



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

### In this issue:

[The New U.S. Embassy on Pariser Platz](#) | [Elections 2008: The European Perspective](#) | [Summer Literature](#) | [Art at the New Embassy](#) | [Web Chat Station](#) | [In Focus](#)

### The New U.S. Embassy on Pariser Platz

On Friday July 4, 2008, the U.S. Embassy's traditional Independence Day reception for invited guests was combined with the official opening of the new Chancery on Pariser Platz, in which Chancellor Angela Merkel and former President George H. W. Bush delivered [keynote speeches](#). Former President Bush joined Ambassador William R. Timken, Jr. and Sue Timken for a ceremonial Ribbon Cutting.

The history of America's diplomatic relations with Germany goes back to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. John Quincy Adams (the son of 2nd President John Adams and later himself to become America's 6th President) was the first Ambassador to a German-speaking country. His official title was Minister Plenipotentiary to the Kingdom of Prussia. When he arrived in Berlin in 1797, his first residence was Pariser Platz 1 – between the Blücher Palace, the future embassy of the United States, and the newly constructed Brandenburg Gate. In his memoirs, Adams recalled that he was questioned at the Berlin city gate by a sentry who had never heard of the United States of America.

In 1931, the U.S. government purchased the Blücher Palace on Pariser Platz as part of a worldwide State Department initiative to acquire and upgrade U.S. diplomatic facilities. Up until that point, American diplomats like John Quincy Adams who lived first at Pariser Platz 1 and then at the corner of Friedrichstrasse and Behrenstrasse, normally rented office and living space. As a result, the Embassy in Berlin changed locations frequently.

The Blücher Palace was chosen for its prime location. The U.S. State Department intended to renovate the property and establish a showcase embassy on Pariser Platz but shortly after the purchase, the building was gutted by fire. Before the United States got around to renovating the historic building in the middle of the Great Depression, Hitler came to power. The move back to Blücher Palace finally took place in 1939 -- but the world was on the verge of war and the Ambassador had been recalled to Washington. The embassy remained open, issuing visas for German Jews seeking asylum until Hitler declared war on the United States on December 11, 1941.

The palace was heavily damaged during the war. Along with other buildings that lay half in ruins on the square, it was demolished in 1957. The Brandenburg Gate was all that remained of the once-proud Pariser Platz. When the Berlin Wall went up in August 1961, the square became part of the non-accessible border zone between East and West Berlin.

With the fall of the Wall in 1989, the U.S. Embassy to the German Democratic Republic on Neustädtische Kirchstrasse 4-5 and the U.S. Mission in West Berlin located on Clayallee in Berlin-Dahlem combined to become the "American Embassy Berlin Office." The American Embassy was formally transferred from Bonn to the building on Neustädtische Kirchstrasse in Berlin on July 7, 1999. It was, however, a temporary address. The U.S. government announced plans in 1992 to rebuild an embassy on the U.S. property historic Pariser Platz site as an affirmation of the strong commitment of the United States to German reunification and German-American partnership. [*continued on page 4*]



[New Embassy Building on Pariser Platz](#)

#### Photos

- Building [Facade & Interior](#)

#### Architecture, Drawings & Background

- [View from Pariser Platz](#) (pdf)
  - [View from Behrenstrasse/Ebertstrasse](#) (pdf)
  - [Exterior View SW, Exterior View NW](#) (pdf)
- (all photos and drawings from MOORE RUBLE YUDELL ARCHITECTS with GRUEN ASSOCIATES)
- [Description](#) (pdf)
  - [History](#)

*This new Chancery is not just a building. [...] It is the symbol of the partnership between the German and American people. That partnership has been called the foundation of the great transatlantic alliance of democracies which transformed Europe. It is the most successful alliance in history, and has brought freedom, economic prosperity and peace to so many millions of people in Europe.*

Remarks by Ambassador William R. Timken, Jr.



Chancellor Merkel and President Bush at the Embassy Fourth of July Celebration

GMF launched a website devoted to helping Europeans and the Transatlantic Community understand the 2008 U.S. presidential elections.

**[Presidential Election 2008: What Europe Needs to Know](#)**

**Blog**

**America.gov Blog: [Campaign Trail Talk](#)**

Provides commentary and information on the 2008 elections in the U.S. Readers may ask questions, post their comments about the candidates, and generally guide the discussion.



© America.gov

- ★ [Official Barack Obama website](#)
- ★ [Official John McCain website](#)

**Article**

- **Foreign Affairs: [Building a New Atlantic Alliance - Restoring America's Partnership With Europe](#)**
- **[Time for a Global Town-Hall Meeting?](#)** Yale Global, June 19: "If Americans could watch the two candidates respond to the concerns of a broader international audience, the voters could make a finer judgment about each nominee's possible approach to an array of international challenges, largely overlooked during the heat of short-term electoral politics."

**Interactive feature**

- **[Mapping World Opinion.](#)** Pew Research: Developed by AP to check out key findings about views of America and the coming U.S. election in countries around the world.

More in Europe Have Confidence in Obama's Foreign Policy than McCain's			
Country	Obama	McCain	
France	84	33	
Germany	82	33	
Britain	74	44	
Spain	72	19	
Poland	53	37	
Russia	39	22	

Percent in each country who say they have a lot or some confidence in said leader to do the right thing in world affairs.  
Source: Pew Global Attitudes Project

**Teaching Resources in German**

- **Ipb: [Präsidentenschaftswahlen in den USA 2008](#)**
- **Bpb: Themenblätter im Unterricht - [2008 US-Präsidentenschaftswahl](#)**: Alle vier Jahre im November sind die Wähler in den USA aufgerufen, ein neues Staatsoberhaupt zu bestimmen. Welche Voraussetzungen muss man als Politiker mitbringen? Und was passiert alles bis zum Einzug ins Weiße Haus?
- **USWahl2008.de: [Informationen für Schüler](#)**

**ELECTIONS 2008**

**The European Perspective**

The next months will be crucial for the transatlantic relationship. With the presidential election in the U.S. in November and elections in Germany and other European countries in 2009, the political actors and priorities in domestic and foreign policies are about to change. Key issues of interest on both sides of the Atlantic include the situation in Afghanistan, the war in Iraq, how to deal with Iran and North Korea, the relationships with China and Russia, and global warming. Current issues will be examined and reevaluated by the new leaders, possibly assigning them a different importance than they presently carry. While transatlantic relations in general and German-American relations in particular, have been undergoing a transformation since the Cold War, the relationship remains the most crucial partnership to address the issues we face today.

**[Will We Get It Right This Time? - How the Europeans See the U.S.](#)**

**Elections.** American Institute for Contemporary German Studies (AICGS) Rüdiger Lentz: "The U.S. elections have been a hot topic in Europe since 2000. Then, [...] Europe would have voted overwhelmingly for Gore. Not only was he well-known, but he was "so green," so international, [...] The next election, in 2004, held the same picture: the overwhelming popular European vote would have been cast for Kerry. [...] This time Europe and Germany again are placing their bets on Obama, and the Republicans are completely off the screen. "McCain who?" one could ask if one were to read only European or German newspapers or watch TV in Europe. [...] How come Europe's and, especially, Germany's public perception of what an American president should be is so very much shaped by idealistic beliefs and wishful thinking? - Europeans want to see U.S. presidents acting in accordance to their visions of an America living up to its ideals."

**Opinion Polls**

**German Opinion Poll/ Deutschlandtrend: Germany and the World (April 4, 2008) [REPORT](#)**

- Compared with ratings from spring 2007, Germans rate their neighbors and partners more positively in 2008.
- The confidence Germans have in the U.S. increased to 53% (up 21%) over the last year.

**Pew Global Attitudes Project (June 12, 2008) [REPORT](#)**

- 64% of Germans believe U.S. foreign policy will improve after the election in November.
- When asked: Is the U.S. a partner? 55% of Germans replied with *yes*.
- 56% of Germans polled said that they are somewhat or very interested in the U.S. presidential race.
- **[Lessons from the 2008 Pew Global Attitudes Survey](#)**: A description of major findings and discussion their implications.

**British Council/Transatlantic Network 2020: Research and Essays on the Transatlantic Relationship and Opportunities for the Future. (March 18, 2008) [REPORT](#)**

- 74% of Germans favor closer European-American relations.
- On average among all European countries polled, 62% favor closer European-American relations.
- 91% of Americans favor closer relations with Europe. American views of the nature of their relationship with Europeans are considerably warmer than European views of their relationship with Americans.
- 16% of Germans cited dislike of US culture and America's personal characteristics (insularity, brashness, etc.).

**Latest News**

Democratic Presidential candidate Barack Obama and Republican Presidential candidate John McCain are expected to visit Europe.

- **[McCain, Obama Head Overseas.](#)** NPR, July 1: The campaigns of John McCain and Barack Obama say the two presidential candidates are traveling abroad this summer. Their trips are extremely unusual. Since 1992, no candidate who is not a sitting president has traveled overseas during a campaign. **[Listen Now](#)**
- **[Obama's Message to Europe.](#)** Roger Cohen, NY Times, July 7, 2008: Senator Barack Obama is expected in Berlin on July 24 to meet with Chancellor Angela Merkel.
- **[Obama to Visit Berlin on July 24.](#)** Spiegel, July 7, 2008

## Summer Reading

It's a perennial question for the summer months, what to read? Here you'll find suggestions, articles, blogs, etc that might help you to make up your mind. Find a nice place outdoors to get reading. There's only one thing left to say: Enjoy!

It really does not matter what kinds of materials students read during vacation. In fact, it's better for children and young adults to pick what they like. Magazines, mysteries, or sports stories-whatever suits their fancy is best for recreational reading. There are no tests or reports. This reading is at a comfortable level to keep it fun. Still, recreational reading develops vocabulary and builds reading speed and comprehension skills.

Every year "*Education World* surveys some of the best children's summer reading lists on the Web. [HERE](#), you'll find an overview of great lists that you or your school's staff might use to create your own summer reading program." Includes annotated links to reading lists from several schools and libraries.

### Article

**America.gov:** [Summer Books: What Americans Read for Fun](#): When summer comes, many Americans head for the beaches or their backyard hammocks to enjoy one of their greatest pleasures: reading.

## Art at the New Embassy

The new U.S. Embassy in Berlin boasts an impressive collection of original works of art by prominent American artists. Commissioned by [Foundation for Art and Preservation in Embassies](#) (FAPE) in 2004, Sol LeWitt (1928-2007) designed a large-scale mural for the new embassy building. [More](#)

**The Foundation for Art and Preservation in Embassies (FAPE)** was founded in 1986 to expand the range of cultural diversity in U.S. embassies. FAPE's mission is to assist the efforts of the State Department in its various programs designed to exhibit and preserve American art in U.S. diplomatic facilities throughout the world. Through its work, FAPE enables art to serve as a cultural ambassador.

### Articles on Sol LeWitt

- [Sol LeWitt, Master of Conceptualism, Dies at 78](#). NYT, April 9, 2007: "Mr. LeWitt helped establish Conceptualism and Minimalism as dominant movements of the postwar era. A patron and friend of colleagues young and old, he was the opposite of the artist as celebrity. He tried to suppress all interest in him as opposed to his work [...]."
- [Sol LeWitt](#). Contemporary Artists, Updated April 2007: "Since the 1960s, the artist Sol LeWitt has been elaborating and extending the notion of the Modernist grid in his sculptures, works on paper, and site-specific wall drawings. Usually associated with the Minimalist movement, LeWitt in fact coined the term "conceptual art" to reflect his abiding interest in the significance of the artist's thought process, rather than the physical appearance of the work of art, as the basis for meaning. Systematic and intellectual though it is, LeWitt's process has expanded over time to allow for arbitrary and unplanned creative decisions." Please contact your [IRC](#) for a copy of the article.

### Art in Embassies Program

"Established by the U.S. Department of State in 1964, the [Art in Embassies Program](#) is a global museum that exhibits original works of art by U.S. citizens in the public rooms of approximately 180 American diplomatic residences worldwide. These exhibitions, with art loaned from galleries, museums, individual artists, and corporate and private collections, play an important role in U.S. public diplomacy. They provide international audiences with a sense of the quality, scope, and diversity of American art and culture through the accomplishments of U.S. artists."

### Publication

[Art on the Edge: 17 Contemporary American Artists](#) (Dep. of State, Nov. 2004): This publication showcases the work of 17 contemporary American artists. All have made their art available in U.S. ambassador's residences in countries around the world.



© NPR: [Summer Books 2008](#)

### Links

- ALA: [Recommended Summer Reading](#)
- Scholastic: [Summer Reading](#)
- NPR: [Summer Book Recommendations 2008](#)
- PBS Parents: [Summer Reading](#)
- UC Berkley: [Summer Reading List](#)
- U.S. Department of Education, First Book and Random House Children's Books Launch 2008 [Summer Reading Initiative](#)
- Queens Library, The New York Public Library and Brooklyn Public Library: [Summer Reading](#)
- Teacher Vision: [Summer Reading Lists](#): Vacation time is the perfect time to read, read, READ! Check out these lists of books, from classics to fun picks, for you and your students. [Pre-K-2](#), [Grades 3-5](#), [Grades 6-8](#), [Grades 9-12](#)

Teacher Vision: [Summer Books I've Read](#). Have your students use this printable to keep track of the books they read over summer vacation.



### American Artist Sol LeWitt

The mural by Sol LeWitt, which is visible to the public in the glass-encased Behrenstraße entrance, measures four-and-one-half by nine meters, and is a diptych, with each half containing a five-point star, one in vibrant color, and the other in black and white.

### Links

- ArtCyclopedia: [Sol LeWitt](#)
- San Francisco MOMA: [Sol LeWitt: A Retrospective](#)
- [Sol LeWitt in the National Gallery Collection](#)
- Guggenheim Museum Curriculum Guide: [Sol LeWitt](#)

America.gov: American Life - [The Arts](#)



In the center of the courtyard stands *Totem*, a 13-meter-high steel sculpture specifically designed for the embassy by the American Artists Ellsworth Kelly.



Pariser Platz during the 1930s

### History

**America.gov:** The Cold War: A Test of American Power and a Trial of Ideals. The competition between U.S. and the Soviet Union [Article](#)

### [Philadelphia, The Original American Melting Pot.](#)

NPR, July 6, 2008: NPR's Weekend Edition Sunday traveled to Philadelphia, the nation's first capital, as part of a month-long series to find out how Americans have changed since the 18th century — and ask what it means to be an American today. - By the eve of the American Revolution, Philadelphia was the biggest city in North America — an extraordinary melting pot of languages, peoples and religions. [Listen Now](#)

**America.gov:** [Race Relations a Factor in 2008 Presidential Election.](#) (June 20): Race relations will be a factor in the 2008 presidential election between presumed Democratic candidate Barack Obama and his presumed Republican opponent, John McCain, several political experts tell America.gov.

[Continued from page 1]

The new U.S. Embassy closes the last frontage on Pariser Platz. Although the building was designed to complement the architecture of the square, it also incorporates architectural and artistic elements that make it uniquely American. There is a quotation from the Constitution inscribed in the stone walls of the entrance rotunda on Pariser Platz. The dome on the roof is meant to be a symbol of the U.S. government's presence on foreign land. Sol LeWitt's star mural is on display for all to see in a glass walled room on the corner of Behrenstrasse and Ebertstrasse. The U.S. now has a permanent diplomatic home in Berlin. The Stars and Stripes once again fly on Pariser Platz.

In 1996, the U.S. Embassy awarded the American architects Moore Ruble Yudell of Santa Monica, California the contract to design Pariser Platz Two in the first State Department design competition in decades. But just as the construction project was about to get underway, security challenges arose. The bombings of the U.S. Embassies in Tanzania and Kenya required the U.S. State Department to tighten its security regulations. The final design is a transformation of the original proposal. The architects worked closely with the State Department and the urban planning authorities of the City of Berlin to meet site, architectural, security, and program requirements.

### In Focus

#### New Publication

The new issue of the **electronic American Studies Journal** on "[Ethnic Visions of the United States of America](#)" is now online.

American National Identity in a Globalized World as a Topic in the Advanced EFL-Classroom (Prof. Peter Freese): "Applied to individuals the concept of 'identity' is hard enough to define, but applied to nations it becomes even fuzzier. Basically, 'identity' is an individual's or a group's sense of self over time. Both individuals and groups have identities, but the former can only define their identities in the context of the latter."



### Webchat Station

#### Upcoming AskAmerica Webchats

#### EducationUSA:

#### Study and Work in the United States

July 14, 3-4 p.m.

[Enter Event >>>](#)

Chat on study, internships, summer jobs, high school exchanges with representatives from the Consulate General in Frankfurt (in German and English).

### Struggles With Technology

"Technology Not Being Used Effectively In Schools" - *Teachers Need Professional Development and Support to Implement School Technology*: Educators say they don't feel adequately prepared to integrate instructional software into their classrooms and are not receiving the technical support needed to fully impact student achievement, according to a joint study by the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers. [Access, Adequacy, and Equity in Education Technology](#) examines the state of resources and the support provided for education technology in public schools and classrooms nationwide as reported directly by classroom teachers and instructional assistants.



### 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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