



About the USA – Virtual Classroom Newsletter for English Teachers

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Election 2008 – Results and Analysis

On November 4, Americans elected Illinois Senator Barack Obama the 44th president of the United States. Addressing supporters in Chicago November 4, the president-elect said, "[...] tonight we've proved once more that the true strength of our nation comes not from the might of our arms or the scale of our wealth, but from the enduring power of our ideals: democracy, liberty, opportunity and unyielding hope." Crowds spontaneously wept, cheered and danced in the streets as they embraced news of Barack Obama's historic victory as the next president of the U.S. ([Video](#), America.gov) For many people around the world, the election was an illustration of what they like about the U.S. -- the vitality of its democracy and the notion of the United States as a land of opportunity.

The Youth Vote

In 2008, young people voted for Democrats with a margin of 2 to 1.

Young Voters in the 2008 Election: In the last three general elections - 2004, 2006, and 2008 -- young voters have given the Democratic Party a majority of their votes, and for all three cycles they have been the party's most supportive age group. This year, 66% of those under age 30 voted for Barack Obama making the disparity between young voters and other age groups larger than in any presidential election since exit polling began in 1972. As with older voters, a gender gap appears in young voters' support for the Democratic ticket: 69% of younger women voted Democratic, compared with 62% of comparably aged men. One of the most striking features of young voters is their racial and ethnic diversity. Just 62% of voters age 18-29 identify as white, while 18% are black and 14% Hispanic. Four years ago, this age group was 68% white. In 2000, nearly three-quarters (74%) of young voters were white. Women voters significantly outnumber men among younger voters, constituting 55% of those 18-29 and 30-44. (Please find details of these patterns of votes at the Pew Research Center's website.)

Voter Turnout in Election Falls Short Of Record * [Listen Now](#) * NPR, Nov. 11: Close to 62% of eligible voters cast their ballots in last week's elections. The highest number since 1964 (67% turnout in 1960).

The World Reacts to the Election

Not only in homes and on streets across the United States, did people celebrate the election of Barack Obama as a significant event in U.S. history. This holds especially true for Kenyans: [Kenyans Celebrate Barack Obama as One of Their Own](#). Kenya, the home country of Obama's father, followed the Illinois senator's campaign closely, viewing him as one of its own. Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki declared November 6 a national holiday in honor of Obama. (America.gov)

- ❖ [The Obama Fantasy](#) (*Foreign Policy*, web exclusive article, Nov. 2008) On November 4 in Kenya, one might mistakenly conclude that Obama was running for president here and not in the United States. There is undeniably an over-the-top quality about Kenya's embrace of Obama. The government declared a national holiday to celebrate the Illinois senator's victory over John McCain. The National Theater is staging "Obama: The Musical."
- ❖ [Global Media Celebrate Obama Victory](#) (Pew Global Attitudes Project, Nov. 13)



President George W. Bush and President-elect Barack Obama meet in the Oval Office of the White House on Nov. 10. (© White House photo)

In Focus

- [Barack Obama's Victory Speech](#) ([Video](#))
- [John McCain's Concession Speech](#) (Transcript)

Results

- [Election Results](#) (NYT)
- [General Election Results](#) (C-SPAN)
- [Election Center](#) (CNN)
- [Inside Obama's Sweeping Victory](#) (PEW)

Timeline 2008 Presidential Election: Summary of Key Dates, Events & Information (NARA)

Links

- [Larry J. Sabato's CrystalBall'08](#) (U of Virginia)
- [Cook Political Report](#) (non-partisan analysis)
- [Ongoing Political Analysis of the 2008 Elections](#) (RealClearPolitics)

Multimedia from America.gov

- [Photo Gallery: World Reacts to Election](#)
- [Video: Crowds Electrified by Obama Win](#)
- [Photo Gallery: Barack Obama](#)



Barack Obama's Kenyan step grandmother, center, speaks about her relative's victory. (© AP Images/ America.gov)



Change.gov: Office of the President-elect Transition Website: Newsroom, blog, rss feeds and links to policy questions that the Obama campaign advocated during the election.

Articles

- [Obama Foreign Policy May Be Rooted in Multilateral Diplomacy](#) - Change in policy will not be immediate, political analyst says: When Barack Obama takes the oath of office January 20, 2009, a new American approach to foreign policy may be in the works -- but change will not come immediately. (Nov. 7, 2008, America.gov)
- [Meet the 44th U.S. President](#)
- [President-elect Obama Planning Response to Economic Crisis](#)
- [Illinois Congressman is Obama's First White House Appointment](#)

Official Statements

- [White House Transition page](#)
- [Statement by Pres. Bush on the Presidential Election \(Nov. 5\)](#)
- [Remarks by Sec. Rice on Presidential Election \(Nov. 5\)](#)
- [White House Fact Sheet: Ensuring a Smooth and Effective Presidential Transition \(Oct. 28\)](#)

Biographies

- [ePublication: Barack Obama: 44th President of the United States](#)
- [President-elect Barack Obama](#)
- [First Lady Michelle Obama](#)
- [Vice President-elect Joe Biden & Mrs. Jill Biden](#)

Media

- [New Administration](#) (C-SPAN)
- [Transition to Power](#) (CNN)
- [The New Team](#) (New York Times)

Polls

- [Tracking the New Administration's Progress](#)
- [Americans Hopeful Obama Can Accomplish Most Key Goals](#) (Gallup)



Supporters of Barack Obama celebrate at an Atlanta church November 4. (© AP Images/ America.gov)

Inauguration

- [Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies – Inaugural History:](#) For more than two hundred years America's citizens have witnessed the Inauguration ceremonies of the President and Vice President of the U.S. - From the first Inauguration of George Washington, in New York City, in 1789, to today.

Please look for our January edition for more information on the Inauguration.

Presidential Transition

Work Begins Immediately for Next U.S. President and His Team: Major economic, foreign policy challenges await the Obama administration

Barack Obama will not take the oath of office until January 20, 2009, but work to address the many challenges that await him in the presidency begins immediately.

As campaign staffs across the country clean out their offices, a transition team begins its work to ensure the Obama administration is ready to handle the major foreign policy and economic challenges facing the United States. The transition team, which will include experts on every major policy issue, will begin preparing policy recommendations for the president-elect and help him select Cabinet members. These Cabinet appointments are subject to confirmation by the new Congress after Obama is sworn in. The transition team will receive help from the White House. The peaceful transfer of power from one presidential administration to the next is a hallmark of American democracy, and the Bush administration is committed to assisting with that transfer.

Transition planning began months ago. Federal agencies and White House offices have prepared briefings on significant pending policy issues for the president-elect's transition team.

Foreign Policy Challenges: When Barack Obama becomes president on January 20, 2009, he will become commander in chief of U.S. military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Obama has criticized the Iraq war since its beginning and has pledged to begin withdrawing troops as soon as he is inaugurated, with a goal of having most troops out of the country within 16 months.

Throughout his campaign, Obama called for a multilateral approach to foreign policy in which the United States would engage more deeply and more frequently with its allies. American University professor Allan Lichtman told journalists at the State Department's Foreign Press Center November 3 that he expects the Obama administration will follow through on that pledge.

One potential area for increased cooperation is climate change. "I would expect Barack Obama to reopen negotiations with the [European Union] and other nations, including Russia and China, on the problem of global climate change," Lichtman said. Political experts caution that external factors often shape a president's foreign policy. "You never know based on a campaign exactly how a president is going to conduct foreign affairs," Lichtman said. [Please find the fulltext article on America.gov.](#)

NPR: [A Glimpse Into Obama Presidency](#) - The co-chair of Obama's transition team, Valerie Jarrett, said the president-elect has plans to create an Office of Urban Policy — and to reverse certain executive orders President Bush signed while in office.

Lesson Plans

- ❖ **[History in the Making:](#)** Examining Reactions to the Election of Barack Obama in the Context of History. In this lesson, students explore the social history of the U.S. to better understand why the election of Barack Obama is historic from a variety of perspectives. (Grades 6-8, 9-12, NYT Learning Network, Nov. 7)
- ❖ **[And the Winner Is...](#)** Holding a Post-Election Discussion or Mock Talk Show. In this lesson, students discuss and evaluate the results of the 2008 presidential election and evaluate its place in history. (Grades 6-8, 9-12, NYT Learning Network, Nov. 5)

Related NYTimes Resources:

- [Article: Obama Elected President as Racial Barrier Falls](#)
- [Video: Election Reaction: Selma, Alabama](#)
- [Column: Finishing Our Work](#)
- [Interactive Feature: The Day After, Voters Reflect](#)
- [Audio Slideshow: Singing for Freedom](#)
- [Interactive Graphic: An Election Day State of Mind](#)
- [Photo Essay: Polling Place Photo Project](#)

We hope we were able to provide you with interesting teaching material during our year-long coverage of the Presidential Election 2008. In our next issues we will turn to other timely issues that cover the German-American partnership.

Focus on Native Americans

Each November many teachers lecture about the First Thanksgiving, the quintessential American holiday. Giving an accurate picture of the events in Plymouth in the fall of 1621 and explaining how that event fits into American history is a complex task. In this section we point you to teaching materials that give a complete and accurate portrayal of the first Thanksgiving and the role of its Native American participants.

Article

❖ [Misconceptions Still Exist About American Indians](#) - The history and contemporary life of American Indians need to be better understood by non-Indians, researchers have found. (America.gov)

Teaching Resources

Data: See the U.S. Census Bureau Web site for a [fact sheet](#) on American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month and [additional data](#) on the American Indian and Alaska Native population.

Links America.gov: [American Indian History, Culture](#)

- Department of Interior's [Bureau of Indian Affairs](#)
- Library of Congress: [Native American Heritage Month](#)
- About the USA: [information resources](#) on Native Americans

Teaching Poster: [American Indian Perspectives on Thanksgiving](#) - An excellent source from the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI). With this poster, you and your students can take a look at just a few Native communities through the prism of three main themes that are central to understanding both American Indians and the deeper meaning of the Thanksgiving holiday: Environment, Community & Encounters.

National American Indian Heritage Month

[U.S. Honors Contributions of American Indians, Alaska Natives](#) - There are nearly 4.6 million American Indians and Alaska Natives in the United States, 1.6 percent of the U.S. population. Each November, National American Indian Heritage Month pays tribute to the first Americans and celebrates their enduring contributions to U.S. history and culture. (America.gov)

Native American Literature

The first American literature to be created, Native American literature has been the last to be recognized. Beginning with its first thousand years of oral literature and continuing to the present with writers in all genres of literature, Native American is an important element in the literature of the United States. Well-known contemporary authors are Duane Niatum, Paula, Gunn Allen, Louise Erdrich, and N. Scott Momaday.

N. Scott Momaday

The poetry and prose of N. Scott Momaday reflect his Kiowa Indian heritage. He has said that his verse, in particular, grows from and sustains the Indian oral tradition. When Momaday's first novel, *House Made of Dawn* (1968), received the 1969 Pulitzer Prize for fiction, it was the first major recognition of a work of Native American literature and a landmark for those seeking to understand "Indian identity." The themes of the healing force of nature and of the Indian caught between two worlds appear in that book and also in his second novel, *The Ancient Child* (1989), whose main character, a Kiowa artist living in San Francisco, seeks to discover his lost Indian identity. In *The Names: A Memoir* (1976), Momaday explores his heritage through tribal tales and boyhood memories. [More](#)

Links

- Academy of Achievements: [N. Scott Momaday](#)
- PBS: [N. Scott Momaday - Keeper of the Flame](#)
- Internet Public Library: [Native American Writers](#) - provides information on authors with bibliographies of their published works, biographical information, and links to online resources (interviews, online texts, etc.).

In our next edition of the Teachers Newsletter we will focus on John Steinbeck (1902-1968); however, we are very interested in your suggestions of authors, books or literary genres we should cover in our literature section. classroom@usembassy.de



Three generations of Shoshone women pose in the Lemhi Valley near Salmon, Idaho. (© AP Images/ America.gov)

Did you know?

- Today, there are nearly 4.6 million American Indians and Alaska Natives in the U.S., 1.6% of the total population, and this is expected to jump to 8.6 million, or 2% of the population, by 2050.
- Most American Indians live in metropolitan areas and not on the 227,000 square kilometers of land held in trust for reservations. The states with the highest percentage of American Indians and Alaska Natives are Alaska (18% of its population), Oklahoma (11%) and New Mexico (10%).
- There are 561 federally recognized Indian tribes in the U.S. The largest, by far, are the Cherokee and Navajo nations, acc. to the 2000 U.S. census.
- Navajo is the most widely spoken American Indian language, and almost one-fourth of Navajos speak a language other than English at home — the highest percentage of all tribes. Unfortunately, only one-half of the 300 or so native languages once spoken in North America still have any living speakers. (See "[Navajo Textbook Aims to Preserve Language, Culture.](#)")

Code Talkers

Lesson Plan: [Native Words – Native Warriors](#) This website explores the lives and experiences of American Indian Code Talkers, the servicemen who used their traditional tribal languages to transmit secret messages for the United States military during World War I and World War II. (NMAI)

The Library of Congress has [a site devoted to Native American Heritage Month](#). Find a [guide](#) to American Indian and Alaska Native military veterans and interviews with former Navajo *code talkers* [Keith Little](#) and [Merril Sandoval](#).

(© NMAI)



"The reason that we have so many myths associated with Thanksgiving is that it is an invented tradition. It doesn't originate in any one event. It is based on the New England puritan Thanksgiving, which is a religious Thanksgiving, and the traditional harvest celebrations of England and New England and maybe other ideas like commemorating the pilgrims. All of these have been gathered together and transformed into something different from the original parts."

- James W. Baker
(Senior Historian at Plimoth Plantation)

Teacher Resources

- Scholastic: [The First Thanksgiving](#)
- Library of Congress: [Thanksgiving in American Memory](#)
- Read a New York Times [article](#) from 1895 on "How the Popular Observance of the Holiday Originated"
- NARA Featured Documents: [Congress Establishes Thanksgiving](#)
- Education World: [You Are the Historian: Investigating the First Thanksgiving](#) Students u learn the truth about the "First Thanksgiving."

The Quintessential Thanksgiving Dish

[The History of Pumpkin Pie](#) - "Early American settlers of Plimoth Plantation (1620-1692) ... might have made pumpkin pies (of sorts) by making stewed pumpkins or by filling a hollowed out shell with milk, honey and spices, and then baking it in hot ashes. An actual present-day pumpkin pie with crust is a myth, as ovens to bake pies were not available in the colony at that stage." Includes recipes.

In Focus:

Thanksgiving Myth ?

Though many competing claims exist, the most familiar story of the first Thanksgiving took place in Plymouth Colony, in present-day Massachusetts, in 1621.

Myth: The first Thanksgiving was in 1621 and the pilgrims celebrated it every year thereafter. The original Thanksgiving feast took place on the fourth Thursday of November.

Fact: "The original feast in 1621 occurred sometime between September 21 and November 11. Unlike our modern holiday, it was three days long. The event was based on English harvest festivals, which traditionally occurred around the 29th of September. After that first harvest was completed by the Plymouth colonists, Gov. William Bradford proclaimed a day of thanksgiving and prayer, shared by all the colonists and neighboring Indians. In 1623 a day of fasting and prayer during a period of drought was changed to one of thanksgiving because the rain came during the prayers. Gradually the custom prevailed in New England of annually celebrating thanksgiving after the harvest.

During the American Revolution a yearly day of national thanksgiving was suggested by the Continental Congress. In 1817 New York State adopted Thanksgiving Day as an annual custom, and by the middle of the 19th century many other states had done the same. In 1863 President Abraham Lincoln appointed a day of thanksgiving as the last Thursday in November, which he may have correlated it with the November 21, 1621, anchoring of the Mayflower at Cape Cod. Since then, each president has issued a Thanksgiving Day proclamation. President Franklin D. Roosevelt set the date for Thanksgiving to the fourth Thursday of November in 1939. Congress approved in 1941." (History.com: [Mayflower Myths](#))

Article

❖ [Thanksgiving Prompts Americans To Help Their Communities.](#)

On Thanksgiving Day, when most Americans enjoy a holiday meal with friends and family and give thanks for the good things in their lives, many also take time to prepare and serve meals to the needy. Others donate to food drives, work at food warehouses or deliver groceries to soup kitchens, churches and other charitable groups. (America.gov)

Webchat Station

Native American History Month Wednesday, November 19, 16:00–18:00

A discussion of the role of identity among Native American Indians - with a focus on the concept of shared identity between American Indians and Afro-descendants.

[ENTER HERE](#)

Find more webchats here:

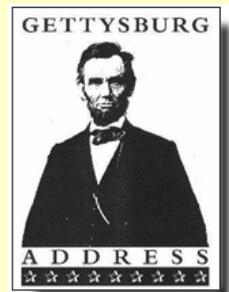
www.america.gov/multimedia/askamerica.html

A DAY IN HISTORY *November 19* The Gettysburg Address

"Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth, upon this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that 'all men are created equal.'"

Speaking of a "new birth of freedom," President Abraham Lincoln [delivered](#) one of the most memorable speeches in U.S. history at the dedication of the cemetery for the Union war dead in Gettysburg, following the most famous battle of the Civil War in July 1863.

- [Drafts of the Gettysburg Address](#)
- [Only Known Photo of Lincoln at Gettysburg](#)



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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.

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