

This research project explored depictions of the American Dream in three fiction books published in the early 1900's: *The Grapes of Wrath*, *The Great Gatsby*, and *This Side of Paradise* as well as one non-fiction book published in 1931, *The Epic of America*. The purpose of this study was to identify the narrative expression of the American Dream as a way of mapping out its conceptual development in the context of America's socio-political environment. I conducted an extensive analysis on the formal components of each work, accounting for each novel's unique writing style, theme and thesis, the author's method of developing their ideas, and each of their various other salient features. *The Epic of America* provides historical context for the exploration of the three novels, and gives a frank account of the principles of individualism, meritocracy, and hard work underlying the concept of the American Dream. Each novel explores a stage in America's social development in the early 1900's. This Dream depends on a socio-economic environment where hard work and playing by the rules appears to lead to upward mobility and that opportunity for such mobility is available to all Americans, rather than unfairly handed out. *This Side of Paradise* sheds light on America's inability to find a driving ethos on the societal level after the first world war due to hardship culminating in a loss of faith in the American Dream. *The Great Gatsby* explores the economic boom of the 1920's, and the divorce of the principles behind the American Dream and individuals born into great wealth. Finally, in the *Grapes of Wrath*, the story of a displaced migrant family sheds light on the lack of opportunity for social mobility among many hard working families during the Great Depression. The author shows that the individualist system created by the American Dream caused material wealth to be prized above human life, creating a hotbed of collectivist, revolutionary sentiment with the potential to undermine the core principles of the American Dream. The American Dream was at the heart of cultural discourse in the early 20th century just as much as it is today, its conception intrinsically tied to the sociopolitical environment it is expressed in. This research endeavours to map out the development of the American Dream through narrative, shedding light on the common myths binding Americans together in an increasingly divided cultural landscape.