



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

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### "Generation Y" - "Net Generation" - "Generation Next" - "Instant Everything Generation" - "Gen Nexters"

They were born after the civil rights, woman's rights and gay rights movements. They view diversity as an accepted norm. Their world has always included computers, the Internet, cell phones, text messaging, etc. They want everything and they want it now.

There are 42 million 16- to 25-year-olds in the United States, making up close to 15 percent of the population. They will have a major impact on American society. In a series of profiles, [NPR] looked at what makes *Generation Next* different from its predecessors. **National Public Radio** - [Generation Next](#)

Please also see **PBS**: [Generation Next - Speak Up Be Heard](#)

### The Pew Research Center: [A Portrait of "Generation Next"](#) - **How Young People View Their Lives, Futures and Politics** (January 2007)

"A new generation has come of age, shaped by an unprecedented revolution in technology and dramatic events both at home and abroad. They are Generation Next, the cohort of young adults who have grown up with personal computers, cell phones and the internet and are now taking their place in a world where the only constant is rapid change.

In reassuring ways, the generation that came of age in the shadow of Sept. 11 shares the characteristics of other generations of young adults. They are generally happy with their lives and optimistic about their futures. Moreover, Gen Nexters feel that educational and job opportunities are better for them today than for the previous generation. At the same time, many of their attitudes and priorities reflect a limited set of life experiences. Marriage, children and an established career remain in the future for most of those in Generation Next.

More than two-thirds see their generation as unique and distinct, yet not all self-evaluations are positive. A majority says that "getting rich" is the main goal of most people in their age group, and large majorities believe that casual sex, binge drinking, illegal drug use and violence are more prevalent among young people today than was the case 20 years ago. In their political outlook, they are the most tolerant of any generation on social issues such as immigration, race and homosexuality. They are also much more likely to identify with the Democratic Party than was the preceding generation of young people, which could reshape politics in the years ahead." [View the complete report in pdf format](#)

### Article

**The Way We Live Now:** [Beyond The Pleasure Principle](#). Ann Hulbert, New York Times Magazine, Mar 11, 2007: What is special about Gen Nexters? "An ethos is emerging that looks at once refreshingly pragmatic and yet still idealistic... A hardheadedness, but also a high-mindedness and softheartedness, seems to be at work."

### Lesson Plan

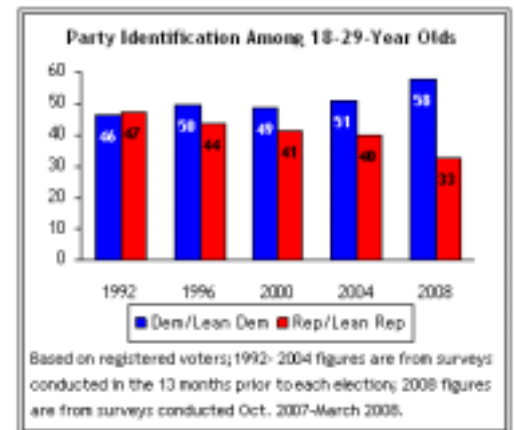
New York Times Learning Network: **I Am Seventeen Going On ...** (Grades to 6-8; 9-12): Creating Podcasts to Examine Adolescence Through the Ages. In this lesson, students create scripts for podcasts about the relationships between teens and parents in a historical era. (Sept. 16/17, 2007) [Learning Lessons](#)



### Survey

#### PEW Research: [Gen Dems: The Party's Advantage Among Young Voters Widens](#) -

Trends in the opinions of America's youngest voters are often a barometer of shifting political winds. And that appears to be the case in 2008. The current generation of young voters, who came of age during the George W. Bush years, is leading the way in giving the Democrats a wide advantage in party identification, just as the previous generation of young people who grew up in the Reagan years -- Generation X -- fueled the Republican surge of the mid-1990's.



### Article

**Generation Y: Ready to Rock the 2008 Election.** Lois Romano, The Washington Post, Jan 10, 2008: The war is the top issue for college students who plan to vote, according to research collected by several groups that track young voter trends, followed by the economy, health care and the environment.

[Download article](#)

### E-BOOK

**EDUCAUSE e-book: Educating the Net Generation.** Diana Oblinger, EDUCAUSE, and James Oblinger, North Carolina State University. [See the PDF Document](#)



April 11: John McCain says he might forgo public financing if his opponent does. (© AP Images)



Barack Obama's supporters have contributed record amounts of money for him. (© AP Images)

**Articles**

**Federal Election Commission Regulates Presidential Campaigns:** Campaign finance monitoring and public funding are the Commission's most important duties. "Candidates come from all walks of life. Many are career politicians; others are political activists, wealthy businessmen, or even professional entertainers." (America.gov, Nov. 5, 2007 - [Article](#))

**Rich Candidates Abound as Presidential Campaign Costs Rise:** U.S. election law aims at limiting advantage that wealth provides to potential presidential candidates. However, "chances are strong that the next U.S. president will be a millionaire. All three Democratic front-runners and all four of the top Republican contenders fall into that category. They range from the wealthiest, Republican Mitt Romney – with a fortune estimated at between \$190 million and \$250 million – to Democrat Barack Obama, who only recently achieved millionaire status when advances on two books he wrote in 2005 pushed his reported worth to at least \$1.1 million. (America.gov, Oct. 16, 2007- [Article](#))

**NEWS**

**Campaign '08: Obama Seeks Private Funding.** Mary Jacoby. Wall Street Journal, Apr 26, 2008: "Buoyed by record-setting fund raising, the Democratic front-runner already has laid the groundwork, through seeking a Federal Election Commission ruling, to reject traditional taxpayer funding for a contest this fall against Republican John McCain. If the Illinois senator were to win the Democratic nomination and take that option, he would be the first White House hopeful from either party to abandon completely the federal campaign-finance system, created in 1974."

[Download article](#)

<b>Top Fundraising Candidates - Total Receipts</b> (as of March 31, 2008) <a href="#">Federal Election Commission</a>	
Barack Obama	\$240,175,066
Hillary Rodham Clinton	\$194,793,404
John McCain	\$ 80,768,516

**ELECTIONS 2008**

**Campaign Finance**

**Public Financing Helps Fuel U.S. Presidential Campaigns** - McCain campaign, Obama supporters trade charges of abusing system

[[America.gov](#) - April 21, 2008] "When Americans file their annual income tax returns, they find this note near the top of the form: "Presidential Election Campaign: Check here if you, or your spouse if filing jointly, want \$3 to go to this fund." Even though \$3 is a small amount, the public financing system it supports could provide each of the presidential nominees with about \$84 million in campaign funds.

The public financing system has funneled tens of millions of dollars into presidential campaigns every election cycle since 1976. However, taxpayer participation in the check-off system has declined. The check-off amount peaked at \$71.3 million in 1994 and decreased to \$51.0 million by 2006. A record-high 28.7 percent of taxpayers contributed to the fund in 1980; that percentage shriveled to 9.1 percent in 2005, according to the Internal Revenue Service.

Public financing was implemented to address concerns about the increasing influence special interest groups wielded in elections and to place nominees of the two major political parties on a more equal financial footing. To this end, Republican and Democratic nominees in the general election receive a fixed amount, indexed for inflation; nominees of other parties that garner more than 5 percent of the vote also qualify, but for smaller shares.

Recipients must meet strict qualifications set by Congress. They must agree to accept no private contributions, spend no more than \$50,000 of their own money and adhere to a spending limit. However, party committees and political action committees (PACs) not coordinating their activities with the candidate's campaign can continue to raise funds. Candidates running in presidential primaries can receive a share of public funding as dollar-for-dollar matches for contributions up to \$250 by individuals. To qualify, a candidate must raise more than \$5,000 in each of 20 states from individual donors. Contributions from parties and PACs are ineligible for matching.

Candidates can accept public funding or opt out of the system and avoid its limits on contributions and spending. That choice already has provoked controversies in the 2008 campaign. [...] [Article](#)

**"527" Committees Spend Millions on Political Discourse:** "527 refers to a section of the U.S. Tax Code that governs a controversial method of financing political campaigns. It covers a category of tax-exempt political committees that avoid the limits on campaign financing imposed by the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2001 by steering clear of directly supporting or opposing candidates for office. These committees can have essentially the same impact by supporting or opposing the policy positions those candidates hold. They disseminate those views through a massive array of television and radio ads, mailings and phone calls to voters. A key restriction placed on such groups is that they cannot directly coordinate their activities with political parties. But the 527s seem to manage to serve the interest of overtly partisan groups despite that restriction." [Article](#) (America.gov, April 3, 2008)

The [eJournal USA Article: How the 2008 U.S. Elections Will Be Financed](#) "explains the legal restrictions on campaign contributions from individuals and organizations, describes how campaigns determine expenditures, and discusses private and public funding of presidential elections."

**Foreign Press Center Briefings**

- [2008 Presidential Campaign Finance Overview](#) (April 13, 2007)
- [Campaign Finance and the 2008 Presidential Election](#) (April 18, 2007)

**Links**

- Federal Election Commission: [Campaign Finance Laws](#)
- Common Cause: Campaign Finance - [Campaign Finance](#)
- Hoover Institution: [Campaign Finance](#)
- Campaign Finance Institute: [Campaign Finance eGuide](#)
- CQ Politics: PoliticalMoneyLine Guide - [2008 Presidential Race](#)
- Washington Post: [Campaign Finance - Summary Figures for the Presidential Candidates](#)

## Teaching Literature:

### "Growing in Courage: Stories for Young Readers"

A new U.S. State Department print publication, "Growing in Courage: Stories for Young Readers," presents 11 excerpts from contemporary U.S. award-winning books for young adults (YA). Many of the works featured have won either the American Library Association's Newbery Medal for the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children or other awards for American YA literature. An introduction and short scene-setting essay is included for each of excerpt. The selections were made by Pamela Pollack, a young adult book consultant and professor of information literacy at the ASA Institute in New York City.

What is children's or young adult literature? Any story or characters created for an audience under adult age. Usually, members of this audience are beginning to face choices and issues that will determine their future – their work, their relationships, their standing in the community. These young readers also are developing the skills and traits that will turn them into responsible, productive adults. The best of young adult literature deals with these concerns.

Among the books featured in "Growing in Courage" are:

**"A Single Shard"** by Linda Sue Park (the story of a Korean orphan apprenticed to a pottery maker) \* **"The View From Saturday"** by E.L. Konigsburg (an Indian-American boy faces the class bully) \* **"Catherine, Called Birdy"** by Karen Cushman (a girl in medieval England faces a marriage she does not want) \* **"Code Talker: A Novel About the Navajo Marines of World War II"** by Joseph Bruchac \* **"Letters From the Corrugated Castle: A Novel of Gold Rush California, 1850-1852"** by Joan W. Blos (young woman is reunited with her mother) \* **"Bud, Not Buddy"** by Christopher Paul Curtis (a 10-year-old orphan sets out to meet the father he has never known) \* **"Shabanu, Daughter of the Wind"** by Suzanne Fisher Staples (a Pakistani girl who protects a baby camel from vultures) \* **"Hole in My Life"** by Jack Gantos (a memoir of Gantos's time in jail and how he re-built his life) \* **"A Girl Named Disaster"** by Nancy Farmer (a 12-year-old must survive on her own in the jungle of Mozambique) \* **"Make Lemonade"** by Virginia Euwer Wolff (a 17-year-old saves the life of her youngest child)

... and **Under the Blood-Red Sun** by Graham Salisbury

In *Under the Blood-Red Sun*, Salisbury writes of the Japanese in Hawaii during World War II and the dilemmas they face as their country of heritage and their adopted home go to war. Japanese-American Tomi Nakaji's peaceful world is destroyed when the Japanese bomb Pearl Harbor. His classmates, who suspect he may be a sympathetic to the Japanese cause, watch eighth-grader Tomi warily. His father is arrested and held on Sand Island as a suspected spy. Tomi is warned not to go near the island, which is guarded by soldiers, but he is determined to see his father. He must know that he is still alive. So he swims across the stormy harbor to the forbidden prison camp.

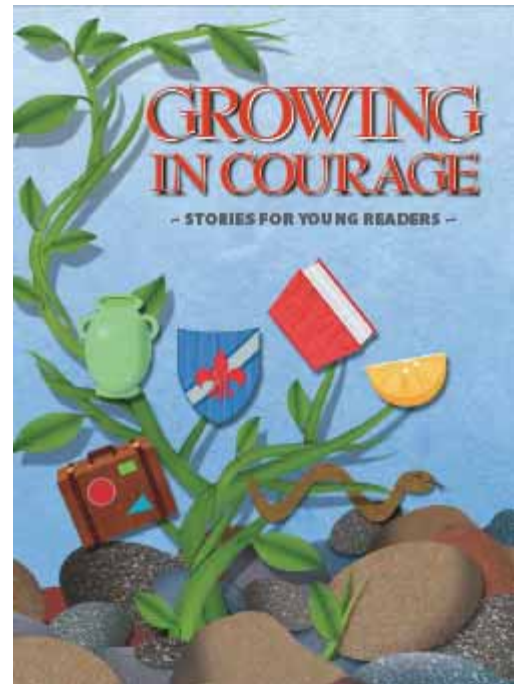
#### Links

- [Graham Salisbury Home Page](#)
- An [interview with Graham Salisbury](#) (May 17, 2007)
- Random House: Teacher's Guide - [Under the Blood-Red Sun](#)

#### Salisbury on becoming a READER and WRITER

*"Embarrassing as it is to admit, especially to fellow writers, I didn't read until I was a little past thirty. [...] Then I read Alex Haley's "Roots," which changed my life forever. [...] I loved it so much that I wanted to read another, and another ... and another. I surprised myself and quite suddenly became a voracious reader. Because reading eventually grew into something as large as life itself, I started feeling an urge to do some writing of my own. Maybe that's how we all come to this art--a desire to create those fantastic worlds and passionate feelings we got when reading something wonderful."*

For an electronic version of "Growing in Courage" please contact the IRC at [ircberlin@state.gov](mailto:ircberlin@state.gov).



© Growing in Courage

The stories in "Growing in Courage," although written by Americans, exemplify values shared by many societies and feature young protagonists in the process of finding their own personal strength and courage. These young heroes come from different countries and different epochs in history. They are a mix of different races, different genders, and speak different languages.



© Discovery Education

#### Lesson Plan

##### Discovery Education - [Lesson Plans Library](#): Japanese-Americans of World War II

Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Franklin Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, which forced the Japanese-American population of the western United States into internment camps. Many of these American citizens lost their property or were forced to sell their homes." Students will examine both sides of this issue by conducting a mock trial. [LESSON PLAN](#)

#### Links

- ❖ [Japanese American Network: History](#) - A brief timeline of events in Japanese American history.
- ❖ [Densho Educational Website](#) - Print material on the internment of Japanese Americans during WW II, plus an archive of videotaped oral histories with Japanese Americans.
- ❖ [The War Relocation Centers of World War II: When Fear Was Stronger than Justice](#) What led the U.S. government to confine nearly 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry to relocation centers?



**Census Bureau: Facts for Features May 2008**  
**[Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month](#)**

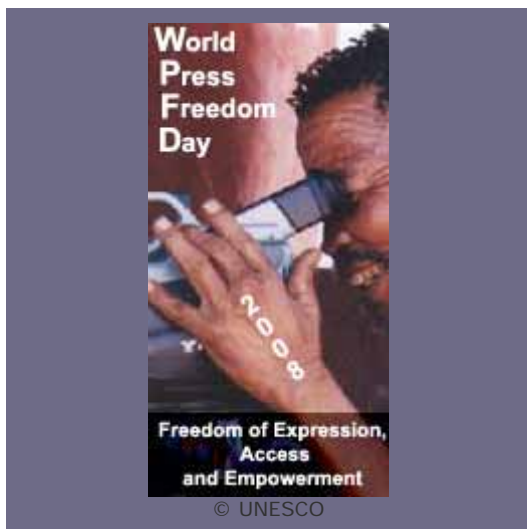
**14.9 million** - Estimated number of U.S. residents in July 2006 who said they were Asian alone or Asian in combination with one or more other races - about 5 percent of the total population.

**Lesson Plan**

**New York Times Learning Network:** [Crossing Borders, Crossing Time](#) - Exploring how trends in American immigration have impacted American politics throughout history, students will create an exhibit that explores the connections between immigration and politics from 1850 to the present..

**Links**

- PBS: [Ancestors in the Americas](#)
- National Park Service: [Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month](#)
- [FREE](#) Teaching and Learning Resources: [Asian-Americans](#)



**THIS MONTH**

**Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month**

"Asian/Pacific Americans have enriched our culture, excelling in many fields, including education, business, science, technology, government, sports, and the arts." President George W. Bush. [Proclamation](#)

Asian Americans are one of the fastest growing, yet least known, groups of immigrants in the United States. Use these links and lesson plans to explore their history and stories.

- ❖ [Recovering Japanese American Experiences for the EFL Classroom.](#) Ingrid Gessner and Christine Moreth-Hebel. U.S. Embassy Teacher Academy: U.S. History and Politics and Visual Culture. October 2003.
- ❖ Smithsonian Institute: [Asian Pacific American History and Culture](#)
- ❖ [Asian Nation: Asian American History, Demographics, and Issues](#) – Several interesting articles and bibliographies on the history of Asian Americans. From University of Massachusetts professor C.N. Le.
- ❖ PBS: [Becoming American: The Chinese Experience](#) - Companion site to a special on PBS; provides background information, educational materials, and the opportunity for users to submit their own stories.
- ❖ Central Pacific Railroad Photographic History Museum: [Chinese American Contribution to the Transcontinental Railroad](#) - Extensive site.
- ❖ [Ethnic America](#) - Digital History (a project of the University of Houston and the Gilder Lehrman Institute) presents a number of essays on ethnicity in American history, with particular emphasis on immigration.

**May 3 - World Press Freedom Day**

Throughout the world, 3 May serves as an occasion to inform the public of violations of the right to freedom of expression and as a reminder that many journalists brave death or jail to bring people their daily news. [More](#)

**UNESCO:** [World Press Freedom Day 2008](#)

**UN:** [Dag Hammarskjöld Library - World Press Freedom Day](#)

**Dep. of State Publications:**

- eJournal: [Media Making Change](#)
- About America: [Edward R. Murrow: Journalism at its Best](#)
- [Handbook of Independent Journalism](#) & [An Unfettered Press](#)

The [World Press Freedom Review](#) examines the state of the media in over 184 countries, territories and administered areas, documenting press freedom, regulations, and media development efforts throughout the world.

**Webchat Station**

**[Upcoming AskAmerica Webchats](#)**

**U.S. Elections - Your Questions**

Wondering about how delegates are counted or how the Electoral College works? Curious where the presidential candidates stand on the issues? Join America.gov's elections experts to discuss the people, processes and issues that shape the U.S. presidential race. Readers' questions & comments will shape [America.gov's Election Coverage](#), so now it is your turn to tell the experts what elections topics you care about.

**Tuesday, May 6, 2008, 15:00**

**INTRODUCING**



**[Open Educational Resources](#)** - Linking You to Teaching and Learning Resources: Welcome to OER Commons, a global teaching and learning network of free-to-use resources – from K-12 lesson plans to college courseware – for you to use, tag, rate, and review.

Please see an example of available online courses: [American Government](#) \* Grade Level: Secondary \* Institution Name: Monterey Institute for Technology and Education and University of California



**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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