



April 2007

About the USA – Virtual Classroom Newsletter for English Teachers

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EARTH DAY – APRIL 22, 2007

The first Earth Day, April 22, 1970, was one of the events that launched the modern environmental movement. It was a day of peaceful, mass demonstrations. Millions of people across the United States called on the government to adopt policies to clean up and protect the environment. Senator Gaylord Nelson called for an Environmental Teach-in or Earth Day to be held on April 22, 1970. Senator Nelson took a leading role in organizing the celebration, in which over 20 million people across the United States participated calling on the government to adopt policies to clean up and protect the environment. U.S. government officials responded: Congress enacted laws to clean the air and protect drinking water, wildlife habitats, and the ocean. Congress also created the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, or EPA, to oversee the nation's progress on the environment. Currently the EPA spends most of its 7.5 billion dollar yearly budget on research and technology to reduce the threat of climate change. In recent years, climate change has become a major focus of Earth Day activities.

Links

- ★ EarthDay.Gov > [Portal for U.S. Government Events & Information](#)
- ★ Earth Day Network > [Earth Day 2007 Organizations & Events](#)
- ★ White House > [Energy Security for the 21st Century](#)
- ★ USInfo > [Environment](#) | [Climate Change & Clean Energy](#) | [What is Earth Day?](#)
- ★ Climate Change Science Program > [Federal Research](#)
- ★ Climate VISION > [Voluntary Innovative Sector Initiatives](#)
- ★ Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) > [Top Stories](#) | [Climate Change](#)
- ★ Department of Energy > [Climate Change](#) | [Clean Coal Technology and Initiative](#) | [Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy](#) | [International Agreements Database](#) | [National Renewable Energy Laboratory](#)
- ★ U.S. Embassy Berlin > [Ambassador Timken: Climate Change, Technology and Growth, February 21, 2007](#) | [U.S.-EU: Shared Priorities – Energy & Environment](#)

Teaching Resources

- ★ Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) epa.gov/teachers/teachresources.htm
- ★ National Geographic: Earth Day Guide <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/earthday/>
- ★ PBS: TeacherSource - Science and Tech www.pbs.org/teachers/sciencetech
- ★ Library of Congress: Learning Page - Environment memory.loc.gov/learn/community/cc_environment.php
- ★ Lesson Plans for Earth Day www.lessonplanspage.com/EarthDay.htm
- ★ Environmental Literacy Council www.enviroliteracy.org/subcategory.php/255.html
- ★ National Environmental Education Week www.eeweek.org

“We in this generation, must come to terms with nature... We're challenged as mankind has never been challenged before to prove our maturity and our mastery, not of nature, but of ourselves.”

Rachel Carson, 1907-1964
Author of *Silent Spring*. (see p.2)



Earth Day 1970 (©AP Images)

Then:



In June 1969, the [Cuyahoga River in Cleveland, Ohio](#), saturated with oil and industrial waste, caught on fire. (©Cleveland Public Library)

Now:



As a result of tough water pollution laws, the Cuyahoga River has been removed from the endangered rivers list. It has been designated an [American Heritage River](#). (©AP Images/The Plain)



Silent Spring by Rachel Carson
(Photograph permission of
The Manhattan Rare Book Company)

**Rachel Carson – Pen Against Poison
(USInfo, U.S. Dept. of State)**

In the 100th anniversary year of Rachel Carson's birth, this publication examines how a book with a powerful idea can bring about peaceful but dramatic change in society.

usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/carson



www.who.int/world-health-day



Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice at State
Department Press Conference
(© AP Images)



EU/US SUMMIT 2007
April 30, 2007, Washington, DC
President Bush will discuss the transatlantic agenda
with European Council President Angela Merkel and
European Commission President Jose Manuel
Barroso.

RACHEL CARSON, 1907 – 1964

A shy, unassuming scientist and former civil servant, Rachel Carson seemed an unlikely candidate to become one of the most influential women in modern America. But Carson had two lifelong passions — a love of nature and a love of writing — that compelled her in 1962 to publish *Silent Spring*, the book that awakened environmental consciousness in the American public and led to an unprecedented national effort to safeguard the natural world from chemical destruction.

As a trained scientist, Carson meticulously documented her conclusions about the long-term dangers of pesticides; as a skilled writer, she communicated those dangers in language the average reader could understand and brought worldwide attention to the the harm to human health and the environment wrought by mishandling of a powerful pesticide, fomenting the environmental movement.

Links:

- ★ [The Life of Rachel Carson](#)
- ★ [The Time 100: The Most Important People of the Century](#)
- ★ [Meet Rachel Carson in this short video.](#) (From " Rachel Carson: A Conservation Legacy." U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service [\(From "Rachel Carson: A Conservation Legacy." U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service\)](#))

WORLD HEALTH DAY, April 7, 2007

World Health Day on 7 April marks the founding of the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)). Emerging diseases, such as SARS and avian influenza, humanitarian emergencies, health risks from effects of climate change or environmental degradation, and other acute health threats can all be defined as public health emergencies. International health security is the first line of defense against health shocks that can devastate people, societies and economies worldwide.

- ★ **The World Health Report 2006: Working Together for Health**
www.who.int/whr

COUNTRY REPORTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/>

The U.S. State Department's 2006 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices were released on March 6. The reports examine the status of human rights in 2006 in 196 countries and entities. For the first time, the reports include a section in each country's report regarding respect for freedom of speech on the Internet. At a press conference, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said: "These congressionally mandated annual reports speak to America's continued support for those fundamental freedoms embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Our country was born in the belief that all people, regardless of race, creed, or culture are free by nature and equal in dignity; that when given a truly unfettered choice, human beings will choose liberty over oppression, the natural right to life over the constant fear of death, the right to own property over random search and seizure, and that they will choose to be ruled by the consent of the governed, not by the coercion of the state."

- ★ [Background from USInfo](#)

EU/US SUMMITS 1990- 2007

The United States will host the next annual U.S.-EU Summit in Washington, D.C., on April 30, 2007. Regular U.S.-EU summit meetings have taken place since 1990. The 1990 U.S.-EU Transatlantic Declaration set out principles for greater consultation, and established regular summit and ministerial meetings. In 1995, the New Transatlantic Agenda (NTA) and the EU-U.S. Joint Action Plan provided a framework for promoting stability and democracy together, responding to global changes, and expanding world trade. The NTA also sought to strengthen individual ties across the Atlantic, and launched a number of dialogues, including ones for business leaders and legislators.

- ★ [Transatlantic Declaration of 1990](#)
- ★ [New Transatlantic Agenda \(1995\)](#)
- ★ [Milestones in the Transatlantic Relationship](#) (U.S. Mission to Germany)
- ★ [InfoAlert: Transatlantic Relations](#) (U.S. Mission to Germany)

TEACHING LITERATURE

"Holes" by Louis Sachar

A family curse.
A "no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing great-great grandfather."
Shoes falling from the sky.
A boys' detention center in the middle of Texas.
The deadly yellow-spotted lizards.

Those are all elements of author Louis Sachar's wildly imaginative, award-winning book "Holes."

"Holes" tells the story of Stanley Yelnats, a young boy in the wrong place at the wrong time. His bad luck finds him sentenced to months of detention at Camp Green Lake for a crime he did not commit, where unwittingly this unusual hero has the chance to lift a 'curse' that has afflicted his family for generations. Along with Squid, Armpit, ZigZag, Magnet, X-Ray and Zero, Stanley is forced by the warden, her henchmen Mr. Sir and Dr. Pendanski to dig a hole five feet by five feet by five feet every day. WHY? They have no idea why they are digging holes, and Stanley begins to wonder why the warden is so interested in anything 'special' found while digging.

Each boy living at Camp Green Lake has a hard-luck story, some involving poverty, homelessness and illiteracy. "Holes" cleverly explores these sensitive topics along with issues of family, destiny, race, bullying and teenage alienation, without being condescending, through its strong and strangely humorous narrative. "Holes" offers messages about courage, loyalty, optimism and perseverance.

TEACHING RESOURCES

- ★ Holes [Comprehension Companion](#)
- ★ [Study Guide](#) from Walden Media
- ★ [Reading Strategies](#) for Holes
- ★ Lesson Plans ["Holes"](#)

MORE INFORMATION

Louis Sachar – Biographical Essay (*Contemporary Authors Online*, Gale, 2007, *Gale Biography Resource Center*) "He [Stanley] is a kind of pathetic kid who feels like he has no friends, feels like his life is cursed. And I think everyone can identify with that in one way or another," explained Sachar. **Please contact your IRC for a copy of the article.**

ARTICLES

Connecting with KIDS. Sharon Miller Cindrich, *The Writer*, Oct 2004, v117, #10, pp20, **ProQuest document ID: 696635171**
Cindrich interviews Louis Sachar, author of the award-winning novel *Holes*. Among other things, he talks about his writing journey, the success of *Holes* and his connection with kids.

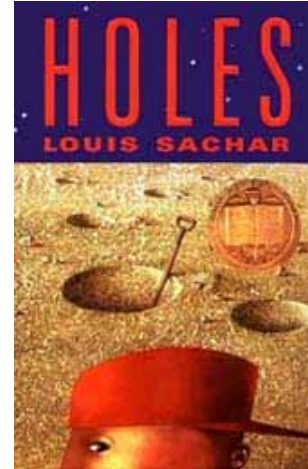
A Conversation with Louis Sachar. Kate Davis, *Writing*, Nov/Dec 2002, v25, #3, pp26, **ProQuest document ID: 252581181**

Holes: A Conversation with Newberry Medal winner Louis Sachar. Cyndi Giorgis and Nancy J. Johnson, *The Reading Teacher*, Dec 1999/Jan 2000, v53, #4, pp340, **ProQuest document ID: 47098321**

Newberry Medal Acceptance

Louis Sachar, *The Horn Book Magazine*, Jul/Aug 1999, v75, #4, pp410, **ProQuest document ID: 42926477**; Louis Sachar's acceptance speech for the Newberry Medal, which was awarded to his book "Holes," is presented.

For additional articles go to:
<http://infoalert.usembassy.de>



The lullaby, sung, with telling variations,
by the Yelnats clan:

*"If only, if only," the woodpecker sighs,
"The bark on the tree was as soft as the skies."
While the wolf waits below,
hungry and lonely,
Crying to the moo-oo-oon,
"If only, if only."*



(© Louis Sachar Website)

For everything you ever wanted to know about Louis and his books, including the Marvin Redpost series and Wayside School series, follow the link below.

[Louis Sachar's Official Website](#)

*"Many students want to know where my ideas
come from. And that's the hardest to answer
because it's a mystery to me!"*

Louis Sachar

***I hear America Singing*
by Walt Whitman**

*I hear America singing,
the varied carols I hear,
Those of mechanics, each one singing his as
it should be blithe and strong, ... [Poem](#)*



© Smithsonian

Webchat Station

[Muslim Women in America](#)

April 16 - 15:00

[Studying and Working in the U.S.](#)

April 16 - 15:00 | May 14 - 15:00

[Doing Business with and in the U.S.](#)

April 24, 11:00

THIS MONTH:

National Poetry Month – April 2007

Inaugurated by the Academy in April 1996, National Poetry Month (NPM) brings together publishers, booksellers, literary organizations, libraries, schools, and poets around the country to celebrate poetry and its vital place in American culture. Thousands of businesses and non-profit organizations participate through readings, festivals, book displays, workshops, and other events.

LINKS

- ★ Poets.org > Online [Poetry Classroom](#)
- ★ Gale.com > [Poet's Corner](#)
- ★ Library of Congress > [Poetry](#) & [A Poem a Day](#) & [Poetry Webcasts](#)
- ★ About the USA > [Literature](#)

Jazz Appreciation Month

Each April, the United States celebrates Jazz Appreciation Month (JAM), an opportunity to savor a major American contribution to world culture. Initiated by the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History, JAM aims to focus public attention on the music, and on the many talented composers, musicians and other contributors to the sound. Jazz Appreciation Month (or JAM) is intended to draw public attention to the glories of jazz as both an historical and a living treasure. Jazz is the most consequential, influential and innovative music to emerge from the United States, and New Orleans, Louisiana, is widely known as the birthplace of jazz.

- ★ Smithsonian > [Louis Armstrong Education Kit](#)
- ★ Smithsonian > [Jazz Class](#)
- ★ PBS > A History of America's Music: [Jazz](#)
- ★ A Passion for [Jazz](#)
- ★ Federal Resources > Music > [Jazz](#)

TALKING ABOUT MEDIA

The New Media Age: End of the Written Word?

Tucker, Patrick, et al.

Futurist, March-April 2007, v41, #2

In a series of articles, experts compare the evidence that the "mid-21st century will bring a post-literate society where digital technologies will have rendered the written word obsolete." The authors note various trends, such as the decline of newspaper circulation, the rise of the Internet as a news source, and the explosive growth of sites such as YouTube. Will reading become? How will we communicate complex ideas in the future? Will formal literacy no longer be necessary to engage in an exchange of ideas? Should education be devoted to the development of creativity and problem-solving rather than the 3Rs? Or will a post-literate age mean the demise of civilization?

Fulltext: infoalert.usembassy.de/soc/e12_207.htm



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.

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