



Newsletter for English Teachers About the USA – Virtual Classroom

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President Barack Obama's First Year

As the one-year anniversary of President Obama's January 20 inauguration approaches, we are looking back at his first year in the White House.

President Barack Obama adapts New Foreign Policy during his First Year in the White House - Foreign affairs specialists cite cooperation over confrontation

In his first year in office, President Obama tackled an array of foreign policy challenges ranging from nuclear proliferation to war in Afghanistan. Throughout, Obama has emphasized inclusion, cooperation and multilateralism, foreign affairs specialists say.

Threats to world peace ranging from nuclear proliferation to war in Afghanistan are being handled "remarkably well" by Obama, says Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Jimmy Carter's national security adviser from 1977 to 1981. Brzezinski, who managed tough challenges for the Carter White House like the 1979 Iran hostage crisis and the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, wrote recently in *Foreign Affairs* magazine that President Obama has "redefined the U.S. view of the world" outside the boundaries of the war on terrorism and "reconnected the United States with the emerging historical context of the twenty-first century."

Obama defined the new context as inclusion, cooperation and what diplomats call multilateralism in his first major foreign policy speech in Prague in April. Citing nuclear nonproliferation as a top priority, he said we live in a more "interconnected world," in which global threats to peace "demand that we listen to one another and work together; that we focus on our common interests, not on occasional differences."
[America.gov](#) -- **Photo Gallery:** [President Obama – Year 1 Highlights](#)

Changing Realities at the State Department: Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton Sees U.S. Aid Based on "Partnership, Not Patronage": The Obama administration is elevating development to equal diplomacy and defense in its foreign policy approach. Secretary Clinton says the United States wants to work with other countries in a spirit of "partnership, not patronage," to improve lives around the world. (America.gov)

Commentary

Brookings Institution: The Status Report. Assessing Obama's Leadership. One year ago, Brookings experts wrote a series of 12 memos to the incoming president on the most pressing policy issues facing the United States. Beginning today, they assess the Obama administration's progress on those issues in *The Status Report*, a series of daily commentary with video to be featured in [POLITICO's Arena](#).

• Brookings Vice President Darrell West gives President Obama a B+ for his leadership of Congress and the country. [Read More](#)

Brookings Institution: Obama's Solid First Year on Foreign Policy. Michael E. O'Hanlon: "[...] Obama has had a solid first year in foreign policy matters. By one measure, comparison with other first-year presidents in modern history, Obama ranks with the three or four best since World War II by my estimation - and I write this as someone who opposed Obama during the Democratic primary process of 2007-2008 largely because of fears at the time that he would not be strong on national security." [Read More](#)



© White House



The Living Stories project is an experiment in presenting news. The project was developed by Google in collaboration with two of the U.S.' leading newspapers, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. **All in one place & easy to explore:** Complete coverage of an on-going story gathered together. Quickly navigate between news articles, opinion pieces and features, evolving summary of current developments and interactive timeline of critical events. Stories can be explored by themes, significant participants or multimedia.

Example: Wash. Tackles Health Care Reform

Overview: The House and Senate have approved sweeping legislation that would provide health care insurance for most Americans, at huge cost to the government. The House plan, approved Nov. 7 in an almost strictly party-line vote, would spend \$1.05 trillion to extend coverage to about 36 million Americans. The Senate bill, passed on Dec. 24, went through several iterations before attracting the support of a filibuster-proof coalition of 60 votes (\$871 billion). It would give coverage to 31 million people who lack it now.

Opinion Polls

RasmussenReports: Health Care Reform - Voter expectations that the health care legislation before Congress will become law have reached a new high, but most are still opposed to the plan. Just 17% believe passage of the legislation will achieve the stated goal of reducing health care costs. 57% think it will lead to higher costs. 52% also believe passage of the legislation will lead to a decline in the quality of care. Overall, 40% of voters nationwide favor the health care reform plan proposed by Pres. Obama and congressional Democrats. 55% are opposed. (Jan. 11)

AFP: Americans split on Obama first year: Polls - New opinion polls show Americans sharply divided on Pres. Obama's first year in office, as his ratings on key issues like health care and the economy hit new lows. Polling also suggests independent voters are turning away from Obama as he nears the anniversary of his Jan. 20 inauguration -- though in a sign of hope for his administration, he remains more popular than his policies. [Read more](#)



© The U.S. Agency for International Development dispatched disaster-assessment teams and search-and-rescue teams as part of the response to the humanitarian crisis affecting the Haitian people in the aftermath of one of the region's most violent earthquakes in a century. [Article](#) (AP/America.gov)

More

State.gov: [Haiti](#)

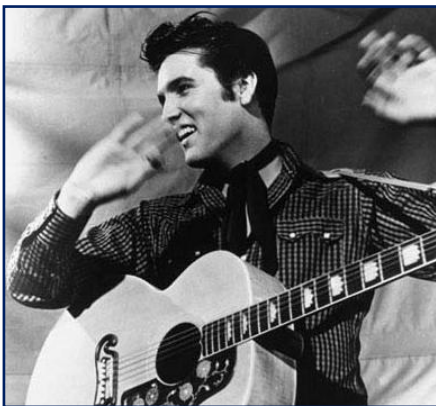
America.gov: [Special Page on Earthquake in Haiti](#)

Article: [Why Was Haiti Earthquake So Devastating?](#)

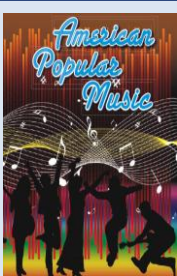


© [State.gov](#)

Did you know? Haiti is the second oldest independent country in the Western Hemisphere, after the United States, having proclaimed its independence from France in 1804. It is the only modern nation created by a slave revolt. [More](#)



Elvis Presley, 1957. (© AP Images)



American popular music is a kaleidoscopic mélange of styles and dreams. Its vibrancy reflects the mating of cultural diversity to artistic and creative freedom. This book illustrates how Americans, borrowing from diverse musical traditions, have contributed to humanity's universal language.

© [America.gov](#)

Earthquake in Haiti

The first wave of American search-and-rescue teams, disaster relief experts, military forces and supplies are at work in Haiti, beginning what President Obama says will be a massive U.S. relief effort in response to the January 12 earthquake, which caused losses that he called "nothing less than devastating." [Read more](#)

The earthquake in Haiti has generated assistance efforts not only from the U.S. government, but also calls for donations from the American public as they join with efforts around the world to mobilize rescue and relief for the Haitian people. In remarks at the White House January 13, President Obama said the earthquake is a reminder "of the common humanity that we all share," and urged Americans to contribute to assistance efforts in spite of tough economic times.

"With just a few hundred miles of ocean between us and a long history that binds us together, Haitians are our neighbors in the Americas and here at home. So we have to be there for them in their hour of need," he said. He directed donors to the White House Web site, which has linked to the American Red Cross donation page for Haiti. The White House also said \$10 contributions can be charged to cell phone accounts by texting "HAITI" to "90999." [Read more](#)

Teaching: NYT Lesson Plans: [5 Ways to Teach About Haiti Right Now](#)

1. Respond to Photos. Use interactive features, slide shows and a Lens blog photo feature on the NYT website. Have students respond in writing to the image of their choice, in the form of detailed descriptions, or letters to the people pictured. [...]

2. Understand the Earthquake's Effects: Students look into how and why Haiti was hit so hard by the earthquake. [...]

3. Learn Recent Haitian History. Why does [a Times editorial today](#) say "Once again, the world weeps with Haiti"? [...]

4. Delve into Earthquake Science. Students seek [information about how and why earthquakes occur](#), focusing on such terms as epicenter, tectonic plates, aftershocks, seismic waves and Richter Scale. [...]

5. Discuss What to Do and Why. Everyone wants to help, but how? To whom should you give money? What kinds of aid will help the most now and in the long term? Read the [ongoing discussion on these issues](#) on the Room for Debate blog. Then find out how specific aid organizations, such as [UNICEF](#), [CARE](#), [Doctors Without Borders](#) & the [Red Cross](#), raise money and provide aid for disasters like the one in Haiti [...].

More: NYT Learning Network: [Resources for Teaching and Learning About the Earthquake in Haiti](#)

January 8 - Elvis Presley's Birthday (1935)

Who is the "King of Rock & Roll" and why was he adored by millions of fans and still loved by so many thirty three years after his death?

Biographical Essay: "It is no accident that Elvis Presley's rise to fame in the 1950s was in tandem with the rise of rock 'n' roll, for the man and the music are indelibly linked. Though not the first rock 'n' roll star, Presley was the most prominent prophet of the pioneering musical form. Moreover, with his daringly unique style, delivery, and sound, he symbolized the cultural shakeup that rumbled throughout the era. As the Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and social historian David Halberstam proclaimed, "In cultural terms, [Elvis's] coming was nothing less than the start of a revolution."

Presley himself was as complex and as conflicted as the decade he has come to represent. Though shy and beguilingly sweet offstage, his early onstage persona was swaggering, even leering, with performances marked by frenzied bumping and grinding and seemingly gravity-defying bolts, leaps, and slides. To the sexually repressed young people of the day, he was an emblem of rebellious liberation. To the terrified adult establishment, parents especially, he was initially viewed as the devil incarnate. At the time, no one could have predicted that rock 'n' roll would "last," or that Presley's stardom would not only endure, but also grow to mythic proportions following his death in 1977. [...]. *Gale Biography Resource Center (St. James Enc. of Popular Culture)* **Fulltext article**

Lesson Plan: [Elvis Presley: The Early Years](#) (by Karla Smith). He held the undisputed title of "The King of Rock and Roll" and in death he is still affectionately referred to as "The King." No other 20th century entertainer has been talked about or written about more than Elvis Presley.

Voices from the Haitian Diaspora in the United States

Edwidge Danticat (1969 -)

"Edwidge Danticat is one of only a handful of contemporary novelists of Haitian heritage writing in English. Danticat did not begin learning English until she moved from Haiti to New York City as an adolescent. Her talents in this second language were evident in the award-winning 1994 debut, *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. In this work, as well as her equally lauded 1995 short story collection *Krik? Krak!*, Danticat focuses on the lives and losses of Haitians, both at home-- where poverty, political repression, and fear were everyday hindrances for decades--and as transplants to an equally dangerous urban American setting where Haitians face a similar poverty, compounded by racism. "The agonies of Haiti are as wide as they are deep," the Caribbean- focused journal *Islands* acknowledged. "It would seem impossible, in fact, to write anything about Haiti that wasn't entirely tragic, yet Edwidge Danticat has done it. [...] Danticat's willingness to tackle controversial subject matter earned her comparisons to African American author Alice Walker." Source: Answers.com

Anacaona: Golden Flower, Haiti, 1490

Edwidge Danticat's young adult novel published in 2005.

Publisher Description: With her signature narrative grace, Edwidge Danticat brings Haiti's beautiful queen Anacaona to life. Queen Anacaona was the wife of one of her island's rulers, and a composer of songs and poems, making her popular among her people. Haiti was relatively quiet until the Spanish conquistadors discovered the island and began to settle there in 1492. The Spaniards treated the natives very cruelly, and when the natives revolted, the Spanish governor of Haiti ordered the arrests of several native nobles, including Anacaona, who was eventually captured and executed, to the horror of her people.

Links

- [Edwidge Danticat interview \(Foreign Policy In Focus\)](#), Oct. 16, 2007)
- [Edwidge Danticat interview \(Democracy Now!\)](#) video, audio, print transcript, Oct. 5, 2007)
- Short Story "[Ghosts](#)" ([The New Yorker](#)), November 24, 2008)
- AALBC: [Edwidge Danticat](#)

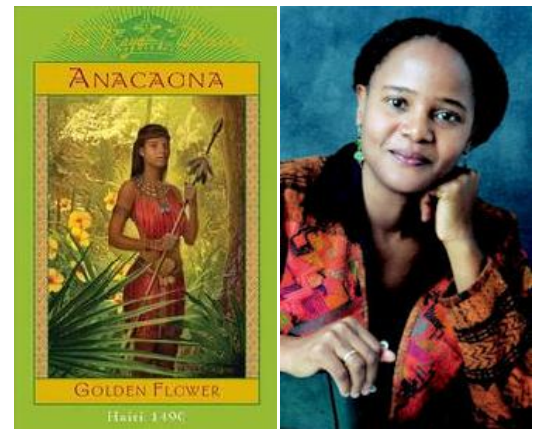
Other Contemporary authors of Haitian Origin Living in the US or Canada: [Anthony Phelps](#) (1928 -); [Émile Ollivier](#) (1940 - 2002); [Dany Laferrrière](#) (1953 -); [Marie-Célie Aqnan](#); [Stanley Péan](#) (1966 -)

Haiti (Scholastic.com)

Ancestry, Language, and Religion. More than 90 percent of Haitians are descended from black Africans who were originally brought to the island as slaves. The rest of the population consists mainly of mulattoes, or persons of mixed black and European (mainly French) ancestry. French and Creole are the official languages. Creole, the common language of nearly all the people, is a French dialect, mixed with African expressions and some Spanish, Indian, and English words. Although most Haitians are Roman Catholics, voodoo, a folk religion from Africa, is also widely practiced.

Way of Life. The African influence is very strong in the rural areas, where about 70 percent of the country's inhabitants live. Much of the music, art, folk dances, and customs are African in origin. Well-to-do Haitians, however, chiefly mulattoes, cling to the Catholic-French tradition dating from colonial times. Haiti is a poor country, perhaps the poorest in the Western Hemisphere, and the majority of the people earn a meager livelihood cultivating small plots of land and gardens. Education, outside the cities, is hampered by a lack of funds, and only about one-quarter of Haitian children attend primary and secondary school.

The Land. Features. Haiti is an Indian name meaning "mountainous land," and about two-thirds of the country is mountainous or hilly. The mountains, separated by valleys and plains, extend along the two peninsulas enclosing the Gulf of Gonâve. They reach their highest elevation at Pic La Selle, in the southeast, which rises to 8,793 feet (2,680 meters). The rugged terrain limits the available good farmland and makes transportation difficult. Port-au-Prince, situated on the gulf, is the capital, largest city, and chief port. On the northeast is Cap-Haïtien, the second largest city and former colonial capital. MORE



Library of Congress Puts Thousands of Historic Books Online:

Nearly 60,000 books prized by historians, writers and genealogists, many too old and fragile to be safely handled, have been digitally scanned as part of a U.S. Library of Congress (LOC) project. The materials are free on the LOC and Internet Archive Web sites.

These and the other digitized books can be accessed through the [Library's catalog Web site](#) and the [Internet Archive](#) (IA), a nonprofit organization dedicated to building and maintaining a free online digital library.

Oxford English Dictionary's Word of 2009: unfriend

unfriend, verb; to remove someone as a 'friend' on a social networking site such as Facebook. As in, "I decided to unfriend my roommate on Facebook after we had a fight."

"It has both currency and potential longevity," notes Christine Lindberg, Senior Lexicographer for Oxford's US dictionary program. "In the online social networking context, its meaning is understood, so its adoption as a modern verb form makes this an interesting choice for Word of the Year. Most "un-" prefixed words are adjectives (unacceptable, unpleasant), and there are certainly some familiar "un-" verbs (uncap, unpack), but "**unfriend**" is different from the norm. [...] **Unfriend** has real lex-appeal."

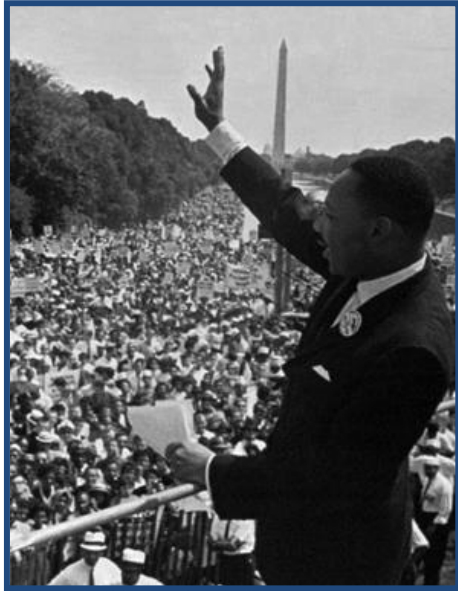
Ms. Lindberg says the Oxford English Dictionary provides a citation for "unfriend" from 1659.

- CNN: [Dictionary Word of the Year](#)
- NPR: [Dictionary Picks 'Unfriend' As Word Of The Year](#)
- NYT: [Schott's Vocab: Words of 2009 and the 2000s](#)

Interesting Teaching Source

[ipl2](#) is the result of a merger of the Internet Public Library (IPL) and the Librarians' Internet Index (LII).





Martin Luther King Jr. gives a speech at the March on Washington, a rally against segregation and in favor of civil rights. Washington, D.C., USA, 1963. (© AP Photo)

Links [The King Center](#)
[History.com: King](#)
 NYT Lesson Plan: [Celebrating MLK Day](#)

Did you know? The 13th amendment, which formally abolished slavery in the United States, passed the Senate on April 8, 1864, and the House on January 31, 1865. [National Archives](#)

In Focus – Ambassador Murphy’s Heroes Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Our [Ambassador Philip Murphy](#) has introduced his heroes to the audiences during his town hall meetings. In this month’s edition we will focus on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who was born on January 15, 1929.

This year, January 18 will be Martin Luther King Jr. Day. The holiday honors Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (1929–1968), the 1964 Nobel Peace laureate and the individual most associated with the triumphs of the African-American civil rights movement during the 1950s and 1960s.

As political organizer, supremely skilled orator and advocate of nonviolent protest, King was pivotal in persuading his fellow Americans to end the legal segregation that prevailed throughout the South and parts of other regions, and in sparking support for the civil rights legislation that established the legal framework for racial equality in the United States.

The day, a legal holiday in the U.S., is observed each year on the third Monday in January and is marked by religious ceremonies, marches, and other public demonstrations in memory of the revered civil rights leader.

Teaching and Learning Resources from Federal Agencies (FREE)

- [Martin Luther King Jr. and the "I Have a Dream" Speech](#): On August 28, 1963, King delivered a speech to civil rights marchers gathered at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. A company recorded the speech and offered the recording for sale. King and his attorneys claimed that the speech was copyrighted and that the recording violated the copyright.
- [Historic Places of the Civil Rights Movement](#) shows 41 churches, houses, etc. related largely to the post-World War II civil rights movement. The exhibit offers a bibliography and links to websites relating to civil rights.
- [Our Shared History: African American Heritage](#) tells about the Underground Railroad, African Americans in the Civil War, historic places of the civil rights movement, the Delta blues of the Lower Mississippi Valley, and landmarks dedicated to Booker T. Washington, Martin Luther King, and Frederick Douglass.

Publication: Free at Last – The U.S. Civil Rights Movement
Photo Gallery: Nonviolent Protest: Following Martin Luther King Jr.



Important ESTA Update

Since January 12, 2009, all nationals or citizens of Visa Waiver Program (VWP) countries who plan to travel to the United States for temporary business or pleasure have been required to obtain prior travel authorization through ESTA prior to boarding a carrier to travel by air or sea to the U.S. under the VWP.

[FURTHER INFORMATION](#)



EducationUSA Corner

Die [Yale Universität](#) erweitert ihr Angebot an frei zugänglichen Online Kursen via [Youtube](#) bzw. [itunes](#).

welcome to Yale University

Diese Neuigkeit und interessante Stipendien-Angebote finden Sie in der News Section von [EducationUSA](#) als Weekly Update. Oder folgen Sie uns auf [TWITTER](#).



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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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