

## Unit 1 Sample A

How does American Exceptionalism counter American values?

**Bookend:** If American is the greatest country, then why are its core values not democratically experienced?

**ANSWER:** American Exceptionalism counters American values. American Exceptionalism is the idea that, in short, America is the best nation in the world. AMERICAN VALUES CAN BE DEFINED AS “wholesome” values such as liberty, justice and democracy. **EXPLAIN:** The concept of American Exceptionalism is tied closely to the concept of Manifest Destiny, which asserts that rapid global expansion is divine prophecy for the United States. THE UNIT demonstrates this is a problematic view because it reflects onto a nation otherwise marred by struggle and reform the experiences of the privileged few; thereby unjustly silencing and ostracizing the minorities that helped build America, and stripping them of their identities by alienating their experiences as unAmerican and irrelevant. American Exceptionalism, then, is nothing more than a thinly veiled political agenda to facilitate and promote a culture of ignorance, bias and mass hysteria under the guise of “wholesome” values such as liberty, justice and democracy. **SUPPORT 1:** For example, in “AntiIntellectualism is Killing America,” author David Niose asserts that “many of [America’s] social problems are rooted in the rejection of critical thinking or, conversely, the glorification of the emotional and irrational,” and argues further that, “corporate interests encourage anti-intellectualism, conditioning Americans into conformity and passive acceptance of institutional dominance.” **COMMENT 1:** This is a critical analysis of the hypocrisy that is American exceptionalism, and the foolishly blind optimism that it promotes under the label of “patriotism” within the ignorant masses so as to subdue them, in order to efficiently maintain the systems of power that favor corporate America. **SUPPORT 2:** In addition, “White Terrorism Is as Old as America,” author Brit Bennett draws a compelling conclusion in stating that, “In America’s contemporary imagination, terrorism is foreign and brown.” In that one succinct statement, Bennett has described essentially everything wrong with the ideology of American Exceptionalism, and how it defines “whiteness” as inherently American by projecting a very limited and privileged experience of the glory of expansion and capitalism as relevant to the fundamentals of this country. **COMMENT 2:** This demonstrates how American Exceptionalism equates blind optimism with patriotism and just misses the point that white denial and white suppression of minorities is in itself a great act of terrorism that defies the very ideals of liberty, justice and democracy that America seeks to promote.

**Bookend:** Until liberty, justice and democracy is experienced by all, America will fall short from being the best country it can be.