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About the USA – Virtual Classroom Newsletter for English Teachers

In this issue:

U.S. – EU Transatlantic Relationship | 110th Congress | Black History Month | Teaching Literature: Fahrenheit 451 | Quote of the Month : Ray Bradbury | Holiday of the Month : Presidents' Day | Upcoming Web Chats

The United States and the European Union – The Transatlantic Relationship

The United States and Europe share a long and intertwined history. The two main pillars of the modern transatlantic relationship — NATO and the European Union (EU) — were created in the aftermath of World War II to deter the Soviet threat and to promote prosperity, security, and stability in Europe. The U.S. Congress and successive U.S. administrations have strongly supported both organizations as means to foster democratic states, reliable military allies, and strong trading partners.

Many observers stress that the security and prosperity of the United States and Europe remain inextricably linked, even after the end of the Cold War. Both sides of the Atlantic face a common set of challenges — from countering terrorism and weapons proliferation to ensuring the stability of global financial markets — and have few other comparable partners. Proponents of close U.S.-European ties argue that neither the United States nor Europe can adequately address such diverse concerns alone, and the track record shows that they can accomplish much more when they work together.

[The United States and Europe: Current Issues. CRS Report for Congress, Nov 21, 2006.](#)

Related Articles:

- ★ **The Fourth Age: The Next Era in Transatlantic Relations.** Kupchan, Charles A., *National Interest*, Sep/Oct2006, #85, pp77-83. <http://infoalert.usembassy.de/09-06/f3.htm>
- ★ **Transatlantic Trends - Key Findings: 2006.** *German Marshall Fund of the United States*. September 2006. <http://www.transatlantictrends.org/index.cfm>
- ★ **Some Transatlantic Challenges.** DeMuth, Christopher. *AEI for Public Policy Research*, On the Issues, posted July 24, 2006, 4p http://www.aei.org/publications/pubID.24696/pub_detail.asp
- ★ **Renewing Transatlantic Relations: The Global Euro-Atlantic Agenda,** Bindenagel, J.D., *National Strategy Forum Review*, Summer 2006, v15, #3, online edition. <http://www.aicgs.org/documents/bind072006.pdf>

Building the Transatlantic Partnership – Milestones germany.usembassy.de/eu_presidency/milestones.htm

JULY 4, 1962 - On America's national holiday, President Kennedy speaks at Independence Hall in Philadelphia. He calls for a 'Declaration of Interdependence' between Europe and America, adding that the United States anticipated the day when Europe would develop sufficiently to engage in a true partnership of equals.

[Text of the Declaration](#)



Visit our [new web page](#) on the Germany Presidency of the EU! Latest news, documents, articles and reports, speeches and press releases about the U.S. – EU transatlantic relationship.

germany.usembassy.de/eu_presidency/



President Bush and European Commission President José Barroso
(© White House)

[President Bush Welcomes European Commission President José Barroso to the White House](#)
(Washington, January 8, 2007)



(© Library of Congress)



Democratic Senator Barack Obama has already formed a committee for the upcoming presidential election. (© AP Images)

Read more at:

★ **About the USA > Government > Legislative Branch**

usa.usembassy.de/government-legislative.htm

★ **U.S. Congress (USDept. Of State)**

usinfo.state.gov/dhr/democracy/congress.html

★ **2006 Midterm Elections**

usinfo.state.gov/dhr/democracy/elections.html

★ **110th United States Congress – Wikipedia**

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/110th_United_States_Congress

Incoming 110th Congress Reflects American Diversity

A fresh mix of U.S. federal legislators prepare for next session

Now that the 109th Congress has adjourned, Americans and their elected representatives have been looking ahead to the 110th Congress, which convened on January 4, 2007. It is a Congress that reflects America's diversity, closing not only the gender gap -- with the highest number of women elected to Congress in history -- but also the ethnic gap.

Texas Democrat Ciro Rodriguez defeated Republican Henry Bonilla in a runoff election December 12 in the state's 23rd District, the last congressional race to be decided. His victory gives the Democrats a 31-vote edge in the House of Representatives, with Democrats holding 233 seats to the Republicans' 202. Rodriguez is Hispanic, one of an increasing number of federal and state legislators from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

The complexion of the 110th Congress glows with a rich demographic mix that includes naturalized, first- or second-generation Americans of Asian and Latin American origins. Americans with a distinctive ethnic base played a significant part in the 2006 elections not only as candidates, but as supporters of candidates who represent their interests. As immigrants make American society and culture their own, they also develop political muscle. The elections were taken seriously by many Arab, Hispanic, South Asian and East Asian Americans who organized, volunteering their time for campaigns.

[\(complete text\)](#)

Related Articles:

The Obama Effect. Talking about my Generation. Kenneth T. Walsh. *U.S. News and World Report*, Januar 6, 2007, pp26

The political and societal forces Obama represents may shape the next presidential election.

Raw Material. Carl M. Cannon. *National Journal*, December 9, 2006, pp30. The author analyzes Illinois Democratic Senator Barack Obama's potential for becoming the next president.

For full text and additional articles go to:

<http://infoalert.usembassy.de>



Carter G. Woodson, founder of Black History Month (©National Park Service)

[Carter G. Woodson, Father of Black History](#)

[Americans Celebrate Black History Month](#)

[Census Facts, 2007](#)

AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY MONTH

Each February, Black History Month tells of the struggles of millions of American citizens over the most devastating obstacles -- slavery, prejudice, poverty -- and looks at their contributions to the nation's cultural and political life.

Each year, the U.S. president honors Black History Month, or African American History Month as it is also called, with a proclamation and a celebration at the White House. States and cities hold their own events around the country, and media feature topics related to black history.

"African Americans have been an integral part of America for generations, and our nation is stronger because of their contributions," Bush said in this year's proclamation, issued on January 26. "All Americans can be proud of the progress we have made, yet the work ... is not done." (**President's Proclamation**)

Read more at:

About the USA > Society > African-Americans - usa.usembassy.de/society-blacks.htm

TEACHING LITERATURE

"Fahrenheit 451" by Ray Bradbury

Ray Bradbury is a prolific writer, who published more than 500 short stories, poems, novels, and plays in the past 50 years, in a field of literature, often called science or futuristic fiction, that seeks to extend man's present into what may or may not be his future. His work has appeared in almost all major U.S. magazines, from the Saturday Evening Post to Playboy, and from the New Republic to Harper's.

Guy Montag was a fireman whose job it was to start fires...

The system was simple. Everyone understood it. Books were for burning ... along with the houses in which they were hidden.

The novella *Fahrenheit 451* is, along with *The Martian Chronicles*, Bradbury's most famous work. In this story, "firemen" are those who set forbidden books aflame, rather than those who put out fires. (The title, Fahrenheit 451, refers to the temperature at which paper ignites.) Guy Montag, the protagonist, is a fireman himself; however, he begins to question his work when he takes home one of the books he is supposed to have destroyed and reads it. *Fahrenheit 451* is a somewhat simple tale, "as much an attack on mass culture as it is a satire of McCarthy-era censorship," remarked the essayist for St. James Guide to Science Fiction Writers. The tale implies that the government-sanctioned illiteracy is the outgrowth of pandering to special interest groups in the mass media, as well as a result of the rise of television. A society of outcasts is the only bastion of great literature; its members dedicate themselves to memorizing the great books of the world. Many commentators note a disturbing similarity between Bradbury's fictional world and our real one. The repressive future world is so vividly depicted in this work that the novella has become as much a staple of political study as George Orwell's 1984. *Fahrenheit 451* has become both a banned book and a book used in many high school classrooms to discuss the topic of censorship.

*Excerpted from Contemporary Authors Online, Gale, 2007.
Reproduced in Biography Resource Center. Farmington Hills, Mich.: Thomson Gale. 2007.*

Links

★ **Ray Bradbury: Lesson plans for Fahrenheit 451 and more**
(Web English Teacher)

www.webenglishteacher.com/bradbury.html

★ **Classic Notes on Fahrenheit 451**

www.gradesaver.com/classicnotes/titles/fahrenheit/

★ **Fahrenheit 451 ; Resources**

www.argo217.k12.il.us/departs/english/blettieri/451.htm

★ **Read.Write.Think - Ray Bradbury**

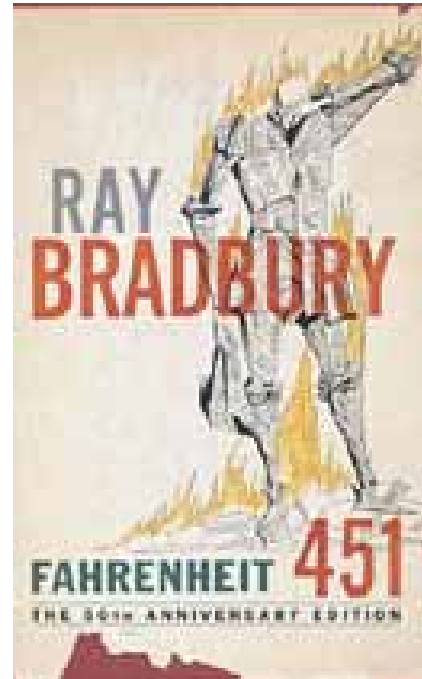
www.readwritethink.org/calendar/calendar_day.asp?id=671

★ **Teaching Guide: Fahrenheit 451**

www.classzone.com/novelguides/litcons/f451/guide.cfm

★ **Understanding Fahrenheit 451 –
a Research Guide for Students**

www.geocities.com/researchguide/451.html



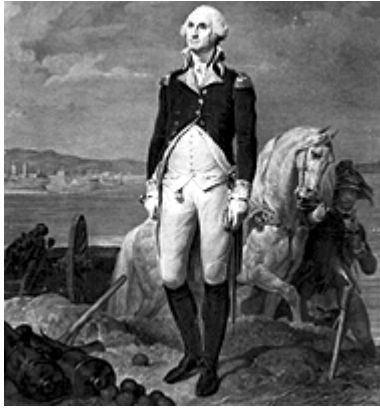
"I'm seventeen and I'm crazy. My uncle says the two always go together. When people ask your age, he said, always say seventeen and insane."
Fahrenheit 451 (1953)



Ray Bradbury (© Photofest)

[Ray Bradbury's Official Web Site](#)

"I know you've heard it a thousand times before. But it's true - hard work pays off. If you want to be good, you have to practice, practice, practice. If you don't love something, then don't do it."



George Washington, full-length portrait, standing on bunker. (© Library of Congress)

- ★ About the USA > Holidays > Presidents' Day > usa.usembassy.de/holidays-presidents.htm
- ★ About the USA > Government > The President > usa.usembassy.de/government-executive.htm
- ★ Today in History: President's Day memory.loc.gov/ammem/today/feb22.html
- ★ The American Presidency: A Glorious Burden > www.americanhistory.si.edu/presidency/home.html

"Government is not reason; it is not eloquent; it is force. Like fire, it is a dangerous servant and a fearful master."

HOLIDAY OF THE MONTH: Presidents' Day

Washington's Birthday Holiday Honors "Father of our Country"

Americans long have honored George Washington, commander of the United States armies in the War of Independence, first President of the United States and "first in the hearts of his countrymen."

Washington enjoyed nearly universal respect, not least for spurning all offers of political power at the moment of his military triumph (1781), choosing instead to return to his Mount Vernon, Virginia farm. When leading Americans in 1787 drafted the new Constitution, they were willing to afford the executive branch greater powers because they anticipated that Washington, who could be counted on not to abuse his office, would serve as the chief executive, and would establish important precedents for his successors. Still the most popular figure in America at the end of his second four-year term, Washington again decided to relinquish power, establishing an informal eight-year limit later formalized by the 22nd Amendment to the Constitution (1951).

It has been said that the American people themselves forced Congress to establish the Washington's Birthday holiday. 19th century Americans commonly celebrated a holiday on February 22, the day of Washington's birth under the Gregorian calendar adopted by Britain and its colonies in 1752. Apparently motivated by chronic employee absenteeism on that date, Congress in 1879 declared Washington's Birthday a legal public holiday.

In 1971, Congress fixed Washington's Birthday and a number of other holidays on Mondays, to create long holiday weekends. [\(complete text\)](#)

[Library of Congress: George Washington Papers](#)

U.S. Embassy Programs

germany.usembassy.gov/germany/upcoming_events.html

Webchat Station

February 7, 2007, 15:00 – 16:00

Web chat: What is the United States Doing to Stop Unwanted Spam?

http://usinfo.state.gov/usinfo/USINFO/spam_07_feb_2007.html

February 12, 2007, 15:00 – 16:00

Web chat: Studying and Working in the U.S.

Please register in advance at:

<http://germany.usembassy.de/chat/>

Interesting Article

The Youtube Effect: How A Technology For Teenagers Became A Force For Political And Economic Change. Moisés Naím. *Foreign Policy*, January/February 2007, pp. 104-103. [article](#)

When it comes to having faith in what we see online, the good news is that the YouTube effect is already creating a strong demand for reliable guides—individuals, institutions, and technologies that we can trust to help us sort facts from lies. actions.



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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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