malice in it. She has learned to find solace in small things.

The television cameras switch to Upper Parliament Street. A wide stretch of road, a barrier built from a van, a burnt-out milk float, a VW Beetle, the silvery sheen of its metallic finish peeled off like plastic in the heat. The reporter sounds afraid. A baker's
55 delivery van turns into the road, brakes hard and starts to reverse, fishtailing wildly back the way it came. But it hits a pothole and loses control, smashes into the wall of a derelict building. The mob is on him. They drag the driver from the van and beat him. His van is overturned and set alight as the fire brigade sirens wail inconsolably beyond the police line.

60 "Animals," John mutters, feasting on her pain.

Lodge Lane: a steady flow of people wheel tartan shopping trolleys with flap tops, or tote bulging carrier bags, their knees sagging with the weight. It's fully dark – the wires of smashed street lamps hang like the intestines of eviscerated corpses. The TV crew interviews a woman. She is a quarter of a mile from the nearest supermarket, and her super-
65 market trolley is brimming with food. "What am I like?" she laughs, giddy with adrenaline. "I was pushing this thing round Kwik Save, looking for the bargains." She snorts at her own stupidity.

The journalist is young – breathless with terror – but ambition gives him courage. "They're looting the shops?" he says, with a sly glance to the camera. Does it ever get
70 better than this on local TV news?

"The door was open," she says tartly, not liking the tag of "looter". "And there wasn't no one on the tills."

"Is there anything left in Kwik Save?" His tone is plaintive, his expression earnest.

"I think I saw a packet of sausages on the meat counter," she says, unleashing her sar-
75 casm.

"No-marks¹," John says. "Selfish bastards." John, who takes what he wants, never thinking to ask. Never thinking of her at all.

Warm air stirs the curtain, bringing the reek of burning fuel and soot. Is the whole city ablaze? The roar of the mob on TV, the howl of sirens, the excited babble of the journalists

¹ losers (slang).

80 cover an insistent bass note, a murmur of voices. For now, they're in her head, but they are coming: she can feel the crackle of tension like an electrical charge in the air.

A glass smashes and she jumps.

He misunderstands its proximity, having grown used to viewing the world through the letterbox of his TV set. He slaps her with the back of his hand, his knuckles bruising her
85 cheekbone.

"Sit still, you twitchy cow," he says. When he replaces his hand, he moves it higher up her thigh. This is his foreplay, his substitute for romance.

She tastes blood, but dares not reach up to wipe her mouth. At such moments, she allows herself to float away, imagines she is a million particles of matter that can simply
90 disperse: it makes what will inevitably follow endurable. [...]

Shouts drift up from the street and he points the remote control at the TV, lowering the volume. Three solid thuds rattle chunks of plaster from the ceiling, then a cheer, and the sound of footsteps on bare boards.

They're in the shop below. He paces to the window and pulls up the sash. "Get out of
95 there, you robbing bastards!"

They aren't listening. She hears them crashing about, rummaging through the cheap crockery and plastic bric-a-brac. He crosses the room and flings the door open.

She stands, afraid of what he might do.

"Don't." The sound of her voice startles her. She hasn't spoken a word of command in
100 four years.

John stares in her direction, as if trying to locate the source of the sound, but he sees no more than a shimmer of something against the orange glow beyond the curtains. She has become invisible.

He turns and she hears the thud of his boots, feels the joists tremble under him. People
105 say he's light on his feet for a big man, but he was never so with her. When he walked all over her, she felt it.

Her hand goes to her jeans pocket, and she takes out a tiger eye stone, a gift from a friend. "For courage," her friend said. It didn't cost much – John's wife is not to be trusted with anything of value. "The tiger eye, creates harmony out of chaos," her friend told her.
110 "Heals bruises, alleviates pain." She could have hired herself out as an experimental subject on the healing properties of gemstones.

Family, friends, religion, hope, have all rushed past her, like corks lost in the torrent of his rage. She clings to this last plank of her previous existence in the blind faith that it will keep her from going under for good.

115 She hears shouts from below. His voice raised in anger.

She trembles, staring into the tiger eye for strength. Sometimes when she gazes into its depths she sees only gathering darkness, but on rare, magical moments she sees a flash of light spark from the amber stripe at its centre and feels a stirring of something within her – spirit, perhaps, or hope.

120 She hears his voice in the street and creeps to the window. He is fighting. When he falls, at first she is afraid. She should have gone with him. Should have persuaded him to stay. Should somehow have stopped all of this happening. She will be blamed. She backs

into the shadows, hears a rumble of noise as the looters run out of the shop, whooping. She smells burning candle wax and something more acrid. Wisps of smoke slide up the staircase, into the room. She feels heat through the soles of her feet. The shop is ablaze.

She slips her shoes on and runs, the tiger eye tight in her palm.

Seconds later she is in the street amid the thick blue stench of petrol fumes, charred wood and burning plastic. All down the wide stretch of road, fires rage, and a smutfall of sooty flakes spins down. A block away, they have set fire to the bakery, and incongruously, the chemical smells are overlaid with the reek of burnt toast.

John lies on his back. His head is bleeding. She looks right and left – but invisibility is not cast off lightly. Two men lug a fridge from the electrical shop and vanish down a side street; others emerge. Radios, an iron, a portable TV, are all carried off. The toy shop has a festival atmosphere: Christmas has come early, and Santa is in generous mood. An existence of want has exploded into wanting – the sensory: food, textures, flavours, colour – and the material: the shiny, the new. They carry their stolen trinkets like trophies. [...]

John stirs and moans and she feels a stab of fear. He opens his eyes. And her heart stops. He sees her.

“Give us your hand.” He has spoken.

It occurs to her that she might not. The thought is exhilarating.

He raises himself to his elbows and a ripple of alarm tingles from the top of her head to her fingertips. “What are you waiting for?”

She looks at his hand extended towards her, demanding help; the fingers are bloody. She doesn’t want blood on her hands.

A man pushing a stolen trolley approaches. One wheel is wonky, it balks and judders, and he has to keep redirecting its course, but he does the work with jaunty good will.

John begs for help, but the man seems not to hear. “Save a mint² on the rental,” he says as he passes, dropping her a friendly wink.

She marvels that he sees her – sees her and not John.

John has never been invisible. Even when he slouched at the edge of their group, out of place, longing to be part of it, but resenting the effort of fitting in, he was noticed. Big John. She wanted to help him, to give him a chance to feel like he belonged, but he hadn’t the knack, and he blamed her for it. Blamed her for his unhappiness, his dissatisfaction, until she broke under the weight of his misery. And as she shrank into silence, faded into invisibility, he seemed to grow bigger, louder, until he was a constant presence, even when he wasn’t around. She might be showering or combing her hair, cleaning or shopping, he would be looking over her shoulder, finding fault, whispering a solemn malediction of her transgressions³. Until finally, even when she looked in the mirror at her own ghostly reflection, he was omnipresent, his fury like a black, pestilent swarm at her back.

But just as sunlight conveys solidity on invisible motes of dust, so the fire and fury of

² a large amount of money.

³ curse of her wrongdoings.

this night have reconstituted her. While he is eclipsed, she has taken form – she feels herself returning – the particles of herself that her husband caused to flee are returning into her.

“Aren’t you afraid they’ll catch you?” she calls after the jaunty man.

165 He glances over his shoulder, into the darkness made thick by the burning. “Not me, girl. I’ve been invisible all me life.” He makes a sharp right at the school and is gone, and they are alone again.

“Don’t you disobey me.”

The hairs rise on the back of her neck, but it is only from habit, a Pavlovian response⁴.
170 She hears a quaver of fear in the command, astonished to discover that it’s been there all along. He tries to get up, but he is weak.

Around her, bricks and rubble. She bends to pick up a brick, and he shrinks from her. She could finish it. Make her protest and vanish. Rejoin the invisible.

She balances the brick in one hand and the tiger eye in the other. The husband licks his
175 lips. His eyes widen, and she recognises the expression of terror.

“Order out of chaos,” she says, choosing the tiger eye. She turns and walks away. Anger will come later: for now she feels light, unburdened.

A window explodes behind her, sending cascades of glass, musical, deadly, to the pavement. Laura is unharmed.

(2008)

⁴ an automatic response.

Anvendt materiale (til brug for COPY-DAN):

Tanith Carey. "Second year of marriage is peak time for couples to split". *The Mirror* website, 15 September 2008, viewed September 2008. (www.mirror.co.uk)

"Wanted – by a young lady, aged nineteen". 1873. *The Times*. *The Woman's Book: Everything but the Kitchen Sink*. Francesca Beauman. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2007.

"About me". 2008. *Flirtbox* website, viewed September 2008. (www.flirtbox.co.uk)

"What is the American Dream". 2002. *The Library of Congress Learning Page* website, viewed September, 2008. (www.loc.gov)

Arnold Schwarzenegger. "Arnold Schwarzenegger Recalls Lessons From 25 Years as a U.S. Citizen – Learn English, Participate in Politics, and Give Back". *U.S. News & World Report* website 18 September 2008, viewed September 2008. (www.usnews.com)

Anya Kamenetz. "Whose American Dream Is It, Anyway?". *Yahoo! Finance* website, 17 June 2008, viewed September 2008. (<http://finance.yahoo.com>)

David Wallechinsky. "Is the American Dream Possible". *Parade* website, 23 April, 2006, viewed September 2008. (www.parade.com)

Margaret Murphy. "Low Visibility". *The Book of Liverpool – a city in short fiction*. Eds. Eleanor Rees & Maria Crossan. London: Comma Press, 2008.