

# Week 1

## Fictions and Realities

The notion "Fictions and Realities" is one of the notions you have to study for your exam.

This notion will be studied along the theme: the American Dream.

### I. Definition

- a) Give your own definition of the "Fictions and Realities" notion
- b) Make a cloud of words with all of the key words to illustrate it

### II. What is a fiction?

- a) Find examples of fictions
- b) Classify them in a grid

### III. Compare

Now compare your definition of the notion to the definition below, if you share some key words it means that you understand the notion, if not make sure you learn the definition.

**A fiction:** A false report or statement that you pretend is true.

Etymologically, the word fiction has been derived from Latin word "fictus," which means "to form." However, in literature, Merriam Webster defines it as, "literature in the form of prose, especially novels, that describes imaginary events and people."

Fiction may be based on stories of actual historical events. Although fictitious characters are presented in a fictitious setting in stories and novels, they may have some resemblance to real life events and characters. Writers alter their characters very skilfully when they take them from actual life.

Example of fiction in literature: Alice in Wonderland (By Lewis Carrol)

The two main types of fiction are **literary** and **commercial**.

**Commercial fiction** attracts a broad audience and may also fall into any subgenre, like mystery, romance, legal thriller, western, science fiction, and so on. For example, *The Bridges of Madison County* by Robert James Waller (Warner, 1992) was a hugely successful commercial novel because the book described the fulfilment of a romantic fantasy that is dear to the heart of millions of readers. Written in a short, easy-to-read style, the book was as mesmerizing to 15-year-olds as it was to 100-year-olds. Other blockbuster commercial fiction authors include John Grisham, Sidney Sheldon, Danielle Steele, and Jackie Collins.

**Literary fiction** tends to appeal to a smaller, more intellectually adventurous audience. A work of literary fiction can fall into any of the subgenres described in the following sections. What sets literary fiction apart, however, is the notable qualities it contains — excellent writing, originality of thought, and style — that raise it above the level of ordinary written works. A recent work of literary fiction that enjoyed wide popularity was *Cold Mountain* by Charles Frazier (Atlantic Monthly Press, 1997). Other popular authors of literary fiction include Toni Morrison, Barbara Kingsolver, John LeCarre, and Saul Bellow.

**Mainstream fiction** is a general term publishers and booksellers use to describe both commercial and literary works that depict a daily reality familiar to most people. These books, usually set in the 20th or present-day 21st century, have at their core a universal theme that attracts a broad audience. Mainstream books deal with such myriad topics as family issues, coming of age initiations, courtroom dramas, career matters, physical and mental disabilities, social pressures, political intrigue, and more. Regardless of original genre or category, most of the novels that appear on the bestseller list are considered mainstream, whether the author is Sue Grafton, Arundhati Roy, Michael Crichton, or David Guterson.

**Reality** are the things in life that are commonly observed and verified to exist, things that are consistent and not random or influenced by conformity or mass hysteria. Something that is perceived as real and is physically experienced by the senses.

The theme the American Dream is incorporated in the notion “fictions and realities” because the American Dream has always been questioned, we don't really know if it is a fiction or if it is real!

## The American Dream

- a) What do you know about the American Dream?
- b) What does "the pursuit of happiness mean"?
- c) Do you know any example of people who embody the American Dream? Explain

**The American Dream** is the belief that everyone in the US has the chance to be successful and happy if they work hard. It is embedded in the deepest layers of American society. “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness,” is the founding creed from the Declaration of Independence that aims at fulfilment in life to all.

## Example of problematic and outline

### Example

Can we still succeed in the USA, today?

- I. The American dream, a symbol of success
- II. From hope to disappointment

