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Circle the text type:

Film

Drama production

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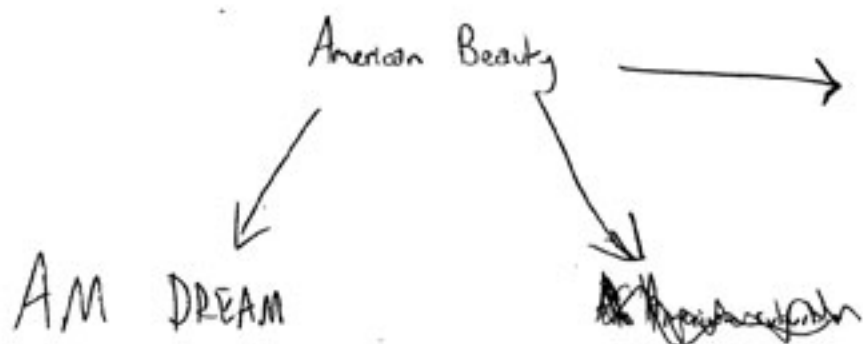
Electronic text

Intertextual studies

M

Question number: 3Title(s): American BeautyAuthor(s)/director(s)/producer(s)/website(s): Sam Mendes

## PLANNING



- AM DREAM
- Society's views on homosexuality
- American Suburbia

Start your essay on the next page.

Begin your essay here:

I completely agree that films such as American Beauty by Sam Mendes give us an insight into society. American Beauty can be linked to the Pagoda that is the American dream, society's views on homosexuality, and also the untrusting view of American suburbs. Mendes has incorporated many different views of modern American society in this film, and also has made managers question themselves, and their moral views after watching American Beauty.

American Beauty is a movie which achieved worldwide success in 1999, because of its abstract look at suburban America. The film is about a man going through a midlife crisis who discovers his youth when he meets a teenage girl, a gay army Colonel hiding the truth, a woman fixated on success rather than her distribution of liberalism, and a teenage gdrunk who understands the meaning of life.

The American Dream is a goal concept that drives many people to <sup>try and live</sup> successful lives. It often engulfs people and they seem to forget the more important parts of their lives. This can be seen as happening to Carolyn Burdham in American Beauty. Carolyn tries to be successful, and appear successful in all aspects of her life. Mostly she is successful as she has a nice car, a <sup>wealthy (money)</sup> house and a good job in real-estate. Her motto is "In order to be successful, one must promote an image of success at all times." This however ruins the relationships within her household. She does not understand her daughter Jane and she cannot communicate with her, and with her husband Lester, she fails to see his <sup>perform</sup> philosophy to enjoy life as it doesn't last forever. These failed relations and also that her firm is losing ground to "Buddy Cone, The King of Real Estate", make her life very miserable. Carolyn is unhappy and dysfunctional. She is also stressed out. This can be seen as an effect of being consumed by the American dream. Lester calls her a "...bloodless, money-grubbing freak," and in some ways he is right as Carolyn is fixated on money and possessions. In terms of this character, Mendes is trying to show the audience the Pagoda that is the American Dream as when it consumes

you, it is all that matters to you. Sam Mendes wants audiences to realize that American Dream is unattainable and that wealth does not make you happy but it's the people around you that make you happy.

In *American Beauty*, Sam Mendes incorporates society's view on homosexuality into his characters. There are ~~three~~ three homosexual characters in the film: ~~the~~ the two Jims, who are actually the only functional relationship within the movie, and Colonel Frank Fitts, who is a violent retired army officer, who has repressed his feelings and therefore has become very homophobic. This can be seen in the quote "What is it with these Faggots? Why do they always have to rub it in your face?" How can they be so stupid? This quote occurs after the two Jims visited the Fitts' house in a friendly attempt to welcome him into the neighborhood, and in a rather embarrassing incident when Jim says "partner", Colonel Frank Fitts asks "What's your business?" This shows his military education, as he is not used to communicating with open homosexuals. Frank Fitts is an example of society's negative view of homosexuality, when in fact the two Jims are the most normal of all the characters. It shows that even in today's modern and vibrant society homosexuality is still not accepted as a norm. The irony is that Colonel Fitts's violent behavior is a result of his own repressed homosexuality, which results in the death of Lester Burnham. ~~Mendes uses~~ ~~Lighting on~~ ~~Frank~~ ~~Fitts~~ is often very dark because of his true nature in being and his violent aggression towards others. Mendes shows us that homophobia is out of date, and should be expressed openly in modern society.

*American Beauty* came out during the post-Columbine trauma, when American Society had ~~of~~ ~~fallen~~ ~~for~~ and a the "What are your neighbors doing?" mentality. Mendes used this insecurity in *American Beauty* by making an apparently happy ~~is~~ ~~in~~ ~~his~~ neighborhood more ~~seem~~ ~~estranged~~ and dark than it initially appears. Mendes was adding to society's post-Columbine hype. Within the Burnham and Fitts' household many interesting acts were occurring as Ricky Fitts is a drug dealer, Cordy has an affair, Lester blackmails his boss for \$60 thousand US dollars and Colonel Fitts commits murder. ~~It's his~~ ~~struggles~~

The theme of appearance versus reality ~~is a play~~ is evident here as nothing is as it first appears. American Beauty can be related well to modern suburbia, as people often find they are not trusting of their neighbours. Mendes ~~is a British~~ ~~director~~ ~~who~~ ~~used~~ ~~American~~ ~~Society's~~ ~~insecurity~~ ~~within~~ ~~the~~ ~~film~~ ~~thus~~ ~~giving~~ ~~us~~ ~~a~~ ~~some~~ ~~what~~ ~~abstract~~ ~~but~~ possible view of American Society.

In conclusion, the British director Sam Mendes captured several of American Society's beliefs and current feeling in making American Beauty, and in so doing he has shown us ~~at~~ his <sup>own</sup> beliefs and purpose. He expressed that the American Dream is a façade, that society should be more accepting of homosexuality and he related the film to ~~the~~ untrusting American Suburbia. Therefore I agree that films such as American Beauty offer insight into society.