



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

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### HIV/AIDS - World AIDS Day

World AIDS Day helps to educate people about HIV, reduce the stigma associated with this disease, and promote HIV testing. Organized by the United Nations World Health Organization in 1988 and observed every December 1, World AIDS Day spotlights the disease, which has killed an estimated 25 million people since the early 1980s.

#### AIDS.gov: [What is HIV/AIDS?](#)

**H**uman (this virus can only infect human beings)

**I**mmunodeficiency (the virus creates a weakened immune system by destroying white blood cells)

**V**irus (the organism is a virus and is incapable of reproducing itself without help from specific cells in the human body)

**HIV** is different from other viruses because the immune system can never fully get rid of it. The virus hides in the immune system and other cells in the body. HIV causes significant damage to the immune system, leaving it open to other dangerous infections. HIV infection can lead to **AIDS**.

**A**cquired (AIDS is a disease that is not hereditary but develops from contact with, or infection by, a disease-causing agent - in this case, HIV)

**I**mmune (AIDS affects the body's immune system, which includes all the organs and cells that work to fight off infection or foreign substances)

**D**eficiency (HIV makes the immune system unable to function properly)

**S**yndrome (a complex illness with a wide range of complications & symptoms)

#### An estimated

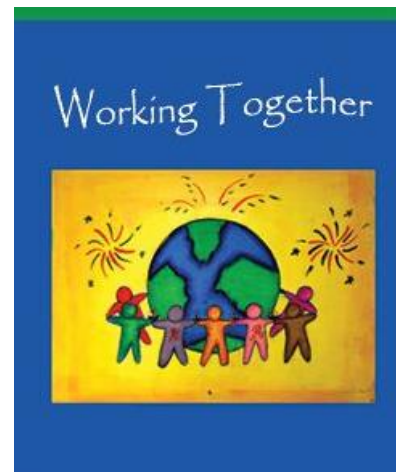
- 33.4 million people are living with HIV worldwide
- 2.7 million people were newly infected in 2008
- 2 million people died of AIDS related illness in 2008
- According to new data in the *2009 AIDS epidemic update*, released by WHO and UNAIDS, new HIV infections have been reduced by 17% over the past eight years. [News release](#) | [Read the report](#) | [More information](#)

### U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)

Through the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the U.S. Government is promoting the theme "Working Together." The international theme for this World AIDS Day is "Universal Access and Human Rights." Over the next five years, the United States will partner with nations to build the long-term sustainability of their national HIV/AIDS responses and support country-led efforts to make universal access a reality for their citizens.

Launched in 2003 to combat global AIDS, PEPFAR is the largest commitment in history by any nation to combat a single disease. The American people have already provided more than \$25 billion to the fight against global AIDS. Through PEPFAR, the U.S. Government is also the first and largest single contributor to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. As PEPFAR goes forward, the U.S. will support efforts through President Obama's Global Health Initiative to make health systems more responsive to people living with HIV by increasing integration and facilitating their access to health care services, incl. those for tuberculosis, malaria, maternal and child health, and family planning.

**Did you know?** In October, President Obama announced the elimination of the HIV entry ban. Since 1987, HIV-positive travelers and immigrants have been banned from entering or traveling through the U.S. without a special waiver. The final rule will take effect in early January 2010. That means that people who have HIV and are not U.S. citizens will be able to enter the U.S. starting in January next year. This is a major step in ending the stigma associated with HIV. [WhiteHouse.gov](#)



© PEPFAR: World AIDS Day 2009  
[PEPFAR on Facebook](#)

#### Links: World AIDS Day Resources

- [Fact Sheets and Issue Briefs](#)
- [U.S. Government HIV/AIDS Information](#)
- [UNAIDS: The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS](#)
- [World Health Organization and HIV/AIDS](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Act Against AIDS](#)



**State.gov: The U. S. Global AIDS Coordinator's** mission is to lead implementation of the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). PEPFAR was launched in 2003, and is the largest commitment ever by any nation for an international health initiative dedicated to a single disease - a comprehensive approach to combating HIV/AIDS around the world. Under PEPFAR, the U.S. Government has committed more than \$25 billion to the fight against global AIDS. Please visit [PEPFAR](#) for more information.



© [Beating AIDS - America.gov](#)



© [COP15](#)

The **Climate Quiz** allows visitors to [cop15.dk](#) to test their climate knowledge. Visitors can compare climate knowledge with friends. [Take the quiz](#)

COP15: [The essentials in Copenhagen](#) – “Rather than getting every small detail of a new global climate treaty done in Copenhagen, UN climate chief Yvo de Boer hopes the conference will reach agreements on four political essentials.” [Read more](#)

[COP15 ON TWITTER](#)  
[COP15 ON FACEBOOK](#)  
[CHANGE CLIMATE CHANGE ON YOUTUBE](#)

**U.S. Government Links**

- WhiteHouse.gov: [Energy & Environment](#)
- America.gov: [Climate Change](#)
- U.S. Dep. of State: [Climate Change Page](#)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: [Climate Change](#)

**State.gov: eJournals USA on the issue**

- [Climate Change Perspectives](#) (September 2009)
- [Energy Efficiency](#) (April 2009)
- [Clean Energy Solutions](#) (July 2006)

*“Our generation's response to this challenge will be judged by history, for if we fail to meet it -- boldly, swiftly, and together -- we risk consigning future generations to an irreversible catastrophe.”*

President Barack Obama, September 22, 2009



© [Global Conversations on Facebook](#) – There is no doubt that the climate is changing. What will it cost to confront the problem? What is the cost of inaction? Join the global conversation and discuss the alternative courses of action. Join. Share. Act. (State.gov)



© [U.S. Participation in COP15](#)

**December 7-18: Copenhagen Summit (COP15)  
 United Nations Climate Change Conference**

The world is preparing to convene from Dec. 7-18 in Copenhagen, Denmark for the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 15) to negotiate the successor to the Kyoto Protocol, which set international goals for greenhouse emissions reductions in 1997. The COP15 conference is the fifteenth Conference of the Parties under the United Nations’ Climate Change Convention.

President Obama will be attending the COP15 Conference, and he will take with him an emissions reduction target to drive progress toward a comprehensive and operational Copenhagen accord. [Press Release](#)

Under President Obama’s leadership, the United States has taken dramatic steps to change the way we use energy. Sharp increases in automobile fuel efficiency have been mandated. Our economic stimulus package includes more than \$80 billion in clean energy investments designed not only to jump-start the economy, but also to build the clean energy jobs of tomorrow. The passage of the American Clean Energy and Security Act in the House of Representatives earlier this year signals America’s commitment to preventing climate change and building a global clean energy economy. Currently, the Senate is reviewing similar legislation. In terms of climate and the environment, this has been the most productive 10 months in our country’s history.

We know that without U.S. emissions reductions, no solution to climate change is possible. President Obama is prepared to put on the table a U.S. emissions reduction target in the range of 17% below 2005 levels in 2020. This will put us on the path to the President’s long term goal of emission reductions of 83 percent by 2050.

But action by the United States and other developed nations is clearly not enough. There is simply no way to preserve a safe and livable planet unless developing countries play a key role in the climate negotiations and join in taking collective action to meet this common challenge.

Please see these speeches by Ambassador Murphy for further information:

- [A Call to Action \(Berlin, American Academy, November 30, 2009\)](#)
- [Hamburg Climate Conference \(Hamburg, November 17, 2009\)](#)

**WhiteHouse.gov: Highlights of actions and accomplishments on climate change and energy by the Obama Administration in the last 10 months**

**Domestic Leadership**

- [Recovery Act](#)
- [Efficiency Standard for Automobiles](#)
- [Advancing Comprehensive Energy Legislation](#)
- [Appliance Efficiency Standards](#)
- The [Offshore Energy Development](#)
- Emissions Inventory Rule: For the first time, the U.S. will catalogue greenhouse gas emissions from large emission sources – an important initial step toward measurable and transparent reductions.

**International Leadership**

- [The Major Economies Forum \(MEF\)](#)
- [Eliminating Fossil Fuel Subsidies](#)
- Bilateral Energy and Climate Partnerships: Collaboration with [China](#), [India](#), [Mexico](#), [Canada](#) and other key international partners to combat climate change, coordinate clean energy research and development, and support the international climate talks.
- [Energy and Climate Partnership for the Americas:](#)
- [Phasing Down HFCs \(Hydrofluorocarbons\)](#)

**Todd Stern, Special Envoy for Climate Change at the U.S. State**

**Dep.:** “We have reached a pivotal moment in the climate challenge, and what we decide to do now will have a profound and lasting impact on our nation and our planet. The science is clear. [...] The health of our planet is in our hands and the time for action is now. The upcoming UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Copenhagen offers a chance to mobilize international collective action to meet this global challenge. [...] the U.S. is working with our partners around the world to find common ground and stem the tide of future irreversible damages.” [More](#)



## Holiday Celebrations

### Christmas

Christmas as we know it today is a [Victorian invention of the 1860s](#). One of the most celebrated holiday in the world, our modern Christmas is a product of hundreds of years of both secular and religious traditions from around the globe. History Channel: [Christmas Around the World](#)

**History.com:** [The Real Story of Christmas](#) - Christmas has had a long and varied history. It has been celebrated for centuries by different people, at different times, in different places, and in many different ways. Here you will find links to information about the different ways that the holiday we know as Christmas has been celebrated, or not celebrated, over the years. Watch a [video](#) about the history and origins of Christmas.

**History.com:** [Christmas Reinvented](#) - It wasn't until the 19th century that Americans began to embrace Christmas. Americans re-invented Christmas, and changed it from a raucous carnival holiday into a family-centered day of peace and nostalgia. But what about the 1800s peaked American interest in the holiday?

The early 19th century was a period of class conflict and turmoil. During this time, unemployment was high and gang rioting by the disenfranchised classes often occurred during the Christmas season. In 1828, the New York city council instituted the city's first police force in response to a Christmas riot. This catalyzed certain members of the upper classes to begin to change the way Christmas was celebrated in America.

In 1819, best-selling author [Washington Irving](#) wrote *The Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon, gent.*, a series of stories about the celebration of Christmas in an English manor house. The sketches feature a squire who invited the peasants into his home for the holiday. In contrast to the problems faced in American society, the two groups mingled effortlessly. In Irving's mind, Christmas should be a peaceful, warm-hearted holiday bringing groups together across lines of wealth or social status. Irving's fictitious celebrants enjoyed "ancient customs," including the crowning of a Lord of Misrule. Irving's book, however, was not based on any holiday celebration he had attended – in fact, many historians say that Irving's account actually "invented" tradition by implying that it described the true customs of the season.

### Teaching Material

- TeacherVision/Teacher Resources: [Christmas](#)
- Scholastic: [Celebrating Winter Holidays](#)
- [This writing idea on how students celebrate Christmas encourages exploration of the traditions of different cultures](#)
- ["Christmas Around the World" is an original classroom play](#)

**Did you know?** According to reports by [Captain John Smith](#), the first eggnog made in the United States was consumed in his 1607 [Jamestown settlement](#). Nog comes from the word grog, which refers to any drink made with rum.

**Hanukkah.** Hanukkah (also known as Chanukah, Hanukah, Hannuka and the Festival of Lights) is an eight-day Jewish holiday that usually takes place between late November and late December. It commemorates the victory of the Maccabees, a Jewish rebel army, over the Syrians in 165 B.C.E., as well as the subsequent rededication of the holy Temple in Jerusalem. Jews around the world celebrate with eight nights of merriment. Traditions include lighting the menorah, exchanging gifts and enjoying treats cooked in oil. [History.com](#) | [Video](#)

**Kwanzaa.** Kwanzaa is a non-religious African American holiday which celebrates family, community, and culture. It is celebrated for seven days: Dec. 26 - January 1. [History.com](#) | [Video](#)

**Chinese New Year.** A holiday that celebrates the beginning of a new year according to the lunar calendar. It is considered to be one of the most important holidays for Chinese families. The holiday is celebrated with big family gatherings, gift giving, the eating of symbolic foods and display of festive decorations--all focused on bringing good luck for the new year and celebrating the coming of Spring. Chinese New Year will be celebrated on February 14, 2010. [More](#)



Special holiday candies from 1868, Santa Claus Sugar Plums. © "Santa Claus Sugar Plums." Confection label. Color lithograph, copyright 1868. Prints & Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

### Links

- About the USA: [Christmas](#)
- Census Bureau: [Facts for Features - Holiday Season](#)
- History Channel: [Rudolph: The Ninth Reindeer](#)
- History Channel: [Christmas Around the World](#)



The modern legend of Santa Claus says that Santa comes down the chimney on Christmas Eve to put presents under the tree and stuff stockings full of treats. © "Caught in the Act." Copyright 1900. Library of Congress.

### Census Bureau: It's in the Mail

**19 billion** - Number of cards, letters and packages the U.S. Postal Service expected to deliver between Thanksgiving and Christmas last year. The busiest delivery day was expected to be Dec. 17. On Dec. 15, the Postal Service expected to cancel the largest volume of mail of the season, with 960 million cards and letters processed. Source: [U.S. Postal Service](#)

# BILL & MELINDA GATES foundation



© In 2003, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation launched [Avahan](#), an initiative to reduce the spread of HIV in India. In July 2009, the foundation announced that it had increased its total commitment to Avahan from \$258 to \$338 million.

**Priority Areas of Focus:** The Foundations' work in infectious diseases focuses on developing ways to fight and prevent [enteric and diarrheal diseases](#), [malaria](#), [pneumonia](#), [HIV/AIDS](#), [tuberculosis](#), and [neglected and other infectious diseases](#).

- Youtube: Remarks by Ambassador Murphy**
- [Annual Fulbright Thanksgiving Dinner](#)
  - [Townhall Meeting, Humboldt University, Berlin](#)
  - [Townhall Meeting, Stuttgart](#)
  - [Speaking to students in Bonn](#)

## In Focus – Ambassador Murphy's Heroes The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Our [Ambassador Philip Murphy](#) has held several town hall meetings throughout Germany over the course of the past two months. During his remarks he has introduced his heroes to the audience. Over the coming months we will focus on these individuals in the *In Focus* section of our newsletter. We will start by introducing the work of Bill and Melinda Gates.

Bill Gates has given much of his wealth from Microsoft, the U.S. software giant that made him one of the world's richest men, to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, a philanthropic powerhouse. During his career at Microsoft, Gates held the positions of CEO and chief software architect, and he still remains the largest individual shareholder. Over the past couple of years, Bill Gates has found a new role: combating social problems. [Time Magazine](#) collectively named Bill Gates, his wife Melinda and rock band U2's lead singer Bono as the [2005 Persons of the Year](#) for their humanitarian efforts. In 2006, he was voted eighth in the list of "Heroes of our time."

**About the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation:** The belief that every life has equal value is at the core of our work at the foundation. The foundation follows [15 guiding principles](#), which help define [our approach](#) to its philanthropic work, and employ an outstanding leadership team to direct its strategies and grantmaking. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, the foundation focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, the Foundation seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life.

[Global Development Program](#) | [Global Health Program](#) | [U.S. Program](#)

## Studying Abroad

### International Enrollment at U.S. Colleges Again Breaks Records

The number of international students enrolled in U.S. higher education institutions jumped 8 percent during the 2008–2009 academic year to an all-time high of 671,616, according to the Institute of International Education's 2009 report on international education exchange. The [Open Doors report](#) also found that a record number of U.S. students are studying abroad. The number of Americans studying abroad increased by 8.5 percent to 262,416 in the 2007–08 academic year, according to the Open Doors 2009 survey. [America.gov](#)



On December 1, the President outlined his strategy on Afghanistan and Pakistan at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. **Read his [remarks](#) and watch the [full video](#) of his address.**

The U.S. will send an additional 30,000 troops to Afghanistan to "seize the initiative" from violent extremists and responsibly transfer the country's security to Afghan forces beginning in July 2011. In addition, President Obama said the United States will reinforce Afghan civil and economic development, and support Pakistan's efforts to achieve security and enhance development. [America.gov](#)



## [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)