



Newsletter for English Teachers About the USA – Virtual Classroom

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Earth Day – April 22, 2010

A Global Day of Action, the worldwide annual environmental awareness day: Earth Day, April 22, is the annual celebration of the environment and a time to assess the work still needed to protect the natural gifts of our planet. Earth Day has no central organizing force behind it though several nongovernmental organizations work to keep track of the thousands of local events in schools and parks that mark the day. Earth Day is observed around the world, although nowhere is it a national holiday. In the United States, it affirms that environmental awareness is part of the country's consciousness and that the idea of protecting the environment - once the province of a few conservationists - has moved from the extreme to the mainstream of American thought.

EarthDayNetwork: 40th Anniversary of Earth Day – “Forty years after the first Earth Day, the world is in greater peril than ever. While climate change is the greatest challenge of our time, it also presents the greatest opportunity – an unprecedented opportunity to build a healthy, prosperous, clean energy economy now and for the future.

Earth Day 2010 can be a turning point to advance climate policy, energy efficiency, renewable energy and green jobs. Earth Day Network is galvanizing millions who make personal commitments to sustainability. Earth Day 2010 is a pivotal opportunity for individuals, corporations and governments to join together and create a global green economy. Join the more than one billion people in 190 countries that are taking action for Earth Day.” [JOIN](#) the Official Earth Day 2010 Campaign.

Teaching Resources

- TeacherPlanet: [Earth Day Resource Page](#)
- Federal Resources for Educational Excellence: [Earth Day](#)

America.gov Publication: [Global Water Issues](#) (March 2010) – The book explores from an international perspective the many interrelated aspects of how humanity manages water quality and supply, how water relates to environmental concerns, and how this most fundamental substance affects even mankind's social and political arrangements. This abridged First Look edition includes several chapters. Watch for the complete book in Summer 2010.

“Earth Days” Documentary Film – FREE on Facebook

PBS: Earth Days – The Seeds of a Revolution - The 102-minute film about the origins of the American environmental movement, from director Robert Stone, is planning a presentation on the social networking site Facebook. Users will be able to watch communally and interact with the filmmaker and the “American Experience” executive producer Mark Samels in real time. The April 11 event will be the first time a major broadcaster has introduced a full-length documentary on the site.

Introduction to Earth Days: “It is now all the rage, but can you remember when everyone in American was not “Going Green”? AMERICAN EXPERIENCE's *Earth Days* looks back to the dawn and development of the modern environmental movement through the extraordinary stories of the era's pioneers [...].” Photo Gallery: [Earth Day across America](#) | Timeline: [The Modern Environmental Movement](#)

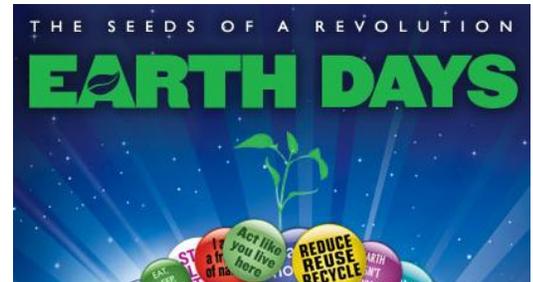


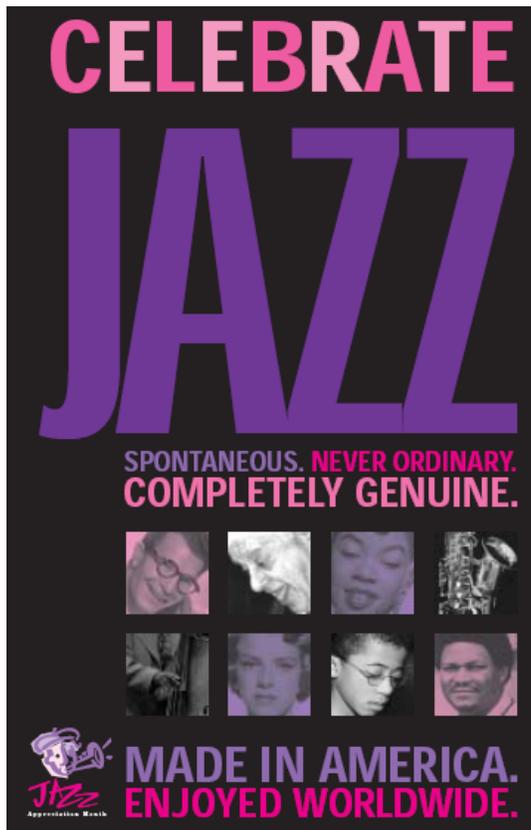
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Links [America.gov: Energy & Environment](#)
[America.gov: Climate Change](#)

EPA Earth Day Site: This [Earth Day](#), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency encourages all to “**Learn, Teach, and Share**”

- Learn about the [origins of Earth Day](#) and [environmental justice](#)
- [Teach](#) children, coworkers, neighbors to help make communities healthy.
- Share your plans for Earth Day and your thoughts about environmental protection with others.





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"I can only hope that one day America will recognize that our indigenous music—jazz—is the heart and soul of all popular music, and that we cannot afford to let its legacy."
 — Quincy Jones



© "American Popular Music"

Photo Gallery: [Jazz in America](#)

"Whether or not you have health insurance right now, the reforms we seek will bring stability and security that you don't have today. [...] This isn't about politics. This is about people's lives. This is about people's businesses. This is about our future."
 -- President Barack Obama

Jazz Appreciation Month

Jazz, one of America's original art forms, emerged in New Orleans, Louisiana, around 1900. New Orleans's position as a gateway between the United States and the Caribbean, its socially stratified population, and its strong residues of colonial French culture, encouraged the formation of a hybrid musical culture unlike that in any other American city. Jazz emerged from the confluence of New Orleans's diverse musical traditions, including ragtime, marching bands, the rhythms used in Mardi Gras and funerary processions, French and Italian opera, Caribbean and Mexican music, Tin Pan Alley songs, and African-American song traditions, both sacred (the spirituals) and secular (the blues). [More](#) (America.gov)

Jazz Appreciation Month at the Smithsonian Explores Jazz & Justice. In coordination with the National Museum of American History's celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Greensboro Lunch Counter Sit-Ins, [Jazz Appreciation Month \(JAM\) 2010](#) will explore how jazz has influenced social justice and freedom of expression in the U.S. and globally.

Teaching Resources & Links

- **Smithsonian:** Discover Louis Armstrong and his contribution to the development of jazz! Download the [Louis Armstrong Education Kit](#) and listen to music clips online.
- **Smithsonian Jazz Class:** [Jazz Class Home](#) | [Groovin' to Jazz \(ages 8-13 & ages 12-15\)](#) | [Duke Ellington](#) | [Ella Fitzgerald](#) | [Louis Armstrong](#) | [Benny Carter](#) | [What Is Jazz](#) | [Jazz 365](#) | [Teacher Lesson Plans](#)
- **Edsitement:** [JAM - Jazz Appreciation Month](#). Featured Lesson Plans: [Jazz and World War II: A Rally to Resistance, A Catalyst for Victory](#) | [Learning the Blues](#) | [Music from Across America](#)
- **FREE - Federal Resources for Educational Excellence:** [Jazz](#)
- **PBS:** [Jazz Biographies](#)

Articles taken from the eJournal "[American Popular Music](#)" (August 2008)

- [Popular Jazz and Swing: America's Original Art Form](#)
- [Dance Music in the "Jazz Age"](#)
- [The King of Jazz](#) | [The King of Swing](#)

Please also see the **America.gov feature** [Jazz: Born in the U.S., Enjoyed By The World](#).

Health Reform

President Obama signed his landmark health care overhaul, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, into law on March 23, saying it enshrines "the core principle that everybody should have some basic security when it comes to their health care."

On March 21, after a yearlong power struggle, the House of Representatives voted along party lines to approve health care reform legislation. In what is being called a "landmark" and "historic" vote, the House voted to enact health care reform to provide medical coverage to tens of millions of uninsured Americans. With the 219-to-212 vote, the House gave final approval to legislation passed by the Senate on December 24.

Health Reform – The Official U.S. government site provides ongoing news and information about health care reform. Includes factchecking, videos, reports, forums and newsroom.

The Obama Administration summarizes the impact of health reform as follows: Makes insurance more affordable. Sets up a new competitive health insurance market. Brings greater accountability by laying out rules to keep premiums down and prevent insurance abuses. The reform ends discrimination against Americans with pre-existing conditions and helps reduce the deficit by more than \$100 billion over ten years. [Learn more](#)

Teaching Resource: 'The Reality of Reform': Understanding the Health Care Law (NYT Learning Network, March 23) **Overview: How will health care reform change life and politics in the United States?** What does the new law mean for individuals, families, businesses and insurers, as well as for politics and government leaders? In this lesson, students gauge their background knowledge of the health care reform act and take a close look at the legislation to clarify their understanding. They then execute a project on historical context, local reaction and/or the key players, and finish by creating collages of images and quotations that illuminate the issues.

Literature

Mark Twain

Samuel Langhorne Clemens (November 30, 1835 – April 21, 1910)

The year 2010 marks the 175th anniversary of Mark Twain's birth and the 100th anniversary of his death. Mark Twain brought Missouri and the Mississippi river to the forefront of American literature through his classic novels.

Although born Samuel Langhorne Clemens, the author adopted what is one of the most famous pen names in literature, Mark Twain, from a Mississippi river slang phrase. Twain is famous as an author, satirist, essayist, newspaper contributor, and lecturer. He wrote about a myriad of topics, ranging from life along the Mississippi River, detailed in famous works such as *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1872) and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), to a collection of essays written while abroad, to political essays. Twain was an influential writer of his time and remains so today. ([Library of Congress](#))

Mark Twain Project online: The [Mark Twain Project Online](#) applies [innovative technology](#) to more than [four decades' worth of archival research](#) by expert editors at the Mark Twain Project. It offers unfettered, intuitive access to reliable texts, accurate and exhaustive notes, and the most recently discovered letters and documents. Its ultimate purpose is to produce a digital critical edition, fully annotated, of everything Mark Twain wrote. MTPO is [a collaboration](#) between the Mark Twain Papers and Project of The Bancroft Library, the California Digital Library, and the University of California Press.

Lesson Plans & Classroom Activities

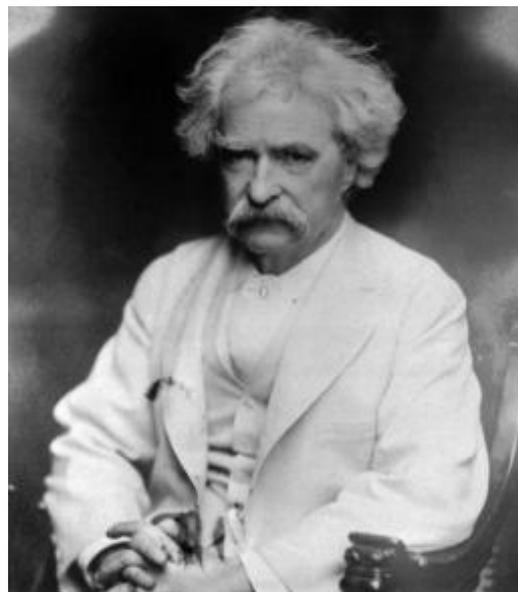
- EDSITEMent: [Mark Twain and American Humor](#) - When Mark Twain's "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" first appeared in 1865, it was hailed by James Russell Lowell, the Boston-based leader of the literary elite, as "the finest piece of humorous literature yet produced in America." This was high praise for a tall-tale from a hitherto little known San Francisco newspaper humorist, but Lowell aimed precisely at the most distinguishing feature of Twain's first nationally acclaimed work of fiction: its transforming relationship to the long tradition of American humor. In this brief masterpiece, Twain combines the vibrant, loquacious storytelling tradition rooted in folk tale, fable, and gossip with the more calculated literary tradition of satire, irony, and wit. This lesson plan frames "The Jumping Frog" in this context, introducing students to both aspects of American humor in order to deepen appreciation of Twain's achievement.
- Northern Illinois University, Institute of Museum and Library Services: [Mark Twain's Mississippi](#) examines what the Mississippi Valley meant to people in the 1800s and how these meanings influenced Twain's writing. Learn about economic development, politics, race, religion, culture, and the idea of "the West." Read a biography of Clemens. Find the full text of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and *Life on the Mississippi*.
- PBS: [Mark Twain's Interactive Scrapbook](#) - Mark Twain was a lifelong creator and keeper of scrapbooks. He took them with him everywhere and filled them with souvenirs, pictures, and articles about his books and performances. But in time, he grew tired of the lost glue, rock-hard paste, and the swearing that resulted from the standard scrapbook process. So, he came up with the idea of printing thin strips of glue on the pages to make updates neat and easy to do. In 1872, he patented his "self-pasting" scrapbook, [...]. It would be his only invention that ever made money. Inspired by his invention, [this interactive scrapbook](#) tells Twain's life story through a collection of texts, photos, illustrations, and clippings from his day. [PBS: Mark Twain - Classroom Activities](#)
- More: Federal Resources for Educational Excellence - [Mark Twain](#)

Social Media: Big Read Blog: [Posts tagged "Mark Twain"](#)

New Books on Mark Twain

- Morris, Roy Jr. [Lighting Out for the Territory: How Samuel Clemens Headed West and Became Mark Twain](#) (Simon & Schuster, March 2010)
- Trombley, Laura. [Mark Twain's Other Woman: The Hidden Story of His Final Years](#) (Knopf, March 2010)

[U.S. Embassy Berlin: Mark Twain](#)



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Links

- [The Mark Twain Papers & Project](#), UC Berkley
- [Mark Twain Quotations, Newspaper Collections & Related Resources by Barbara Schmidt](#)
- [*TwainWeb* web service of the Mark Twain Forum](#)
- [Center for Mark Twain Studies at Elmira College](#)
- [Mark Twain. PBS Companion site to the Ken Burns' documentary on Twain](#)
- [The Mark Twain Circular](#) (newsletter)
- [Mark Twain Chronology: "The Ultimate Mark Twain Reference"](#)



[Download Booklet](#)



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Mark Twain, "der treueste Freund der deutschen Sprache" by [Professor Holger Kersten](#), Universität Magdeburg: „Knapp zwei Wochen nach seiner Ankunft auf deutschem Boden schrieb Twain in einem Brief: "Ich habe das Deutsche Sprache gelernt und bin ein glücklicher Kind, you bet." Vier Wochen später bekannte er allerdings bereits, dass er ein hoffnungsloses und unverbesserliches Deutsch spreche, eine Aussage, die Schreibbeispiele aus seinen Briefen anschaulich bestätigen: "Ich habe der Consul Smith gesehen ein Paar Wochen ago, & told him about that Pass, und er hat mir gesagt das er wurde be absent from this region Gegen-(something) [...]" Please find the fulltext of Professor Kersten's essay in our [booklet](#).

[Please contact us](#) for print copies of the Mark Twain booklet.



In Focus – Ambassador Murphy’s Heroes

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 former Vice President Al Gore.

Former U.S. Vice President and Nobel Laureate Al Gore

Al Gore is a politician, businessman, and environmentalist, and was the 45th Vice President of the United States, under President Bill Clinton. When Al Gore and the [U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) won the [2007 Nobel Peace Prize](#), Gore used the attention to warn that global warming is "the greatest challenge we've ever faced." Gore in a statement said he was "deeply honored [...] We face a true planetary emergency. The climate crisis is not a political issue, it is a moral and spiritual challenge to all of humanity."

Today, "Al Gore is cofounder and Chairman of Generation Investment Management, a firm that is focused on a new approach to Sustainable Investing. Gore is also cofounder and Chairman of Current TV, an independently owned cable and satellite television network for young people based on viewer-created content and citizen journalism. A member of the Board of Directors of Apple Computer, Inc. and a Senior Advisor to Google, Inc. Gore is also Visiting Professor at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro, Tennessee.

Mr. Gore is the author of [An Inconvenient Truth](#), a best-selling book on the threat of and solutions to global warming, and the subject of the movie of the same title, [...]. In 2007, An Inconvenient Truth was awarded two Academy Awards for Best Documentary Feature and Best Original Song.

Since his earliest days in the U. S. Congress 30 years ago, Al Gore has been the leading advocate for confronting the threat of global warming. His pioneering efforts were outlined in his best-selling book Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit (1992). He led the Clinton-Gore Administration's efforts to protect the environment in a way that also strengthens the economy." [Official Website - About Al Gore](#)

There is an old African proverb that says, "If you want to go quickly, go alone; if you want to go far, go together."

We have to go far, quickly.

We can solve the climate crisis. It will be hard, to be sure, but if we can make the choice to solve it, I have no doubt whatsoever that we can and will succeed.

AL Gore, from the introduction of [Our Choice: A Plan to Solve the Climate Crisis](#), Al Gore's newest book about the solutions to the climate crisis.

Articles & Links

- [The official Website of Al Gore](#)
- [An Inconvenient Truth](#)



A Global Day of Action Webchat with Ambassador Murphy on Earth Day, April 22, 9:00 – 10:30 AM

For further details please see the [Ambassador's Facebook page](#).

(Look for the profile:

[Botschafter Philip Murphy](#))



Free Online Conference

Understanding and Sustaining a Biodiverse Planet CO.NX & Smithsonian (April 29, 2010)

11:00-11:50 am: [What do modern animal bones tell us about biodiversity?](#)

12:00-12:50 pm: [Can development and conservation go hand-in-hand?](#)

2:00 - 2:50 pm: [How \(and why\) do we count living things?](#) All times EDT

Join CO.NX as it partners to solve problems together with Smithsonian experts in a series of conferences throughout April. In these exclusive online conferences, Smithsonian historians, scientists, and other experts share their questions, their methods, and their unique way of thinking in an interactive format that welcomes you to contribute your own ideas during a two part conference. April 13-14 and April 28-29, 2010. The conference sessions span the arts, history, science, and culture, and are organized around four key themes. All sessions take place live online — you participate and interact directly from your computer in real time. Each session will be recorded and posted after it takes place.

Seats in the online session are limited so [register today](#).



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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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