

Question Part

A meritocracy offers opportunities for advancement through individual ability and achievement. To what extent is your society meritocratic?

v1: The United States is meritocratic.

v2: The United States is not meritocratic, despite the expectations that it is.

In ~~the~~ ^{the} past, the United States has had many success stories through the American Dream, which involves starting out with nothing and ending up ~~with~~ ⁱⁿ successful. This idea is called the American Dream because it's something that ^{many} US citizens strive for, ~~working their way to the top~~. Two billionaires in particular are perfect examples of this extent of meritocracy. Well-known Oprah Winfrey and previous CEO of Starbucks coffee Howard Schultz both greatly struggled - growing up, living in poverty, ~~and~~ dealing with mistreatment, and taking on ~~a lot~~ ^{too much} of responsibility. ~~But~~ ^{Despite this,} both Winfrey and Schultz worked hard and persevered until they met their goals, and are now some of the richest people in the world. Anyone is born with this potential, and the United States provides the opportunities for ~~you~~ any individual to succeed in meritocracy if they work hard enough for it.

Education is an essential component of a meritocratic society. In the US, education is enforced until the age of 16 in most regions, and many programs are provided to assist those in need. Fundamentally, education is the beginning of earning merit in society. An individual's future begins its journey with schooling, prepping for higher education or a career path, ~~meaning it offers~~ ^{offering} several opportunities for the student. Through academic, athletic, and artistic achievement, students may earn scholarships to allow them to advance and achieve ~~more~~ in the future.

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Question Part

Florida has a great example of this, as the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship is earned through academic merit, and ~~rewards~~ ^{awards} money to fund the recipient's pursuit of higher education. Programs such as food stamps in the US also relieve some financial stress for qualifiers, which improves education in the long run.

In meritocratic society, the term "advancement" is subjective. Though billionaires are common examples of meritocracy in the US, progress does not always lead to becoming rich. ~~It's~~ ^{it is} also possible that working hard at a trade or skill will lead to opportunities and an individual will live comfortably and happily in their own American Dream. For example, an individual could be very interested in teaching ^{and} so they go to university. They may start out as a middle school teacher, but ~~through~~ ^{eventually} over time, opportunities may present themselves, and they become a ~~professor at college or university~~ ^{college professor}. This is not likely an example of a rich individual, but an individual who worked hard in a meritocratic system to achieve their goals.

A true meritocracy in the United States is unobtainable. Every individual begins at a different point, even neurologically. Mental illnesses such as depression or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and physical ones such as cystic fibrosis can heavily impair one's ability to achieve, despite regardless of their intelligence or true skills. These individuals cannot control this disadvantage, and many ~~don't~~ do not have the financial means or healthcare needed to seek therapy or medical help. An individual with healthcare and a generally healthy life will ~~receive~~ ^{receive} more opportunities than someone without those things, preventing sole reliance on merit.

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Question Part

Question	Part	
		<p>On the same note, family caused ^{may cause} disadvantage as well. For example, ^{US} immigrants to the US will have a much more difficult time succeeding and advancing than a citizen born in the US. The ^{immigrant} would need to worry about obtaining a Green Card and citizenship far more than earning merit and being successful. A second example might be between two children, where the first is a child of a single ^{mother} parent working overtime in poverty would struggle far more than a middle class biparental family's child. This is purely due to luck of the draw, and has nothing to do with individual ^{capabilities} ability. There are some aforementioned examples of success stories, but the average ^{of these} are few and far between. In a true meritocracy, this would be more common.</p>
		<p>Luck fact plays a huge part in what opportunities an individual is presented with, perhaps even more so than individual ability. Connections are extremely important in order to be successful in the United States, and can often "make or break" an individual. Many million ^{people} wealthy individuals such as Jeff Bezos and Mark Zuckerberg had previous investments, and did not were not entirely self built alongside the American Dream ideals. Jeff Bezos obtained a large sum from his parents, who just so happened to be wealthy enough to do so. Between Bezos' individual personal intelligence and skill and his familial luck, he became the richest ^{richest} person ^{person} in the world. Without his parent's help, opportunities may not have presented themselves ^{themselves}, and his rise to success may have fallen flat.</p>