



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

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### Economic Crisis

The rising number of defaults on home loans — loans made to individuals who could not afford them — has led to the failure of a half-dozen major banks and other financial companies. On October 3, President Bush signed into law legislation designed to stabilize the U.S. and global financial systems by thawing frozen credit markets and preventing further bank bankruptcies. Hours earlier, the House of Representatives cleared a Senate-revised version of the \$700 billion rescue plan it had rejected four days earlier. Some lawmakers, private-sector economists and other opponents of the controversial plan argued it risked too much taxpayer money to help irresponsible people on Wall Street. But the administration, the Federal Reserve — the U.S. central bank — congressional leaders and other supporters countered that the consequences of inaction or delay could be a global financial meltdown and depression.

Details of the complicated plan have yet to be fleshed out. Its implementation, together with sweeping regulatory reform, will need to be taken on by the next Congress. The plan amounts to the largest government intervention in the financial markets since the Great Depression of the 1930s will reshape the financial and related industries and is likely to have a significant impact on the U.S. economy. [Read more.](#)

**America.gov: [How Will Washington Prevent Another Financial Crisis?](#)** - Everything from abusive lending to unregulated derivatives may be curbed. Whatever the impact of the federal government's gigantic rescue plan for the country's financial system, observers say, new rules governing the system will surely follow. Treasury Secretary Henry M. Paulson Jr. indicated as much in an interview. “We don't have the regulatory authorities and structure in place to protect the American people,” he said. Officials will seek new regulations in two areas: the way housing loans, credit cards and similar financial products are sold to consumers — the “primary market” — and how banks and other institutions invest the money they raise from these operations — the “secondary market.” (October 1)

### Economy and the Presidential Elections

The winner of the 2008 Presidential election will likely be chosen on the credibility of his plan to stabilize the economy and to construct policies that will balance the need for oversight and innovation.

**America.gov: [Economy Remains Central Issue in Presidential Race](#)** Typically, Democrats are portrayed as likely to raise taxes and fix problems through government intervention, and Republicans as likely to lower taxes and choose market solutions. The stereotypes largely fit in the 2008 presidential campaign. The campaigns' economic focus is not, however, strictly domestic. One in five U.S. jobs is trade-related. The current financial crisis underscores that international relationships are about more than trade. Both campaigns see repairing the U.S. standing in global capital markets as a top objective.

Here is information on the candidates' positions on economic issues:

- **National Journal:** [Presidential Candidates & The Issues](#). Economy: [Sharp Contrast](#)
- **New York Times:** [The Candidates on the Issues: Economy](#)



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**America.gov: [U.S. Pursues Plan to Tackle Growing Financial Crisis](#)** - The U.S. Department of the Treasury and the U.S. central bank are promoting a plan that calls for the government to buy bad mortgage loans and other securities to stabilize U.S. and global financial systems. [More](#)

**International Cooperation? - America.gov: [U.S. Partners May Act Individually on Global Financial Woes](#)**: The U.S. has asked for global action to deal with international financial turmoil. Other countries, while somewhat willing to help, view the crisis on a national basis. Some U.S. economic partners from the G-7 are not convinced they need to bail out firms holding bad debt. (September 24)

**PBS NOW: [Behind the Bailout](#)** - The government's historic proposal to bail out the U.S. banking system is raising as many questions as it is offering solutions.

#### Teaching Tool

- BBC: [Learning English - Words in the News](#): U.S. to tackle financial crisis (Sept. 19)

#### Links

- Business Week: [How World Growth Will Withstand the U.S. Recession](#)
- BBC: [The layman's finance crisis glossary](#)
- Economist: [The financial crisis and the election](#)
- Economic Crisis 2008: Rutgers University economists offer their perspectives. [More](#)



**PBS: [Economic Choices](#)** - As Wall Street faces a crisis, experts and analysts weigh in on Obama's and McCain's economic plans.



### [Get out the Vote 2008](#)

AIGA, the professional association for design, invited designers from across the U.S. to create nonpartisan posters that inspire the American public to participate in the electoral process and vote for a presidential candidate in the 2008 general election.



### Links

- [John McCain's Facebook Page](#)
- [Barack Obama's Facebook Page](#)

**PBS:** [MediaShift](#). Examine the role of fact-checking websites in this year's campaign coverage. Related Resource: [Vote 2008](#) - Get election news and web coverage from across the public media.

### Links: Learn about the Electoral College

#### National Archives & Records Administration

- [U.S. Electoral College](#)
- [What is the Electoral College](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Electoral College Calculator](#)

#### Original Documents

- The Constitution of the United States: [Article II](#)
- The Federalist No. 68: [The Mode of Electing the President](#) (1788, Alexander Hamilton)

#### Background

- PBS: [News Hour Vote 2008](#) - PBS site documenting the presidential election process
- Federal Election Commission: [Distribution of Electoral Votes](#)
- Election Assistance Commission: [How the Electoral College Works](#) (pdf)
- History Channel: [Electoral College](#)
- Fair Vote: [Electoral College](#)

## ELECTIONS 2008: Candidates, Debates & Electoral College

In 2008, for the first time since the beginning of TV debates in 1960, we witness a series of general election debates lacking either a sitting president or vice president. Many journalists and political pundits have used a sports analogy by treating presidential debates as boxing matches.

Democratic Senator John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts and Republican Vice President Richard M. Nixon in 1960 held the first-ever televised presidential debates, but there was no vice presidential debate that year. The first televised debate between major-party candidates for vice president, between Democratic Sen. Walter F. Mondale of Minnesota and Republican Sen. Bob Dole of Kansas, was held on Oct. 15, 1976.

Find [Memorable Moments From Presidential Debates That Mattered](#) - From Kennedy's visual triumph over Nixon in 1960 to Al Gore's sighs in 2000, as CQ Politics political editor Bob Benenson looks at past debate moments that mattered. [Read More](#) | [Watch Video](#)

### Article

- [A Brief History of the Modern Presidential Debate](#) (The American, Sept. 29) Most Americans may not realize that formal presidential debates are a somewhat recent phenomenon.

### The Candidates

**eJournal USA:** This issue looks at presidential candidates Republican John McCain and Democrat Barack Obama, their vice presidential running mates, and their families. "Every presidential campaign is dramatic and historic, but as the fervor surrounding the 2008 election continues to build, U.S. voters and the rest of the world will want to consider the candidates' personal histories more closely. What sort of people rise to the top in the U.S. political system, what are their attributes, their sensibilities, and their strengths?"

The journal includes: An examination of the lives of Barack Obama and John McCain, stressing each candidate's readiness to lead the country, their long campaigns to become their parties' nominees, and their aspirations and achievements as political leaders; an introduction to the vice presidential candidates, Joseph Biden and Sarah Palin; a look at the wives and families of Obama and McCain; article on the powers of the presidency, the duties of the president, and the limits of power in a divided system of government; excerpts from Obama's and McCain's writings and speeches, a bibliography, and a filmography. ([HTML](#) & [PDF](#) versions of the eJournal)

### The Electoral College

**eJournal USA:** More than 100 million voters are likely to cast ballots in nationwide U.S. elections November 4. But only 538 men and women will elect the next president of the U.S., and those elections will take place in 50 state capitals and in Washington, D.C., December 15. This indirect election system, called the Electoral College and devised in 1787 by the framers of the Constitution, puzzles Americans and non-Americans alike. It reflects the federal governing system of allocating powers not only to a national government and to the people but also to the states. We hope this [eJOURNAL](#) will help with understanding of the historical reasons for the system and how it functions.

### America.gov:

#### [Forecasting the Election: The 13 Keys to the White House](#)

An accurate method to predict the winner of a presidential election has long been a dream of pollsters. A Russian scientist and an American historian have a formula that, in the last six elections, has never failed. The formula incorporates 13 variables, or keys, that can be classified as either true or false. If five or fewer keys are false, the formula predicts the incumbent party will win. The keys address economic growth, foreign and domestic affairs, social unrest and political scandal but ignore polling, advertising, news strategies and debates, techniques frequently used in American political campaigns. The 13 keys suggest that voters are influenced more by the performance of the incumbent administration than by the candidates running for president.

## Turkish-American Literature at the Frankfurt Book Fair

Meet **Güneli Gün** and **Maureen Freely**:

**October 14, 2008 from 18:00-19:30**

Hessische Landesvertretung, Ministergärten 5, 10117 Berlin  
Welcome remarks by Dr. Bernadette Droste, Hessischen  
Landesvertretung and Helena Kane Finn, U.S. Embassy.  
RSVP by October 9

Registration: [IRCBerlin@state.gov](mailto:IRCBerlin@state.gov)

**October 17, 2008 from 11:00-12:30**

Literaturhaus Frankfurt, Schöne Aussicht 2, 60311 Frankfurt  
RSVP by October 15

Registration: [VogtM@state.gov](mailto:VogtM@state.gov)

See our [WEBSITE](#) for more information on these programs.

**Güneli Gün** is a Turkish writer who writes in English. She will read from *On the Road to Baghdad* (originally published in 1987). Güneli Gün lives in Oberlin, Ohio, where she has been teaching creative writing and women's studies at Oberlin College for many years. She is the author of *Book of Trances* (1979), a regular contributor to the *Paris Review* and *World Literature Today* and the translator of three major Turkish novels into English, among them Orhan Pamuk's *The New Life* and *The Black Book*. In 2006 Gün said, "the award [Orhan Pamuk won the 2006 Nobel Prize in Literature] couldn't come at a better time because, in the West, there's so much enmity to Muslim countries."

- Contemporary Turkish Literature: [Güneli Gün](#)

**Maureen Freely** was born in the U.S. of Irish parents. She grew up in Istanbul, Turkey but now lives in England. She has translated works by Orhan Pamuk, and is also a lecturer in creative writing, a freelance journalist, and a writer. Freely will read from her latest novel. *Enlightenment* is partly an autobiography. It's also a psychological thriller, a murder story, a rumination on friendship and a political investigation. If that sounds like a lot of weight for a novel to carry, it is; and it's a testament to Freely's ability that the novel does, in large measure, succeed." (The Washington Post: [Byzantine Crimes](#))

- Warwick University: [Maureen Freely](#)
- Publisher Marion Boyars: [Enlightenment](#)
- The Guardian: [A Review of Enlightenment](#)
- The Independent: [Enlightenment by Maureen Freely](#)
- The Observer: Enlightenment - [When the young cut up rough](#)

### The History of Reading

Does an increase in reading on the Internet have a negative effect on the way people think? Or are opponents of online reading overreacting to a new technology with which they are unfamiliar?

**Critics of reading online say:** Reading on the Internet decreases people's attention spans. They are able to concentrate and remember less, and are more susceptible to inaccurate information. Additionally, the decrease in the reading of books and literature statistically leads to lower test scores and income levels.

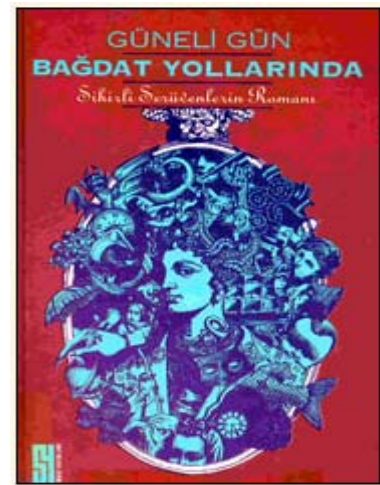
**Supporters of reading online say:** The Internet represents another step in the evolution of reading, as significant as written language development and the invention of the printing press. It is quicker and easier to access information online, and careful readers can find many accurate sources on the Internet in the same amount of time that it would take to read a book.

[To receive a copy of *The History of Reading*, a *Facts on File* publication, please contact your IRC.]

### "Comprehend What You Read"

Getting a complete understanding of what they are reading is important for your students, and by practicing reading comprehension techniques, not only will they improve their understanding of the content, but they will be better able to utilize the information they have learned because of the thinking processes involved in reading critically.

PBS NOW Classroom: [Lesson Plan](#) \* [PDF](#)



On the Road to Baghdad:

[Chapter One – The Heartbreak of Education](#)



"A dark Conradian drama set in a beautifully illuminated Istanbul, where the past is always with us."

Orhan Pamuk on *Enlightenment*



[Deutschland liest - WILLKOMMEN!](#)

October 24-31, 2008

During the last week of October, libraries around Germany will be hosting a variety of events to highlight the importance of lifelong literacy and education. Making reading and enjoyment of books for young people is also an essential part of America's educational and social goals. It is a main feature of the Embassy's [America@yourlibrary](#) initiative which showcases libraries as centers for learning, information and entertainment in their communities.





### October by Robert Frost

O hushed October morning mild,  
 Thy leaves have ripened to the fall;  
 Tomorrow's wind, if it be wild,  
 Should waste them all.

The crows above the forest call;  
 Tomorrow they may form and go.  
 O hushed October morning mild,  
 Begin the hours of this day slow.  
 Make the day seem to us less brief.  
 Hearts not averse to being beguiled,  
 Beguile us in the way you know.  
 Release one leaf at break of day;  
 At noon release another leaf;  
 One from our trees, one far away.  
 Retard the sun with gentle mist;  
 Enchant the land with amethyst.  
 Slow, slow!

For the grapes' sake, if the were all,  
 Whose leaves already are burnt with frost,  
 Whose clustered fruit must else be lost--  
 For the grapes' sake along the all.

Poetry Foundation: [Robert Frost](#)

## In Focus:

### Nobel Peace Prize

[Nobel Foundation](#): The names of the year's Nobel Peace Prize Laureates will be announced on Friday, October 10, during a press conference at the Norwegian Nobel Institute in Oslo.

"The Norwegian Nobel Committee always starts with Alfred Nobel's will where he states that the Peace Prize should go to the person "who shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses." [But] these words give only limited guidance. The Nobel Committee believes that there are many different roads to peace. [...]" [Questions about the Nobel Peace Prize](#)

The three most talked about Nobel Peace Prize winners are probably Martin Luther King Jr. (1964), Mother Teresa (1979), Nelson Mandela (1993). But did you know that [Theodore Roosevelt](#) (1906), [Woodrow Wilson](#) (1919), the [American Friends Service Committee](#) (1947), [Ralph Bunche](#) (1950), [George C. Marshall](#) (1953), [Henry Kissinger](#) (1973) and [Al Gore](#) (2007) were among the laureates from the United States?

[Educational Games](#): You don't have to be a genius to understand the work of the Nobel Laureates. These games and simulations, based on Nobel Prize-awarded achievements, will teach and inspire students, teachers and non-professionals of all ages. Enjoy testing and building your knowledge in physics, chemistry, physiology or medicine, literature, peace and economics. (Nobelprize.org)

### "Green Card Lottery"

#### 2010 Diversity Visa Lottery Registration Opens October 2, 2008

Each year the U.S. government makes 50,000 permanent residence visas ("green cards") available through the [Diversity Immigrant Visa program](#). Visa applicants are selected through a computer-generated, random lottery, which is open to persons from eligible countries who meet certain education or work experience requirements. [Article](#)

#### Links

- America.gov: [Diversity](#)
- [Diversity Visa Applicants Must Meet Eligibility Requirements](#)
- [Q&A on the Diversity Visa Lottery Program](#)

## Webchat Station

### Ask America: What questions do you have as Election Day draws near?

America.gov's election experts keep you up to date on the candidates, issues and quirky happenings in the 2008 campaign on the America.gov blog Campaign Trail Talk. [blogs.america.gov/campaign/](http://blogs.america.gov/campaign/)

Elections 08 webchats take place regularly. No registration is needed. [www.america.gov/multimedia/askamerica.html](http://www.america.gov/multimedia/askamerica.html)

## INTRODUCING

### INSPIRING TEACHERS

- Empowering Educators around the World –

"We are a community of educators networking for mutual growth and support in the teaching profession. Our mission is to empower beginning teachers and provide strategies to help them not just survive, but thrive in the classroom. We also seek to encourage those who train, mentor, and lead new teachers, and offer resources to help them in their efforts."



- [Beginning Teachers](#)
- [Student Teachers](#)
- [Mentor Teachers](#)
- [Veteran Teachers](#)



[usa.usembassy.de](http://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](mailto:classroom@usembassy.de)