



About the USA – Virtual Classroom Newsletter for English Teachers

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EARTH DAY and the Rise of Environmental Consciousness

Earth Day, April 22, is the annual celebration of the environment and a time to assess the work still needed to protect the natural gifts of our planet. Earth Day has no central organizing force behind it though several nongovernmental organizations work to keep track of the thousands of local events in schools and parks that mark the day. Earth Day is observed around the world, although nowhere is it a national holiday. In the United States, it affirms that environmental awareness is part of the country's consciousness and that the idea of protecting the environment - once the province of a few conservationists - has moved from the extreme to the mainstream of American thought. [more > America.gov](#)

New eJournal USA: [The Greening of U.S. Corporations](#). U.S. corporations have embraced environmentally friendly ways of doing business. What prompts a corporation to "go green"?

Photo Gallery: America.gov - [Green Buildings](#). A new field called "green building" is gaining momentum in the United States.

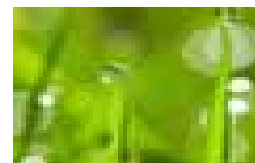
Lesson Plans (New York Times Learning Network)

- ❖ **Developing Factual and Fictional Depictions of Earth's End:** Students diagram the predicted effects of the sun's life cycle on both Earth and the rest of the solar system. They use the scientific facts in the article as a basis for writing science fiction stories. [Here Today, Gone 7.59 Billion Years From Now?](#)
- ❖ **Proposing Solutions to Decrease Your Town's Carbon Footprint:** Students reflect on the meaning of a "carbon footprint" and methods of reducing it. They research various technological innovations designed to decrease greenhouse gas emissions and develop a proposal detailing ways to reduce the carbon footprint of their own town. [One Foot, Two Foot, Red Foot, Green Foot](#)
- ❖ **Preparing a Newsletter Focusing on Community Recycling:** Students share opinions about products that can be reused and recycled. They then investigate and create articles focusing on recycling issues for a newsletter. [Reduce, Reuse, Recycle](#)
- ❖ **Investigating Ways to Reduce Carbon Footprints:** Students learn about the exchange of carbon credits to offset corporate emissions. They then investigate their own "carbon footprints" and how they can reduce their personal impact on the environment. [Tread Lightly](#)

Learn about specific subjects: [Acid rain](#) * [Climate change](#) * [Drinking water](#) * [Endangered species](#) * [Environmental Health Science](#) * [Estuaries](#) * [Ground water](#) * [Indoor air quality](#) * [Invasive species](#) * [Ozone depletion](#) * [National Youth Service Day](#) * [Trash: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle](#) (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency)

National Public Radio (NPR): Getting Rid of Junk, Staying Green - [After the Techno Lust, There's Always E-Cycling](#): March 26, 2008 - As technology improves and gets cheaper, cell phones, computers, digital cameras, etc. end up in desk drawers, basements — or on the curb. While some of these gizmos are recycled, lots of them still wind up in the garbage. In 2005, the EPA estimated there was about 2.2 million tons of e-waste. About 80 to 85 percent of that ended up in landfills, ... [Listen Now](#)

For information about U.S. actions to address climate change please visit the U.S. Department of State [website](#).



© America.gov - [Environment - Protecting Our Natural Resources](#)

For teachers

- [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\) Teaching Center](#)
- [National Institutes of Health \(NIH\): Tox Town](#)
- [National Institutes of Health: Tox Map](#)
- [National Oceanic & Atmospheric Adm. \(NOAA\) Education Resources](#)
- [Natural Inquirer Lesson Plans](#)

For students

- [EPA Student Center](#)
- [NIH: Tox Mystery](#) and [Tox Town](#)
- [EarthDay.gov: For kids](#)

Song

Jack' Johnson reinterpreted the classic "Three Is a Magic Number," with "The 3 R's" as a call to protect the environment and "**Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle.**" [Listen to the song on youtube](#)

Three it's a magic number
Yes it is, it's a magic number
Because two times three is six
And three times six is eighteen
And the eighteenth letter in the alphabet is R
We've got three R's we're going to talk about today
We've got to learn to Reduce, Reuse, Recycle
Reduce, Reuse, Recycle [...]

Well, if you're going to the market to buy some juice - You've got to bring your own bags and you learn to reduce your waste
And if your brother or your sister's got some cool clothes - You could try them on before you buy some more of those
Reuse, we've got to learn to reuse
And if the first two R's don't work out
And if you've got to make some trash
Don't throw it out
Recycle, we've got to learn to recycle,
We've got to learn to Reduce, Reuse, Recycle [...]



Video: [The Greening of San Francisco](#)



© Source: YouTube

Memorable U.S. campaign speeches:

- Abraham Lincoln's "["House Divided" Address](#), June 16, 1858
- Franklin D. Roosevelt's 1936 convention speech "["Rendezvous with Destiny"](#)", June 27, 1936
- [John F. Kennedy: Opening Statement, First Presidential Candidate Debate](#), Sept. 26, 1960
- Ronald Reagan's 1980 Republican National Convention Acceptance Address "["Time to Recapture Our Destiny"](#)"
- George H.W. Bush's call for a "["kinder and gentler nation."](#)" 1988 Republican National Convention Acceptance Address, Aug 18, 1988

Teaching Resource

PBS NOW: [Persuasive Writing - Take a Stand:](#)

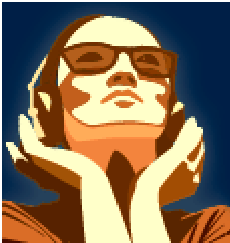
The ability to state ideas clearly and back them up with proof is increasingly important, regardless of one's profession, age or background. New technologies such as blogs, podcasts, instant messaging, virtual social networks and email make opinionated self-expression easier and more encouraged than ever before. At the same time, learning to distinguish reputable sources of information from inaccurate sources is challenging, yet important when making credible arguments. Learning how to recognize and use credible resources to form opinions and support them is a skill used by everyone.

Article

BUSH-CLINTON FOREVER?

Kristof, Nicholas D., New York Times Upfront, March 10, 2008: "If Senator Hillary Clinton is elected President and serves two terms, then the presidency will have been held by a Bush or a Clinton for 28 years." In this article the author examines if American democracy will diminish if Americans keep the presidency in the same two families that have held it since 1989. See [INFOALERT](#) for the [full text](#).

NEW ON THE WEB



[Youth Radio: Election 2008](#)

This site follows the 2008 U.S. presidential election "around the country, through the perspectives of young people who are getting a close-up view of the process." It features youth reporting on candidates, primaries, fundraisers, and other election topics.

ELECTIONS 2008

Speeches and Presidential Elections

After Barack Obama's *A More Perfect Union* speech there was wide agreement on the importance of the speech for his campaign. His speech, covering the history of race relations in America, came as an attempt to resolve the controversy associated with sermons from his pastor, Jeremiah Wright. Obama's rhetorical talents have had a great impact on the success of his campaign so far. Hillary Clinton's most recent speeches have included substantive policy proposals on mortgages and affordable and accessible health care; proposals which have been called bold and progressive by commentators.

The designated Republican Presidential candidate, John McCain, call himself "a realistic idealist" who in his own words has been shaped by "hard experience and the judgment it informs." McCain reinforces his impressive biography with a "["Service to America" speech tour](#)" to places associated with his own, and his family's, service to the United States.

Will the ability to inform, educate and inspire people in a speech be decisive in this year's presidential election?

Campaign 2008: Speeches

- ❖ **Barack Obama:** [A More Perfect Union](#), March 18, 2008, Philadelphia: "[...] Of course, the answer to the slavery question was already embedded within our Constitution -- a Constitution that had at its very core the ideal of equal citizenship under the law; a Constitution that promised its people liberty, and justice, and a union that could be and should be perfected over time. [...]"
- ❖ **Barack Obama:** "[Yes, we can change](#)" - Remarks after South Carolina Democratic Presidential Primary victory.
- ❖ **Barack TV:** Videos of [speeches](#) and [TV ads](#)
- ❖ **Barack Obama Announces his Candidacy** for the Democratic Nomination for President in 2008 - [Speech](#) (transcript and video)
- ❖ **Hillary for President:** [Speeches](#)
- ❖ **Hillary TV:** [Videos of speeches and TV ads](#)
- ❖ **Hillary Clinton's March 4 Speech** (transcript of the senator's speech to supporters after the March 4 nominating contests)
- ❖ **John McCain's Remarks to the Los Angeles World Affairs Council**, March 26, 2008
- ❖ **John McCain:** [Remarks on New Hampshire Primary Victory](#)
- ❖ **John McCain:** [Speech on Iraq](#)

Links Online Speech Bank: [American Rhetoric](#)
Merriam Webster: [Rhetoric](#)

Memorable Convention Keynote Addresses

Barack Obama's famous keynote address "["The Audacity of Hope"](#) (text & audio file) to the 2004 Democratic convention in Boston lasted 15 minutes and put him on the national political map. Many commentators said that the then Illinois Senate candidate "hit every note."

Barbara Jordan's [keynote address](#) (text & audio file) to the Democratic National Convention, July 12, 1976: Scholars cite Barbara Jordan's eloquence, power and masterful delivery, as well as the historical importance of the first keynote by an African-American woman, when pointing out that her speech is among the most significant [American political speeches](#) of the 20th century.

INTRODUCING

<http://www.factchecked.org/>



Lesson Plan: [The Language of Deception](#) It's a phased withdrawal, not a retreat. Except that the terms actually mean the same thing. But "retreat" sounds much worse, so savvy politicians avoid using it. That's because they understand that there is a difference between the cognitive (or literal) meaning and the emotive meaning of a word. This lesson examines the ways in which terms that pack an emotional punch can add power to a statement; and also ways in which emotive meanings can be used to mislead, either by doing the reader's thinking for him or by blinding her to the real nature of the issue. Students will learn to distinguish between different uses of language and analyze the emotive impact of words.

Teaching Literature

Battle of the Books - A Voluntary Reading Incentive Program

In an attempt to encourage middle and high school students in the United States to read, the "battle of the books" concept has enjoyed popularity. It is based on a simple idea. A group of students is given a large list of books and challenged to read as many as they can. Then, a quiz show is staged where questions are fired at the contestants, giving clues to the books listed. Like a spelling bee, contestants battle until the winner emerges – the person who has answered the most questions.

Battle of the Books in Germany 2008

Organized by an English teacher from a high school in Markkleeberg, Saxony, the "Battle of the Books," based on the American formula, is held annually as an English language reading and literature competition. In 2007 it brought together students from eight schools, some in Leipzig and others from as far away as Kronshagen in Schleswig-Holstein. The competition on students' familiarity with selected American books was introduced to Germany in 2004-5 by four American Fulbright teaching assistants in the Leipzig Consular General district working with Ms. Kerstin Kirschke, a teacher at the Rudolf-Hildebrand-Gymnasium. The contest prompts students to immerse themselves in the English language and American literature, and thus to broaden their views on U.S. society and values.

Literature List 2008

- ❖ **Silent to the Bone** by E. L. Konigsburg
- ❖ **Dairy Queen** by Catherine Gilbert Murdock
- ❖ **Tenderness** by Robert Cormier
- ❖ **Killing Mr. Griffin** by Lois Duncan
- ❖ **The Earth, My Butt and Other Big Round Things** by Carolyn Mackler
- ❖ **So Yesterday** by Scott Westerfeld
- ❖ **Romiette and Julio** by Sharon Mills Draper
- ❖ **A Mango-Shaped Space** by Wendy Mass
- ❖ **Godless** by Pete Hautman
- ❖ **Double Helix** (Puffin Sleuth Novels) by Nancy Werlin

Source: [Battle of the Books literature list \(Amazon\)](#)

Participating schools send a team of five students who like to read and discuss. Each student must read at least two books from the Battle of the Books book list in preparation for the contest. The competition consists of three parts: facts, interpretation, and creativity. All competitions are held in English. For further information on the 2008 Battle of the Books or information on how to participate next year, contact Ms. Kerstin Kirschke at kkleipzig@hotmail.com.

Adapting Literature for the Big Screen: The Wave

The Wave is based on the real experience of a high school class in Palo Alto, CA (USA), in April 1967.

"When Ben Ross, a history teacher at an American high school, shows his students a film about the Nazis of World War II, they are shocked. How did such a party become so powerful in a civilized country? Mr. Ross cannot answer this question himself, but he decides to try an experiment that might answer it. Over the next few days he introduces his class to some new ideas: they are going to be part of a team called 'the Wave'. The aim of the team is success, and for success you need discipline. To his amazement, the students like the Wave - it is as if it is what they have wanted all along. Soon almost everyone in the school wants to join. But there are darker sides to 'teams', and soon the Wave is out of control..." (Penguin Teacher's Notes)

Ron Jones wrote of his "experiment" in a short story, titled *Take As Directed*, which was published in 1972 in the *Whole Earth Review*. The short story was then written by Todd Strasser (under the pseudonym Morton Rhue) into a full-length and published in 1981.

The reputation of the experiment stretched internationally, evidenced by the new German movie *Die Welle*.



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[AMERICA'S BATTLE OF THE BOOKS](#) is a reading incentive program for students in grades 4 through 12. Students read books and come together to demonstrate their abilities and test their knowledge about the books they have read. The structure and format of the competitions may vary depending on the needs, resources and preferences for both school-based and regional competitions.



Links

- [How Battle of the Books Works](#)

Book Recommendation

Elementary Battle of the Books and More. By Sybilla Cook, Frances Corcoran, and Beverley Fannesbeck (Upstart Books, 2005): The authors describe effective "Battle of the Books" programs and provide techniques on how to set up contests; how to relate the contests to curriculum; and, how to keep them fun. The book contains descriptions of several hundred book titles with ready-to-use clues.



© Die Welle (2008)

Links

- [Penguin's Teacher's Notes on The Wave](#)
- [Todd Strasser's Homepage](#)
- [Original Short Story by Ron Jones](#)
- [Die Welle - Der Film \(2008\)](#)
- DW: "[Die Welle](#)" im Klassenzimmer
- WDR: "[Macht durch Disziplin](#)" - Ron Jones im Interview
- U.S. Consulate Frankfurt: [Transcript](#) of Chat with Todd Strasser

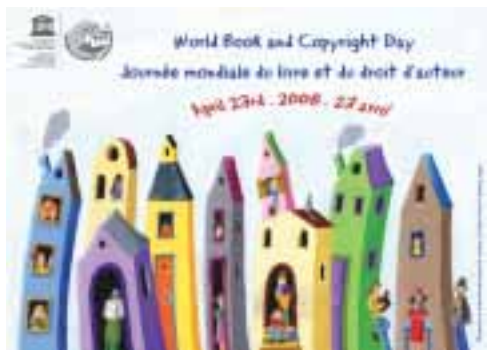


© [NATO](#)

Teaching Resource: [PowerPoint presentation](#) introducing NATO, what it does and how it works.



© [National Cherry Blossom Festival](#)



© [UNESCO: World Book Day](#)

Webchat Station

Upcoming AskAmerica Webchats

April 14, 15:00

Studium, Praktika, Sommerjobs, High School & AuPair Aufenthalte in den USA

Worauf achten bei der Planung eines USA-Aufenthaltes? Bewerbung? Zivildienst in den USA? Visum? Wir freuen uns auf Fragen von Schülern, Studenten, Lehrern und Eltern. Der Chat wird moderiert von Fachreferenten für Studium und Austausch der U.S. Mission; Mitarbeiter der Visa-Abteilung geben Auskunft über Visa für einen Aufenthalt in den USA.

THIS MONTH

NATO Summit: April 2 - 4, 2008 in Bucharest, Romania

NATO summit meetings provide periodic opportunities for member countries to evaluate and provide strategic direction for Alliance activities.

Links

- [North Atlantic Treaty Organization \(NATO\): Bucharest Summit](#)
- [Remarks by Secretary Rice at NATO Foreign Ministers Meeting](#)
- [Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs: NATO](#)

National Cherry Blossom Festival

The thousands of cherry trees that border the Tidal Basin in Washington, D.C., are one of the most well known symbols of the United States' capital, especially when they are in full bloom. To celebrate this, the [National Cherry Blossom Festival](#) is held. The 2008 Festival is scheduled for March 29 through April 13. The [National Park Service's \(NPS\) National Cherry Blossom web page](#) contains information about the trees themselves and activities that celebrate their annual bloom, and also provides answers to [frequently asked questions](#).

April 23 - World Book and Copyright Day

By celebrating this Day throughout the world, UNESCO seeks to promote reading, publishing and the protection of intellectual property through copyright. [UNESCO: World Book Day](#)

Why April 23? A symbolic date for world literature for on this date and in the same year of 1616, Cervantes, Shakespeare and Inca Garcilaso de la Vega all died. It is also the date of birth or death of other prominent authors such as Vladimir Nabokov, Josep Pla and Manuel Mejía Vallejo. It was a natural choice for UNESCO's General Conference to pay a worldwide tribute to books and authors on this date, encouraging everyone, and in particular young people, to discover the pleasure of reading [...]."

Links

- UN Dag Hammarskjöld Library: [World Book and Copyright Day](#)
- Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels: [Der Welttag des Buches](#)
- Veranstaltungskalender: [Deutschland liest am Welttag des Buches](#)

Teaching Resource



Lehrer-Online WebQuests -

Internetbasierte Lernabenteuer. Lernende erarbeiten mithilfe des Internets ein Wissensgebiet und präsentieren ihre Ergebnisse.

Mit dem [WebQuest "American Dream"](#) lernen Schülerinnen und Schüler das Phänomen des amerikanischen Traumes kennen. Der WebQuest lässt sich auch mit einer Zeitreise durch die amerikanische Geschichte vergleichen. Die SchülerInnen versuchen, die Bedeutung von Träumen und der zentralen Thematik des "American Dream" zu verstehen, indem sie die dafür aufbereiteten Aufgaben selbstständig oder in Gruppen erledigen. Viele Text-Beispiele und Links geben Einblicke in die Träume von Menschen in den USA. Nach der Recherche-Reise kann das Ergebnis in einer PowerPoint-Präsentation vorgestellt werden.



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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Questions? Contact: classroom@usembassy.de