



Newsletter for English Teachers

About the USA – Virtual Classroom

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Social Networking & Web 2.0 Tools

Social Media and Web 2.0 are umbrella terms that define the range of activities that integrate technology, social interaction, and content creation. Social media are primarily Internet- and mobile-based tools that allow people to easily share and discuss information. The term is often used interchangeably with "Web 2.0" to indicate that the role and use of the World Wide Web is changing: moving from traditional websites to a network of social interaction in which users, not only webmasters, create and organize content.

Through social media, individuals or collaborations of individuals create web content - by organizing, editing, and combining, sharing and commenting on content. In doing so, social media use the "wisdom of crowds" to connect information online.

Social media use many technologies and forms, including RSS and other syndicated web feeds, blogs, wikis, photo- and video-sharing, podcasts, social networking, social bookmarking, widgets, virtual worlds, and more.

Lesson Plan: [To Share or Not to Share?](#) Creating Guidelines for Social Networking: Students evaluate the pros and cons of sharing private information on social networking sites, and create guidelines for behaving prudently and protecting privacy online. (NYT Learning Network, Feb. 4, 2009)

Some Forms of Social Media

RSS Feeds: RSS stands for Really Simple Syndication. These news feeds enable users to avoid the conventional methods of browsing or searching for information on websites. Now the content they want is delivered directly to them.

Podcasting: A way of publishing MP3 audio files on the web so they can be downloaded onto computers or portable devices, such as MP3 players. Podcasting allows users to subscribe to a feed of new audio files using "podcatching" software, which periodically checks for and downloads new audio files automatically.

Wiki: A collaborative work space. A wiki is a collection of web pages that encourages users to contribute or modify the content.

"How stuff works"

[How do blogs, podcasts, wikis and companies like Digg and MySpace work?](#) * [How Photo Sharing Works](#) * [How Blogs work](#)

Government-Wide 2.0 Tools

Visit USA.gov's newest page -- [Government 2.0](#) -- where you can find blogs, RSS feeds, videos, gadgets, and more! These tools will improve access to U.S. government information and resources.

- [Blogs from the U.S. Government](#): Read blogs from various U.S. government sources
- [Government RSS Library](#): Library of RSS feeds from across government
- [Podcasts from the U.S. Government](#): Listen to podcasts
- [Videos from the U.S. Government](#): Links to public domain videos that may be used and reproduced without permission or fee
- [Virtual Tours from the U.S. Government](#): View virtual tours created by federal government agencies.



Tools used by the U.S. Department of State

- U.S. Department of State [Youth Website](#)
- Facebook: [U.S. State Department](#)
- Twitter: U.S. Dep. of State's [Official Blog](#)
- [Blogs](#) at America.gov & [Dipnote](#)
- Youtube: [Statevideo](#) (featuring official video produced by the U.S. Department of State)
- Flickr: [U.S. Department of State's Photostream](#) (online photo management/sharing application)
- [Democracy](#) video challenge on America.gov

Articles

- [People Use Social Networking to Fight Violence, Extremism](#). America.gov, Dec. 2, 2008: In an innovative approach to countering violence, Oscar Morales used the social networking tool Facebook.com to mobilize 12 million people worldwide against the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).
- [Why I Blog](#). By Andrew Sullivan, Atlantic, Nov. 2008: Sullivan describes the evolution of his blogging, which he began in 2000.



(©America.gov)

America.gov: [New Media - Government 2.0](#). New media has changed the way politicians campaign. Now the world is looking to the Obama administration to see how new media will change the way politicians govern. (Video)

Secretary of State [Hillary Rodham Clinton](#) traveled to the Middle East and Europe March 1 to 7. Trip updates are also available at [Facebook](#), [DipNote](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#), and [Flickr](#).



© [National Women's History Project](#)

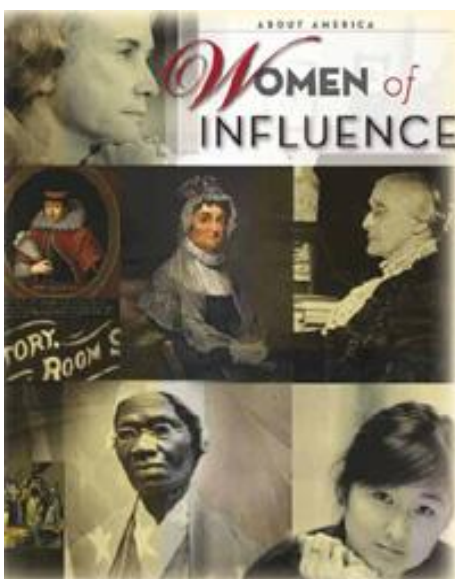
Each March, National Women's History Month celebrates the contributions of women to the history and culture of the United States. The 2009 theme is Women Taking the Lead to Save Our Planet, recognizing the role of women in the "green movement," according to the National Women's History Project.

Did you know? The idea of an International Women's Day first arose at the turn of the 20th century. In accordance with a declaration by the Socialist Party of America, the first National Woman's Day was observed across the United States on February 28, 1909. (Source: [UN](#))

Article

Idea of Afghan Women's Rights Starts Taking Hold. *New York Times, March 3, 2009:* Since the overthrow of the Taliban in 2001, a more egalitarian notion of women's rights has begun to take hold, founded in the country's new Constitution and promoted by the newly created Ministry of Women's Affairs and a small community of women's advocates. The problems they are confronting are deeply ingrained in a culture that has been mainly governed by tribal law. But they are changing the lives of young women like Mariam [...].

America.gov: Women of Influence (PDF, 36 pp)
This collection chronicles how 21 notable American women broke new ground, some by championing equal rights for all and others by their accomplishments in fields such as government, literature, and even in war.



International Women's Day & Women's History Month

During this year's Women's History Month in March, the United States is celebrating the pioneering and creative ways in which women are working both locally and internationally to help save the planet.

Links

- America.gov: [U.S. Celebrates Women's Contributions](#) * [Milestones in U.S. Women's History](#) * [Women's History Month](#) * [Photo Gallery](#)
- [Presidential Proclamation on Women's History Month](#)
- USA.gov: [Women's History Month](#) honors the achievements and contributions of American women from all walks of life.
- USA.gov: [WomensHistoryMonth.gov](#) and learn about this year's theme, "Women Taking the Lead to Save Our Planet."
- About the USA: [Society - Women](#)

Lesson Plans

- [Charlotte Perkins Gilman's The Yellow Wall-paper—The "New Woman"](#): This lesson plan helps to set the historical, social, cultural, and economic context of Gilman's story.
- [Who Were the Foremothers of Women's Equality?](#) This lesson introduces students to the achievements of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, "foremothers" of women's equality, and the lesser-known activists.
- [Women's Equality: Changing Attitudes and Beliefs](#) Students analyze archival cartoons, posters, magazine humor, newspaper articles and poems that reflect the deeply entrenched attitudes and beliefs the early crusaders for women's rights had to overcome.

Teaching Resources

- TeacherVision: [Women's History: Teacher Resources](#). Recognize Women's History Month, by exploring the many important contributions of women, with printables, lesson plans, biographies and worksheets about accomplished women in American history.

International Women's Day is an occasion marked around the world on March 8. This date is also commemorated at the United Nations and is designated in many countries as a national holiday. When we celebrate International Women's Day, we look back to a tradition that represents decades of struggle for equality, justice, peace and development. The theme of this year's International Women's Day UN events is [Women and Men United to End Violence against Women and Girls](#).

Few causes promoted by the United Nations have generated more intense and widespread support than the campaign to promote and protect the equal rights of women. The Charter of the United Nations, signed in San Francisco in 1945, was the first international agreement to proclaim gender equality as a fundamental human right. Since then, the Organization has helped create a historic legacy of internationally agreed strategies, standards, programs and goals to advance the status of women worldwide. [International Women's Day 2009](#)

UN Fact Sheets

- [How widespread is Violence against Women?](#)
- [Forms, consequences and costs of violence against women](#)
- [Fighting violence against women: What works](#)
- [Executive summary of the Secretary-General's in-depth study on violence against women](#)

The struggle for equal rights often focuses on developing countries, where many women still lack some of the most basic of rights. However, in many prosperous countries gender bias endures.

Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act

On January 29, 2009, President Obama signed his first piece of legislation, the [Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009](#), which will make it easier for people to get the pay they deserve - regardless of their gender, race, or age. "Ultimately, equal pay isn't just an economic issue for millions of Americans and their families, it's a question of who we are -- and whether we're truly living up to our fundamental ideals," President Obama said. "Whether we'll do our part, as generations before us, to ensure those words put on paper some 200 years ago really mean something -- to breathe new life into them with a more enlightened understanding that is appropriate for our time.

Literature: Junot Diaz

Junot Díaz was born in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. His family moved to the U.S. when he was six years old. His Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, centers on an outcast, science fiction-obsessed kid who comes from a family of Dominican immigrants.

[Homepage: Bio](#)

The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao

Teaching Material: [eNotes](#): A complete study guide, featuring *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* summary, Junot Diaz biography, analysis of the work, plot summary, character analysis, themes and style discussion, published criticism and essays, and much more.

"Junot Díaz tells a brutal, but irresistible, story in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. Through the eyes of various narrators, readers enter the frightening world of a Dominican Republic family living in New Jersey. The characters' lives are overflowing with injustices, unrequited love, lost opportunities, physical cruelties, and as one narrator points out, an ancient Dominican curse called Fukú. The background of the story takes place in the Dominican Republic under the fearsome dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo, a man who, according to one narrator, imprisoned, tortured, and murdered thousands for merely looking at him in the wrong way. Oscar, the character around whom this novel revolves, had a grandfather who was imprisoned for almost two decades because he refused to bring his oldest daughter to meet Trujillo. A few years after the doctor was sentenced, only one of his daughters remained alive. The rest of the family had been victims of the Fukú, a curse of doom that would continue to track down the doctor's descendants." (Source: [eNotes](#))

Links - Articles

- [Junot Díaz wins Pulitzer for 'Oscar Wao'](#). Sarah Wright, MIT, Apr. 7, 2008
- [An Interview with Junot Diaz](#). John Zuarino, Bookslut, Sep. 2007
- [Junot Diaz on YouTube](#), Authors@Google, Sep. 26, 2007
- [Junot Diaz Karate-Chops His Writer's Block](#). Boris Kachka. New York, Aug. 24, 2007
- Interview: [Junot Diaz, Author and Pulitzer Prize Winner](#). Carrie Meathrell and Osmany Rodriguez, LAist, April 10, 2008
- [Mil Máscaras: An Interview with Pulitzer-Winner Junot Díaz](#). Matt Okie, identitytheory, Sep. 2, 2008
- ['I'm Nobody or I'm a Nation'](#). Interview, J. Ellison, Newsweek, Apr. 3, 2008

Links - Audio

- NPR: [Junot Diaz On 'Becoming American'](#). Nov. 24, 2008
- NPR: [Junot Diaz Reflects On 'This American Moment'](#). Sep. 10, 2008
- NPR: [Junot Diaz Discusses His 'Wondrous' Debut Novel](#). May 2, 2008

Leipzig Book Fair 2009 — A Reader's Delight

March 12-15 at the Leipzig Neue Messe, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. daily

Visit the Mission Germany booth in Halle 4 D301, and take a look at the latest American books, many of which were generously donated by U.S. publishers.

The literary festival -- "Leipzig liest" or "Leipzig reads" -- was established as a complement to the Leipzig Book Fair in 1991. Since then, the fair has doubled in size and popularity, attracting book lovers of all ages. The fair features a number of special programs for young readers, featuring new books, comics, and games.

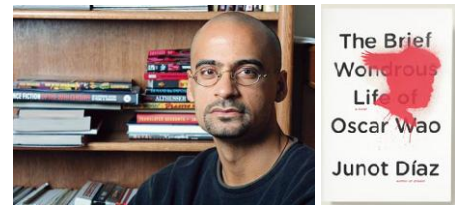
Leipzig.Liest.Amerika * www.leipzig-liest.de/ * www.krautgarden.com

Wednesday, March 11, 20:00 -- krautgarden: leipzig.liest.amerika

Junot Diaz: "The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao", bilingual reading with actress Jasmin Tabatabaei. Moritzbastei Leipzig, Veranstaltungstonne

Friday, March 13 & Sat., March 14, 18:00-23:00 -- "Krautgarten"

American authors T.C. Boyle, Steven Bloom, Ralph Martin, Tao Lin, Anya Ulinich, Tod Wodicka, Anna Winger, Ron Winkler, Aleksandar Hemon und Willy Vlautin. Alte Baumwollspinnerei, Spinnereistr. 7, 04179 Leipzig



© AP Image

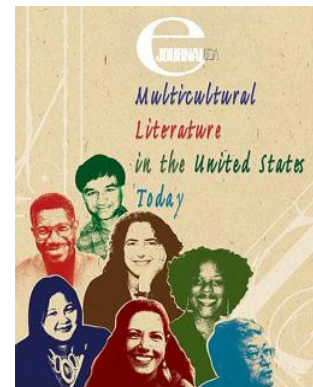
[Junot Diaz' Homepage](#)

"It's never the changes we want that change everything."

This is how it all starts: with your mother calling you into the bathroom. You will remember what you were doing at that precise moment for the rest of your life: You were reading Watership Down and the rabbits and their does were making their dash for the boat and you didn't want to stop reading, the book has to go back to your brother tomorrow, but then she called you again, louder, her I'm-not-fucking-around voice, and you mumbled irritably, Sí, señora." excerpt

Discussion Questions

The book centers on the story of Oscar and his family—and yet the majority of the book is narrated by Yunior, who is not part of the family, and only plays a relatively minor role in the events of the story. Yunior even calls himself "The Watcher," underscoring his outsider status in the story. What is the effect of having a relative outsider tell the story, rather than having someone in the family tell it? And why do you think Díaz waits for so long at the beginning of the book to reveal who the narrator is? ([Penguin.com: Reading Guide](#))



eJournal USA: Multicultural Literature in the United States Today

The United States is enriched culturally by immigrants from many nations. This edition of eJournal USA focuses on distinguished American writers from various ethnic backgrounds who add immeasurably to mutual understanding and appreciation through tales of their native lands and their experiences as Americans. (Feb. 2009, [View PDF](#), 1.14 MB)





Dancers from Woods School of Irish Dance in Boston
(© AP Images)

Did you know?

36.5 million: Number of U.S. residents who claimed Irish ancestry in 2007. This number was more than eight times the population of Ireland itself (more than 4 million). Irish was the nation's second most frequently reported ancestry, trailing only German. [Source: Census Bureau](#)



Among the lectures available are:
[The American Novel Since 1945](#)
[The World is Flat 3.0](#)



Webcasts @ America.gov
The "First 100 Days" and the New Administration

March 11, 2009 - 16:30

The inauguration of America's first African-American president has generated excitement around the world and interest in learning more about democratic systems. Join us for the webcast of a discussion on the first days of the new administration with well-known political analyst Charlie Cook. [Enter the Event](#)

In Focus
St. Patrick's Day & Irish-American Heritage Month

"St. Patrick's Day might be one of the world's most celebrated holidays, with city-sponsored festivities held in Japan, Australia, Canada, Malaysia, Great Britain and the U.S. as well as Ireland. That geography reflects the broad dispersion of Irish, through choice or necessity, in a 300-year, globe-spanning migration. But perhaps in no other adopted nation is the Irish presence felt as keenly as in the United States, where an ethnic holiday has expanded to embrace all Americans." (America.gov [Article](#))

Proclamation by the President - Irish-American Heritage Month 2009

U.S. relations with Ireland have long been based on common ancestral ties and shared values. These relations have broadened and matured, given the cooperation on global challenges. Besides regular dialogue on political and economic issues, the U.S. and Irish Governments have official exchanges in areas such as medical research and education. (Source: U.S. Department of State: [Profile - Ireland](#))

Announcement by White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs: "President Obama will welcome Taoiseach Brian Cowen of Ireland to the White House on Tuesday, March 17th. The United States and Ireland have strong bilateral relations, deep cultural ties, and a commitment for positive change in the world. [...] The President also looks forward to commemorating with the Taoiseach his first St. Patrick's Day in the White House, a celebration which serves as a reminder of the rich history of friendship that our two countries share."

Introducing

[Academic Earth](#) is an organization founded with the goal of giving everyone on earth access to a world-class education. Find thousands of video lectures from the world's top scholars.

"We are building a user-friendly educational ecosystem that will give internet users around the world the ability to easily find, interact with, and learn from full video courses and lectures from the world's leading scholars. Our goal is to bring the best content together in one place [...]. We invite those who share our passion to explore our website, participate in our online community, and help us continue to find new ways to make learning easier for everyone."

America.gov: Policy News

NATO Agrees to Resume Dialogue with Russia

March 5 - Secretary Hillary Rodham Clinton (center front), flanked by foreign ministers attending a NATO meeting in Brussels, counseled members to revive the NATO-Russia Council. "It's time to explore a fresh start. We can and must find ways to work constructively with Russia." [Article](#) (© AP Image/ America.gov)



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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.

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