



Newsletter for English Teachers About the USA – Virtual Classroom

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Women's History Month

"Empowering women to take greater control over their own destinies" – A theme articulated by Secretary of State Clinton on numerous occasions.

In March, the world observes International Women's Day and the United States observes Women's History Month. While women have made great strides in many areas where they once were marginalized, there is still much work to be done in areas including education, health and gender-based violence. [More](#)

Women's issues will be the "centerpiece of my term as secretary of state," Hillary Rodham Clinton told a gathering of female heads of state and foreign ministers September 24. "I have advocated for many years that women are the key to progress and prosperity around the world," Clinton told the guests, who were in New York City to participate in the opening of the 64th annual United Nations General Assembly. "There are people who say, well, women's issues is an important issue, but it doesn't rank up there with the Middle East or Iran's nuclear threat or Afghanistan and Pakistan. I could not disagree more. I think women are key to our being able to resolve all of those difficult conflicts, as well as provide for a better future," Clinton said. [America.gov](#)

Teaching Material

- **NYT Learning Network:** [Women's History Month Across the Curriculum](#) – "March is Women's History Month, and this year's theme, according to the National Women's History Project and the Library of Congress, is "Writing Women Back Into History." To help you "write women back into history" with your students, we have compiled related lesson plans and Times materials for teaching about women's history into a collection called [Celebrate Women's History Month](#). Read ["The Women's Crusade"](#), an excerpt from Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn's 2009 book ["Half the Sky,"](#) a manifesto on "how changing the lives of women and girls in the developing world can change everything." Then, pick one of the women whose success story is featured in the article and write a first-person diary entry or series of entries from the point of view of that woman. [MORE](#)

Interesting Article

- **The Better Half: Helping Women Help the World.** Isobel Coleman. *Foreign Affairs, January/February 2010*: The author writes that "efforts to provide the world's women with economic and political power are more than just a worthy moral crusade: they represent perhaps the best strategy for pursuing development and stability across the globe." Coleman reviews Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn's new book, [Half the Sky](#). [ARTICLE](#)

Facts for Features: Women's History Month (March 2010)

- 155.8 million females in the U.S. as of Oct. 1, 2009. Males: 151.8 million. [Population estimates](#)
- 55% of college students in fall 2008 were women. [School Enrollment in the U.S.: 2008](#)
- 66% of female citizens 18 and older reported voting in the 2008 Presidential election. 62% of their male counterparts cast a ballot. Additionally, 73 % of female citizens reported being registered to vote. [Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2008](#)
- 59% of females 16 and older participated in the labor force, representing about 72 million women. (2008) [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)



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Links

- Official Site: [International Women's Day Site](#)
- [National Women's History Project](#) - 2010 Theme: Writing Women Back into History
- Dep. of State: [Office of Global Women's Issues](#)
- [Presidential Proclamation](#)
- [DipNote Blog: Global Women's Issues Channel](#)
- [United Nations Women Watch](#)
- [54th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women \(March 1 - March 12, 2010\)](#)

America.gov

- [People & Places page](#): Women's History
- Feature: [Helping Girls Stay in School](#)
- Feature: [Women of Courage](#)
- Publication: [Women of Influence](#)
- Photo Gallery: [Great Women of the 20th Century](#)
- Feature: [Oprah Winfrey Still Loves School](#)

America.gov Articles on Women in Afghanistan

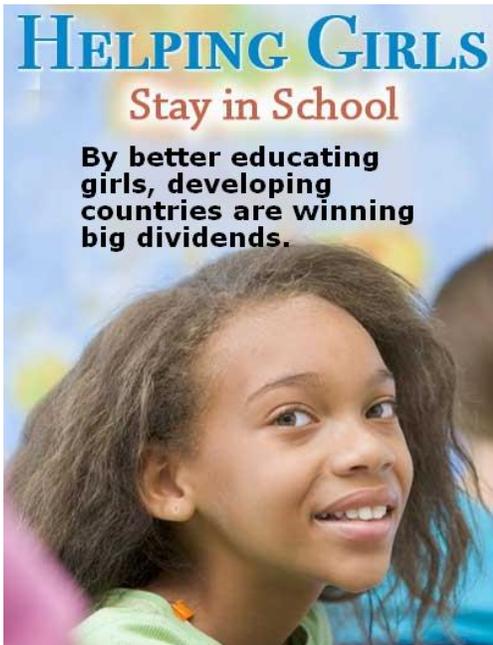
- [Women Key to More Prosperous Afghanistan](#): Investment in women is the single most effective development strategy, and Afghanistan is no exception, says a State Department official, who outlines ways the Obama administration is working to promote women's rights in that country despite continuing obstacles.
- [U.S. Plan Would Help Afghan Women Build Better Lives](#): Empowering women is critical to improving life in Afghanistan. The Women's Action Plan for Afghanistan seeks to increase Afghan women's security, leadership in the public and private sectors, access to judicial institutions and services, and economic opportunities.



International Women's Day
8 March 2009

© [United Nations: International Women's Day](#)

NOW (National Organization for Women)
[Women Deserve Equal Pay](#) - For full-time, year-round workers, women are paid on average only 78 percent of what men are paid; for women of color, the gap is significantly wider. These wage gaps stubbornly remain despite the passage of the Equal Pay Act in 1963, and a variety of legislation prohibiting employment discrimination.



© America.gov: [Helping Girls Stay in School](#)

HELPING GIRLS

Stay in School

By better educating girls, developing countries are winning big dividends.

Teaching Resources & Links

- Scholastic: [Women who changed history](#)
- Scholastic: [Women's Suffrage](#)
- FREE: [Women's History](#)
- WWW Virtual Library: [Women's History](#)

The Library of Congress, National Archives and Records Administration, National Endowment for the Humanities, National Gallery of Art, National Park Service, Smithsonian Institution and U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum join in paying tribute to the generations of women whose commitment to nature and the planet have proved invaluable to society.



© [Women's History Month](#)



© U.S. Census Bureau

Interesting Factoid: In 1790, the first census was taken by 17 U.S. marshals on horseback and 200 assistants. The census counted 3.9 million people. Census 2000 counted more than 281 million people.

The 2000 Census

- U.S. Resident Population: 281,421,906
- Population per square mile of land area: 79.6

World Reflects on Women's Progress, Remaining Obstacles

- Equal opportunity, health and gender-based violence remain issues

"If half of the world's population remains vulnerable to economic, political, legal and social marginalization, our hope of advancing democracy and prosperity will remain in serious jeopardy," [Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said](#). "We still have a long way to go, and the United States must remain an unambiguous and unequivocal voice in support of women's rights in every country, every region, on every continent."

The Obama White House has aggressively promoted women's issues both in the United States and abroad. Early in his presidency, President Obama created a new position at the White House — now held by Lynn Rosenthal — to advise the president and vice president on domestic violence and sexual assault issues in the United States. The president also created a new position at the U.S. Department of State: ambassador-at-large for global women's issues. Melanne Verveer, who has a long career working for the advancement of women, was appointed to that position to mobilize concrete support worldwide for women's rights and to combat [violence against women and girls](#) in all its forms.

Clinton's focus on women's issues was underlined during her visit to [Africa](#) in 2009, where violence against women in conflict areas is a problem. There, she gave support to victims of gender-based violence and announced [aid programs](#) to help them. Later, in hailing a [U.N. Security Council resolution](#), Clinton emphasized that violence against women should not be viewed as an unfortunate characteristic of culture, but as a criminal offense.

In addition to ensuring that women around the world are safe from gender-based violence, the State Department under Clinton is focusing on promoting women's economic opportunities — from which other rights and freedoms often follow. [In remarks](#) before Congress in October 2009, Verveer said women in many parts of the world are "the drivers of economic growth" and tend to reinvest whatever income they can command into their families and communities.

"When women are accorded their rights and afforded [equal opportunities in education](#), health care and gainful employment, they drive social and economic progress," Clinton made clear in a [commentary](#) last summer.

In an impassioned speech at that U.N. conference (Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing), Clinton, who was first lady at the time, made her famous statement: "Human rights are women's rights; and women's rights are human rights."

[READ MORE \(America.gov Article\)](#)

The U.S. Census

Countdown to Census Day: The "Population and Housing Census" will be taken on April 1, 2010. The 2010 Census aims to count all U.S. residents—citizens and non-citizens alike.

The Census is taken every ten years and is directed with counting the full population of the United States. The first census was taken in 1790 and estimated the population of the United States at 3,929,214. The 2010 Census will mark the 23rd census of the United States. The U.S. Census Bureau, which is running the 2010 Census and reports directly to the Secretary of Commerce, has to ensure everyone residing in the United States — in all 50 states, Washington, DC, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marian Islands, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands — are included in the 2010 Census. The Census Bureau will seek to determine the precise populations of each state on April 1, 2010. The secretary of Commerce then has until Dec. 31, 2010 to announce those population counts.

The U.S. Census counts every resident in the United States, and is required by the Constitution to take place every 10 years.

"The actual enumeration shall be made within three years after the first meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent term of 10 years, in such manner as they shall by Law direct." -- Article I, Section 2 of the Constitution of the United States

Learn More at [2010 Census](#)

America.gov Article: [Looking for a Full Count in U.S. Census](#)

Literature

In celebration of Women's History Month, we are devoting our Literature section to women writers.

Little Women by Louisa May Alcott

Louisa May Alcott is best known for her creation of the classic work "Little Women", the story of four sisters growing up in a New England town during the mid 1800s.

"Louisa May Alcott had the good fortune to be raised by highly unconventional, literary-minded parents. Her mother was a pioneer in the women's suffrage and abolitionist movements, and her father was a transcendentalist philosopher and social reformer. Alcott's first and still best-known novel, Little Women, was an immediate popular success and continues to enjoy a wide readership. Largely based on her own childhood experiences, Little Women recounts the story of sisters Jo, Amy, Beth, Meg, and their mother, "Marmee" March. The March women must learn to fend for themselves when their father leaves home to fight in the Civil War. Little Women and Alcott have rallied generations of women who find strength in the love, support, and success of her dynamic female characters. Alcott would go on to write three follow-up novels about Jo March as well as numerous other novels, poetry, and nonfiction." [eNotes](#)

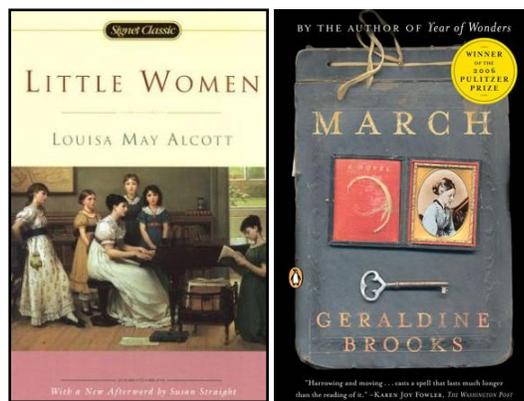
Teaching Resources on Little Women

- eNotes: [Little Women - American History Through Literature](#)
- eNotes: [Little Women eText](#) and [Little Women Study Guide](#)
- eNotes: [Louisa May Alcott - Critical Survey of Long Fiction](#)
- Spark Notes: [Little Women](#) | BookRags: [Little Women](#)

March by Geraldine Brooks

"From Louisa May Alcott's beloved classic Little Women, Geraldine Brooks has taken the character of the absent father, March, who has gone off to war leaving his wife and daughters. To evoke him, Brooks turned to the journals and letters of Bronson Alcott, Louisa May's father, a friend and confidant of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau.

In Brooks' telling, March emerges as an idealistic chaplain in the little known backwaters of a war that will test his faith in himself and in the Union cause as he learns that his side, too, is capable of acts of barbarism and racism. As he recovers from a near mortal illness, he must reassemble his shattered mind and body, and find a way to reconnect with a wife and daughters who have no idea of the ordeals he has been through. From the vibrant intellectual world of New England and the sensuous antebellum South, March adds adult resonance to Alcott's optimistic children's tale and portrays the moral complexity of war, a marriage tested by the demands of extreme idealism, and by the temptations of a powerful forbidden attraction." Taken from [Geraldine Brooks's Official Website](#)



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Interesting Factoid

Acclaimed CNN journalist Christiane Amanpour on the fictional character she identifies with: "Jo in the novel "Little Women," by Louisa May Alcott, because sometimes I feel I belong to a different era, but also Jo was a girl but she was ballsy." ([NYT Magazine](#))

Links on March

- [Readers Guide](#)
- [Geraldine Brooks talks about the book](#)
- NPR Interview: [Geraldine Brooks](#)
- eNotes: [March](#) | BookRags: [March](#)
- Powell's Books: [Interview](#)

Read an Excerpt

"This is what I write to her: The clouds tonight embossed the sky. A dipping sun gilded and brazed each raveling edge as if the firmament were threaded through with precious filaments."
[Excerpt](#) © Barnes & Noble

Women Writers - Links

- [Resources for Teaching: Women Writers](#): Explores how literature written by women can be taught effectively in secondary and postsecondary educational settings. (DePaul University)
- [Women Writers](#): Commentary on women writers from 1800 to the present, with extensive annotated links to other sites. (By Kim Wells)
- [A Celebration of Women Writers](#) recognizes the contributions of women writers throughout history. Attempt to provide easy access to available on-line information. (By Mary Mark)

Leipzig Book Fair 2010

Visit the **booth of the U.S. Consulate General in Hall 4 D301**, and take a look at the latest American books, many of which were generously donated by U.S. publishers.

[U.S. Consulate Leipzig Events](#)

Among the events organized by the U.S. Consulate Leipzig are readings with the American author Holly Jane Rahlens who will introduce her book, Mauerblümchen.

Mauerblümchen by Holly Jane Rahlens

WALLFLOWER (English-language working title), Rowohlt Verlag, 2009. Wallflower is four hours in the life of New Yorker Molly Lenzfeld, 16 years old, inverted, six feet tall, size 12 shoe. It's late November 1989, two weeks after the fall of the Berlin wall. On a short metro and subway ride to her mother's birth house in Berlin's eastern sector, she meets up with East German wildflower Mick Maier, 19. It's love at first sight and for both a journey into an unknown land, into the labyrinth of Berlin's under-ground world, a fertile terrain in which to discover each other, the wonder of love, and the mystery of Germany's divided past.



Links & Teaching Material

- [Holly Jane Rahlens' official website](#)
- Rowohlt Verlag: [Summary of "Mauerblümchen"](#)
- Classroom guide (in German, compliments of Rowohlt Verlag): [Classroom guide by Christine Behnen and Hans Poetke](#)

Leipzig Book Fair — A Reader's Delight
March 18-21, 2010 * 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. daily
Leipzig Neue Messe



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In Focus – Ambassador Murphy’s Heroes Billie Jean King

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 former tennis player Billie Jean King.

Born November 22, 1943 in Long Beach, California, Billie Jean King has won 12 Grand Slam singles titles, 16 Grand Slam women’s doubles titles, and 11 Grand Slam mixed doubles titles. King has been an advocate against sexism in sports and society. She is known for the "The Battle of the Sexes" in 1973, in which she defeated former Wimbledon men’s singles champion Bobby Riggs.

In August 2009, King was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation’s highest civilian honor. The award was presented to King by President Obama on Aug. 12, 2009 in ceremonies at The White House.

[President Obama Honors 2009 Medal of Freedom Recipients](#)

[WhiteHouse.gov](#): Billie Jean King was an acclaimed professional tennis player in the 1960s and 1970s, and has helped champion gender equality issues not only in sports, but in all areas of public life. King beat Bobby Riggs in the "Battle of the Sexes" tennis match, then the most viewed tennis match in history. King became one of the first openly lesbian major sports figures in America when she came out in 1981. Following her professional tennis career, King became the first woman commissioner in professional sports when she co-founded and led the World Team Tennis (WTT) League. The U.S. Tennis Association named the National Tennis Center, where the US Open is played, the Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in 2006.

Articles & Links

- World Team Tennis: [Billie Jean King](#) | [International Tennis Hall of Fame profile](#) | [Billie Jean King](#) (WTA Tour’s official website)
- [Billie Jean King](#) at the [Fed Cup](#) | [Official Wimbledon profile](#)
- [Best & Worst: Billie Jean King](#) (Sunday Times article Sept. 27, 2009)
- [Billie Jean won for all women](#) (ESPN.com article)



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In the U.S., government serves the citizens. It protects their constitutional rights, including freedom of speech and religion, and the right to equal protection under the law.

[This book](#) depicts American citizens exercising the many rights and privileges that empower them to participate fully in the nation’s political, economic, and cultural life.

[American Citizenship](#)
A new [America.gov](#) publication!

Young Generation

MILLENNIALS

A PORTRAIT OF GENERATION NEXT

PEW: [The Millennials: Confident. Connected. Open to Change](#)
 “Generations, like people, have personalities, and Millennials -- the American teens and twenty-somethings who are making the passage into adulthood at the start of a new millennium -- have begun to forge theirs: confident, self-expressive, liberal, upbeat and open to change. They are more ethnically and racially diverse than older adults. They’re less religious, less likely to have served in the military, and are on track to become the most educated generation in American history. [...] Who are they? How are they different? How might they reshape America in the future? The Pew Research Center sets out to answer these questions in a [yearlong series](#) of original reports that explore the behaviors, values and opinions of the Millennials.” [More](#) | [The Quiz: How Millennial are You](#)



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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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 Questions & Suggestions? Contact: classroom@usembassy.de