

# “The American Dream” – the USA at a glance

Von Gus Simons, Basel

Seit mindestens 70 Jahren spielen die USA weltweit eine dominierende Rolle – kulturell, ökonomisch, politisch und militärisch. Weil der amerikanische Einfluss auf unterschiedlichen Ebenen beobachtbar ist, glauben viele, die USA schon zu kennen, auch wenn sie sich vielleicht nie mit der Geschichte, der Vielfalt und den Besonderheiten dieses Landes auseinandergesetzt haben.

In dieser Unterrichtseinheit erhalten die Schüler einen Überblick über die Entstehung der Nation, die Schlüsselprobleme der Gesellschaft und des politischen Systems. Außerdem lernen sie soziale Sitten, die man vor der Begegnung mit US-Amerikanern – sowohl im privaten als auch im geschäftlichen Kontext – unbedingt kennen sollte. Dazu erarbeiten sie typische Redemittel und wenden diese in einer Multiple-Choice-Aufgabe an. Die Schüler werden über die dazu angeregt, Sachverhalte kritisch zu hinterfragen, erworbenes Wissen auf die eigene Lebenswelt zu übertragen und Werturteile zu fällen. Dabei trainieren sie ihre eigene Meinung in der Fremdsprache wiederzugeben.



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Ihre Schüler lernen die Geschichte, Kultur und Politik der USA näher kennen und trainieren dabei ihre Sprachfähigkeit.

## Das Wichtigste auf einen Blick

### Kompetenzen

- Grundwissen zur Geschichte, Kultur, Gesellschaft und Politik der USA erwerben
- US-amerikanische Sitten und Verhaltensweisen richtig interpretieren
- die eigene Meinung auf Englisch äußern (schriftlich und mündlich)
- authentischen Fremdsprachentexten zum Thema Geschichte und Gesellschaft der USA grundlegende Informationen entnehmen
- thematischen Wortschatz aneignen und richtig gebrauchen

### Dauer

5 Schulstunden (+ Test)

### Niveau

B1 mit Möglichkeiten zur Binnendifferenzierung

### Ihr Plus

mit zwei Farbseiten und einem Rollenspiel

## Verlaufsübersicht

1. Stunde: How well do you know the USA? – Getting into the topic	
Material	Verlauf
M 1	<b>The United States of America – filling in the map</b> / anhand einer USA-Karte vorhandenes Wissen aktivieren und bekannte Städte, Flüsse und Gebirge ergänzen
M 2	<b>The United States of America – an illustrated map</b> / mithilfe der illustrierten Landkarte typische Merkmale der Bundesstaaten und amerikanische Stereotypen herausarbeiten
M 3	<b>How well do you know the USA? – Getting into the topic</b> / passende Überschriften zu kurzen Beschreibungstexten verfassen und dabei mehr über die Regionen der USA erfahren
<i>Stundenziel:</i>	Die Schüler lernen, dass die USA ein vielfältiges Land mit zahlreichen regionalen und kulturellen Unterschieden sind.

2. Stunde: The history of the USA – origins and expansion	
Material	Verlauf
M 4	<b>Revolutionary! – The origins of the USA</b> / einen Text zur Geschichte der USA erarbeiten, Verständnisfragen beantworten und kritisch reflektieren
<i>Stundenziel:</i>	Die Lernenden verstehen die Entstehung und Entwicklung der USA, denken kritisch über diese nach und verknüpfen das erworbene Wissen mit ihrer eigenen Lebenswelt.

3. Stunde: An American Dream for everyone? – Discrimination in the USA	
Material	Verlauf
M 5	<b>An American Dream for everyone? – Discrimination in the USA</b> / in einem Rollenspiel von der Unterdrückung der Afro-Amerikaner und deren Kampf für Gerechtigkeit erfahren
M 6	<b>An American Dream for everyone? – Role cards</b> / Rollenkarten für das Rollenspiel (M 5)
M 7	<b>African-American civil rights – a timeline</b> / mithilfe des Gruppenpuzzles die historische Entwicklung der Bürgerrechte in den USA nachvollziehen
<i>Stundenziel:</i>	Die Schüler beleuchten die Diskriminierung von Afro-Amerikanern in den USA im historischen sowie im aktuellen Kontext.

4. Stunde: The land of the free – US politics and society	
Material	Verlauf
M 8	<b>US Democracy – how the president is elected in the USA</b> / mithilfe eines Lückentextes das US-amerikanische Wahlsystem kennenlernen und dabei den thematischen Wortschatz erarbeiten
M 9	<b>Land of the free? – Laws in the USA</b> / Gesetze in den USA und Deutschland vergleichen und kritisch reflektieren, ob die USA ihrem Image als „Land der Freiheit“ entsprechen
<i>Stundenziel:</i>	Die Lernenden erhalten einen Einblick in das komplexe Präsidentschaftswahlsystem und kennen grundlegende Unterschiede zwischen der US-amerikanischen und der deutschen Gesetzgebung.

5. Stunde: Down to business! – American social and professional customs	
Material	Verlauf
M 10	<b>Down to business! – Social customs in the USA</b> / anhand eines Interviews typisch amerikanische Verhaltens- und Ausdrucksweisen kennenlernen und in einer Tabelle festhalten
M 11	<b>Americanize the conversation! – What would an American say?</b> / in einer Multiple-Choice-Aufgabe die gelernten sozialen Sitten anwenden
<b>Stundenziel:</b>	Die Schüler verstehen US-amerikanische Sitten, vor allem den Unterschied zwischen dem Gesagten und dem Gemeinten.



Auf der **CD 25** RAAbits Englisch Berufliche Schulen bzw. in der **ZIP-Datei** finden Sie alle Materialien im veränderbaren Word-Format, Zusatzmaterialien und differenzierende Materialien.

### Materialübersicht

#### 1. Stunde How well do you know the USA? – Getting into the topic

- M 1 (Ws) The United States of America – filling in the map  
 M 2 (Tr) The United States of America – an illustrated map  
 M 3 (Tx) How well do you know the USA? – Getting into the topic

#### 2. Stunde The history of the USA: origins and expansion

- M 4 (Tx) Revolutionary! – The origins of the USA

#### 3. Stunde An American Dream for everyone? – Discrimination in the USA

- M 5 (Rp) An American Dream for everyone? – Discrimination in the USA  
 M 6 (Ca) An American Dream for everyone? – Role cards  
 M 7 (Ws) African-American civil rights – a timeline

#### 4. Stunde The land of the free – US politics and society

- M 8 (Ws) US Democracy – how the president is elected in the USA  
 M 9 (Ws) Land of the free? – Laws in the USA

#### 5. Stunde Down to business! – American social and professional customs

- M 10 (Tx) Down to business! – Social customs in the USA  
 M 11 (Ws) Americanize the conversation! – What would an American say?

**Vocabulary** “The American Dream” (M 12)

**Test** “The American Dream” – class test (M 13)

#### Bedeutung der Abkürzungen

**Ca:** Cards; **Rp:** Role play; **Tr:** Transparency; **Tx:** Text; **Ws:** Worksheet

## The United States of America – an illustrated map

Have a look at the map and pictures. What do you associate with the different US states and regions?



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## M 3 How well do you know the USA? – Getting into the topic

Compare your knowledge of the USA to your classmates'. Then learn more about it!

1. \_\_\_\_\_

This city was French, but Napoleon sold it to the USA in 1803. It has Caribbean influence<sup>1</sup> because of its location on the Gulf of Mexico. Jazz music began here. Many people still speak a French dialect.

2. \_\_\_\_\_

This Californian city is famous for its film industry. Many famous actors, actresses and musicians live here. It is very warm, so you can go swimming in the Pacific Ocean.

3. \_\_\_\_\_

This northern Californian city was the center of the hippie movement<sup>2</sup> in the 1960s. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century there has been a large Chinese community, and in many neighborhoods Cantonese<sup>3</sup> is the main language. In recent years, the region has become a center for new tech industries.

4. \_\_\_\_\_

This group of islands in the Pacific Ocean was an independent nation until the USA took control of it in 1893. People from here often speak a language called Pidgin, which is a mixture of English and various Pacific languages. The ukulele is from here.

5. \_\_\_\_\_

This state is a large peninsula<sup>4</sup> in the southeast United States. It is very warm and is called the "Sunshine State". In its second largest city, Miami, there is a large Cuban population, so most people can speak Spanish. It became a state of the USA in 1845 after the USA forced out<sup>5</sup> the Seminole Native Americans<sup>6</sup>.

6. \_\_\_\_\_

This state on the east coast was one of the original 13 British colonies. Here you can find some communities of Amish people. The Amish are descendants<sup>7</sup> of Swiss and Germans who immigrated in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, they still speak an old dialect of German. They don't use cars, electricity or modern technology.

7. \_\_\_\_\_

This northern state is home to many groups of Native Americans. Many of them can speak variations of the Sioux language. Here you can find Mount Rushmore. It is a monument of the faces of four US Presidents carved<sup>8</sup> into a mountain. The problem is that the region is sacred<sup>9</sup> for Native Americans, so it was a big insult to carve the presidents' faces there.

8. \_\_\_\_\_

This is the largest US state, but it is not connected to the other states. It is on the northwestern corner of Canada. In 1867, the USA bought the land from Russia. It is very cold here, but some Native American groups have lived here for thousands of years. They speak many different languages in the Eskimo and Na-Dene language families.



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### Vocabulary

1 **influence**: der Einfluss – 2 **movement**: die Bewegung – 3 **Cantonese**: Kantonesisch – 4 **peninsula**: die Halbinsel – 5 **to force out**: verdrängen – 6 **Native American**: der/die Ureinwohner/in Amerikas – 7 **descendant**: der Nachfahre/die Nachfaherin – 8 **to carve**: meißeln – 9 **sacred**: heilig

### Tasks

1. What is "typical US-American" for you? Think of food, music, language, economy, free time, etc. Take five minutes in order to write down as many things as you can. Afterwards, compare your results to your classmates'.
2. Eight places are described in the box above, but the names have gone missing. Read the descriptions and write the names of the places on the lines. A look at the map (M 2) might help you.

## An American Dream for everyone? – Role cards

M 6

### Card 1

**Elizabeth Freeman** (1744–1829) was born as a slave around 1744 in New York (then still a British colony). At that time, Europeans traded<sup>1</sup> Africans and their descendants as slaves. In 1780, Freeman heard someone read the constitution<sup>2</sup> of Massachusetts, which begins “All men are born free and equal ...”. She asked a lawyer<sup>3</sup> to help her become free. They won in court<sup>4</sup>, and so she became the first slave freed in Massachusetts. Because of the court’s decision, slavery became illegal in Massachusetts.

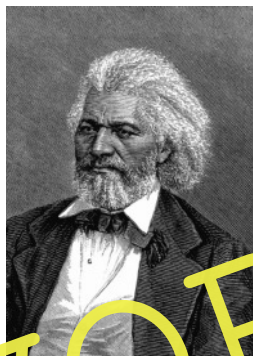
Importing slaves into the USA became illegal in 1808. Slavery (but not importation) was legal in the southern states until 1865. Freeman died in 1829, so she never saw the end of slavery.



© Mum Bett, aka Elizabeth Freeman (ca. 1812) by Susan Ridley Sedgwick

1 **to trade**: handeln – 2 **constitution**: die Verfassung – 3 **lawyer**: der/die Rechtsanwalt/Rechtsanwältin – 4 **court**: das Gericht

### Card 2



**Frederick Douglass** (1818–1895) was born as a slave in 1818. When he was 20 years old, he escaped<sup>1</sup> from Maryland, a slave state, to New York, a free state, with help from his future wife Anna Murray. Douglass became a famous speaker against slavery. He also advocated for women’s rights. Slavery was abolished in the American Civil War<sup>2</sup> from 1861–1865. During this war, Douglass helped the anti-slavery Union Army by recruiting<sup>3</sup> soldiers. After slavery became illegal, black people still did not have equal rights. In many regions, they could not vote, and many public places were segregated<sup>4</sup>.

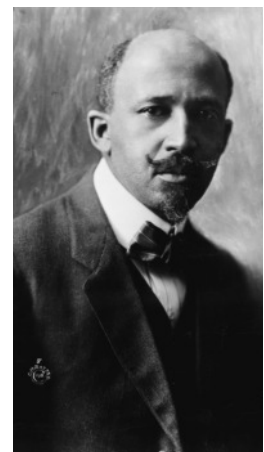
Until his death in 1895, he worked with the government of the USA in order to improve the situation of black people.

1 **to escape**: fliehen – 2 **American Civil War**: der amerikanische Bürgerkrieg – 3 **to recruit**: rekrutieren – 4 **segregated**: hier: getrennt nach Rassen

### Card 3

**W.E.B. Du Bois** (1868–1963) was born three years after slavery became illegal. He studied at Humboldt University in Berlin and at Harvard University. In 1895, he was the first black American to earn a doctorate. Although slavery became illegal in 1865, there were still many problems for black people. In the southern states, the so-called “Jim Crow Laws” kept black people separate from white people in schools, buses, trains, restaurants, bathrooms, and other public places. If white people believed that a black person committed a crime<sup>2</sup>, they would often murder him instead of contacting police. This is called “lynching<sup>3</sup>”. To resist<sup>4</sup> this discrimination, Du Bois co-founded an organization called NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) in 1909.

The NAACP is still an important civil rights institution today. Du Bois also supported rights for native people in European colonies in Africa and in Asia. He believed that racism was based in capitalism.



© Photo: C. M. Battey

1 **law**: das Gesetz – 2 **to commit a crime**: ein Verbrechen begehen – 3 **lynching**: die außergesetzliche Hinrichtung – 4 **to resist sth**: sich gegen etw. wehren

## M 10 Down to business! – Social customs in the USA

*There are US-American social customs<sup>1</sup> which you should know when working in the USA.*

The United States and Germany have a very active relationship politically, culturally and economically. The USA is Germany's largest export market! Germany exports machinery, electronics, cars, chemicals and many other products and materials to the USA. Germany is a large export market for the USA as well and many companies have subsidiaries<sup>2</sup> in both countries. The good news is that US-Americans are generally open and easy to chat with. The bad news is that they usually only speak English and they will expect you to speak English with them.



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**Interviewer:** Hello Nils, thanks for doing an interview with us.

**Nils:** Thanks for inviting me!

**Interviewer:** How are you enjoying your internship in San Francisco?

**Nils:** I'm really enjoying it a lot, but there were many aspects of American life which I had to get used to.

**Interviewer:** Could you please give us some examples?

**Nils:** Well, I expected to be called "Mr. Müller" at work, but here everyone uses first names. Even when talking to your boss! Actually, they don't just use first names, but mostly nicknames. If your name is Joseph, you are Joe or Joey. Another German intern here is named Anna-Katharina, but everyone just calls her "Kat". Nobody knew the name "Nils", so everyone calls me "Niel", since that is a common name here.

**Interviewer:** Haha, ok then, Niel! Have you made many friends here?

**Nils:** Yes, it is very easy to meet people! Every day my colleagues ask how I'm doing. Actually, US-Americans always ask how you're doing, but it's just a way to say hello. They don't really want to know all of your problems. You should just say "Fine, thanks" or "I'm well. And you?"

**Interviewer:** So do you feel like the social interactions are superficial<sup>3</sup>?

**Nils:** Sometimes. People act friendly and pretend to be interested in order to be polite, even if they don't like you or don't care what you are saying. If you invite an American to an event, they pretend to be interested and say they will come, even if they will not come!

**Interviewer:** That sounds complicated. What other strange customs are there?

**Nils:** Well, everything here is exaggerated<sup>4</sup>. If they like a restaurant, they don't just say "I like it". They have to say something like "Oh my gosh, it's the best food in the city!" or "It's incredible! Just amazing!" If you tell someone that her new haircut is "nice" it can be a real insult. You have to tell her something like "It really fits your style! You look like that one actress ..."

**Interviewer:** Do you have any advice for understanding Americans better?

**Nils:** Yes, it's good to know a little bit about American sports, since all their metaphors are about sports. If you "drop the ball<sup>5</sup>" it means you made a big mistake. If someone asks you for a "ballpark figure<sup>6</sup>" they want an estimate. If you "play hardball<sup>7</sup>" then you are a tough negotiator<sup>8</sup>.

**Interviewer:** Haha! OK ... How is it to work here?

**Nils:** Well, there is no English word for "Feierabend". People work longer hours, have less vacation days and often bring work home.

**Interviewer:** That sounds tough. Are you learning a lot professionally?

### Conversation 2 – “The job interview”

1. Interviewer: “Hello, please have a seat. How are you doing?”

- Candidate:
- a)  “I’m OK. Could be better.”
  - b)  “Fine, thanks. And you?”
  - c)  “I’m doing really well because I just won concert tickets on the radio and I’m going to ask a guy I know to come to the concert with me. Hopefully she’ll say yes!”



2. Interviewer: “So have you completed your apprenticeship?”

- Candidate:
- a)  “No, I’m not finished. I still have to do my final project. If I don’t do it, I will not get my diploma.”
  - b)  “No, but I will hopefully be done in a few months.”
  - c)  “Yes, everything except for my final project. When I turn that in I will get my diploma!”

3. Interviewer: “Oh, alright. Do you have any practical experience?”

- Candidate:
- a)  “Yes. I’ve done two internships in similar businesses.”
  - b)  “A little ... just two internships.”
  - c)  “I did two internships, but it wasn’t exactly the same job.”

4. Interviewer: “Ok, Interesting. And would you be interested in taking over some further responsibilities in the office?”

- Candidate:
- a)  “Well, if I don’t have the training, then I won’t know what to do!”
  - b)  “Yes, I’d be happy to have the opportunity to learn new skills on the job!”
  - c)  “This will be my first job, so I’m not totally comfortable with new responsibilities so soon.”

5. Interviewer: “What do you do in your free time? Any hobbies?”

- Candidate:
- a)  “Yes, I often go door to door in order to distribute information about my religion.”
  - b)  “Yes, I like to cook and I’m on a baseball team.”
  - c)  “Yes, I work for the local Republican Party. We’re fundraising for the next election.”

6. Interviewer: “Oh, that’s nice. What would you say is your biggest weakness?”

- Candidate:
- a)  “Well, I’m a real perfectionist. I just can’t relax until everything has been completed just right.”
  - b)  “I get distracted easily, especially on the computer.”
  - c)  “I get really tired and unmotivated after lunch. Then I might really drop the ball.”

7. Interviewer: “Are you prepared to give 100% at this job?”

- Candidate:
- a)  “Yes! From 8 am until I leave the office at exactly 4 pm I will be working hard!”
  - b)  “Yes! As long as I don’t bring any work home in the evenings, weekends or holidays.”
  - c)  “Yes! I’m prepared to invest as much time and energy as the team needs from me!”

Interviewer: “Alright, thanks for coming in. You’ll hear from us by next week.”