



## About the USA – Virtual Classroom Newsletter for English Teachers

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### "TEAR DOWN THIS WALL" – June 12, 1987

President Reagan's speech and his declaration to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev at the Berlin Wall — "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" — was credited with helping to bring an end to the Cold War. The speech, delivered to the people of West Berlin on the occasion of the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the city of Berlin, was also audible on the East side of the Berlin wall.



(© Reagan Foundation)

Remarks at the Brandenburg Gate West Berlin, Germany, June 12, 1987

*"General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization: Come here to this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!"*

### Links & Teaching Resources

- ★ [Official web site](#) for the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation
- ★ White House: [President Ronald Reagan](#)
- ★ The American Presidency Project – [Listen to the Speech](#)
- ★ PBS Essay: [Ronald Reagan](#)
- ★ Internet Public Library: [Ronald Wilson Reagan](#)

### Articles – Contrasting views on President Reagan's legacy

#### Just Who Did Smash Communism?

James G. Hershberg, Washington Post, Jun 27, 2004, pg. B.01  
Historians abhor the idea of attributing a vast, complex phenomenon to a single cause. No one person brought down the Soviet Union, but if I had to choose the one who mattered most, that person would not be Reagan, [...] \*\*Request article.

#### The Man Who Beat Communism.

The Economist, Jun 12, 2004, v371, #8379, pg. 13  
The Reagan presidency of 1981-1989 changed the face of the world. By defeating communism, Ronald Reagan ended one of history's most violent centuries and [...] \*[Download article \(password required\)](#)

### G8 Summit

#### Growth and Responsibility – Leitmotif for Germany's G8 Presidency



On 1 January 2007 Germany assumed the presidency of the eight leading industrialized nations. This is its fifth G8 Presidency. The highlight of the one-year presidency will be the Summit of heads of state and government on 6 - 8 June 2007 at the Baltic Sea resort of Heiligendamm. With the Leitmotif "Growth and Responsibility", Chancellor Merkel is directing the focus of the G8 in 2007 on key global challenges: the world economy as well as Africa's economic, political, and social development. An important goal in this aspect is to take account of the major shifts in the world economy brought about by the rise of the newly industrialized economies, also within the system of global governance. [Full Text](#)



### Links

- ★ [Germany's G8 Presidency 2007 Official Site](#)
- ★ [Canada Government G8 Site](#)
- ★ [G-8 Information Center, University of Toronto](#)



[Model G8 Youth Summit 2007](#)



"Children of high class, Chinatown, San Francisco." 1900 (© Library of Congress)

### Asian Loan Words

While English has borrowed most heavily from the languages of Europe and the Near East, it has also acquired many loan words from Asia, sometimes through the intermediary of Dutch, the native language of the merchant-sailors who dominated the Spice Islands trade in the 17th century. Many of these borrowed words no longer seem foreign, having been completely assimilated into English (boondocks, gingham, and ketchup); while others are still strongly associated with their country of origin... [Link](#)

### Statistics - 14.4 million

The estimated number of U.S. residents in July 2005 who said they were Asian or Asian in combination with one or more other races. This group comprised about 5 percent of the total population. California had the largest population (4.9 million) of people of this group.

[Facts for Features](#)

### Model Minority Stereotype

As many people hold positive views of Asian Americans as hard-working, smart, and relatively successful, Asian Americans have been labeled a "model minority" for their high rates of achievement.

### How have Asian Americans been portrayed as a model minority?

Find out more about the background of the "model minority" stereotype. In the 1960s, the U.S. media began to portray the model minority through academic and economic success stories of Japanese and Chinese students. This paper illustrates problems resulting from the artificial grouping of Asian Americans as one ethnic group and the stereotype's influence on young Asian Americans. [Model Minority Stereotype Reconsidered. Kobayashi, Futoshi. University of Texas, 1999.](#)



Korean-American leaders held a vigil for the Virginia Tech victims in Los Angeles, April 17 (© AP)

## Asian Pacific American Heritage Month: May 2007

Asian Pacific American Heritage Month honors the achievements of American ethnic groups with roots in Asia and the Pacific Islands and recognizes their contributions to the United States. The U.S. Census Bureau lists more than 25 such groups -- Vietnamese, Chinese, Filipinos, Indian, Pakistani, Korean, Japanese, Cambodian, Laotian, Indonesian, Thai, Burmese, Malaysian, Taiwanese, Sri Lanka, Bangladeshi, and native Hawaiians, Polynesians, New Zealanders and Australians.

In 1978, a joint congressional resolution established Asian/Pacific American Heritage Week. The first 10 days of May were chosen to coincide with two important milestones in Asian/Pacific American history: the arrival in the United States of the first Japanese immigrants (May 7, 1843) and contributions of Chinese workers to the building of the transcontinental railroad, completed on May 10, 1869.

### Links & Teaching Resources

- ★ **Smithsonian** - [Asian Pacific American History and Culture](#);
- ★ **About the USA** - [Asian Americans](#)
- ★ **Fact Monster**: [Asian Pacific American Heritage Month](#)
- ★ **PBS**: [Ancestors in the Americas](#)

### Milestones in Asian American History

- 499 A Chinese priest named Hui Shen reportedly travels to the North American continent.
- 1587 The Spanish galleon Nuestra Senora de Esperanza (Our Lady of Hope) lands in California, bringing Filipino crewmembers who act as scouts for the landing party.
- 1790 The first U.S. Naturalization Act allows only "free White persons" to become U.S. citizens.
- 1830 The first U.S. Census notation of Chinese in America – the count is three. In 1840, eight; by 1850, the figure is 758. These early Census figures probably did not include other Asians and Pacific Islanders in the United States. [Timeline](#)

### Korean Americans

The history of Koreans in American began just over a hundred years ago, on January 13, 1903, when the S.S. Gaelic arrived in Honolulu Harbor, carrying the first significant group of Korean immigrants to the New World. Today, Korean American populations exist throughout the United States, with the largest communities residing in Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, and Northern Virginia.

### Links

- ★ [Korean American Museum](#)
- ★ [Korean History Project](#)
- ★ Smithsonian: [The Korean Experience](#)

In the aftermath of the massacre at Virginia Tech University on April 16th, as the nation mourned the victims of Cho Seung Hui, a sense of shock and shame overcame the Korean American community.

### Articles

**Koreans Aren't to Blame.** Adrian Hong, Washington Post, 04/20/2007  
 "The actions of Cho Seung Hui are no more the fault of Korean Americans than the actions of the Washington area snipers were the fault of African Americans. A deranged individual acted on his own initiative, not on behalf of any ethnic grievance or agenda." \*\*Request article.

### Massacre at Virginia Tech: Ethnicity Brings an Unwelcome Focus.

Sandy Banks, Los Angeles Times, 04/19/2007  
 "The sensitivity of Korean Americans -- and that of other minorities -- is rooted in culture and history, and reflects the reality that distinctive events, with distinctive players, and reflects the reality that distinctive events, with distinctive players, tend to leave a unique mark on our collective psyche, bolstering innate tendencies toward bias and stereotyping. [...] Foundational to Korean thinking is the sense that you need to ... adjust yourself to expectations. It's very, very important that you protect your family face and reputation, recognize that whatever you do has consequences not just for you, but for others as well."  
 \*\*Request article.

## TEACHING LITERATURE

### An Na: A Step from Heaven

An Na's first novel, *A Step from Heaven*, was the 2002 winner of an award for excellence in literature for young adults. It is the story of a Korean family that immigrates to California in search of a better life. The story is told through the eyes of Young Ju, who is a preschooler when the book begins and a young woman heading off to college by the time it ends. The story begins in Korea. In the airplane flight to the United States, Young Ju equates going to America with going to heaven. Her uncle corrects her by saying that America is "a step from heaven." In fact, life turns out to be much harder in America than the family anticipated. Young Ju, however, adjusts quickly and soon excels in school. But the shame of her family's poverty and her father's worsening alcoholism leads to lies that prevent her from fully embracing her new life. She is caught between two cultures and increasingly isolated by the growing tension within her family.

A play for children based on An Na's *A Step from Heaven* was adapted by the author for classroom use.

Read, October 6, 2006, v56, #4, p6

[Download article \(\\*password required\)](#)

### An Interview with An Na

Rochman, Hazel. *Booklist*, March 15, 2002, v98, #14, p1253

Excerpt:

"Did you feel caught between being Korean and American?"

AN NA: That really was a conflict when I was growing up: learning to be independent and speak my mind at school, and then coming home to be a Korean daughter, demure, soft-spoken, obedient. There were definitely battles, especially when I was a teenager. I was different from Young Ju, much more outspoken. I really fought hard. ...

*A scene in the immigration office shows the child taking control. Did you speak for your family in situations like that?*

AN NA: Many times. I think that's a unique experience for children of immigrant parents. The kids become very powerful when they translate... I remember lying to my parents about things I didn't want them to know.

...

*When you have children, will you keep them in touch with their Korean roots?*

AN NA: I hope so. But I know how difficult it is because my parents tried very hard with me. I went to Korean school and refused to learn. It was one of those things: 'I'm in America. I don't need to learn Korean.' ..."

[Download article \(\\*password required\)](#)

### About Asian-American Literature

#### The Cultural Production of Asian American Young Adults in the Novels of Marie G. Lee, An Na, and Doris Jones Yang

Chiu, Monica. *The Lion and the Unicorn*, April 2006, v30, # 2, p168

Can one challenge stereotypes without first alluding to them? In the U.S., Asian American youth must often distance themselves much more from their families and culture than those from other ethnic backgrounds. In this essay, the author examines socializing subtexts as portrayed in four young adult novels: "To enter the ongoing conversation about multicultural literature -- what to read and teach, and how to interpret the readings -- is to contribute to a territory fraught with controversy... To swallow the texts uncritically is to participate in socializing Asian American teens into a landscape that, ultimately, may not help them find their voices." The author has particular praise for An Na's *A Step from Heaven*: "All of the novels emphasize immigrant hardships, but it is in the telling and unfolding of these hardships that allow them to read either as 'becoming American' novels concluding in expected Asian American success or that, like Na's, reference the continued often hidden, pain of immigrant struggles."

[Download article \(\\*password required\)](#)



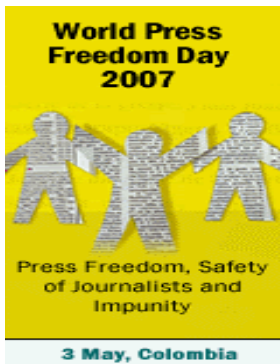
An Na: A Step from Heaven  
(Front Street, Penguin USA, c2001)  
Deutsch: Im Himmel spricht man Englisch.  
(Sauerländer, 2005)

[An Na's official website](#)



An Na

"The inspiration for the story definitely came from memory. There are parts that are just me.... But as the novel grew, it became Young Ju's story. Her father is beaten from the beginning, and he struggles with his place and his manhood in this new country. It was different for me. My father was a stern and very traditional father, but my parents did well here and adjusted well. Still, there were times when it was difficult and there were lots of family arguments."  
(Booklist Interview)



© UNESCO – [World Press Freedom Day 2007](#)

**Links**

- USINFO: [Freedom of the Press](#)
- USINFO: [Internet Freedom](#)
- USINFO: [Democracy Dialogues – Freedom of Speech](#)
- Freedom Forum: [A Brief History of the Bill of Rights and the First Amendment](#)



**Links**

- [Proclamation by the President of the U.S.](#)
- United Jewish Communities – [Jewish American Heritage Month](#)

**Webchat Station**

**Does the Marshall Plan still matter after 60 years?**

Date: Thursday, 31 May 2007  
Time: 9:00 a.m. EDT (1300 GMT)

**[Sign in](#)**

Join us for a webchat led by professor Edwina Campbell as USINFO commemorates the 60th anniversary of the Marshall Plan with an online discussion covering all aspects of the initiative and its relevance to the complex world of the 21st century.

**THIS MONTH**

**World Press Freedom Day – May 3**

Every year, May 3rd is a date which celebrates the fundamental principles of press freedom; to evaluate press freedom around the world, to defend the media from attacks on their independence and to pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives in the exercise of their profession. Press freedom, safety of journalists and impunity will be the topics of UNESCO World Press Freedom Day 2007.

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice praised journalists for being on the front lines to report “some of the most difficult conflicts in the world.” ([Full Text](#)) And indeed, the world became a more dangerous place for journalists in 2006, with more members of the media killed last year than in any year since 1994, several global press freedom advocacy groups report. In its “Press Freedom Round-up 2006,” released December 31, 2006, Reporters Without Borders -- a Paris-based international nongovernmental organization that advocates for freedom of the press -- said at least 81 journalists were killed in 21 countries while doing their job, the highest annual toll since 1994, when 103 journalists died. [Full Text](#)

**Jewish American Heritage Month**

May is officially designated as Jewish American Heritage Month.

**Mindy Weisel: Words on a Journey**

Jewish American artist Mindy Weisel met with U.S. American and German artists and writers in Berlin. The daughter of Auschwitz survivors, Ms. Weisel was born in a displaced persons camp in Bergen Belsen. She has been able to transform and transcend that legacy of loss into hope and spirituality through art. Weisel discussed her upcoming contribution to the Berlin-and-Beyond project which the Outdoor Arts Foundation has commissioned for the 20th Anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. The discussion focused on the personal and social perspectives that art can provide. [Video](#) | [MP3](#)

**TALKING ABOUT MEDIA**

**State of the News Media 2007.**

Project for Excellence in Journalism (Pew Research Center)

This annual report documents the health and status of American journalism. This year, the report focuses on the rapid pace of change in the American media landscape. “As audiences migrate to new delivery systems, practicing journalism has become far more difficult and demands new vision. Traditional journalism is not, as some suggest, becoming irrelevant but the press is no longer gatekeeper over what the public knows. Journalism’s new role is only beginning to be understood.”

**Fulltext:** <http://www.stateofthenewsmedia.org/2007/index.asp>



**usa.usembassy.de**

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