



Newsletter for English Teachers

About the USA – Virtual Classroom

In this issue:

[Ramadan](#) | [Looking Ahead: G20 Pittsburgh Summit](#) | [Literature: International Literacy Day](#) | [Hispanic Heritage Month](#)
[In Focus: Back to School](#) | [Remembering Senator Edward M. Kennedy](#) | [The Department of State on Youtube](#)
[Introducing: New eJournal – Campus Connections](#)

Ramadan – Muslims in the United States

In North America, Ramadan began on August 22, 2009 and will finish on September 20, 2009. This is the first Ramadan since President Obama came into office. He has called for a new beginning between the United States and Muslims worldwide. With the beginning of Ramadan, President Obama extended greetings on behalf of the American people to Muslims around the world: Ramadan Kareem. White House: [President Sends Ramadan Greetings to Muslims](#)

America.gov Articles

- [The Lessons of Ramadan](#). Ansaf Kareem, the son of Pakistani parents, was born and raised in Portland, Oregon. (August 4)
- [Diversity, Faith Define Evolving Identity of Muslim Americans](#): Muslim Americans forging a community that “flourishes in democracy”. (August 18)
- [Muslim Americans Launch Community Service Initiative](#): President Obama, in his Ramadan message to Muslims worldwide, recognized Muslim-American organizations engaged in volunteering and community service works. (August 26)

Feature: [A Multicultural Ramadan](#). American Muslims trace their ancestry to more than 80 countries. America.gov explores the richness of these traditions through the lens of Ramadan.

Photo Galleries

Young Muslim Americans: Young Muslim Americans are making their mark on American society. Whether through academics or extracurricular activities, young Muslim Americans are balancing their commitments to their schools and communities with their devotion to their Islamic faith. Here, America.gov profiles some of these young Americans.

Observing Ramadan Worldwide: Many of the world’s 1.5 billion Muslims will observe the month of Ramadan in different ways, blending their own cultural customs with Islamic traditions of prayer and fasting. In the U.S. alone, Muslims come from more than 80 countries and represent a mosaic of ethnic, linguistic, ideological, social and economic groups. Although the principal teachings of Ramadan remain consistent, the fusion between religious tradition and diverse cultures embodies the interconnectivity and diffusion of a modern, globalized world.

Muslims in America - A Statistical Portrait

Today’s Muslim American population is an extraordinary mosaic of ethnic, linguistic, ideological, social, economic, and religious groups. Native Muslim Americans are well integrated into American society, while many newcomers are just beginning to adapt to American life. In terms of religious devotion, Muslims range from highly orthodox to moderate to secular. Muslims resemble Christians, Jews, Hindus, and other American religious communities in that many of them seek full political and social integration, while others prefer to live primarily in the context of their communities and cultural practices. Many of the immigrants come from Muslim-majority countries and inevitably go through a period of adjustment as they learn the ways of a pluralistic society.

The size of the Muslim-American population has proved difficult to measure because the U.S. Census does not track religious affiliation. Estimates vary widely from 2 million to 7 million. What is clear, however, is that the Muslim-American population has been growing rapidly as a result of immigration, a high birth rate, and conversions.



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Presidential Message on Ramadan: “[...] I know this to be a festive time – a time when families gather, friends host iftars, and meals are shared. But I also know that Ramadan is a time of intense devotion and reflection – a time when Muslims fast during the day and perform tarawih prayers at night, reciting and listening to the entire Koran over the course of the month. These rituals remind us of the principles that we hold in common, and Islam’s role in advancing justice, progress, tolerance, and the dignity of all human beings.” (Aug. 21)

Publications

- **Freedom of Faith eJOURNAL:** Highlights the historical roots of U.S. religious freedom and examines how the U.S. remains true to these principles while adjusting to demographic changes that bring great religious diversity to many communities.
- **Being Muslim in America**



Dear Teachers, we very much appreciate your input. [Please send us your comments and suggestions.](#) Thank you!



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A young boy attends prayers to celebrate Eid al-Fitr at a mosque in Johannesburg, South Africa. In Cape Town, Muslims celebrate Eid al-Fitr by gathering for the sighting of the moon on the last day of Ramadan. By Islamic tradition, Ramadan can end only when the new moon marking the next month can be seen. The next day will begin the celebrations of Eid al-Fitr.

Links

- [Council on American-Islamic Relations](#)
- [American Society for Muslim Advancement](#)
- [Prince Alwaleed Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding at Georgetown University](#)
- [Macdonald Center for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations](#)
- World Book Encyclopedia: [Ramadan](#)
- InfoPlease: [Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr](#)
- InfoPlease: [Glossary of Islam](#)

About Islam and American Muslims - Answers

What is Islam? Who are Muslims and what do they believe? What is the Quran? What are the "Five Pillars" of Islam? What about the American Muslim community? *Council on American-Islamic Relations*

Teaching Material

- PBS Teachers Guide: [Beliefs and Daily Lives of Muslims](#)
- BBC: [Religion and Ethics - Islam](#)
- BBC: Schools - [Ramadan](#)



G-20 Background Information: [G-20 Official Site](#)

Prior Summit Documents

- [London Summit Communiqué: Global Plan for Recovery and Reform](#)
- [Declaration on Strengthening the Financial System \(Annex to London Summit Communiqué\)](#)
- [Washington Declaration](#) & [Washington Action Plan](#)



Ramadan (cont.)

Ramadan is an Islamic religious observance of the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. It begins with the sighting of the new moon and continues for 30 days.

Although Ramadan is always on the same day of the Islamic calendar, the date on the Western solar (Gregorian) calendar varies from year to year, since the Gregorian calendar is a solar calendar and the Islamic calendar is a lunar calendar. This difference means Ramadan moves in the Gregorian calendar approximately 11 days every year. The date of Ramadan may also vary from country to country depending on whether the moon has been sighted or not. This year, 1430 by the Islamic calendar, Ramadan starts on August 22 and ends on September 20 for Sunnis, with Shi'a Islam starting and ending Ramadan a few days later.

Ramadan is considered the holiest month of the Islamic year, regardless of faith or sect. The month is characterized by fasting, additional prayer and charity for the less fortunate. Muslims reflect on their lives and use this period to get closer to God.

Ramadan is a time for increased prayer and mosque attendance. Celebrating the time when the verses of the Qur'an were revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, Muslims are also encouraged to read the entire Quran during the month of Ramadan. A special prayer, called the Tarawih, is given at mosque, and recites 1/30 of the Quran each night of Ramadan.

A large celebration of the breaking of the fast, Eid ul-Fitr, signifies the end of Ramadan when the next new moon is sighted. During this celebration Muslims dress in their finest clothes, give gifts to children and spend time with their friends and family. At Eid it is obligatory to give a set amount of money to charity to be used to help poor people.

"First day of Ramadan will be Saturday, August 22, 2009 and Eid al-Fitr on Sunday, September 20, 2009, inshaAllah.

"O you who believe, fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that you may (learn) self-restraint." Qur'an 2: 183

The dates provided here are based on the dates adopted by the [Fiqh Council of North America](#) for the celebration of Ramadan. Note that these dates are based on astronomical calculations to affirm each date, and not on the actual sighting of the moon with the naked eyes. This approach is accepted by many, but is still being hotly debated. Source: [When is Ramadan in 2009?](#)

Did you know? 2009 CE = 1430 AH. The abbreviation "H" (Hegira) or "AH" (Anno Hejira) is used after dates in the Islamic calendar. The base of the Islamic calendar is 622 CE (Common Era), the year of the Hegira, when the Prophet Muhammad traveled from Mecca to Medina in what is now Saudi Arabia. Because Ramadan is based on the lunar calendar, it is observed about 11 days earlier each year. Thus, over time, it goes through all four seasons.

Looking Ahead: G20 Pittsburgh Summit

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania will host the G-20 Summit September 24-25, 2009. President Obama will chair this meeting of leaders from countries around the world who will review the progress made since the Washington and London Summits and discuss further actions to assure a sound and sustainable recovery from the global financial and economic crisis. [Official website](#)

When the White House announced in May that Pittsburgh would be the site of the next G-20 Summit, reporters asked, "Why Pittsburgh?"

The reason, according to the White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs, was that Pittsburgh today serves as a model for economic and environmental transformation in the United States and abroad. The city has reinvented itself by building a balanced, innovation-driven economy based on its strengths in advanced manufacturing, financial services, information and communications technologies, health care and life sciences, education and research, and energy and environmental solutions. [The G20 Pittsburgh Summit Press Room](#)

Over the past half-century, the Pittsburgh region has undergone the most extraordinary urban environmental transformation in modern history. [Learn more](#)

Literature

International Literacy Day 2009 - September 8

This year, International Literacy Day will put the spotlight on the empowering role of literacy and its importance for participation, citizenship and social development. Literacy and Empowerment is the theme for the 2009-2010 biennium of the United Nations Literacy Decade.

On International Literacy Day each year, UNESCO reminds the international community of the status of literacy and adult learning globally. Despite many and varied efforts, literacy remains an elusive target: some 776 million adults lack minimum literacy skills which means that one in five adults is still not literate; 75 million children are out-of-school and many more attend irregularly or drop out.

The Power of Literacy - This year, International Literacy Day will put the spotlight on the empowering role of literacy and its importance for participation, citizenship and social development. Literacy and Empowerment is the theme for the 2009-2010 biennium of the United Nations Literacy Decade. [UNESCO - International Literacy Day](#)

The Literacy Project: A [resource](#) for teachers, literacy organizations and anyone interested in reading and education, created in collaboration with LitCam, Google, and UNESCO's Institute for Lifelong Learning.

Hispanic Heritage Month: September 15 - October 15

Each year, Americans observe National Hispanic Heritage Month from September 15 to October 15 by celebrating the histories, cultures and contributions of American citizens whose ancestors came from Spain, Mexico, and the Spanish-speaking nations of the Caribbean and Central and South America.

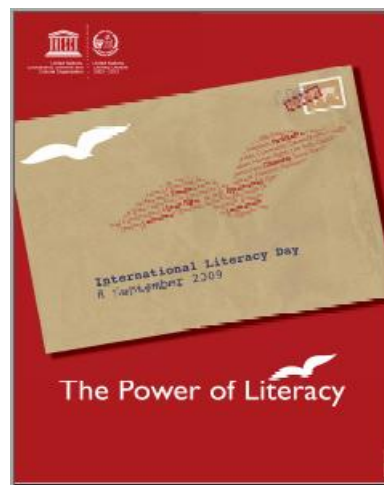
The day of September 15 is significant because it is the anniversary of independence for Latin American countries Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. In addition, Mexico and Chile celebrate their independence days on September 16 and 18, respectively. Also, Columbus Day or Día de la Raza, which is October 12, falls within this 30 day period. Library of Congress: [About National Hispanic Heritage Month](#)

Links

- About the USA. U.S. Society: [Hispanic Americans](#)
- Infoplease. [Hispanic Heritage Month](#)
- Library of Congress. [Hispanic Reading Room](#) - online collections, from Hispanic Americans in Congress to digitized historical documents
- Latin American Network Information Center. [Hispanic/Latino. Academic resources](#) - compilation of web sites focused on Hispanics.
- Smithsonian Education: [Hispanic Heritage Teaching Resources](#)
- Scholastic: [Celebrate Hispanic Heritage](#)
- TeacherVision: [Hispanic-American Literature Resources](#)

Report: Latino Children: A Majority Are U.S.-Born Offspring of Immigrants. [Pew Hispanic Center](#). Richard Fry, Jeffrey S. Passel, May 28: "Hispanics now make up 22% of all children under the age of 18 in the United States--up from 9% in 1980--and as their numbers have grown, their demographic profile has changed. A majority (52%) of the nation's 16 million Hispanic children are now "second generation," meaning they are the U.S.-born sons or daughters of at least one foreign-born parent, typically someone who came to this country in the immigration wave from Mexico, Central America and South America that began around 1980."

Who makes up the U.S. Hispanic population? - Hispanics are an ethnically and racially diverse population. The Latino population on the U.S. mainland is composed of Mexican Americans (64%), Puerto Ricans (9%), Cubans (3.5%), Salvadorans (3%), and Dominicans (2.7%). The remainder are of some other Central American, South American, or other Hispanic or Latino origins (17.8%). National Council of La Raza: [Twenty of the Most Frequently Asked Questions About Hispanics in the U.S.](#)



© UNESCO - The Power of Literacy

Links

- Dag Hammarskjöld Library: [Int. Literacy Day](#)
- UNESCO: [Literacy](#)
- National Institute for Literacy
- [Reading is fundamental](#)
- [Lifelong Literacy \(Library of Congress\)](#)



© Gale - Free Resources: [Hispanic Heritage](#)

- Read [biographies](#) of significant Hispanic individuals
- Take a Hispanic culture [quiz](#)
- Follow a [timeline](#) of events that helped shape the Hispanic culture
- Explore Hispanic [holidays, musical genres and other topics](#)

Facts for Features: Hispanic Heritage Month

46.9 million - The estimated Hispanic population of the United States as of July 1, 2008, making people of Hispanic origin the nation's largest ethnic or race minority. Hispanics constituted 15 percent of the nation's total population. In addition, there are approximately 4 million residents of Puerto Rico.

Teaching Resource

Scholastic: Celebrate Hispanic Heritage - Students learn about the Hispanic history in the Americas and Latinos in history, meet famous Latinos and read about the heritage of people.

Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor

America.gov: Sotomayor's presence on the court is of special historic significance because she is the first Hispanic-American member. She is also only the third female justice. [Sotomayor Confirmed as Newest U.S. Supreme Court Justice](#)

PEW Hispanic Center: [Who's Hispanic?](#) May 28, 2009: Is Judge Sonia Sotomayor the first Hispanic ever nominated to the U.S. Supreme Court, or does that distinction belong to Justice Benjamin Cardozo, who served on the court from 1932-38 and whose family tree apparently had some roots in Portugal? The question of who's Hispanic -- and who isn't -- turns out to be pretty complicated.



© National Center for Education Statistics

Nearly 50 million students are heading off to approximately 99,000 public elementary and secondary schools for the fall term, and before the school year is out, an estimated \$543 billion will be spent related to their education.

[DATA](#) about American elementary, secondary and postsecondary schools, students, and the educational process.



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More

- [Senator Ted Kennedy Mourned by Friend & Foe](#)
- Photo Gallery: [Edward Kennedy's Life of Global Engagement](#)
- Please find interesting articles on Senator Kennedy's work and life at our [InfoAlert page](#).

In Focus: Back to School

- Approximately [27 % of the U.S. population is enrolled in school](#)—from nursery school to college. Although some may attend school year-round, many are now getting ready for the 2009-2010 school year. Visit USA.gov's [Back to School](#) page
- [About](#) 3,327,000 students are expected to graduate from high school in 2009-10, including 3,005,000 from public high schools and 321,000 from private high schools.
- During the 2009-10 school year, colleges and universities are expected to award 741,000 associate's degrees ([source](#)); 1,634,000 bachelor's degrees ([source](#)); 659,000 master's degrees ([source](#)); 94,400 first-professional degrees ([source](#)); and 60,400 doctor's degrees ([source](#)).

Remembering Senator Edward M. Kennedy

Edward M. Kennedy, a respected elder statesman known as the "lion of the Senate," died in Massachusetts on August 25 at the age of 77 after a yearlong battle with brain cancer.

"An important chapter in our history has come to an end. Our country has lost a great leader, who picked up the torch of his fallen brothers and became the greatest United States senator of our time," President Obama said in a statement released by the White House August 26. (See [President Obama's statement](#))

Although never elected to the U.S. presidency, Kennedy profoundly affected U.S. policy, domestic and international, and is widely regarded as one of the most effective legislators of the past three or four decades, with important roles in landmark laws such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act.

Kennedy's endorsement of Barack Obama early in 2008 was seen by many as a key factor in Obama's successful pursuit of the Democratic nomination for the presidency. In a passionate speech at the 2008 Democratic National Convention in Denver, Kennedy called on Americans to support Obama's bid for the highest U.S. office. [America.gov](#)

The Department of State on Youtube

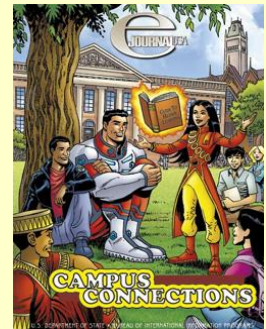


[President Obama gives Ramadan Message](#)

NEW eJournal: [Campus Connections](#)

A globalized economy makes business and employment spill across national boundaries, so an education abroad is likely to make a young person better prepared for the world's future. Almost double the numbers of students travel abroad for an education today as compared with 20 years ago. Campus Connections examines the international study experience and its influence on individual growth.

Cover: Specially designed by Teshkeel Media for eJournalUSA, our cover features three characters from the comic book series THE 99.



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.

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