

Out of Control? Gun Possession in America – Über ein kontroverses Thema diskutieren (S II)

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M 1 Gun possession in America – an introduction

Tasks

1. Read the info box. Describe and explain your emotional response to the text.
2. A school shooting is more likely to happen in the USA than in Germany. Discuss.

School shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School

In December 2012, a 20-year-old man armed with his mother's semi-automatic AR-15 rifle entered Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, and started shooting. In less than five minutes, he had fired 154 shots and killed 20 first and second graders and six teachers. The shocking massacre seemed to be a tipping point in the relatively quiet national discussion about gun control. It prompted many people – including those who fiercely protect their right to own guns – to take a fresh look at what the nation should do to reduce gun violence.



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How Americans remain divided on the issue. Some people want to take the opportunity to strengthen gun laws to prevent not only mass shootings, but also the thousands of other deaths that occur every year due to gun violence. Others sought solutions to specifically prevent another tragedy like Sandy Hook without infringing on the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding gun owners.

3.
 - a) The wordle contains terms from the thematic field of "Gun Possession in America". Working in pairs: Explain the meaning of the words or phrases you don't know. You can use a dictionary for help.
 - b) Categorise the terms into sets. Each set should contain at least three words or phrases. Give each set a heading.
 - c) This set of words is called *Out of Control? Gun Possession in America*. Write a short text in which you use the terms from the wordle, showing in what way they are related to the topic.



2 **AR-15 rifle:** ein Sturmgewehr – 5 **tipping point:** the moment in which a change or effect cannot be reversed – 6 **to prompt sb. to do sth.:** to make sb. decide to say or do sth. – 7 **fiercely:** extremely – 15 **to infringe:** to break a rule or law – 16 **law-abiding:** obeying the laws

M 3 Our boy was shot! – Parents in favour of gun control

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After the school shooting in Newtown, Connecticut in December 2012, some American playwrights reacted. They wrote plays and published the book *24 Gun Control Plays* to start a discussion they felt could no longer be ignored. The excerpt of the play *The Next Time* published in this collection of plays is set in a gun shop.

A. Approaching the text



1. Work in groups of 3:
 - Brainstorm possible connections between the two photographs. Imagine the photograph on the left is the cause for the one on the right.
 - Now imagine it to be the other way around: The photograph on the right is the cause for the one on the left.
 - Share the results of your brainstorming with your class.
2. Read the text and find information associated with your earlier discussion.

Excerpt from *The Next Time* by Cecilia Copeland (2013)

CHARACTERS:

JANE Mother

JACK Shop Owner

SCENE 1: The Next Time

5 JACK stands casually behind a counter and JANE enters awkwardly. She surveys the many, many guns all around her. She doesn't know where to start.

JANE: I would like to buy a gun ... please.

10 JACK: Sure. I have all of the ones you see in front of you and I have a few in the back, and I can order some if you have something special in mind.

JANE: Do I need a license?

JACK: You need a license to carry a concealed firearm.

JANE: Oh, does that mean I can't buy one?

15 JACK: Of course not, go ahead.

JANE: Well then, how would I get it home? I mean would you put it in a bag and if it goes in a bag isn't it concealed?

20 JACK: Well, I mean, yes, but you're not carrying it for use.

JANE: But it's concealed then ... in the bag.

JACK: You're allowed to bring it home.

JANE: Oh ...

JACK: Concealed means like ... hiding on your person, you know, like under your shirt or something. 25

JANE: Huh.

JACK: It doesn't apply to this situation.

JANE: Sure.

JACK: Great. So, which one did you want to buy? What are you looking to shoot? 30

JANE: I don't know what I want to shoot, I just thought I should have a gun. For ... protection I guess.

JACK: Everyone should have a gun for protection.

JANE: But what if I don't know how to use it?

JACK: You just point and shoot. 35

JANE: Are there rules about me keeping a firearm in my house with kids?

JACK: I mean, obviously you should keep them in a safe place.

JANE: My kids? 40

JACK: The guns. Keep the guns in a safe place.

JANE: Oh. Like ... high up on a shelf?

JACK: Somewhere that the kids can't get to them without supervision.

JANE: Is there a law for that? 45

M 4 The Second Amendment – background knowledge

The U.S. Constitution contains 27 amendments. These define personal freedoms – ranging from freedom of speech and religion to the rights of the accused in criminal proceedings. The first ten amendments are known as the Bill of Rights. The Second Amendment provides for the right to bear arms.

A. Approaching the text

1. Match the words with their definitions. You can use a dictionary for help if necessary.

1. Constitution	a) It establishes basic civil liberties that the government cannot violate.
2. Bill of Rights	b) In legislation, this adds civil rights and liberties of citizens to the constitution.
3. amendment	c) An organised, armed rebellion against an established government.
4. insurrection	d) A system of fundamental laws of a country; it establishes and limits the authority of the federal government over the states and spells out freedoms and liberties for citizens.

2. Here are two more definitions. Read the text and write down the words they describe from the text on the line.

a) _____

These are rights held by a group. _____ These are rights held by individuals. These rights are associated with _____ and are often associated with political and economic freedom.

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The **Supreme Court** is the highest court in the USA. It hears cases in which someone claims that constitutional law has been violated. It has the power to examine the actions of the legislative, executive, and administrative institutions of the government and decide whether they are constitutional. It is in this function that the Supreme Court has the potential to influence the political, social, and economic life of the country. It cannot, however, make laws itself.

The Second Amendment – different interpretations

America's complicated relationship with firearms was woven right into the U.S. Constitution. When the Constitution was written in 1787, it gave Congress the power in Article I to "raise and support Armies" as well as "calling forth the Militia". The Constitution made states, however, from keeping "Troops, or Ships of War in time of Peace". Many opponents of the Constitution feared that these provisions endangered the state militia system – the only safe defense, they thought, against a standing army of the national government. To address that concern, the founders crafted the Second Amendment of the Bill of Rights: "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."

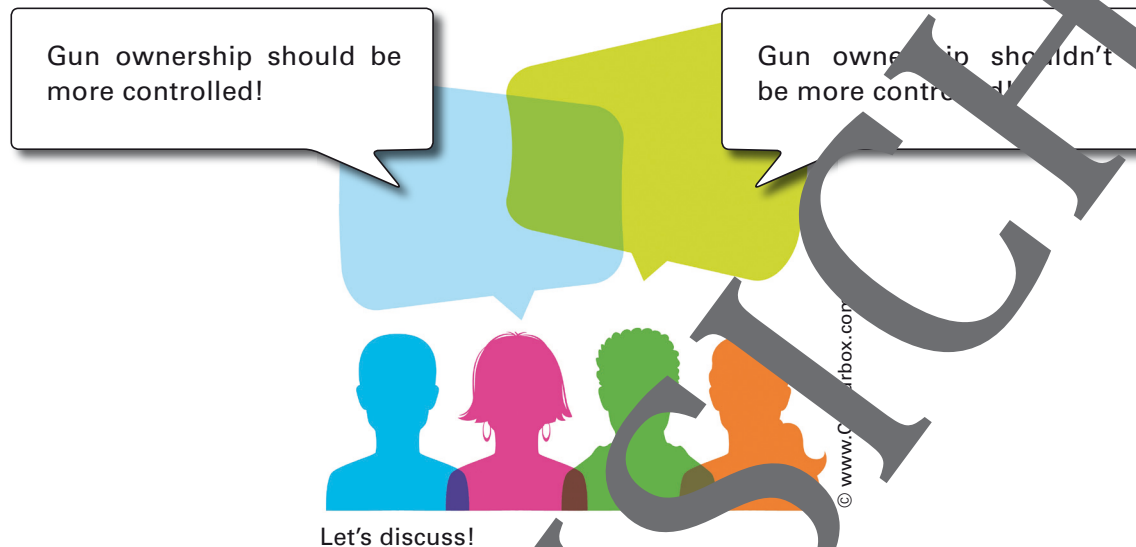
However, the precise meaning of those words has proved enormously controversial. One interpretation, dominant in the nation's early years, saw the Second Amendment as simply guaranteeing a "collective right" of the states to have armed militias. In [the case] *United States v. Miller* (1939), the Supreme Court declared that the Amendment's "obvious purpose" was to "assure the continuation" of the militia – confirming the collective right interpretation.

Over time, however, as more Americans sought to own guns for self-defense, more people believed the Second Amendment protected an "individual right" to keep and bear arms as well. In [the case] *District of Columbia v. Heller* (2008), the Supreme Court agreed, though noted that the "right to the Second Amendment is not unlimited" and that there might be laws imposing conditions on the commercial sale

of arms. And in *McDonald v. City of Chicago* (2010), the Court ruled that state and local governments also could not curtail an individual's right to keep and bear arms.

M 7 Should gun ownership be controlled? – A group discussion

In this unit you have studied the question of whether gun ownership should be more controlled or not. Discuss the issue.



Task

Prepare for and perform a group discussion.

Follow these steps:

Prepare your position

Get into groups of 4. Divide your group into 2 pairs. One pair takes the position for more gun control and the other pair takes the position against more gun control. With your partner, plan how to present your position to the other pair. Gather relevant facts, information and arguments from what you have learned to prepare for a discussion.

Present your position

Present your position to the other pair. Be as convincing as possible. Take notes and write down questions while the opposing pair is presenting. Clarify anything you do not understand.

Discuss your positions

Argue for your position, presenting as many supporting facts as you can. Evaluate the opposing pair's arguments, challenge their information and reasoning, and defend your position.

Reverse perspectives

Reverse perspectives and present the opposing position. The other pair will do the same. Discuss again.

Synthesis

Synthesise and integrate the best evidence and reasoning from both sides into a joint position that all members can agree on.

Present your conclusions to the class.

Kompetenzen

sich analytisch mit unterschiedlichen Textsorten auseinandersetzen

die Bedeutung von Waffen und Waffenbesitz in den USA anhand literarischer Beispiele nachvollziehen, verstehen und diskutieren

sich argumentativ in einer Abschlussdiskussion mit dem Thema „Waffenkontrolle in den USA“ auseinandersetzen

Niveau

Klasse 11–13

Dauer

3–10 Unterrichtsstunden (je nach Auswahl des Materials)

Einbettung

Die Einheit kann unabhängig vom Lehrwerk eingesetzt werden. Inhaltlich bietet sich eine Anknüpfung an das Thema „*American traditions and values*“ an.

Hinweise

Als im Dezember 2012 ein 20-Jähriger mit einer halbautomatischen Waffe 20 Grundschüler sowie sechs Lehrkräfte in der Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut tötete, begann in den USA erneut die Diskussion um schärfere Waffengesetze. Die Waffenaffinität der Amerikaner (47% der Amerikaner besitzen eine Waffe¹) ist für Nicht-Amerikaner oft schwer zu verstehen. Im Sinne des interkulturellen Verstehens und aufgrund des leider immer wieder aktuellen Themas sollten sich die Schülerinnen und Schüler² mit dem kontrovers diskutierten, jedoch typisch amerikanischen Thema „Waffen und Waffenbesitz in den USA“ auseinandersetzen. Die vorliegende Unterrichtseinheit verhilft den Lernenden zu vertiefenden Einsichten über diesen Aspekt der amerikanischen Kultur und Tradition.

Zur Durchführung**1. Stunde: Gun possession in America – an introduction (M 1)**

Der **Infotext (M 1)** über den Amoklauf an der **Sandy Hook Elementary School** und die öffentliche Diskussion über das Waffengesetz in den USA dient als **thematischer Einstieg** in die Einheit. Der Text weckt Emotionen in den Schülern, die diese im Plenum beschreiben und erklären (**task 1**). Vermutlich werden die Reaktionen auch Aussagen beinhalten, die auf die Änderung der Waffengesetze anspielen (z. B. *Why don't they just change the laws*). Diese Reaktionen kann die Lehrkraft zum Beispiel an der Tafel oder am Whiteboard festhalten, sodass in den folgenden Stunden darauf zurückgegriffen werden kann. In **task 2** diskutieren die Lernenden im Plenum, ob ein Schulamoklauf eher in den USA als in Deutschland stattfinden würde.

Tipp: Nehmen Sie im Einstieg Bezug auf ein **aktuelles Ereignis**, zum Beispiel den Fall des deutschen Austauschschülers Diren Dede, der in den USA im Zuge einer jugendlichen Mutprobe erschossen wurde, oder fragen Sie die Schüler, ob ihnen ein aktueller Fall bekannt ist, bei dem jemand Opfer der verhältnismäßig lockeren Waffengesetze in den USA wurde. Nehmen Sie auch Bezug auf die Reaktionen der Schüler nach ihren Reaktionen darauf.

1 GALLUP: „Self-Reported Ownership in U.S. IS Highest Since 1993“ www.gallup.com/poll/150353/self-reported-gun-ownership-highest-1993.aspx. (abgerufen am 17.12.2014).

² Im weiteren Verlauf wird aus Gründen der besseren Lesbarkeit nur „Schüler“ verwendet.

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