

Debunking America	
<i>Territoire et mémoire</i> : the American Dream is the ideal that the United States is a land of opportunity that allows the possibility of upward mobility, freedom, and equality for people of all classes who work hard and have the will to succeed. But how was it built and what is its legacy ?	
UNIT 3- How does art contribute	How does art contribute to building up a certain representation?
At the end of the Unit, I will	Read a story about an American myth that I will have written
What vocabulary will I need ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - depicting a visual document - comparison - society
What grammatical structure will I need ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - supposition - modals - past tenses
What will I learn about ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the origin of the American Dream - how a common memory is built - the need for a representation
What documents will be used ?	<p>1. Thanksgiving: Myth and Reality 1a- The Wampanoags' Thanksgiving, David A. Silverman, 2019, <i>This Land Is Their Land: The Wampanoag Indians, Plymouth Colony, and the Troubled History of Thanksgiving</i> (2019) 1b- Coming to America on the Mayflower - Tim Bailey, <i>gilderlehrman.org</i>, 2024 1c- History of Thanksgiving, <i>history.com</i>, 2012 1d- The 1st Thanksgiving, Jean Leon Jerome, 1912-1915 1e- Thanksgiving: Turkey's a feast, Norman Rockwell, 1943 1f- The First Thanksgiving: Separating Myth From Fact <i>Teenvogue.Com</i>, 2020</p> <p>2. Go West! Manifest Destiny & Frontier Myth 2a- What is the Manifest Destiny? 2b- American Progress, John Gast, 1872 2c- Paintings by Frederic Remington (1861-1909) 2d- Cowboy life, Theodore Roosevelt, <i>An Autobiography</i>, 1913</p> <p>3. Arriving in the USA: Immigration Dreams and Realities 3a: The New Colossus, Emma Lazarus, 1889 3b – Uncle Sam's first Thanksgiving, Thomas Nast <i>Harper's Weekly</i>, 1896 3c- “<i>You Tired, You Poor</i>”, A short story by Rupert Morgan, 2008 3d- In the Land of Promise by Charles Frederick Ulrich (1858-1908): 3e- On the Threshold of a New World, Mark Helprin, <i>Ellis Island and other stories</i>, 1976</p> <p>4. Representations of Immigrants in American Culture 4a- Embracing illegals, <i>Business week</i>, 2005 4b- “<i>The New American Gothic</i>” by Criselda Vasquez 4c- “I Can Tell By The Color of Your Skin You’re Not From Around Here, Are You?”, Eagle Cartoon, 2010</p>

	<p>4d- The New, New Collossus, caricature by Julian Sherthus, 2016</p> <p>5. What Next?</p> <p>5a- Why The Handmaid's Tale is so relevant today' Jennifer Keishin Armstrong, <i>BBC</i>, 25 April 2018</p> <p>5b – <i>Interview with Margaret Atwood</i>, nytimes.com, 2017</p> <p>5c- Trump's America reads more like 'The Handmaid's Tale' Mai Clifford, Opinions and Editorials Editor, February 19, <i>thepacepress.org</i>, 2025</p> <p>5d- Writing The Handsmaid's Tale, cartoon by Tom Gauld, 2017</p> <p>5e - Still Two Americas: Cartoonist Ben Sergeant, 2015</p> <p>5f- Viewpoint: What it's like to be an African in the US Larry Madowo, <i>BBC</i>, 4 June 2020</p> <p>5g – This is America, Childish Gambino</p>
Final Task	You will write and read a story about a moment of America and read it outloud in class

Instructions for your Final Task :

- 1- You will need to be at least 3 and up to 5 people reading this text
- 2- You will need to have one narrator and at least 2 different characters
- 3- The grading will be common concerning the content and the story,
- 4- And will be individual on the grammar and reading part.
- 5- Make sure to link part of the story to an episod of the American as seen in class
- 6- Your story must be at lest 6 minutes long (3 minutes of reading per person)
- 7- It will have an end and a conclusion
- 8 – You may make a video before hand but you need to register it within one shot

Debunking America

You will write and read a story about a moment of America and read it outloud in class

	Qualité du contenu	Pt score	Expression orale en continu	Pt score	Correction de la langue orale	Pt score	Richesse de la langue	Pt score
C2	Nous avons rendu de finances nuances de sens en rapport avec le sujet	30	Nous avons rendu de finances nuances de sens en rapport avec le sujet	30	J'ai utilisé avec une bonne maîtrise tout l'éventail des traits phonologiques de la langue cible , de façon à être toujours intelligible	30	J'ai employé de manière pertinente un vaste répertoire lexical incluant des expressions idiomatiques, des nuances de formulation et des structures variées	30
C1+		25		25		25		25
C1	Nous avons traité le sujet et produit un oral fluide et convaincant, étayé par des éléments (inter)culturels pertinents, et pas simplement des éléments du cours.	20	Nous avons développé une histoire complexe , avec des rebondissements intéressants, fondée sur des aspects (inter)culturels, de manière synthétique et	20	J'ai utilisé avec une assez bonne maîtrise tout l'éventail des traits phonologiques de la langue cible , de façon à être toujours intelligible. Les rares erreurs de	20	J'ai employé de manière pertinente un vaste répertoire lexical incluant des expressions idiomatiques, des nuances de	20
C1-		15		15		15		15

B2+		12	fluide tout en m'assurant de sa bonne réception. J'ai parlé plus de 3 minutes	12	langue ne donnent pas lieu à des malentendus.	12	formulation et des structures variées.	12
B2	Nous avons traité le sujet de façon claire, détaillée et globalement efficace , J'ai exploité plusieurs aspects du cours de façon intelligente et développée	10	Nous avons développé un point de vue pertinent et étayé, y compris par des reformulations qui ne rompent pas le fil du discours. J'ai parlé pendant plus de 2 minutes 30, en utilisant mes notes en soutien et non en support, j'ai incarné mon sujet	10	Mon accent subit l'influence d'autres langues mais n'entrave pas l'intelligibilité . Mes erreurs de langue ne donnent pas lieu à malentendu.	10	J'ai produit un discours et des énoncés assez fluides, l'étendue de min lexique est suffisante pour permettre précision et variété des formulations.	10
B2-		8		8		8		8
B1+		6		6		6		6
B1	Notre histoire était structurée, j'ai utilisé des éléments du cours. J'ai respecté les consignes dans l'ensemble	5	Nous avons exposé un point de vue de manière simple, notre histoire était peu développée, peu intéressante. J'ai beaucoup utilisé mes notes mais sans les lire de façon continue. J'ai parlé pendant environ deux minutes	5	Je m'exprime de manière intelligible malgré l'influence d'autres langues. J'ai une bonne maîtrise des structures simples.	5	J'ai produit un discours et des énoncés dont l'étendue lexicale relative nécessite l'usage de périphrases et répétitions.	5
B1-/A2+		4		4		4		4
A2	Notre histoire était brève et les éléments en sont juxtaposés.. nous avons peu utilisé les éléments du cours.	3	Nous avons écrit une histoire en termes simples. J'ai parlé pendant moins de deux minutes. J'ai lu mes notes	3	Je m'exprime de manière suffisamment claire pour être compris, mais la compréhension requiert un effort de mes interlocuteurs.	3	J'ai produit un discours et des énoncés dont les mots sont adaptés à l'intention de communication, en dépit d'un répertoire lexical limité.	3
A1	j'ai exprimé un avis en termes très simples.	1	Mes énoncés sont ponctués de pauses, d'hésitations et de faux démarrages.	1	J'ai utilisé un répertoire très limité d'expressions et de mots mémorisés de façon compréhensible.	1	J'ai produit des énoncés intelligibles malgré un lexique très limité.	1

1. Thanksgiving: Myth and Reality

1a- The Wampanoags' Thanksgiving, David A. Silverman, 2019, *This Land Is Their Land: The Wampanoag Indians, Plymouth Colony, and the Troubled History of Thanksgiving* (2019)

1b- Coming to America on the Mayflower - Tim Bailey, *gilderlehrman.org*, 2024

distribuer les deux textes en groupe de 4 : recap summary sous format de récit avec des voix différentes – partage entre groupes lecture à voix haute puis en pairwork, decide which six events in the story are the most important and justify your answer
besoin de s'appuyer sur les 2 documents (donc minimum un even par document)

1c- History of Thanksgiving, history.com, 2012

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ls1qtUMwDxA>

travail de repérage sur la vidéo : which summary best explains the video (cf image)

give 3 information which were new, surprising, old news

be ready to discuss it

travail en semi improvisation à 3 :

« So... what are your plans for Thanksgiving this year ? » + une date à donner plus ou moins lointaine
passage à 2 ou 3, sur un temps déterminé. Possibilité de donner une petite note

1d- *The 1st Thanksgiving*, Jean Leon Jerome, 1912-1915

travail de description sur la tableau : partage de l'image en 2: forêt / civilisation; bois des outils indiens vs métal ; indiens vetu en peau vs habits; indiens par terre vs hommes blancs debouts
incongru: accueil par les femmes des natives, homme indien avec le chapeau, conquistador, un seul enfant =

critique: chien par terre: comme les indiens, outils = calumet de paix et hache (symbole combat à venir), sang représenter par le rouge.

Travail à la suite de ce tableau : écrire le récit après ce 1er repas. Point de vue imposé Indien ou blanc, donner des personnages en fonction des chiffres choisis (marquer les chiffres au tableau sur le tableau vidéoprojeter et leur donner des noms)
ramassé, noté (possibilité de le faire en pairwork)

1e- *Thanksgiving: Turkey's a feast*, Norman Rockwell, 1943: travail de description et analyse du tableau
imaginer le making of de Norman Rockwell: narration à la 1ère personne du singulier, supposition qu'il se fait au fur et à mesure qu'il dessine son tableau
revoir la supposition

1f- The First Thanksgiving: Separating Myth From Fact *Teenvogue.Com*, 2020

video projeter l'introduction au texte
distribution au hasard des textes avec Facts and Myth pour qu'ils puissent travailler à deux
appropriation du document en vue de le raconter de façon intéressante et ludique
faire recopier le tableau de l'intro

name	Facts	Myths	Interesting to listen to	English (accent, vocabulary...)

Passage en pairwork, temps limité
faire faire passer uniquement les mêmes personnes 4/5 fois puis changer le sens de lecture
mettre à disposition les différentes partie du texte (ou leur donner accès au texte sur tel / ordi)
temps limité pour retrouver les myths and facts de chaque groupe, proposition de correction puis dire son avis sur the accuracy

mock grade pour le interesting to listen to et le English

2. Go West! Manifest Destiny & Frontier Myth

2a- What is the Manifest Destiny? Travail sur les différentes citations, proposition d'une idée de ce qu'est le manifest Destiny

résumé en une deux phrases : partage des idées puis réécriture d'une seule proposition (travail à 2 au début puis à 4 et écriture des propositions au tableau
recap et mise en commun pour une définition commune

2b- American Progress, John Gast, 1872 – guided questions
travail sur le tableau

2c- Frederic remington (1861-1909): Frederic Sackrider Remington was an American painter, illustrator, sculptor, and writer who specialized in the genre of Western American Art. His works are known for depicting the Western United States in the last quarter of the 19th century and featuring such images as cowboys, Native Americans, and the US Cavalry.

perles de tableau : description et analyse d'un tableau, puis mélange des textes (prévoir un temps limité – 150 mots) et retrouver le tableau original

vérification puis remélange, distribution groupes au hasard (un reçoit le texte, un autre le dessin correspondant) et écriture d'une histoire, point de vue interne et point de vue externe, imposé au hasard

2d- texte de Theodore Roosevelt : mise en // avec le ressenti de Theodore Roosevelt

3. Arriving in the USA: Immigration Dreams and Realities

3a: The New Colossus, Emma Lazarus, 1889 :

travail sur le poème ver par ver, compréhension de ce que ça représente, idéal de l'accueil

3b – Uncle Sam's first Thanksgiving, Thomas Nast *Harper's Weekly*, 1896

The cartoon depicts people of varying races, ethnicities, and religions around a conventional American Thanksgiving table; African Americans sitting next to Chinese Americans sitting next to Indigenous Americans, women and children sitting equally beside men. Nast's illustration envisions the very issue that every American in the Reconstruction Era was debating: whether non-white Americans and immigrants should be allowed to become citizens, and if so, how these groups could be integrated into the fabric of the country. The former question was answered following the ratification of the 13th Amendment in 1865, formally ending slavery, and the 14th Amendment in 1868, granting the privilege of citizenship to anyone born or naturalized in the U.S. The latter question was considered by abolitionist and activist Frederick Douglass in his 1869 "Composite Nation" speech. Douglass toured this speech around the country in the later years of the 1860s, hoping to instill values of hope and acceptance in a divided and unforgiving America following the passage of the 14th Amendment. Douglass uses "Composite Nation" to argue for "absolute equality" and the idea that people of any race or background could make the United States stronger by enjoying the same liberty as Americans. "Uncle Sam's Thanksgiving Dinner" is a testament to these themes, by symbolically showing American tradition and Constitutional guarantees as "food" for a heterogeneous body of citizens, making the complexities of a diverse nation more comprehensible for Americans. Overall, by combining patriotic symbols, constitutional ideals, and ethnic diversity in his cartoons, Thomas Nast is able to visually disseminate Frederick Douglass' concept of composite nationality.

Travail sur l'image, mise en // avec le Thanksgiving tel que vu précédemment et Emma Lazarus : quel message est véhiculé ? Réalité derrière ?

3c- "You Tired, You Poor", A short story by Rupert Morgan, 2008

On the threshold of a new world Mark Helprin, *Ellis Island and other stories*, 1976: travail sur le texte, repérage vocabulaire (5 mots au choix et proposition individuelle de la définition)
accueil fait?

3d- In the Land of Promise by Charles Frederick Ulrich (1858-1908): à partir du tableau, écriture d'une histoire à 2, 3 ou 4 voix : point de vue interne ou externe. Ressenti de Brigitte en arrivant à Ellis Island

3e- On the Threshold of a New World, Mark Helprin, *Ellis Island and other stories*, 1976

travail sur le texte, lecture à voix haute éventuellement

imaginer le récit fait ensuite, une seule voix narrative (ramassé noté)

4. Representations of Immigrants in American Culture

4a-: Media analysis of *Business Week* cover (guided questions)

4b- "The New American Gothic" by Criselda Vasquez

4c- "I Can Tell By The Color of Your Skin You're Not From Around Here, Are You?", Eagle Cartoon, 2010

travail sur les 3 images en parallèle : constitution d'une histoire à partir d'une analyse faite en personnages

faire faire uniquement un dialogue, imposé pour chacun de groupes des mots clés

4a- jealousy - separation – neighborhood

awareness – success – family

fear – impression – lie

4b- apron – cleaning up – despair

broken dream – hope – fairness

Sweat, Future, Silence

4c- Checkpoint, Glance, cliché

Voice, Border, Question

Assumption, Silence, Identity

4d- The New, New Colossus, caricature by Julian Sherthus, 2016

5. What Next?

5a- Why The Handmaid's Tale is so relevant today' Jennifer Keishin Armstrong, *BBC*, 25 April 2018

travail sur l'illustration – signification de cette image ?

5b – *Interview with Margaret Atwood*, *nytimes.com*, 2017

mise en parallèle avec l'interview de Margaret Atwood

5c- Trump's America reads more like 'The Handmaid's Tale' Mai Clifford, *Opinions and Editorials* Editor, February 19, *thepacepress.org*, 2025

appropriation des 3 documents en // et en groupe – conclusion ensemble
puis travail sur le doc 5D

5d- Writing The Handmaid's Tale, cartoon by Tom Gauld, 2017

5e - Still Two Americas: Cartoonist Ben Seargeant, 2015

supposition sur ce que sont les pb qui vont être évoqués; est-ce encore d'actualité?

5f- Viewpoint: What it's like to be an African in the US Larry Madowo, *BBC*, 4 June 2020

travail sur le texte: notion de Black American et Black African ; similitude? Problématique?

5g – This is America, Childish Gambino

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VYOjWnS4cMY>

repérage des éléments donnés dans la chanson visuel puis les paroles

mise en commun, conclusion et correction avec le powtoon

Idee DST :

<https://time.com/5457183/thanksgiving-native-american-holiday>

<https://time.com/6123160/first-thanksgiving-wampanoag-tribe-pilgrims>

<https://www.bonappetit.com/story/can-we-respectfully-celebrate-thanksgiving?>

The Wampanoags' Thanksgiving

Every year, Thanksgiving celebrations teach that the English or “Pilgrims” of Plymouth Colony and local Native Americans made friends, held a great feast, and thereby permitted United States history to proceed. These stories rarely address who the Natives were, why they were so friendly, and what happened to them later. The story of the Wampanoag people, the Natives of this story, reveals the struggles for power at the heart of American history.

The Wampanoags were in a crisis when the *Mayflower* appeared in the late fall of 1620. Between 1616 and 1619, an unidentified European epidemic disease had devastated them, wiping out at least half of their population. The Narragansett people to the west took advantage of the Wampanoags’ weakness to force them to pay an annual tribute (or tax) of corn, shell beads, and furs, and surrender valuable land. When the *Mayflower* arrived, the great Wampanoag leader, or chief, Massasoit faced a momentous choice: should they seek the help of these strangers against the Narragansetts?

The question was challenging because though the Wampanoags wanted English weaponry, they already knew the English to be treacherous. European sailing ships had been visiting the Wampanoag coast periodically since 1524, and at least once a year since 1602. Sometimes, the Wampanoags traded their fur and food for the strangers’ goods. The Wampanoags particularly wanted the Europeans’ metal knives, hatchets, and swords, arrowheads, and guns. The Wampanoags, like the rest of Native America, did not make their own metal tools. Yet this opportunity came with a steep cost. Too often, the explorers took Wampanoag people captive. Sometimes, the purpose was to train the captives as interpreters and guides. At other times, it was to sell them as slaves. Remarkably, two of these captives managed to return home after years in London with a knowledge of the English language and English society. One of them, named Squanto, would become the interpreter between the Wampanoags and the Pilgrims.

Massasoit, a Wampanoag chief, decided to ally with Plymouth not because his people were simply friendly or misunderstood who the English were but because he wanted the newcomers’ weapons and soldiers to help his people fight off the Narragansetts. Many of his people warned that this decision was a mistake. They wanted to wipe out the Plymouth colony before it became a threat worse than the Narragansetts. But Massasoit held firm. In the short term, his gamble was worth it. With English help, the Wampanoags regained their independence and became rich in English goods.

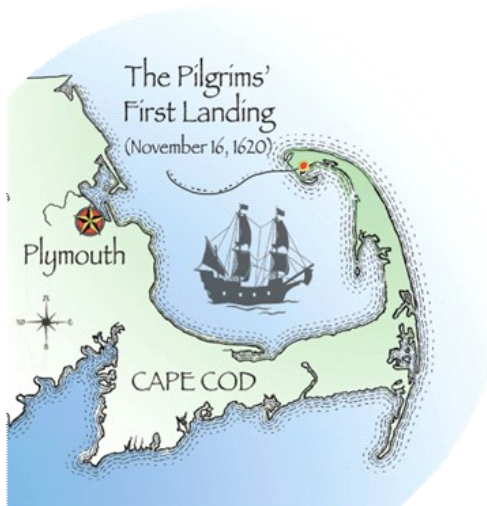
Yet, in the long term, they lost nearly everything. The survival of Plymouth, with the Wampanoags’ help, led to the creation of the neighboring colonies of Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and New Hampshire. By the 1660s, colonists outnumbered Native Americans in New England. Once the English had the advantage, they turned on their Wampanoag allies, seizing their land and forcing them into servitude.

Consequently, in 1675–1676, the Wampanoags, Narragansetts, and several other Native American tribes allied against the English under the leadership of Massasoit’s son, Pumetacom, or King Philip. They lost this war terribly and, with it, control of their own homeland. The Wampanoags and Narragansetts survive in southern New England to this very day, but on just tiny portions of their former territory under the rule of the United States. We all should understand that, for them, loss and subjugation are the legacy of the First Thanksgiving.

David A. Silverman, professor of history at The George Washington University, *This Land Is Their*

Land: The Wampanoag Indians, Plymouth Colony, and the Troubled History of Thanksgiving (2019)

Coming to America on the *Mayflower*



In the early 1600s a group of English men and women called Separatists were living in Holland. They had moved there because in England they did not have religious freedom and were forced to belong to the Church of England. They did not believe in the Church of England, so they decided to separate from that church and go to Holland where they could worship God as they chose. But after living in Holland for a while these people began to think that their children were losing their family traditions and becoming too much like the Dutch. They decided that they needed to move again. This time they would go somewhere where they could raise their children as they chose and no one could tell them what religion they had to follow. They chose to sail to the New World—America.

These people, who we now call Pilgrims, hired two ships to take them to America. The two ships were the *Mayflower* and the *Speedwell*.

The Pilgrims made an agreement with the Virginia Company to build a settlement in Virginia and begin a new life in America. After loading the two ships with food, water, and other supplies the Pilgrims set sail for America in August 1620. Almost immediately the *Speedwell* began leaking. The Pilgrims had to turn around and sail back to England to fix the ship. Over two weeks passed before the *Speedwell* was ready. On August 21, 1620, the Pilgrims set off again for America. But soon water was again leaking into the *Speedwell*. After sailing nearly 300 miles toward America they had to turn back again. This time the Pilgrims decided to leave the *Speedwell* in England and sail to America with just one ship, the *Mayflower*.

Of course, putting all of the supplies and all of the people from two ships onto one ship made the *Mayflower* very crowded. There were now about 130 people on the small ship, 102 of them Pilgrims. On September 6, 1620, the *Mayflower* set sail once again for America. Unfortunately, because of the delay, the *Mayflower* was going to cross the Atlantic Ocean during the dangerous stormy season.

The first few weeks of the voyage went fairly well. The only real problem was seasickness among many of the Pilgrims. It was cold, wet, and very uncomfortable aboard the ship.

Then violent storms began pounding on the little ship. One man was washed overboard during a storm and was only saved by grabbing a rope and being pulled back onboard. The *Mayflower* began to take on water and a wooden beam cracked. The ship's crew quickly began to plug the cracks in the *Mayflower* and repair the broken beam. The storms pushed the ship farther and farther north. When the storms finally ended the Pilgrims and the crew of the *Mayflower* found themselves hundreds of miles north of where they were supposed to be. But there was some good news as well. A baby was born to Elizabeth Hopkins during the voyage. She named him Oceanus. On November 11, 1620, the *Mayflower* stopped at Cape Cod. It had been sixty-six days since they left England.

The Pilgrims decided to build their settlement near Cape Cod in a place they named Plymouth. The *Mayflower* stayed in Plymouth through the winter as the Pilgrims built their houses, and the ship finally returned to England on April 5, 1621

The First Thanksgiving: Separating Myth From Fact *Teenvogue.Com*, 2020

Ruth Hopkins, a Dakota/Lakota Sioux writer, biologist, attorney, and former tribal judge, breaks down the myths and facts about Thanksgiving and early encounters between Pilgrims and the Wampanoag

It all started in November 1620, when a group of 102 English religious separatists known as Pilgrims, joined by unaffiliated commercial entrepreneurs, arrived on the shores of North America in a ship called the *Mayflower*, at present-day Cape Cod. They’d planned to settle in Virginia but were blown 500 miles off course.

Unfortunately, like much of U.S. history, the narrative surrounding the landing of the *Mayflower*, and what happened to the English settlers on board, has been whitewashed, diluted, or just plain fabricated. On the 400th anniversary of that fabled landing at Plymouth Rock, let’s delve into the reality of this famous event by sorting myth from fact.

name	Facts	Myths	Interesting to listen to	English (accent, vocabulary...)

Myth

When the *Mayflower* arrived at Plymouth Rock, the landscape was devoid of human civilization.

Fact

William Bradford, leader of the voyage, declared they discovered the era “unpeopled,” but when the Pilgrims landed, Darius Coombs, codirector of the Plimouth Plantation, says there were some 70 Wampanoag communities in the area and an estimated 100,000 Tribal members whose ancestors had been living there for at least 12,000 years. European trade ships had already been visiting the region for 100 years before the *Mayflower* sailed, but the Pilgrims were the first who attempted to stay. In truth, upon disembarking, the Pilgrims were met with cleared fields and fresh water. The Wampanoag had moved to winter camp, but the Pilgrims were aware of ongoing Indigenous occupation because they dug up and used some of the Wampanoag’s food stores.

Myth

Pilgrims took pity on Indigenous people and fed them.

Fact

The Pilgrims had no idea how to survive in the new land. They would have starved to death during the severe 1620–21 winter if it weren’t for the Wampanoag. They shared their provisions with the colonists and taught them how to hunt, fish, farm, and preserve food in their new environment. As Wampanoag Nanepashemet said, “We have lived with this land for thousands of generations — fishing in the waters, planting, and harvesting crops, hunting the four-legged and winged beings and giving respect and thanks for each and everything taken for our use. We were originally taught to use many resources, remembering to use them with care, respect, and with a mind towards preserving some for the seven generations of unborn, and not to waste anything.”

Myth

Thanksgiving was the name of the harvest feast Pilgrims and Indigenous people shared.

Fact

While Pilgrims did share a meal with the Wampanoag people, it wouldn't have been possible without their Native teachers, and it wasn't called Thanksgiving, either. Harvest feasts were a tradition that Natives had observed for time immemorial, so it is Native generosity that is the basis for the Americanized idea of Turkey Day. The origins of the holiday's modern name are actually quite grisly. Pilgrims and other European invaders warred with the Wampanoag and other local Tribes after they settled in. An official "day of Thanksgiving kept in all the churches for our victories against the Pequots" was proclaimed by Massachusetts Bay governor William Bradford in 1637, and it was meant to memorialize the slaughter of about 700 Pequot men, women, and children.

Myth

The Indigenous people who interacted with Pilgrims are extinct.

Fact

The Mashpee Wampanoag people who first encountered the Pilgrims were subjected to centuries of disease, starvation, and war, but they survived. They still inhabit Massachusetts and eastern Rhode Island, are a federally recognized Tribe, and have about 2,600 citizens.

Myth

The Indigenous people who helped the Pilgrims aren't being oppressed anymore.

Fact

In spring 2020, just as the Mashpee Wampanoag were getting hit with the COVID-19 pandemic, the Trump administration moved to disestablish their Reservation, threatening their very existence. A federal judge found the Trump administration's decision "arbitrary and capricious" and ordered them to reconsider. In July, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 7608. It is an appropriations bill, but it includes an amendment that would stop the Interior Department from taking the Mashpee Wampanoag's land. The legislation underwent a Senate vote.

The Wampanoag are also seeking the return of the wampum belt of Metacom, one of their 17th-century chiefs. When he was killed in the 1670s, his belt was sent to King Charles II as a spoil of war. To the Wampanoag, the wampum belt is comparable to the crown jewels. Wampum is comprised of purple and white shells from whelks and quahog and plays a crucial role in the Tribe's culture. According to the Washington Post, the whereabouts of Metacom's belt is currently not known.

Myth

While colonization was an ugly chapter in American history, it's over now.

Fact

Tribes in the United States are still dealing with the fallout of colonization, including the same Indigenous groups that helped the people survive. (...)

On Thanksgiving Day 1970, the 350th anniversary of the Mayflower landing, Natives took back Plymouth Rock. Frank James (Wamsutta), Wampanoag, gave a speech that discussed the suffering his people had endured after the arrival of the Pilgrims, and said that while many consider it a day of celebration, to this country's Indigenous, it was a day of mourning. He then led a protest on Cole's Hill near Plymouth Rock, close to a replica of the Mayflower and a statue of the Wampanoag leader Massasoit. (...)

Since then, Natives and their allies continue to gather on Cole's Hill in Plymouth on Thanksgiving Day to commemorate a National Day of Mourning. To many Natives in the United States, Thanksgiving is a reminder of the genocide of millions of the Indigenous ancestors and the theft of our lands because of colonialism. It's become a way to honor our dead as well as protest the continuing racism and tyranny that we are being subjected to even now. There are still Natives who host family meals during this season, but that is because we've always held harvest feasts, long before the Pilgrims' arrival.

Tribes are still under attack today. Natives live with historical trauma, crushing poverty on Reservations, a lack of adequate health care, racism, police brutality, voter suppression, little representation, an epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women, and toxic pipelines being forced through our lands, among other pressing issues. We are still fighting for our Treaties to be honored, for our human rights, and for our survival.

Perhaps the holiday, like this country, can be salvaged. We shouldn't celebrate genocide, but we can honor those who were killed, elevate Native voices, and embrace that spirit of generosity that Indigenous people shared with the Pilgrims. We can feed the hungry and shelter the houseless, and fund and advocate for Native causes and organizations. We can use this day to teach history, rather than hide it. Instead of forcing schoolchildren to partake in embarrassing Thanksgiving plays based on ugly stereotypes and colonial fiction, Native speakers and historians can come and educate them about Native culture. We can make this world what we want it to be. Create a more perfect union.

Pour impression :

F- Myth

While colonization was an ugly chapter in American history, it's over now.

Fact

Tribes in the United States are still dealing with the fallout of colonization, including the same Indigenous groups that helped the people survive. (...)

On Thanksgiving Day 1970, the 350th anniversary of the Mayflower landing, Natives took back Plymouth Rock. Frank James (Wamsutta), Wampanoag, gave a speech that discussed the suffering his people had endured after the arrival of the Pilgrims, and said that while many consider it a day of celebration, to this country's Indigenous, it was a day of mourning. He then led a protest on Cole's Hill near Plymouth Rock, close to a replica of the Mayflower and a statue of the Wampanoag leader Massasoit. (...)

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D- Myth

The Indigenous people who interacted with Pilgrims are extinct.

Fact

The Mashpee Wampanoag people who first encountered the Pilgrims were subjected to centuries of disease, starvation, and war, but they survived. They still inhabit Massachusetts and eastern Rhode Island, are a federally recognized Tribe, and have about 2,600 citizens.

A- Myth

When the Mayflower arrived at Plymouth Rock, the landscape was devoid of human civilization.

Fact

William Bradford, leader of the voyage, declared they discovered the era "unpeopled," but when the Pilgrims landed, Darius Coombs, codirector of the Plimouth Plantation, says there were some 70 Wampanoag communities in the area and an estimated 100,000 Tribal members whose ancestors had been living there for at least 12,000 years. European trade ships had already been visiting the region for 100 years before the Mayflower sailed, but the Pilgrims were the first who attempted to stay. In truth, upon disembarking, the Pilgrims were met with cleared fields and fresh water. The Wampanoag had moved to winter camp, but the Pilgrims were aware of ongoing Indigenous occupation because they dug up and used some of the Wampanoag's food stores.

B- Myth

Pilgrims took pity on Indigenous people and fed them.

Fact

The Pilgrims had no idea how to survive in the new land. They would have starved to death during the severe 1620–21 winter if it weren't for the Wampanoag. They shared their provisions with the colonists and taught them how to hunt, fish, farm, and preserve food in their new environment.

As Wampanoag Nanepashemet said, "We have lived with this land for thousands of generations — fishing in the waters, planting, and harvesting crops, hunting the four-legged and winged beings and giving respect and thanks for each and everything taken for our use. We were originally taught to use many resources, remembering to use them with care, respect, and with a mind towards preserving some for the seven generations of unborn, and not to waste anything."

C- Myth

Thanksgiving was the name of the harvest feast Pilgrims and Indigenous people shared.

Fact

While Pilgrims did share a meal with the Wampanoag people, it wouldn't have been possible without their Native teachers, and it wasn't called Thanksgiving, either. Harvest feasts were a tradition that Natives had observed for time immemorial, so it is Native generosity that is the basis for the Americanized idea of Turkey Day. The origins of the holiday's modern name are actually quite grisly. Pilgrims and other European invaders warred with the Wampanoag and other local Tribes after they settled in. An official "day of Thanksgiving kept in all the churches for our victories against the Pequots" was proclaimed by Massachusetts Bay governor William Bradford in 1637, and it was meant to memorialize the slaughter of about 700 Pequot men, women, and children.

E- Myth

The Indigenous people who helped the Pilgrims aren't being oppressed anymore.

Fact

In spring 2020, just as the Mashpee Wampanoag were getting hit with the COVID-19 pandemic, the Trump administration moved to disestablish their Reservation, threatening their very existence. A federal judge found the Trump administration's decision "arbitrary and capricious" and ordered them to reconsider. In July, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 7608. It is an appropriations bill, but it includes an amendment that would stop the Interior Department from taking the Mashpee Wampanoag's land. The legislation underwent a Senate vote.

The Wampanoag are also seeking the return of the wampum belt of Metacom, one of their 17th-century chiefs. When he was killed in the 1670s, his belt was sent to King Charles II as a spoil of war. To the Wampanoag, the wampum belt is comparable to the crown jewels. Wampum is comprised of purple and white shells from whelks and quahog and plays a crucial role in the Tribe's culture. According to the Washington Post, the whereabouts of Metacom's belt is currently not known.

WHAT IS MANIFEST DESTINY?

A- 1811, John Quincy Adams, sixth president of the United States (1825-1829):

"The whole continent appears to be **destined...**to be peopled by one nation. The acquisition of a definite line of boundary to the [Pacific] forms a great epoch in our history."

B- Map of the United States with the contiguous British and Spanish Possessions. Philadelphia, 1816 by John Melish:



**C- John Melish about his geographical description of the USA, "The Great Nation of Futurity,"
The United States Democratic Review, Volume 6, Issue 2 Philadelphia, 1816:**

"To present a picture of it was desirable in every point of view. The map so constructed, shows at a glance the whole extent of the United States territory from sea to sea; and in tracing the probable expansion of the human race from east to west, the mind finds an agreeable resting place on its western limits. The view is complete, and leaves nothing to be wished for."

D- John O'Sullivan, a New Yorker and editor, 1845:

"Away, away with all these cobweb tissues of rights of discovery, exploration, settlement, contiguity, etc. The American claim is by the right of our **manifest destiny** to overspread and to possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and federative self-government entrusted to us. It is a right such as that of the tree to the space of air and earth suitable for the full expansion of its principle and **destiny** of growth. ...It is in our future far more than in the past history of Spanish exploration or French colonial rights, that our True Title is to be found."

E – General George Crook, Us Army, 1878 :

"I do not wonder, and you will not either, that when Indians see their wives and children starving and their last source of supplies cut off, they go to war. And then we are sent out there to kill them. It is an outrage. All tribes tell the same story. They are surrounded on all sides, the game is destroyed or driven away, they are left to starve, and there remains but one thing for them to do—fight while they can. Our treatment of the Indian is an outrage."

F- Peter Cozzens, *The Earth Is Weeping: The Epic Story of the Indian Wars for the American West*, 2017 :

"No epoch in American history, in fact, is more deeply steeped in myth than the era of the Indian Wars of the American West. For 125 years, much of both popular and academic history, film, and fiction has depicted the period as an absolute struggle between good and evil, reversing the roles of heroes and villains as necessary to accommodate a changing national conscience.

In the first eighty years following the tragedy at Wounded Knee, which marked the end of Indian resistance, the nation romanticized Indian fighters and white settlers and vilified or trivialized the Indians who resisted them. The Army appeared as the shining knights of an enlightened government dedicated to conquering the wilderness and to 'civilizing' the West and its Native American inhabitants.

In 1970, the story reversed itself, and the pendulum swung to the opposite extreme. Americans were developing an acute sense of the countless wrongs done the Indians....In the public mind, the government and the army of the latter decades of the nineteenth century became seen as willful exterminators of the Native peoples of the West. (In fact, the government's response to what was commonly called 'the Indian Problem' was inconsistent, and although massacres occurred and treaties were broken, the federal government never contemplated genocide. That the Indian way of life must be eradicated if the Indian were to survive, however, was taken for granted.)

Brigitte Dutertre de la Montagne de Pouzy raised her lavender-perfumed hand-kerchief up to her nose and breathed in deep. Unlike the hundreds of other people filling the registration hall, she was not excited to find herself on Ellis Island. Of course not. It was humiliating to be in this mass of uncultured and frankly pungent individuals.

Had Brigitte understood the inscription on the Statue of Liberty, she would have found it an apt description of her fellow immigrants:

*'Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.'*

Brigitte might be financially embarrassed, she was fatigued and indeed desperate to breathe free, but she was not 'wretched refuse'.

By rights, she should have been in First Class on board the Queen Victoria with individuals more like herself. It was obvious that any member of the Dutertre de la Montagne de Pouzy family was First Class material even if she only had a Third Class ticket. A private cabin, cocktails, dinner at the Captain's table - that was the world to which Brigitte belonged. First Class passengers did not come to Ellis Island, but simply disembarked in New York. First Class passengers did not have to ask permission to enter the United States, or submit to medical examination as if they were horses for sale.

The queue moved forward a pace. Brigitte was now only one person away from the fat immigration official's desk.

"Family name?" the official said to the young man in front, who Brigitte recognised from the Queen Victoria. He too was French, having got on board with her at Le Havre. She supposed he was about seventeen.

"Meriguet," the young man replied.

Meriguet, Brigitte thought to herself, How very... agricultural. A boy his age should have been preparing to fight the Germans. What was going to become of France if all the farmers' boys ran off to America instead of sacrificing themselves for their country?

"First name?"

"Alfonse."

It was an outrage that she was obliged to mix with an Alfonse Meriguet and two thousand other assorted peasants. Her younger sister, Beatrice, was supposed to send her enough money for a second class passage, at least. But Brigitte was accustomed to being disappointed by Beatrice. After all, it was in Beatrice that the family had placed their last, desperate hope that she, as the prettiest of them, would marry into a fortune. That was why they had used the very last of their money to send her to America two years ago. First Class, of course.

But instead of using her opportunity well, instead of meeting some rich industrialist on board the ship, what had she done? Fallen idiotically in love. The first news the family had was that she was married to a Charles ('Chas' for short) Blackburn of Ashville, North Carolina.

Mrs Chas Blackburn... hideous. Simply hideous.

So that was that the family was officially ruined, but silly little Beatrice was madly in love and already pregnant with Chas Junior. God bless America.

The war-evading farmer boy was handed his documents, stamped and formal, and went through the exit door. Brigitte stepped forward.

"Family name?" the fat official said without looking up.

"Dutertre de la Montagne de Pouzy." Brigitte announced.

The man looked slowly up, pushing back his cap.

"Say what, lady?" he frowned.

Brigitte heard the people in the queue behind her snigger.

"Dutertre de la Montagne de Pouzy." she repeated, "Mademoiselle."

"You speak English?" he asked.

Brigitte held up her hand, finger and thumb almost touching.

"Small." she answered.

"Oh Jeez..." he whistled, "I just need your name, lady, not your life story. What is your... name?"

"Yes!" Brigitte nodded, "My name ees Dutertre de la Montagne de Pouzy!"

The people behind her were fighting back their laughter.

"Okay." "the official" I shrugged, "If you say so."

He picked up his pen and filled in the box:

"Du... ma... poo... zi." he said, "Okay... first name, please?"

Brigitte looked in horror at how the idiotic man had massacred the family name: Dumapoozi. Mademoiselle Dumapoozi. She was about to take the pen from him and write it properly, but then: stopped herself.

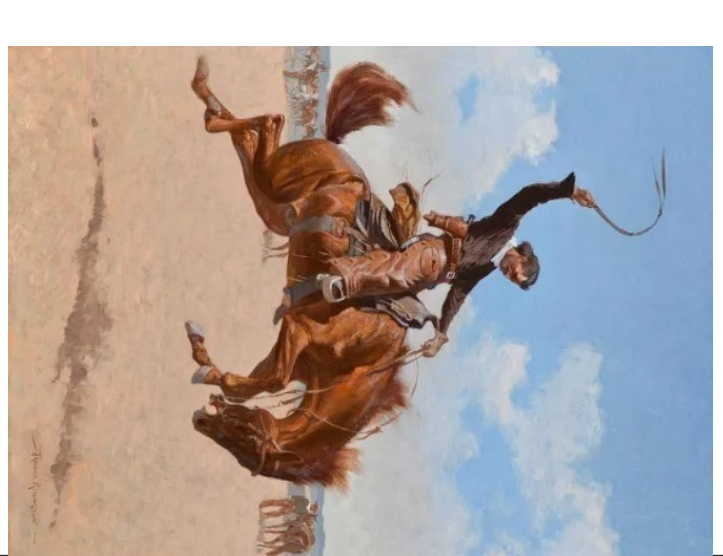
It was over, she realised. That life, that family, that history... whatever the future might hold, that was all over now. She was in America, the land of new beginnings, and perhaps... perhaps it would be good to set herself free.

"Bridget." she smiled, "Bridget Dumapoozi."

She turned to look at the people behind her, and laughed with them.

A short story by Rupert Morgan, 2008







“...it was not until 1883 that I went to the Little Missouri, and there took hold of two cattle ranches, the Chimney Butte and the Elkhorn. It was still the Wild West in those days, the Far West, the West of Owen Wister’s stories and Frederic Remington’s drawings, the West of the Indian and the buffalo-hunter, the soldier and the cow-puncher. That land of the West has gone now, “gone, gone with lost Atlantis,” gone to the isle of ghosts and of strange dead memories. It was a land of vast silent spaces, of lonely rivers, and of plains where the wild game stared at the passing horseman. It was a land of scattered ranches, of herds of long-horned cattle, and of reckless riders who unmoved looked in the eyes of life or of death. In that land we led a free and hardy life, with horse and with rifle. We worked under the scorching midsummer sun, when the wide plains shimmered and wavered in the heat; and we knew the freezing misery of riding night guard round the cattle in the late fall round-up.”

-Theodore Roosevelt, *An Autobiography* (1913)



propos

The Immigrant

I handed my passport and papers to the Immigration Bureau Officer. He opened the passport and found the ten-dollar note I'd left in its centre. The note was gone before I saw it missing. Then came the questions I couldn't get wrong.

"What is your name?"

"Henry Drake."

"Where are you from?"

"London."

"Why have you come to the United States?"

"Opportunity."

So far, so easy.

But he stopped. He looked at me.

"Where are you travelling from, sir?" he asked me.

It wasn't one of the questions on the list, I knew it.

"London", I said.

He seemed to be staring at the word as I spoke it.

"You are a born Englishman, sir?"

He read my latest name.

"Mister Drake?"

"Yes."

"And how do you intend to support yourself, sir?"

That was one of the questions on the list.

"I am a salesman."

He handed me a sheet of paper.

"Could you read this for me, sir?"

"We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union..."

He took the paper from my fingers.

"Welcome to America", he said.

He handed me the passport and registration card, then held them back.

"But you'd want to work on your accent. *Slán leat.*"

That shook me, but only until I climbed the last few steps and walked out into my first American sunshine.

I threw the passport into the river. I was a clean sheet.

It was the 16th of March, 1924, two years since I'd sailed out of Dublin.

Adapted from *Oh, Play That Thing*, Roddy DOYLE (2004)

Help!		
Migrants	Smugglers	Situation / Reality
immigrant	ruthless: <i>impitoyable</i>	desperate / <i>despərt</i> /
undocumented alien / <i>eɪliən</i> /	sly = cunning: <i>sournois, rusé</i>	hazardous = risky
haven / <i>heɪvən</i> /: <i>refuge, asile</i>	unscrupulous / <i>ʌn'skru:pjələs</i> /	die of thirst: <i>mourir de soif</i>
confident = trustful	greedy for money: <i>cupide</i>	face hardships
gullible: <i>crédule</i>	cash in on: <i>tirer profit de</i>	dread sth: <i>redouter qqch</i>
helpless = defenceless	take advantage of sb's naivety	fear that sb might + V: <i>craindre que qqn ne...</i>
flee (fled, fled)	deceive sb: <i>tromper qqn</i>	deport: <i>expulser</i>
fulfil one's dream	swindle: <i>escroquer</i>	be stranded: <i>être laissé en plan</i>
fall into a trap = be trapped	pretend: <i>faire semblant de</i>	endure pains



All those women having jobs: hard to imagine, now, but thousands of them had jobs, millions. It was considered the normal thing. Now it's like remembering the paper money, when they still had that. My mother kept some of it, pasted into her scrapbook along with the early photos. It was obsolete by then, you couldn't buy anything with it. Pieces of paper, thickish¹, greasy to the touch, green-coloured, with pictures on each side, some old man in a wig² and on the other side a pyramid with an eye above it. It said *In God We Trust*. My mother said people used to have signs beside their cash registers, for a joke: *In God We Trust, All Others Pay Cash*. That would be blasphemy now.

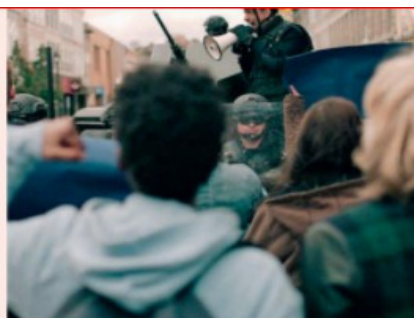
You had to take those pieces of paper with you when you went shopping, though by the time I was nine or ten most people used plastic cards. Not for the groceries though, that came later. It seems so primitive, totemistic even, like cowrie shells³. I must have used that kind of money myself, a little, before everything went on the Compubank. I guess that's how they were able to do it, in the way they did, all at once, without anyone knowing beforehand. If there had still been portable money, it would have been more difficult.

It was after the catastrophe, when they shot the President and machine-gunned the Congress and the army declared a state of emergency. They blamed it on the Islamic fanatics, at the time.

Keep calm, they said on television. Everything is under control.

I was stunned⁴. Everyone was, I know that. It was hard to believe. The entire government, gone like that. How did they get in, how did it happen?

That was when they suspended the Constitution. They said it would be temporary. There wasn't even any rioting⁵ in the streets. People stayed home at night, watching television, looking for some direction. There wasn't even an enemy you could put your finger on.



Look out, said Moira to me, over the phone. Here it comes.

Here what comes? I said.

You wait, she said. They've been building up to this. It's you and me up against the wall, baby. She was quoting an expression of my mother's, but she wasn't intending to be funny.

Things continued in that state of suspended animation for weeks, although some things did happen. Newspapers were censored and some were closed down, for security reasons they said. The roadblocks began to appear, and Identipasses. Everyone approved of that, since it was obvious you couldn't be too careful. They said that new elections would be held, but that it would take some time to prepare for them. The thing to do, they said, was to continue on as usual.

1 épais • 2 perruque • 3 shiny shells of sea snails • 4 shocked • 5 émeute

The Handmaid's Tale, Margaret Atwood, 1985



hit the road

Picture challenge

- ★ 3 sentences
- ★★ 4 to 6 sentences
- ★★★ 7 sentences and +

How many sentences can you write using the opposite rules? Collect as many stars as possible!



Tom Gauld (British cartoonist), 2017

Is *The Handmaid's Tale* a prediction? That is the third question I'm asked – increasingly, as forces within American society seize power and enact decrees that embody what they were saying they wanted to do, even back in 1984, when I was writing the novel. No, it isn't a prediction, because predicting the future isn't really possible: there are too many variables and unforeseen possibilities. Let's say it's an antiprediction: if this future can be described in detail, maybe it won't happen. But such wishful thinking cannot be depended on either. [...]

In the wake of the recent American election, fears and anxieties proliferate. Basic civil liberties are seen as endangered, along with many of the rights for women won over the past decades, and indeed the past centuries.

In this divisive climate, in which hate for many groups seems on the rise and scorn for democratic institutions is being expressed by extremists of all stripes, it is a certainty that someone, somewhere – many, I would guess – are writing down what is happening as they themselves are experiencing it. Or they will remember, and record later, if they can. Will their messages be suppressed and hidden? Will they be found, centuries later, in an old house, behind a wall? Let us hope it doesn't come to that. I trust it will not.

Margaret Atwood, www.nytimes.com,
10 March 2017



Trump's America reads more like 'The Handmaid's Tale'

Margaret Atwood's "The Handmaid's Tale" is often quoted as a cautionary tale, a dystopian world that often seems and feels far too extreme to ever be reality. But under the policies of Donald Trump, the United States is creeping towards a reality with uncomfortably similar parallels—a society where women are systematically stripped of their rights, with the government in full control of their bodily autonomy and where marginalized communities are diminished under the guise of traditional values.

Trump's recent legislative actions—such as freezing federal grants and loans, empowering the ultra-religious right as well as pushing for extreme abortion bans—are not simply conservative policies. These are all part of a larger movement, one that aims to reshape America into a country that is not only concentrated in the hands of white wealthy men but leaves everyone else as **scapegoats** forced to suffer.

The Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* in June of 2022 was a tipping point, it was the beginning of the end. This move signaled to women across the country that their reproductive rights were not only not valued but not guaranteed. With Trump taking credit for appointing the justices that made that ruling possible it is clear that his second term is guaranteed to include even more aggressive restrictions on birth control, healthcare access and abortion. Women, especially low-income women and women of color, would **bear the brunt** of these policies, forcing them into a system where their choices, autonomy and their very futures are controlled and dictated by white, male, conservative lawmakers.

Trump's reach has extended far beyond reproductive rights; his policies have targeted LGBTQ+ rights and protections for immigrants, all in the name of "making America great again." But America can not be "great" when it is becoming more and more synonymous with a dystopian novel. It can not be great when women must flee their states to seek access to medical care. It can not be great when queer people fear losing their legal protections and right to self. It can not be great when marginalized communities are being scapegoated for one party's political gain. America can not be great when it is only great for some.

Trump's version of America (...) extends to controlling and distorting the very foundation of our democracy. His administration has repeatedly and openly attacked journalists and the press, has sought to criminalize opposing opinions and has incited extremist groups who believe in ruling by religion. The current administration's policies are not simply about winning elections. These policies are about rewriting America's past, its present and its future. Where differing opinions are punished, history is erased and power is held by those who meet a narrow and exclusive definition of what it means to be American under Trump.

In "The Handmaid's Tale" the authoritarian regime, Gilead, didn't come to power overnight. It was a regime that built itself up piece by piece, law by law, and restriction by restriction until it was too late for anyone to fight back. America may not be Gilead yet, but ignoring these **jarring** similarities ensures it will be. The parallels between this administration and Atwood's Gilead are far too alarming to ignore. His direct and targeted assault on women's rights, LGBTQ+ protections, racial justice and our fundamental democratic principles and process represents a transparent agenda: one that aims to consolidate all of the power into the hands of a select few while simultaneously stripping away the rights of those who do not fit his idea of a "great America."

Margaret Atwood explained that "The Handmaid's Tale" was rooted in truth and historical accuracy; the events that took place in the book had already happened somewhere in the world. The question is no longer whether this administration will **strip away** more rights because the answer to that is clear. The

question now is: how much damage will be done before this country realizes that we are no longer warning against a dystopia? We are living in one.

Mai Clifford, Opinions and Editorials Editor, February 19, *thepacepress.org*, 2025

scapegoats : been held / made responsible for something bad

bear the brunt of : suffer from

jarring : unpleasant

strip away : take off





A white, wide-brimmed bonnet and a red cloak have come to mean one thing: women's oppression. Margaret Atwood's 1985 novel *The Handmaid's Tale* seared this image into our souls with its depiction of a near-future dystopia in which women are forced into reproductive slavery to bear the children of the elite – and wear this uniform to underline their subservience. For more than three decades, the image has shown up on the covers of the book around the world, on posters from the 1990 film, in ads for the 2017 TV series, and even on real women at demonstrations for reproductive rights.

'Why *The Handmaid's Tale* is so relevant today' Jennifer Keishin Armstrong, *BBC*, 25 April 2018

Viewpoint: What it's like to be an African in the US

As protests rock the US following the death of African-American George Floyd in police custody, Kenyan journalist Larry Madowo writes about the racism he has experienced in the country.



A woman with her face covered by a Kenyan flag protests against George Floyd's death

In my first week in New York City last summer, I was invited to dinner at a friend's penthouse on the wealthy Upper West Side. I picked up some fruit for her and arrived at her building carrying a plastic bag. The front desk sent me through an open courtyard to the back of the building, past residents' garbage bags and into a surprisingly dirty lift.

When I got off upstairs, my host opened the door mortified, all the colour drained from her face. "My racist doorman thought you're a delivery guy and made you use the service elevator," she explained as she apologised. I have worked in the complicated racial hierarchies of South Africa and the UK and have travelled around the world, but it still stung that an American butler did not think accomplished white people like my friend and her husband could have a black dinner guest.

That early micro-aggression forewarned me that America may be the land of opportunity for many, but it would still reduce me to the colour of my skin and find me unworthy. In Kenya, I may disappear into the crowd, but in America I always have a target on my back for being black.

A day after investment banker Amy Cooper called the police after a Harvard-educated black man asked her to follow park rules and leash her dog, a white policeman knelt on George Floyd's neck for so long it eventually killed him.

I was heartbroken.

As protests broke out nationwide to demand justice for Floyd and the countless other black people who have been killed by police, I held my breath. How could I grieve for someone I did not know? How could I own a pain I had not lived, as an African "fresh off the boat" in America? I wondered if I would be appropriating the African-American struggle at a convenient moment.

Then I saw a video shot at a protest in Long Beach, California, that was clear about allegiances. "The best way that Africans in America can support African-Americans is to stand with us, and to understand that we're all the same," said a protester.

I asked Tom Gitaa - a publisher of Mshale newspaper, which serves African immigrants in the Midwest of the US - what he made of the protests, subsequent riots and looting that began in his city of Minneapolis.

"Many of us didn't grow up with some of these civil rights issues in Africa so sometimes our understanding is not there.

"But with issues like police brutality and discrimination at the workplace, we're running into a lot of the same things African-Americans have experienced over the years," said Mr Gitaa, who moved to the US from East Africa about 30 years ago and whose American-born 24-year-old daughter has been one of the people making their voices heard on the streets. (...)

Because of the violent history of American policing for black and brown communities, parents are always on edge.

Ifrah Udgoon, a Somalia-born high school science teacher in Columbus, Ohio, lives with that fear for her 13-year-old son.

"Each passing day brings the realisation that soon, if not already, he will go from being seen as cute to being seen as threatening. And my heart breaks for his innocence," she wrote in South Africa's Mail & Guardian.

Larry Madowo, *BBC*, 4 June 2020