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АМЕРИКАНСКАЯ МЕЧТА В РОМАНЕ «СТЕКЛЯННЫЙ ЗАМОК» ДЖАННЕТТ УОЛЛС

THE AMERICAN DREAM IN THE NOVEL THE GLASS CASTLE BY JEANNETTE WALLS

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Abstract

The novel *The Glass Castle* by Jeannette Walls is an autobiographical work in which the author recounts her difficult childhood and upbringing in a family that constantly teetered on the edge of poverty and chaos. One of the central themes of the novel is the concept of the "American Dream" — the idea that every person, regardless of their background, can achieve success and prosperity through hard work and perseverance. This article explores how the author interprets and redefines this concept, demonstrating that the path to success can be fraught with

obstacles, yet remains attainable. The article also examines how family and personal ambitions influence the protagonist's perception of the "American Dream."

Keywords: American Dream, Jeannette Walls, The Glass Castle, poverty, family, success, self-realization, social mobility

Аннотация: Роман The Glass Castle (Стеклянный замок) Джаннетт Уоллс представляет собой автобиографическое произведение, в котором автор рассказывает о своем трудном детстве и взрослении в семье, которая постоянно балансировала на грани бедности и хаоса. Одной из центральных тем романа является концепция "американской мечты" — идеи о том, что каждый человек, независимо от своего происхождения, может достичь успеха и благополучия благодаря упорному труду и настойчивости. В данной статье исследуется, как автор интерпретирует и переосмысливает эту концепцию, показывая, что путь к успеху может быть полон препятствий, но при этом остается возможным. Также рассматривается, как семья и личные амбиции влияют на восприятие "американской мечты" главной героиней.

Ключевые слова: Американская мечта, Джаннетт Уоллс, The Glass Castle, бедность, семья, успех, самореализация, социальная мобильность

The "American Dream" is far from a homogeneous concept. Its semantic potential, its historical development, associated with various socio-economic changes in the United States and around the world, have been studied in numerous scientific and journalistic works, for example, in the book by D. Cullen "The American Dream: A Brief History of the Idea that Shaped the Nation" ², D. H. Beth "The American Dream and the Power of Wealth" ³, R. Miguez "Dialogues in the United States" ⁴ and others. The "American Dream" in various versions of understanding was also reflected in works of fiction, for example, in the story "Of Mice and Men" by D. Steinbeck (1937), the novel "The Catcher in the Rye" by J. D. Salinger (1951), the novel "Slaughterhouse-Five, or The Children's Crusade" by

K. Vonnegut (1972), the story "Panic in in a Suitcase" by E. Akhtiorskaia (Panic in a Suitcase, 2014) and many others. [4]

Today, the concept of the "American Dream" remains the subject of heated debate, as its traditional values - success through work, social mobility and access to opportunities - collide with new economic, political and cultural realities. Its relevance can be considered through several key aspects:

1. Economic inequality and the crisis of social mobility

Initially, the "American Dream" was built on the belief that hard work guarantees well-being. However, today the gap between rich and poor in the United States has reached a historical maximum. According to research, the chances of a person from the lower class to rise to the upper class have significantly decreased compared to the mid-20th century. This calls into question the very idea of equal opportunity.

2. Globalization and the transformation of the dream

The "American Dream" no longer belongs only to the United States — its ideals (personal freedom, material success) have become global. However, in different countries it takes on new forms: for example, in China it is the "Chinese Dream" of technological progress, and in Europe it is a balance between career and quality of life.

3. The digital age and new paths to success

Social networks and startup culture have created the illusion that success can be achieved instantly (like Elon Musk or Mark Zuckerberg). But at the same time, automation and artificial intelligence threaten traditional professions, forcing us to rethink the very concept of "honest earnings".

4. Ecology and sustainable development

The pursuit of material wealth is now accompanied by questions: at what cost? Climate crises and resource depletion are forcing us to reconsider the consumer model of the "dream" in favor of conscious minimalism and ESG principles (ecology, social responsibility, governance).

5. Politicization and the Crisis of Trust

In the age of polarization, the "American Dream" has become a propaganda tool. Some see it as a lost ideal, while others see it as a hypocritical myth that covers up systemic inequality. This is especially noticeable in debates about the availability of education, healthcare, and housing.

The "American Dream" today is no longer a universal reference point, but a complex, ambiguous symbol. For some, it remains a goal, for others, a relic of the past. Its future depends on whether society can adapt it to the challenges of the 21st century: reduce inequality, find a balance between progress and sustainability, and redefine what a "decent life" means in a global world. [7]

The concept of the "American Dream" occupies an important place in the cultural and social discourse of the United States. [6] It implies the belief that every person, regardless of their background, can achieve success and well-being through hard work, determination, and perseverance. However, in reality, the path to this dream is often difficult and contradictory, especially for those who face economic and social difficulties. Jeannette Walls' novel *The Glass Castle* offers a unique perspective on this concept through the lens of autobiographical narrative. The article examines how the author reveals the theme of the "American Dream" in the context of her life, full of hardships, but also hope and aspirations for a better future.

The American Dream is traditionally associated with the possibility of achieving material well-being, social success, and personal happiness. [2], [3] However, in Walls's novel, this concept takes on a more complex and multifaceted outline. Jeannette's family is a family that lives in extreme poverty, constantly moving from place to place, and facing many difficulties. Jeannette's parents, especially her father, Rex Walls, often talk about the "glass castle" - a symbol of their dream of a better life. However, this castle remains unattainable, which emphasizes the gap between the ideal and reality. Rex Walls, despite his ambition and intelligence, cannot realize his dreams due to alcoholism and inability to cope

with responsibility. His dreams of a "glass castle" become a metaphor for the unattainable ideal that he passes on to his children. At the same time, Jeannette's mother, Rose Mary, prefers to live in a world of illusions, refusing to acknowledge the reality of their plight. Thus, Jeannette's parents represent two different approaches to the "American Dream": one through the pursuit of material success, the other through the denial of reality. [1]

For Jeannette, the "American Dream" becomes not just an abstract idea, but a personal goal that she strives for despite all the difficulties. From an early age, she demonstrates incredible fortitude and a desire for independence. Unlike her parents, Jeannette does not allow circumstances to determine her future. She learns to find a way out of difficult situations takes responsibility for her life and gradually builds her future.

One of the key moments in the novel is Jeannette's decision to leave home and start a new life in New York. This step symbolizes her rejection of the past and the desire for a new life where she can realize her dreams. In New York, Jeannette faces new challenges, but thanks to her perseverance and hard work, she achieves success in her career as a journalist. Her story shows that the "American Dream" is possible, but it requires great effort and a willingness to overcome obstacles. Family plays a major role in shaping Jeannette's idea of the "American Dream." Despite the challenges, her parents impart important values such as independence, creativity, and self-confidence. However, their inability to provide stability and security forces Jeannette to find her own path. Her story highlights that social mobility is possible, but it requires not only personal effort but also community support.

The novel also raises the question of how accessible the "American Dream" is to those on the margins of society. Jeannette and her siblings face many obstacles, including poverty, lack of education, and social isolation. However, their story shows that even in such circumstances, opportunities for growth and self-realization can be found. *The Glass Castle* by Jeannette Walls offers a deep and

multifaceted look at the concept of the "American Dream." Through the prism of her own life, the author shows that the path to success can be full of difficulties and obstacles, but it remains possible. Jeannette's story is inspiring and reminds us of the importance of perseverance, self-confidence, and a willingness to overcome difficulties. At the same time, the novel makes us think about the social and economic barriers that prevent many people from realizing their dreams.

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