**Vámanos—What does it meant to be an American?**

To be an American. Many take this phrase too lightly others, too strict. Being an American does not mean that you go to baseball games and eat hot dogs, but to live your life out to the fullest, not just waving around a flag every day. Being an American is to help another, whether it be Polish or Chinese or Afghan or Muslim. Being an American means helping your sworn enemy, even if you do not wish, but you shall help with dignity and pride. Being American means that you capture the true essence of every being, from the simplest little flower to the most-beautiful person in the world. Being American means to be united as one, under whatever deity you worship, and to be able to depend, rely, and give hope to each other. Because being American does not just mean living in America, every person has a part of being an American in them, deep inside, embedded, until they wish to release that piece, and share it with the world. That is what a true American is.
**Jonathan B., 12, Hawaii**

To be an American is the greatest thing in the world. We have freedom and liberty. We also have a very diverse country which means we are stronger because we have to learn all the different ways of living. I am very lucky to be an American.
**Morgan A., 11, Kentucky**

To be an American for me means freedom and justice. I also think being an American is a big responsibility.
**Neil C., 10, Wisconsin**

Sacrifice is a huge part of patriotism. When soldiers go off to war, they know full well that not all of them will come home, but those soldiers, as well as their families, are ready for the sacrifice they are called to make. It sounds horrible, but those soldiers know that there is a price for freedom and they are willing to pay it to keep us safe at home. However, it’s not just our military that shows patriotism — teachers, politicians, doctors and soldiers are just a few of the people who show great devotion and dedication to the United States and they each do it in a unique way.

**Collen S., 14 California**

Read the quotes above, then write in your own words (in complete sentences), what do you think it means to be an American?