



ZOOM

IN ON THE USA

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IN THIS ISSUE: AMERICAN CARS

Ingenious in design, big in dimensions, powerful and comfortable, the car has defined 20th century American pop-culture. The country's huge size, long distances and good roads have made Americans reliant on cars.

In this issue of *Zoom in on the USA* we highlight some of the history of the American car. It is not going to be history alone, though. The photo below, for example, features a truck that continues the American automobile success story, the Chevrolet, or Chevy, for short.

Read and enjoy!

AMERICA'S BEST TRUCK

The Chevrolet Silverado 1500 (whose racing version you can see in the photo) was ranked America's number one full size pickup truck, while Chevy Silverado HD won in the heavy duty pickup truck category. The ranking, prepared by *U.S. News & World Report Rankings & Reviews*, considered and assessed the following factors: performance, exterior, interior, safety and reliability. In all these sub-categories, Chevy was highly ranked, receiving an overall score of 9.2. Smooth ride and good handling, attractive exterior and above-average fuel economy for its class were singled out as the reasons. The awards the Silverado 1500 has won include: *Car and Driver's* "Best Pickup," *Motor Trend's* "Truck of the Year," and *Motor Week's* "Driver's Choice." They seem well-deserved!



A Chevy Silverado Trophy Truck driven by Dale Dondel flies off a jump during the 11th annual SCORE Laughlin Desert Challenge off-road race in Laughlin, Nevada, Sunday, Jan. 16, 2005. Photo © AP Images

TWO DECADES OF MODEL T RULE

Henry Ford's motto when he established his Motor Company at the beginning of the 20th century was to "build a car for the great multitude." He went about achieving this goal by producing and selling cars cheaply at a time when their price was still very high and they were affordable only for the very rich. Ford - himself an engineer and inventor - discovered his own ways to manufacture cars more cheaply. He introduced a conveyor belt into the manufacturing process, which helped reduce the assembly time of a car from over 12 to less than 2 worker-hours. He also discovered that producing spare parts and shipping them to market areas where they were put together helped lower production costs. His Model T got cheaper and cheaper. From the original price of \$825, it went down

to ... \$290 in 1924, a sum that did not exceed the average family budget. While lowering the price of his car, Ford raised the wages of his employees and reduced the length of the workday. However, this forward looking and ingenious businessman did not foresee one thing. He did not actively seek to upgrade the comfort and appearance of his Model T, whose design changed very little over the 19 years during which it was produced. Competitors (see the article on the GM Cadillac on p. 3) spared no efforts to beautify and modernize their vehicles. In 1927, having sold more than 15 million cars and having revolutionized the market, the Model T was discontinued. Today, some cars, now in the caring hands of vintage car collectors, are still as good as new.



A 1908 Model "T" Touring Car,
Photo © AP Images

An affordable car meant people could explore the countryside. Camping clubs were established. One was named "Tin Can Tourist" after the colloquial name by which the model T was known: "Tin Lizzie".

The four-cylinder motor of the Model T could go as fast as 40-45 mph. Fuel consumption was between 11 and 18.7 liters per 100 kilometers, but remember, this was before the oil crisis!



A 1911 model "T" Touring Car,
Photo © AP Images



The 1914 Ford Model T touring car
Photo © AP Images

"Any customer can have a car painted any color that he wants so long as it is black," said Henry Ford. Indeed, to keep costs down he had his Model T produced only in black from 1914 to 1926.

The Model T's tank could hold as much as 38 liters of fuel. There was also a variant that could run on ethyl alcohol, but because of the Prohibition that banned alcohol in the U.S. in the 1920s, it was not widely used.



A 1925 Model T Ford back in 1968, Photo © AP Images



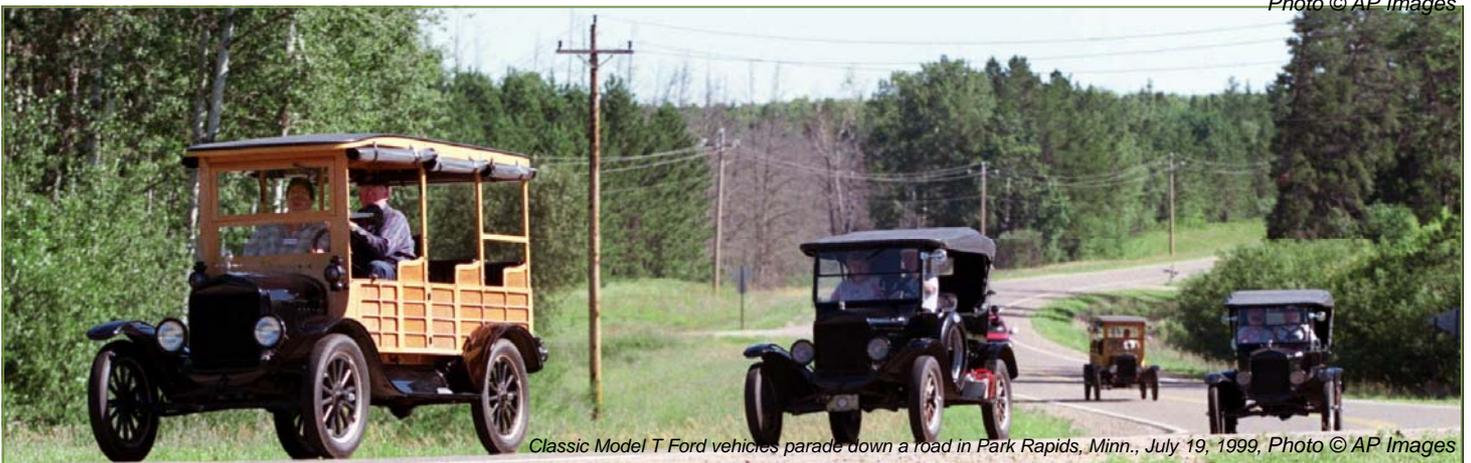
A 1909 Ford Model T Photo © AP

Nearly all major automobile museums have some Model Ts. To mention just a few: the Petersen Automotive Museum in Los Angeles, the National Automobile Museum in Reno, Nevada and the Harold E. LeMay Museum in Tacoma, Washington.

A hand crank had to be used to start the car. One had to hold the crank with a firm grip so that they would not get hurt in case the engine "kicked back." The sturdy Model T was not really a lady's car.



1923 Ford Model T touring car,
Photo © AP Images



Classic Model T Ford vehicles parade down a road in Park Rapids, Minn., July 19, 1999, Photo © AP Images



THE CADILLAC & MUSTANG: CARS THAT EXPRESS THE U.S.

If the Model T was not exactly a lady's car, the Cadillac could well be. Designed and made by General Motors, the Cadillac was addressed to a different clientele: those who could and wanted to pay much more for an elegant product that could please even the most demanding and sophisticated tastes. Up until the oil crisis of the 1970s, the designers were free to do as they pleased. Long hoods, trunks with tailfins, wraparound windshields, chrome grilles and bumpers were the embodiment of opulence. They were also in a variety of colors, from flamboyant hues of pink to highly elegant shades of white and black, all polished to reflect every single sunray. Additionally, the leather

furbishing of the interior made the Cadillac one of the most luxurious cars in the world.

The Ford Mustang - a product of the Ford Motor Company - is yet another car with a "soul". Named after a fighter plane from World War II, the Mustang was designed to embody excellence, power, style, and reliability. Its characteristic long hood and short rear deck came to be regarded as the father of the family of the so called "pony cars". Production of the Mustang began in the 1960s, and it has been in constant production ever since. Now, the fifth generation of Mustangs are being produced.



Photo © AP Images

A Honda FCX Fuel Cell Power, passes a classic Cadillac parked Tuesday, April, 27, 2004, outside a hotel in the Hollywood section of Los Angeles.

The model logo shines off the grille of a 2007 Mustang outside a Ford dealership in Denver. Statistics show the market shifts toward gas-thrifty compacts.



Photo © AP Images



Photo © AP Images

A replica of one of Elvis' Cadillacs stands outside the Elvis Is Alive Museum on Saturday, November 17, 2007, in Wright City, Missouri.

A Ford Motor Company assemblyman works on the Ford Mustang. The company is cutting expenses so it can compete better against lower-cost rivals from overseas.



Photo © AP Images



Photo © AP Images

A photographer looks at Elvis Presley's Cadillac from 1959 during a special exhibition "Elvis Presley in Germany" in Bonn on November 18, 2004.

Hundreds of Ford Motor Company's 2005 Ford Mustang await shipment at the AutoAlliance International plant in Flat Rock, Michigan.



Photo © AP Images



The 42-cent stamp of a 1957 Cadillac Eldorado, one of five 2008 stamps showing fancy chrome and fins cars of the 1950s.

Photo © AP Images



A 1960 Ford Thunderbird convertible is shown at Christie's rare motor car display in New York's Rockefeller Plaza, May 16, 2002.

Photo © AP Images

Click to listen:



Zoom page 3

ACTIVITY PAGE

Win a Prize!

November 2008
CONTEST

What car was
named after a U.S.
president?

Send the answer (with
your home address) to:
madridIRC@state.gov

Deadline: December 15

Win a Prize!

The answer in the
October 2008
Contest was:

Two terms

Thank you for
participating

ZOOM

IN ON THE USA

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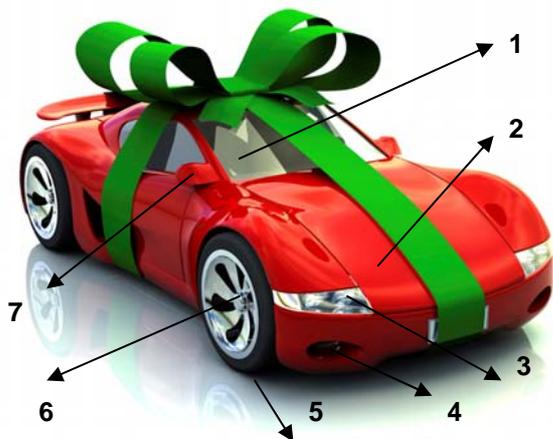
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Exercise 1

Please name the parts of the car indicated
with arrows:



Exercise 2

There are several idiomatic expressions
with the word "road". Match the expres-
sions 1-5 with the definitions below:

1. road show
 2. down the road
 3. hit the road
 4. the road to hell is paved with good intentions
 5. road hog
- a. well-meant acts can result in a disaster
 - b. a tour arranged for a particular purpose such as a political campaign
 - c. a driver whose vehicle straddles two traffic lanes
 - d. at some future point
 - e. set out on a trip

Exercise 3

True (T) or false (F):

1. The Chevy Silverado HD won in the full size pickup truck category.
2. Henry Ford produced his Model T in a variety of colors from 1914 to 1926.
3. The Model T's nickname was "Thin Lizzie."
4. The Cadillac was made by GM.
5. The golden age for classic American cars was the 1960s.
6. Elvis Presley liked the Cadillac.

Exercise 4: Are you ready to help?

More and more tourists hit the road with GPS (Global Positioning System) mounted in their cars. There are a few, however, that don't. Are you prepared to give them instructions on how to get to places in your town, if they stop you and ask for directions?

Give directions to a foreigner who wants to get from the street where you live to:

- a. the nearest bank,
- b. a historical monument, such as a famous castle, statue or the town hall,
- c. the nearest tourist information office,
- d. a moderate-priced hotel,
- e. a police station,
- f. a garage.

Exercise 5: Discussion

In groups discuss the future of the car.
Think of the following:

- type of propulsion (e.g. hydrogen, battery-powered, biofuels, diesel, gasoline)
- design of the exterior and the interior
- speed
- safety
- price

Glossary

(in the order of appearance)

reliant (on) - depending on,
heavy duty - (of material) designed to withstand the stresses of demanding use
single out - choose something or someone for special treatment
conveyor belt - moving band used for moving objects from one place to another
vintage - (here) something of the past and of high quality
embodiment - representation or expression of something
opulence - wealth, luxury
flamboyant - brightly colored
hue - a color or shade