
In Ralph Waldo Emerson's 1841 essay, "Self-Reliance," he describes his ideal ways of life: living simply, working honestly, and spiritual vs. material wealth. He argues against our over-reliance on mechanical inventions, stating that we have lost our simple, natural intuitions like telling the time from the sun. He believes a man should work for his living, rather than rely on inheritance or chance. And finally, he believes that we should not be judged by material wealth – like inventions or inheritance – but by our spiritual and moral code. Ultimately, the man who operates by this code alone is the strongest form of an ideal human.

Emerson offers a very clear depiction of what he sees as an ideal man: a man operating in his natural state without any frills. He does not see the value in human invention, which, it could be argued, is an extension of human brainpower and potential. Why do we need to plow by hand if we have invented machinery? Inventions can allow us to focus on other things like art or spirituality, which Emerson does think is worthy of our time. Emerson's ideal vision, though enticing, is a bit short-sighted, or blind even, in that he does not address the fact that certain humans are born without the right or ability to be self-reliant, particularly slaves, women, or people with disabilities. Although his values about human behavior are sound, they are not entirely inclusive, promoting a
color-blindness that may not capably be able to answer the research question: Is the American Dream in crisis?

King, Martin Luther, Jr. "I Have a Dream... " 1963,

In Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech, "I Have a Dream," he hopes to draw attention to the fact that the rights laid out in the Declaration of Independence are still not being secured for African Americans. He indicates that there is a correlation between these rights and poverty, which is why he is speaking in Washington at the Lincoln Memorial.

In order to combat poverty among a huge number of the population, these rights have got to be equal and protected. Only when the Declaration is true will people be able to overcome racial inequality and unjust treatment.

King's focus on guaranteed rights is crucial to equality. His focus on Thomas Jefferson's promise is important, because it points out that the government has not made good on its promises to African Americans. His argument that their destiny and the white population's destiny are linked together is also visionary: If we are going to move forward as a united nation, we must actually be united. This speech is not only valuable to see how far we as a nation have come, but how far we have yet to go. It questions whether or not the American Dream – as defined by equal rights and access to socioeconomic mobility opportunities – is available to all citizens.

NOTE: Different instructors expect different elements for Annotated Bibliographies. This example includes a summary and evaluation paragraph. Adhere to specific instructions and requirements for your course.

This example has been adapted from MLA 8th edition information.

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