

Crevecoeur's America: Very Different from Today

I enjoyed reading Crevecoeur's essay Letter III: What is an American, and I share his pride and enthusiasm for our country. And all it has to offer. However, alot has changed in the more than 200 years since he wrote his letter. Today's typical American is very different than the one Crevecoeur describes.

Comment [JJ1]: Use quotation marks for titles of essays and shorter works; underline titles of longer works like books

Comment [JJ2]: This is a fragment; it is not a complete sentence that makes sense on its own. Try joining it to the preceding sentence.

Comment [JJ3]: "a lot" (two words)

Comment [JJ4]: This is a nice, concise introduction with a clear thesis statement – good job!

Crevecoeur describes the Americans of his time as "tillers of the earth" and "a people of cultivators" (108), but our country's economy no longer revolves around agriculture. Most of us are

Comment [JJ5]: Good topic sentence.

consumers, not cultivators; we are more likely to get dinner from the McDonald's drive-through window than from our own gardens. This kind of reliance on fast-food meals can lead to obesity and increased heart disease. People should be smarter about their food choices and eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables every day. And while in Crevecoeur's rural community "each person works for himself"

Comment [JJ6]: I like the specific detail – that's very true!

(108) that is not the case today. Of course, there are some entrepreneurial types who have their own companies, but most of us work for someone else. Instead of driving a plow across our own land, we

Comment [JJ7]: These statements (while true) do not support your overall thesis or the main point of this paragraph, so they should be deleted to preserve UNITY.

drive long distances to go to work on computers in fabric-covered cubicles in tall office buildings. At

Comment [JJ8]: I like the contrast of this specific example.

some big companies, like IBM, Intel, and Cisco, you might not even get to *see* the owner(s) except on videotaped speeches shown in big conference rooms. Most employees don't pay attention during those

Comment [JJ9]: Don't shift pronoun point-of-view from "we" to "you." (In fact, you should avoid using "you" in your essays unless directly addressing the reader)

speeches and only show up to get the free doughnuts. I don't know if Crevecoeur would be happy to see what his "perfect society" of humble farmers has become today.

Comment [JJ10]: Again, this is a very true (and kind of funny) point, but it doesn't belong in this paragraph – I'd leave it out.

Crevecoeur describes America as a place of refuge for "the poor of Europe" but today America welcomes a much more diverse range of immigrants. Many immigrants today are not poor at all, but well-educated engineers and technicians from middle- or upper-class families in India or Asia. Some of today's immigrants are poor, like those who travel back and forth across the southern border to earn money in America and help support their families in Mexico. And some immigrants are extremely wealthy and successful businesspeople in their own countries who just want to experience life in America. In

Comment [JJ11]: This is a run-on sentence; you need to have a comma before the "but" to join together these two complete ideas.

Crevecoeur's day the only immigrants were from Western Europe. People come to America from all over the world. My own neighborhood includes people born in England, Japan, and Pakistan, and my husband works with engineers from China, Israel, and India. Although Crevecoeur describes the "new" American

Comment [JJ12]: These are good supporting points, but they aren't organized in a logical way. How about rearranging them and adding some transitional words as follows:
1. Although some immigrants today *are* poor...
2. Many immigrants are not poor at all...
3. And some are extremely wealthy.

Comment [JJ13]: You need some kind of transitional word (like "Also" or "Furthermore") at the beginning of this sentence to signal to the reader that you're shifting to your next main point

Comment [JJ14]: How about adding a "but" or "however" to join these two sentences together?

as a “strange mixture of blood, which you will find in no other country.” (109) I think he would be surprised to see how much “stranger” today’s ethnic and racial mixture can be.

Comment [JJ15]: Punctuation should go after the parenthetical citation

One thing that has not changed is our faith in what we now call the “American Dream.” As Crevecoeur explained, the American of his day could expect that “the rewards of his industry follow with equal steps the progress of his labor” (109). We still believe in this simple formula today. If we work hard, we will make money, and we will be able to do the things we want to do in life, and thus we will be successful. There are many examples of this today. It follows that the harder we work, the faster we can achieve this kind of success. This is what makes America great. People all over the world believe that America is the land of opportunity. Anyone can come here from any kind of background and, if he is willing to work hard, he will be able to achieve his dreams. There is no impossible dream in America. Anyone can do anything once he sets his mind to whatever it is.

Comment [JJ16]: Can you give some specific examples?

So, it turns out that although much has changed in America, in some ways we are still very similar to the Americans Crevecoeur described. We’re no longer a country made up simply of humble white European farmers; however, we still believe in the American Dream. That we can achieve success by working hard. I’m not sure if we are still what Crevecoeur hailed as “the most perfect society now existing in the world” (108). But I do think that overall we still try to live up to the ideals of freedom and equality that meant so much to Crevecoeur and to all Americans, past and present.

Comment [JJ17]: These are all nice sentiments, but do you have some specific examples or details to back them up?

Comment [JJ18]: Use a semicolon (;) before “however” to avoid a run-on sentence

Comment [JJ19]: Fragment

Comment [JJ20]: Nice, strong conclusion!

GENERAL COMMENTS

Overall, I liked this essay and thought you did a very thoughtful job of identifying key differences between Crevecoeur’s America and our country today. However, there are several ways you can make this essay stronger:

1. Your first body paragraph (about farmers) has several sentences that don’t belong. In general, you want to strive for UNITY in your essay and in each paragraph. If a detail or example doesn’t support your essay’s overall thesis or the main point of that paragraph, then you should delete it.
2. The second body paragraph (on immigrants) is full of many good specific details, but some of the sentences seem out of order. You can improve the COHERENCE of your writing by organizing your ideas in a logical way, and include more transitional words to help make it easier for the reader to follow.
3. The last body paragraph, unfortunately, lacks any specific examples to provide SUPPORT for your main points. You really need to beef up this paragraph with more details; otherwise it seems much too vague and general. This is especially important since it is your last body paragraph, which is the one the reader will remember most clearly.
4. There are a few grammar and mechanical errors that I’ve noted in my comments. Be sure to clean those up in your next revision.

Let me know if you have any questions about any of these suggestions! -JJ