



## About the USA – Virtual Classroom Newsletter for English Teachers

### In this issue:

[News for Students](#) | [Elections 2008](#) | [Teaching Literature: Contemporary Literature for Young Adults](#)

This Month: [St. Patrick's Day](#) and [Women's History Month](#) | [Web Chat Station](#) & [Education USA](#) | [Leipzig Book Fair](#)

### NEWS for STUDENTS

Discuss current news -- such as Kosovo's Independence or the dramatic fall of the U.S. Dollar in class -- using **NEWS WEBSITES** for students.

#### Kosovo

On Feb 17, after lengthy negotiations with Serbia led by the EU/Russia/U.S. troika, the elected representatives of the people of Kosovo declared the province's independence. "A longer delay in independence would have contributed to greater regional instability. Kosovo's unique history, its long period under U.N. administration and the diplomatic process that led to U.N. Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari's 12-point plan for independence following a period of international supervision make its situation unique." [America.gov: Kosovo's Independence](#)

#### PBS NewsHour Extra: [Kosovo Becomes Newest Nation](#)

The Serbian province of Kosovo -- which is made up of a largely ethnic Albanian population -- has declared independence and become the world's newest nation.

- **Related Coverage: News for Students**  
[Serbia Cleared of Genocide But Guilty of Inaction](#)  
[Milosevic's War Crimes Trial](#)  
[Birth of Democracy in the Former Yugoslavia](#)
- **The Online NewsHour**  
[U.S. Envoy Discusses Kosovo Independence Declaration](#)  
[U.N.-Backed Talks Deadlock Over Kosovo Status](#)
- **NYT Topics:** [Kosovo](#)

**Quote:** "I want to be very clear that we see a future in which Kosovo and Serbia are both strong and free and in which both are fully integrated into the Euro-Atlantic horizon and Euro-Atlantic structures..." – Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

#### America.gov: [Bush Hails Kosovo Independence](#)

Pledging to work with Kosovo for a peaceful transition, President Bush says, "Kosovo committed itself to the highest standards of democracy, including freedom and tolerance and justice for citizens of all ethnic backgrounds. These are principles that honor human dignity; they are values America looks for in a friend."

#### The Fall of the Dollar

The EURO has reached a new high against the dollar, with the 15-nation currency at one point worth \$1.5087. The drop in the dollar came after a series of dour reports on the U.S. economy and expectations that the Federal Reserve will continue slashing interest rates. CNN [full story](#)

**PBS NewsHour Extra:** Sliding U.S. Dollar Packs a Wallop to Wallets Worldwide - The dollar, once one of the world's strongest currencies, has fallen dramatically in recent years -- a development impacting attitudes from corporate boardrooms to the sets of music videos where artists are choosing to flash the EURO over U.S. Dollars. [PBS full story](#)

#### Links

- PBS NewsHour EXTRA: [Stagflation Threatens U.S. Economy](#)
- PBS Lesson Plan: [The Fall of the Dollar](#)



© [PBS - Online NewsHour EXTRA](#)



© [America.gov/ AP Images:](#)

Students in Pristina celebrate Kosovo's February 17 declaration of independence.



© [PBS NewsHour Extra:](#)

The U.S. dollar has lost more than a quarter of its value compared to other currencies.



New York Times - Learning Network - [NEWS](#)



[CNN Student News](#)



© [Scholastic News](#) helps students build skills and connects classroom learning to timely current events in an accessible, kid-friendly way.



[How America Elects](#) - Video series from Voice of America looking at the U.S. election process from the campaigns to Election Day and beyond.

### Survey

#### [The Internet's Broader Role in Campaign 2008](#)

*Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, January 2008:* The internet is living up to its potential as a major source for news about the presidential races. Nearly a quarter of Americans say they regularly learn something about the campaign from the internet, almost double the percentage at a comparable point in 2004. Moreover, the internet has now become a leading source of campaign news for young people and the role of social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook is a notable part of the story. Fully 42% of those ages 18 to 29 say they regularly learn about the campaign from the internet, the highest percentage for any news source.

**PBS:** [Media Literacy](#) - How do you help your students succeed in a media-filled world? Do they know how media is created? Can they analyze the messages that inform, entertain, and sell to us everyday? Have they created their own media messages? - Resources: quiz on media consumption, trends, legislation, organizations & research, PBS resources, activity ideas.



© VOA - U.S. election campaigning is increasingly becoming Internet based

### Article

o ResearchPennState: [Can a Woman be Elected President?](#) - "The U.S. has yet to have a woman come close to winning the presidency. Professor Gutgold thinks this has had more to do with issues other than gender."

### Teaching Resources

- NYT Learning Network: [Girl Power!?](#)  
**Examining the Role of Gender in American Politics and Society:** In this lesson (Grades 6-8, 9-12) students examine the impact of gender role expectations on their own lives and those of ordinary Americans and compare their findings with the influence of gender role expectations on contemporary American presidential politics. (Feb 11, 2008)
- NYT Learning Network: [Workin' \(More Than\) 9 to 5](#) (Grades 6-8, 9-12)  
**Exploring the Roles of Men and Women in Today's World:** In this lesson, students will consider how men and women are alike and different, and explore society's expectations of how members of each gender should balance work and family life. (June 1, 2007)

## ELECTIONS 2008

### The Internet - A Powerful Tool in U.S. Politics

The Internet is having a great influence on this year's race for President. Internet allows people to learn about candidates faster and is believed to be encouraging young people to think about the presidential campaign.

#### **eJournal USA:** [The New Media and U.S. Politics](#)

New technologies and their savviest users are leaving their stamp on many U.S. election campaigns — exposing candidate gaffes, boosting fundraising, and reshaping the news cycle. [...] The World Wide Web and the accompanying explosion in "new media" have forced an upheaval in U.S. politics in at least four areas, creating 1) innovative ways to reach voters; 2) a radically changed news system; 3) an unprecedented flood of small donors; and 4) newly empowered interest groups on the left and the right. Read Columbia University Professor Thomas B. Edsall's article on the influence of the new media on U.S. politics.

#### **PBS:** A Race to Watch

#### [Campaign 2008 - The Role of Technology and the Internet](#)

Students analyze the use of technology in the political and campaign process and examine how this new medium might impact the outcome of the 2008 presidential election.

#### [Presidential Campaigns Explore a New Medium](#)

Several presidential hopefuls, including Senators Clinton and Obama, have used the Internet to announce their candidacy. A political media expert analyzes the impact that the Internet will have on campaigns for the 2008 presidency.

#### **Voice of America:** [Internet Becomes Powerful Political Tool](#)

Nov 12, 2007 · While political campaigns in the United States have used the Internet since the 1990s, the importance of the Internet has grown dramatically in the current campaign for the White House. In this segment of "How America Elects," VOA's Jeffrey Young looks at how candidates and their parties make strategic use of cyberspace.  
*watch Internet Politics report / Windows broadband - download*   
*watch Internet Politics report / Windows broadband*

#### **National Public Radio:**

#### [Technology Transforms Youth Vote in 2008 Election](#)

Feb 24, 2008 · Young people have proven to be an important political force in the 2008 election cycle. Changes in technology are enabling them to get involved in politics in new and interesting ways. Mindy Finn is a Republican strategist, and former director of e-Strategy for Mitt Romney's presidential campaign. Joshua Levy is with [techPresident.com](#), a company that tracks how the 2008 presidential candidates and their supporters are using the Internet. They explore the youth vote in 2008.  
[Article](#)

### Gender and Politics

In recent political history, only a handful of female presidential candidates made the effort: Margaret Chase Smith (1964), Shirley Chisholm (1972), Patricia Schroeder (1988) and Sen. Elizabeth Dole (R-N.C.) in 2000.

#### **NPR:** [In Politics, Gender and Race Vie for Top Billing](#)

Feb 17, 2008 · A discussion about "the prominence of identity politics as Clinton and Obama compete over the Democratic nomination. Which is more fundamental, more essential: gender or race? Whose "turn" is it - the white women's or the black man's? Liane Hansen speaks to Diane Roberts and poet E. Ethelbert Miller about race and identity in the U.S.

#### **Questions for Discussion:**

- How important do you think personal characteristics, such as race, gender, religion, etc. should be in electing a presidential candidate?
- How important is it to have representatives from different groups?  
NYT Lesson: [Are We There Yet? Exploring Diversity in American Politics](#)

**NEW publication:** [Women in Politics: Making a Difference in the USA](#). Interviews with women who are changing the face of politics.

**NYT Opinion Piece:** [When Women Rule](#). By Nicholas D. Kristof, Feb 10, 2008. "While no woman has been president of the U.S. — yet — the world does have several thousand years' worth of experience with female leaders. [...] Their historical record puts men's to shame."

## Teaching Literature: Literature for Young Adults

### Alex Awards

The American Library Association's (ALA) [Alex Awards](#) are given to ten books written for adults that have special appeal to young adults, ages 12 through 18. The winning titles are selected from the previous year's publishing. The Alex Awards were created to recognize that many teens enjoy and often prefer books written for adults, and to assist librarians in recommending adult books that appeal to teens. The award is named in honor of the late Margaret Alexander Edwards, a young adult specialist at the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore. She used adult books extensively with young adults to broaden their experience and enrich their understanding of themselves and their world.

The [2008 Alex Awards](#) winners are:

- ❖ **American Shaolin: Flying Kicks, Buddhist Monks, and the Legend of Iron Crotch: An Odyssey in the New China**, by Matthew Polly
- ❖ **Bad Monkeys**, by Matt Ruff
- ❖ **Essex County Volume 1: Tales from the Farm**, by Jeff Lemire
- ❖ **Genghis: Birth of an Empire**, by Conn Iggulden
- ❖ **A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier**, by Ishmael Beah
- ❖ **Mister Pip**, by Lloyd Jones
- ❖ **The Name of the Wind**, by Patrick Rothfuss
- ❖ **The Night Birds**, by Thomas Maltman
- ❖ **The Spellman Files**, by Lisa Lutz

&

### ❖ **The God of Animals** by Aryn Kyle

"When her older sister runs away to marry a rodeo cowboy, Alice Winston is left to bear the brunt of her family's troubles -- a depressed, bedridden mother; a reticent, overworked father; and a run-down horse ranch. As the hottest summer in fifteen years unfolds and bills pile up, Alice is torn between dreams of escaping the loneliness of her duty-filled life and a longing to help her father mend their family and the ranch. To make ends meet, the Winstons board the pampered horses of rich neighbors, and for the first time Alice confronts the power and security that class and wealth provide. As her family and their well-being become intertwined with the lives of their clients, Alice is drawn into an adult world of secrets and hard truths, and soon discovers that people -- including herself -- can be cruel, can lie and cheat, and every once in a while, can do something heartbreaking and selfless." [Simon & Schuster](#)

#### Links

- Official website for [Aryn Kyle](#)
- Ploughshare story by Aryn Kyle, [Allegiance](#)
- Simon & Schuster Reading Guide for [The God of Animals](#)
- Newsday review of [The God of Animals](#)
- BookPage review of [The God of Animals](#)

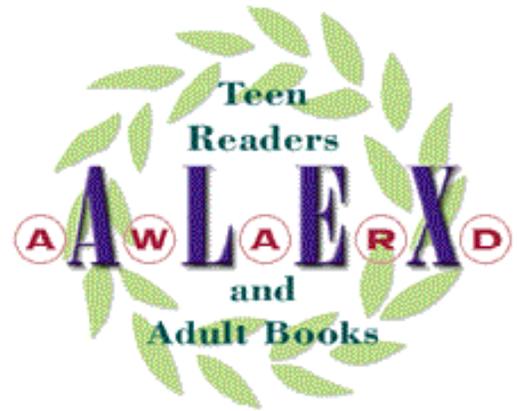
**NPR Interview:** [Debut Novel Chronicles Coming of Age in the West](#)  
Kyle talks with Scott Simon about her own Colorado upbringing and how she managed to write a book that reveres horses, but doesn't get sentimental about them. (March 31, 2007) [Listen Now](#)

ALA's Young Adult Library Services Association:

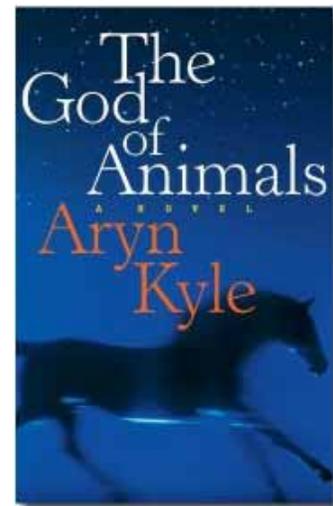
### The Best Books for Young Adults & Quick Picks

The [Best Books for Young Adults list](#) is compiled annually by a committee of the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA), a division of ALA. The books, recommended for those ages 12-18, meet the criteria of both good quality literature and appealing reading for teens. The list comprises a wide range of genres and styles, including contemporary realistic fiction that reflects the diversity of the teen experience, nonfiction that brings to teens an awareness of the world they live in and its history, and fantastical stories told in both narrative and graphic formats.

YALSA also compiles a [2008 Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers](#) selection list. The Quick Picks list suggests books that teens, ages 12-18, will pick up on their own and read for pleasure; it is geared to the teenager who, for whatever reason, does not like to read.



© [American Library Association](#)



© Simon & Schuster

*"Six months before Polly Cain drowned in the canal, my sister, Nona, ran off and married a cowboy. My father said there was a time when he would have been able to stop her, and I wasn't sure if he meant a time in our lives when she would have listened to him, or a time in history when the Desert Valley Sheriff's Posse would have been allowed to chase after her with torches and drag her back to our house by her yellow hair."*

Chapter 1 [More](#)



© [Booklist](#)



This 2007 St. Patrick's Day parade demonstrates the Irish became Americans without sacrificing their religious and cultural heritage. © AP Images/Fukada

**Links**

- America.gov: [Diversity](#)
- Library of Congress: [Irish-Catholic Immigration](#)

**New on the Web:** [Immigrants in the United States: 2007](#). The Center for Immigration Studies uses Census Bureau data collected in March 2007 and details the quantity and socio-economic status of immigrant and foreign-born inhabitants of the USA, both legal and illegal.



© History Channel: Women's History Month

**Links**

- The [National Women's History Project](#) (NWHP)
- Library of Congress Learning Page: [Her Story](#)
- University of Wash. Libraries: [History of Women](#)
- Scholastic: [Women Who Changed History](#)
- Library of Congress: [American Women](#)

**THIS MONTH**

**St. Patrick's Day - Irish Immigrants in the United States**

Irish immigrants had a rough start in the United States, stuck in urban poverty and taunted by some of their neighbors. They and their descendants overcame the obstacles and prevailed. Today the Irish are one of the most prosperous ethnic groups in the U.S., significantly exceeding national averages on education levels, occupational status, and income. In line with their steady upward social mobility during the 20th century, the American Irish moved out of the tight-knit urban communities of the Northeast and Midwest to settle in suburbs, towns, and cities across the U.S. They also married increasingly outside their ethnic group, first with other Catholics and then with Americans generally. The result of these developments is a much less cohesive sense of communal identity than in the past. But Irish Americans retain a strong sense of ethnic pride, especially in politics and culture. [Article](#)

**National Public Radio:**

**What of American Democracy Is Worth Exporting? [Listen Now](#)**

[All Things Considered](#), Marianne McCune, February 20, 2008: How do immigrants to this country view the messy process of democracy? What would they like to bring home to their own countries? In the midst of the primary season, immigrants in New York City talk about their perceptions of the process and the problems. What they're observing is messy and complicated, often angry and combative, and sometimes inspiring. They're taking mental notes on what works and what doesn't.

**Women's History Month & International Women's Day**

[CNN Student News](#): March is Women's History Month, a federally recognized, nationwide celebration that encourages Americans to reflect on the ways in which women have shaped U.S. history. But how did this celebration come to be, and why is it held in March?

**Teaching Resource**

- **American Women's History** provides citations to print and Internet reference sources, as well as to selected large primary source collections. Many of the [Digital Collections of Primary Sources](#) are appropriate for high school and perhaps middle school students.

**Webchat Station**

[Upcoming AskAmerica Webchats](#)

**EDUCATION USA WEBCHAT**

**Friday, March 14, 15:00 – 16:00**  
**STUDY, INTERNSHIPS, SUMMER JOBS, HIGH SCHOOL STAYS IN THE U.S.**

Questions relating to studying, working or seeking internships in the U.S. will be answered by representatives from the Information Resource Center and Consular sections. [Please register](#) in advance or join us at the booth (Halle 4, D301).

**LEIPZIG BOOK FAIR**

The Consulate General Leipzig is once again present with a booth, at which our colleagues will display a wide variety of the latest American titles, all generously contributed by U.S. publishers. After the Fair, CG Leipzig will be presenting these books to university, city and school libraries throughout eastern Germany. There will also be on hand free copies of the New York Review of Books and other U.S. publications. The Consulate's booth will be located in **Halle 4 D301**.

**"KRAUTGARDEN"** American and German authors team up to read from their works... including Uljana Wolf, Christian Hawkey, Ulrike Almut Sandig, Christopher Edgar and Peter Licht. Alte Baumwollspinnerei, Spinnereistraße 7, Leipzig \* Friday, March 14, 20:00 - open end

<http://leipzig.usconsulate.gov/>



**usa.usembassy.de**

*About the USA* is a digital collection of background resources on American society, culture, and political processes. In addition to featuring selected websites, it provides access to documents in full text format (E-Texts) on topics ranging from the history of German-American relations, government and politics to travel, holidays and sports.

This newsletter is produced by the Information Resource Centers/U.S. Diplomatic Mission to Germany.

\*Request password to download articles: [usa.usembassy.de/classroom/newsletter\\_reg.htm](http://usa.usembassy.de/classroom/newsletter_reg.htm)

\*\*Order articles via the IRC in your consular district. See: [usa.usembassy.de/classroom/](http://usa.usembassy.de/classroom/)

Questions? Contact: [classroom@usembassy.de](mailto:classroom@usembassy.de)