



Newsletter for English Teachers

About the USA – Virtual Classroom

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The Olympic Winter Games – Vancouver 2010



Vancouver and Whistler will host the XXI Olympic Winter Games from 12 to 28 February 2010 and the 2010 Paralympic Winter Games from 12 to 21 March 2010. Up to 450,000 participants and spectators are expected to attend the games, with more than 45 percent of those visitors traveling from outside B.C. (British Columbia, Canada).

[The Official Website](#)

Winter Games History: The first modern Olympic Games were held in the summer of 1896. The organizers added skating to the Summer Games in 1908 (ice rinks could be kept cold even in the hottest weather) – but eventually decided that winter sports were perhaps best left to the winter. The first Olympic Winter Games were held in 1924, in Chamonix, France. [Vancouver 2010](#)

Olympics represent a celebration of humanity and our pursuit of excellence: "Every two years when the world's nations join together in either the Winter or Summer Olympics, the event spotlights national aspirations and international causes. [...] The Games remind us of certain universal human values – the need for persistence and tenacity in the pursuit of excellence, acceptance and dignity in the face of failure. As the Olympic Games approach, some nations and competitors will raise their hopes for victories, and a drumbeat will pound for those coveted medals. Perhaps [we will remember] that the true meaning of the Olympic Games is not the medals, but our shared human struggle for excellence and our devotion to pursue purpose in life." [America.gov](#)

Did you know? Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the Modern Olympic Games, regarded himself first and foremost as an educator. As he saw it, sport should form part of every young person's education, in the same way as science, literature and art. His aim was thereby to offer a harmonious education of the body and mind. The Olympic Games enabled Coubertin to give his educational concept the international visibility and scope it needed. The IOC has acknowledged its particular responsibility in terms of promoting culture and Olympic education, and regards culture as the second dimension of Olympism, alongside sport. [The Olympic Studies Centre](#)

Meet the Olympic Team of the United States: On February 1st, the U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC) announced its team members for competition at the 2010 Olympic Winter Games in Vancouver. Team USA consists of 216 athletes, including 123 men and 93 women. Highlighting the list are three Olympians heading to their fifth Winter Games. Luge athlete Mark Grimmette and Nordic combined skier Todd Lodwick have been named to five consecutive U.S. Olympic Teams (1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010). Casey Puckett competed in four straight Winter Games as an alpine skier (1992, 1994, 1998, 2002). He retired from the U.S. Alpine Ski Team in 2002 before returning to the slopes to try out ski cross, which makes its Olympic debut in Vancouver. They join former bobsledder and current men's bobsled head coach Brian Shimer as the only five-time U.S. Olympians to compete in a Winter Games in history.

Athletes: [Lindsey Vonn](#) (Alpine Skiing) * [Shaun White](#) (Snowboard) * [Bode Miller](#) (Alpine Skiing) * [Tim Burke](#) (Biathlon) * [MORE](#)

The heart of the Olympics is a celebration of individual excellence.



Lindsey Vonn © AP Image

Links

- [Official Website of the Olympic Movement](#)
- [The Olympic Studies Centre](#)
- [U.S. Olympic Committee](#)

Teaching Resources: Teacher Vision: [Olympic Games – Resources for Teachers](#): Help students draw parallels between the perseverance of athletes and their own lives with lessons, printables, and activities on the Olympics. These resources are appropriate for all grade levels.

Ancient Olympic Games: According to historical records, the first ancient Olympic Games can be traced back to 776 BC. They were dedicated to the Olympian gods and were staged on the ancient plains of Olympia. They continued for nearly 12 centuries, until Emperor Theodosius decreed in 393 A.D. that all such "pagan cults" be banned. [Olympic.org](#)

VIDEOS: Science of the Olympic Winter Games

NBC Learn, the educational arm of NBC News, has teamed up with the National Science Foundation (NSF) to produce [Science of the Olympic Winter Games](#), a 16-part video series that explores the science behind individual Olympic events, including Downhill and Aerial Skiing, Speed Skating and Figure Skating, Curling and Hockey, and Ski Jumping, Bobsledding and Snowboarding. This groundbreaking project between the NSF and NBC Learn uses the global spotlight of the Olympics to make science more accessible and more interesting to students by showing how science helps athletes fulfill the Olympic motto: Citius, Altius, Fortius--Swifter, Higher, Stronger.



People & Places: Exploring Black History Month

© America.gov

Teaching Sources

- In recognition of Black History Month, [here](#) is a collection of New York Times and Learning Network materials for teaching and learning about African-American history.
- [Federal Resources for Educational Excellence](#): Nearly 70 offerings that address important events, individuals, or periods in African American history.
- [Race: A Teacher's Guide](#): American Anthropological Ass.: A teaching tool to assist educators in addressing race and human variation.
- [Race – The Power of an Illusion](#): The companion website to California Newsreel's documentary Race: The Power of an Illusion about race in society, science and history. Site contains many online activities, lesson plans, and informative interviews with anthropologists & other scholars.
- [PBS: Matters of Race](#): Companion website to a PBS documentary on contemporary U.S. racial identities. Site includes a teacher's guide for using the documentaries.
- [Slavery in New York](#): The website for the popular New York Historical Society exhibit, *Slavery in New York*. The site includes an educator's guide and other downloadable classroom resources.
- The National Archives: [Teaching With Documents - The Many Faces of Paul Robeson](#)



Jackie Robinson © History.com: [Black History Milestones](#)

Facts for Features

[African American History Month: February 2010](#)

- 41.1 Million - As of July 1, 2008, the estimated population of black residents in the U.S., including those of more than one race. They made up 13.5 % of the total U.S. population.
- 30% - The proportion of the black population younger than 18 as of July 1, 2008. At the other end of the spectrum, 8 % of the black population was 65 and older.

Did you know?

- In 1870, Hiram Revels of Mississippi became the first African American senator. Blanche K. Bruce of Mississippi took the oath of office five years later. In 1967, a century later, Edward Brooke of Massachusetts followed. In 1993, Carol Moseley-Braun became the first African American female U.S. senator. In 2005, Senator Barack Obama of Illinois took the oath of office and became the fifth African American to serve and the third to be popularly elected.
- In 1967, Thurgood Marshall became the first African American to sit on the Supreme Court.

Opinion Poll: PEW Research: [Blacks Upbeat about Black Progress, Prospects](#) - Despite the bad economy, blacks' assessments about the state of black progress in America have improved more dramatically during the past two years than at any time in the past quarter century.

Black (African American) History Month

Each February, Black History Month honors the struggles and triumphs of millions of American citizens over the most devastating obstacles — slavery, prejudice, poverty — as well as their contributions to the nation's cultural and political life. To commemorate and celebrate the contributions made by people of African descent, American historian Carter G. Woodson established Black History Week. The first celebration occurred on Feb. 12, 1926. For many years, the second week of February was set aside for this celebration to coincide with the birthdays of abolitionist/editor Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln. In 1976, as part of the nation's bicentennial, the week was expanded into Black History Month. Each year, U.S. presidents proclaim February as National African-American History Month. Presidential Proclamation by President Barack Obama: [National African American History Month](#)

America.gov: [People & Places website featuring Black History Month materials](#)

- The page explores the topic of "talking openly about race and ethnicity" and notions of cultural and ethnic identity in a dynamic, pluralistic society like the U.S. It employs first-person narratives, photo galleries and interactive elements to show how communities are fighting stereotypes and promoting open and honest discussions about race, ethnicity and identity.

Links

- [Library of Congress: African American History Month](#)
- [NAACP – National Association for the Advancement of Colored People](#)
- [Smithsonian: African American History and Culture](#)
- [History.com: Black History](#)
- [America.gov: Beyond Dr. King - Notable African Americans](#)
- [The National Museum of African American History & Culture](#) is an excellent source of information on the Civil Rights Movement but including scientific and technological inventiveness. The museum currently has an online presence but is still awaiting its permanent home on the National Mall in Washington.

Further Information

- [Migration Information Source: African Immigrants in the United States](#)
- [American Anthropological Association: Understanding Race](#)

The Association for the Study of African American Life and History

([ASALH](#)) designates the annual theme for U.S. Black History Month. The theme for 2010, "The History of Black Economic Empowerment," recognizes the lives of successful black men and women. This year ASALH is celebrating the centennial of the National Urban League, which was founded in New York City in 1910 by a group of dedicated reformers, both black and white, who wanted to address the needs of African Americans as they migrated northward to escape economic, social and political oppression in the South. [America.gov](#)

The late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed an unprecedented degree of racial solidarity and organization. In 1910, a group of dedicated reformers, black and white, gathered to create an organization to address the needs of African Americans as they migrated to the cities of the United States. The organization that they created a century ago became we all know as the National Urban League. For a century, they have struggled to open the doors of opportunity for successive generations, engaging the challenges of each age. ASALH celebrates the centennial of the National Urban League by exploring racial uplift and black economic development in the twentieth century. [MORE The National Urban League](#) - Its mission is to enable African Americans to secure economic self-reliance, parity, power and civil rights.

Publications

- The Book "[Free at Last: The U.S. Civil Rights Movement](#)"
- The Book "[Abraham Lincoln: A Legacy of Freedom](#)"
- The book "[Justice for All: The Legacy of Thurgood Marshall](#)"
- eJournal USA: "[Multicultural Literature in the United States Today](#)" (Feb. 2009) This publication focuses on the ethnic diversity among distinguished American writers and the richness various cultures bring to U.S. society and the arts.

America.gov Photo Galleries

- [African Athletes Shine in American Football](#)
- [Black Economic Empowerment in America](#)

Literature

Push by Sapphire

A courageous teacher inspires Claireece Precious Jones, the victim of father-daughter incest and other violence, to learn to read and then to write her story. In finding her voice, Precious is empowered to create a new life.

Claireece is sixteen years old. She should be a junior in high school, but is only in ninth grade. She was held back in second grade because she couldn't read and peed on herself. When she was twelve, she left school to give birth to her daughter, who was born with Down's Syndrome. The baby is her father's. Precious says he has been raping her since she was in second grade. [More on Bookrags.com](#)

Push won the Book-of-the-Month Club Stephen Crane award for First Fiction and the Black Caucus of the American Library Association's First Novelist Award. Push was named by the Village Voice and Time Out New York as one of the top ten books of 1996. [More](#)

Study Guides Random House: [Guide for Teachers: Push](#)
Barnes&Noble: [Reading Group Guide](#)
Bookrags: [Push Study Guide](#)

Teaching Material "Using fiction in the classroom can dramatize public policy issues, therefore making them more real and relevant to students. Sapphire's 1996 novel "Push" puts a face on welfare, rape, incest, child abuse, educational inequalities, homophobia, and AIDS. The main character, Precious Jones, is the original child left behind. Because Precious is a poor African American illiterate incest victim, her character also illustrates the theory of target populations, especially how "deviant" members of society do not receive benefits. Students who read the book feel this injustice keenly and thus better understand the theory because they come to love Precious so much. This presentation details how "Push" can be used to teach not only units on public policy, but also federalism and bureaucracy, two fields that are sometimes difficult to personalize for students." Source: Pappas, Christine. ["You Hafta Push": Using Sapphire's Novel to Teach Introduction to American Government"](#)

About the Author [Push](#) is Sapphire's first novel. She was born in 1950 and grew up on army bases in California, Pennsylvania, and Texas. She was graduated from City College in New York, received an MFA from Brooklyn College, and taught reading and writing to teenagers and adults in Harlem and the Bronx for eight years. Sapphire is a performance poet and the author of American Dreams. She lives in New York City. Sapphire's work has appeared in The New Yorker, The New York Times Magazine, The New York Times Book Review, The Black Scholar, Spin, and Bomb. In February of 2007 Arizona State University presented PUSHing Boundaries, PUSHing Art: A Symposium on the Works of Sapphire. Sapphire's work has been translated into eleven languages and has been adapted for stage in the United States and Europe.

Links The African American Literature Book Club: [Sapphire](#)
GoodReads.com: [Push](#)

Precious, the Film Adaption

Precious, the film adaption of Push, won the Grand Jury Prize and the Audience Awards in the U.S. dramatic competition at Sundance (2009). Sidibe (Precious) made her screen debut in "Precious," earning an Oscar nomination for her first professional acting job. Watch the trailer on the official movie site at www.weareallprecious.com

- NPR: [Sapphire's Story: How 'Push' Became 'Precious'](#)
- New York Times: [Movie Review - Precious](#)

Announcement by the National Education Association: "NEA recognizes and applauds this powerful film that explores so many brutal but urgent issues facing students and teachers every day," said NEA President Dennis Van Roekel. "Precious is one of the most celebrated films of the year—a vibrant, honest and resoundingly hopeful film about the human capacity to grow and overcome even the most seemingly insurmountable circumstances. [...] As Precious discovers her own potential and worth, she is able to break the chains of her circumstances, and pursue her vision of a better future, for herself and for her children.



"Don't nobody want me. Don't nobody need me. I know who I am.... Ugly black grease to be wipe away, punish, kilt, changed, finded a job for." -

This is the voice of Precious Jones, a viciously abused Harlem girl. Her life seems set to repeat the self-destructive pattern of her mother's, until her principal sends her to an alternative reading class where, with the help of a dedicated teacher and fellow students who have undergone experiences as harrowing as her own, she begins an intoxicating discovery of words, friendship, and, in the process, herself. Precious's voice—stark and crude yet filled with raw intelligence and even humor—demands to be heard and, once heard, will prove unforgettable. [Random House](#)

Interview: Charlie Rose: A conversation with performance artist Sapphire [WATCH](#)

America.gov:
Articles on African American Literature

- [What Is African-American Literature?](#)
Emergence of a new, black pulp fiction may indicate the maturity, rather than the decline, of African-American literature.
- [Literature at the Crossroads](#)

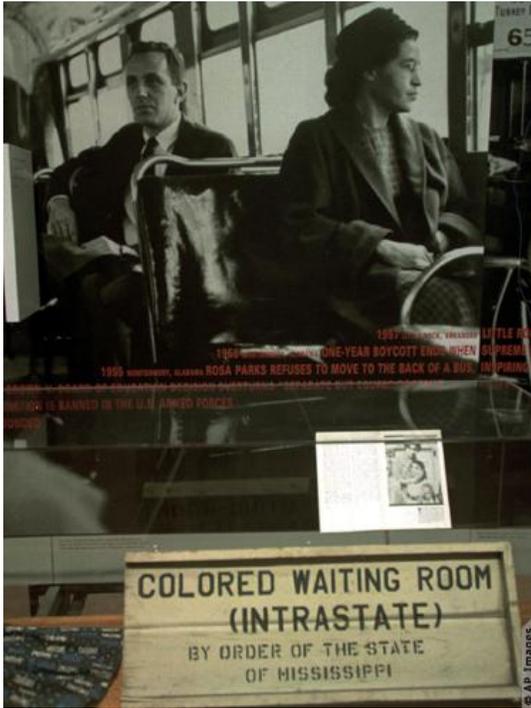
Interesting Teaching Source

 **INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S DIGITAL LIBRARY**
A Library for the World's Children

[International Children's Digital Library Foundation](#) (ICDL Foundation) makes the best in children's literature available online and free of charge.

The ICDL is a rich resource which can be used in a wonderfully wide range of situations by children, parents, teachers, librarians and others from all walks of life. Children can expand upon the stories to create games; parents can extract themes to help explain important lessons; teachers can utilize the multicultural nature of the collection to teach languages; librarians can enrich community outreach programs with tales from around the world and; of course, anyone can just open a book to read for pleasure.

Its [digital library](#) has outstanding children's books from around the world and supports communities of children and adults in exploring and using this literature through innovative technology designed in close partnership with children for children.



After the Supreme Court's decision outlawing segregation on city buses, Rosa Parks was able to sit at the front of the bus. © America.gov/AP Photo

In Focus – Ambassador Murphy's Heroes Rosa Parks, Civil Rights Leader (1913-2005)

Our [Ambassador Philip Murphy](#) has introduced his heroes to the audiences during his town hall meetings. In this month's edition we will focus on Rosa McCauley Parks, who is known today as the "mother of the civil rights movement" because her arrest for refusing to give up her bus seat sparked the pivotal Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott. She didn't set out to make history when she left her job as a seamstress to board a bus on the afternoon of December 1, 1955. She was tired, and she just wanted to go home. Still, when the bus driver asked her to move toward the back of the bus so that a white man could sit, she couldn't bring herself to do it. "I didn't get on the bus with the intention of being arrested," she said later. "I got on the bus with the intention of going home."

While she did not know her act would set in motion a 381-day bus boycott, she knew one thing. Her own personal bus boycott began that day. "I knew that as far as I was concerned, I would never ride on a segregated bus again."

The arrest and brief jailing of Rosa Parks, a woman highly respected in the black community, and the boycott that followed led to a U.S. Supreme Court decision outlawing segregation on city buses. The boycott also raised to national prominence a youthful, little-known minister named Martin Luther King Jr. Under his leadership, the boycott set a pattern for nonviolent, community-based protest that became a successful strategy in the civil rights movement. [Read more](#) [Article is excerpted from the book [Free At Last: The U.S. Civil Rights Movement](#), Dep. of State, Bureau of International Information Programs]

Did you know? Claudette Colvin: The First to Keep Her Seat - Teenager arrested in March 1955 for refusing to yield seat to a white rider. [America.gov article](#) (Jan. 29, 2010)

Links & Teaching Resources

- Archives.gov: [Teaching With Documents: An Act of Courage, The Arrest Records of Rosa Parks](#)
- Library of Congress: [A Guide to materials for Rosa Parks](#)
- PBS: [Remembering Rosa Parks](#)



U.S. television and cinema promote images of Americans that are ... well ... wrong! Pop Culture versus Real America will contrast those pop culture images with profiles of real Americans in every walk of life. Look [here](#) soon for the entire book.

For now, this **First Look** edition includes the [introduction and two chapters](#):

- Baywatch / Real Lifeguards
- Grey's Anatomy / Real Doctor

Pop Culture versus Real America
A new America.gov publication!



EducationUSA Corner

LEHRERAUSTAUSCH

Um als Lehrer in den USA arbeiten zu können, müssen zwei Hürden genommen werden: die Zertifizierung (oder Zulassung) als Lehrer in einem bestimmten Bundesstaat und der Erhalt der Arbeitserlaubnis. Beide Schritte sind nicht einfach zu bewältigen, deshalb ziehen es viele Lehrer vor, an Lehreraustauschprogrammen teilzunehmen. [INFOBLATT](#)

Programme

- [German American Partnership Program \(GAPP\)](#) Austauschprogramm für Schulklassen
- Lehreinsatz an US-Highschools in Zusammenarbeit mit [Fulbright](#) und [PAD](#)
- [Internationaler Austausch von LehrerInnen](#) nur für Lehrer aus NRW



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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.

This newsletter is produced by the Information Resource Centers/U.S. Diplomatic Mission to Germany.

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