

NEWSLETTER FOR ENGLISH TEACHERS

December 2009

The Newsletter for English Teachers is a monthly publication by the American Reference Center in Vienna. It focuses on American Studies topics of relevance to our academic audiences.

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HIV/AIDS - WORLD AIDS DAY

World AIDS Day helps to educate people about HIV, reduce the stigma associated with this disease, and promote HIV testing. Organized by the United Nations World Health Organization in 1988 and observed every December 1, World AIDS Day spotlights the disease, which has killed an estimated 25 million people since the early 1980s.

AIDS.gov: [What is HIV/AIDS?](#)

Human (this virus can only infect human beings)

Immunodeficiency (the virus creates a weakened immune system by destroying white blood cells)

Virus (the organism is a virus and is incapable of reproducing itself without help from specific cells in the human body)

HIV is different from other viruses because the immune system can never fully get rid of it. The virus hides in the immune system and other cells in the body. HIV causes significant damage to the immune system, leaving it open to other dangerous infections. HIV infection can lead to **AIDS**.

Acquired (AIDS is a disease that is not hereditary but develops from contact with, or infection by, a disease-causing agent - in this case, HIV)

Immune (AIDS affects the body's immune system, which includes all the organs and cells that work to fight off infection or foreign substances)

Deficiency (HIV makes the immune system unable to function properly)

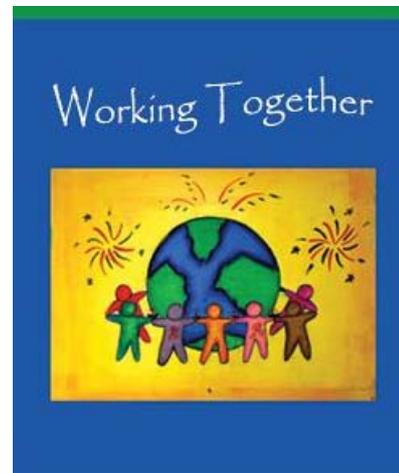
Syndrome (AIDS is a complex illness with a wide range of complications & symptoms)

An estimated

- 33.4 million people are living with HIV worldwide
- 2.7 million people were newly infected in 2008
- 2 million people died of AIDS related illness in 2008
- According to new data in the *2009 AIDS epidemic update*, released by WHO and UNAIDS, new HIV infections have been reduced by 17% over the past eight years. (WHO: [News release](#) | [Full report](#) | [More information](#))

U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)

Through the [U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief \(PEPFAR\)](#), the U.S. Government is promoting the theme "Working Together." The international theme for this World AIDS Day is "Universal Access and Human Rights." Over the next five years, the United States will partner with nations to build the long-term sustainability of their national HIV/AIDS responses and support country-led



© PEPFAR: World AIDS Day 2009
[PEPFAR on Facebook](#)

Links:

- ★ [The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief - Fact Sheets and Issue Briefs](#)
- ★ [AIDS.gov - U.S. Government HIV/AIDS Information](#)
- ★ [UNAIDS - UNAIDS: The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS](#)
- ★ [World Health Organization - WHO and HIV/AIDS](#)
- ★ [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Act Against AIDS](#)



State.gov: The U. S. Global AIDS Coordinator's mission is to lead implementation of the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). PEPFAR was launched in 2003, and is the largest commitment ever by any nation for an international health initiative dedicated to a single disease - a comprehensive approach to combating HIV/AIDS around the world. Under PEPFAR, the U.S. Government has committed more than \$25 billion to the fight against global AIDS. Please visit [PEPFAR](#) for more information.

efforts to make universal access a reality for their citizens. Through PEPFAR, the U.S. Government is also the first and largest single contributor to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. As PEPFAR goes forward, the U.S. will support efforts through President Obama's Global Health Initiative to make health systems more responsive to people living with HIV by increasing integration and facilitating their access to health care services, including those for tuberculosis, malaria, maternal and child health, and family planning.

Did you know? In October, President Obama announced the elimination of the HIV entry ban. Since 1987, HIV-positive travelers and immigrants have been banned from entering or traveling through the U.S. without a special waiver. The final rule will take effect in early January 2010. That means that people who have HIV and are not U.S. citizens will be able to enter the U.S. starting in January next year. This is a major step in ending the stigma associated with HIV. (Source: [The White House - Office of National AIDS Policy](#))



© [Beating AIDS - America.gov](#)

COPENHAGEN SUMMIT (COP15) – December 7 - 15 United Nations Climate Change Conference

The world is convening from Dec. 7-18 in Copenhagen, Denmark for the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 15) to negotiate the successor to the Kyoto Protocol, which set international goals for greenhouse emissions reductions in 1997. The COP15 conference is the fifteenth Conference of the Parties under the United Nations' Climate Change Convention.

President Obama will be attending the COP15 Conference, and he will take with him an emissions reduction target to drive progress toward a comprehensive and operational Copenhagen accord.

(Source: The White House/[Press Release](#), November 25, 2009)

Under President Obama's leadership, the United States has taken dramatic steps to change the way we use energy. Sharp increases in automobile fuel efficiency have been mandated. Our economic stimulus package includes more than \$80 billion in clean energy investments designed not only to jump-start the economy, but also to build the clean energy jobs of tomorrow. The passage of the American Clean Energy and Security Act in the House of Representatives earlier this year signals America's commitment to preventing climate change and building a global clean energy economy. Currently, the Senate is reviewing similar legislation. In terms of climate and the environment, this has been the most productive 10 months in our country's history.

We know that without U.S. emissions reductions, no solution to climate change is possible. President Obama is prepared to put on the table a U.S. emissions reduction target in the range of 17% below 2005 levels in 2020. This will put us on the path to the President's long term goal of emission reductions of 83 percent by 2050.

But action by the United States and other developed nations is clearly not enough. There is simply no way to preserve a safe and livable planet unless developing countries play a key role in the climate negotiations and join in taking collective action to meet this common challenge.

The White House

- ★ [Recovery Act](#)
- ★ [President Obama Announces National Fuel Efficiency Policy](#), May 19, 2009
- ★ [Remarks by the President on the Importance of Passing a Historic Energy Bill](#), June 25, 2009



© [COP15](#)

The Climate Quiz allows visitors to [cop15.dk](#) to test their climate knowledge. Visitors can compare the climate change knowledge with friends - [Take the quiz](#).

COP15: [The essentials in Copenhagen](#) – "Rather than getting every small detail of a new global climate treaty done in Copenhagen, UN climate chief Yvo de Boer hopes the conference will reach agreements on four political essentials."

[COP15 ON TWITTER](#)
[COP15 ON FACEBOOK](#)
[CHANGE CLIMATE CHANGE ON YOUTUBE](#)

U.S. Government Links

- ★ [The White House - Energy & Environment](#)
- ★ [America.gov - Climate Change](#)
- ★ [U.S. Department of State - Climate Change](#)
- ★ [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency - Climate Change](#)

State.gov: eJournals USA on the issue

- ★ [Climate Change Perspectives](#) (September 2009)
- ★ [Energy Efficiency](#) (April 2009)
- ★ [Clean Energy Solutions](#) (July 2006)

"Our generation's response to this challenge will be judged by history, for if we fail to meet it – boldly, swiftly, and together – we risk consigning future generations to an irreversible catastrophe."

President Barack Obama, September 22, 2009

- ★ [Remarks by the President on Energy](#), June 29, 2009
- ★ [Declaration of the Leaders – The Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate](#), Press release, July 9, 2009
- ★ [Remarks by President Obama at Climate Change Summit](#), September 22, 2009 - Bilateral Energy and Climate Partnerships: Collaboration with China, India, Mexico, Canada and other key international partners to combat climate change, coordinate clean energy research and development, and support the international climate talks.
- ★ [The U.S. and the 2009 Summit of the Americas: Securing Our Citizens' Future](#), Press release, April 19, 2009

Todd Stern, Special Envoy for Climate Change at the U.S. Department of State: "We have reached a pivotal moment in the climate challenge, and what we decide to do now will have a profound and lasting impact on our nation and our planet. The science is clear. [...] The health of our planet is in our hands and the time for action is now. The upcoming UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Copenhagen offers a chance to mobilize international collective action to meet this global challenge. [...] the U.S. is working with our partners around the world to find common ground and stem the tide of future irreversible damages."
(Source: [A Pivotal Opportunity](#), *America.gov*, September 16, 2009)



© [Global Conversations on Facebook](#)
- There is no doubt that the climate is changing. What will it cost to confront the problem? What is the cost of inaction? Join the global conversation and discuss the alternative courses of action. Join. Share. Act. (State.gov)



© [U.S. Participation in COP15](#)



HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS

Christmas

One of the most celebrated holiday in the world, our modern Christmas is a product of hundreds of years of both secular and religious traditions from around the globe.
(Source: [History.com](#))

History.com: [The Real Story of Christmas](#) - Christmas has had a long and varied history. It has been celebrated for centuries by different people, at different times, in different places, and in many different ways. Here you will find links to information about the different ways that the holiday we know as Christmas has been celebrated, or not celebrated, over the years. Watch a [video](#) about the history and origins of Christmas.

History.com: [Christmas Reinvented](#) - It wasn't until the 19th century that Americans began to embrace Christmas. Americans re-invented Christmas, and changed it from a raucous carnival holiday into a family-centered day of peace and nostalgia. But what about the 1800s peaked American interest in the holiday?

The early 19th century was a period of class conflict and turmoil. During this time, unemployment was high and gang rioting by the disenfranchised classes often occurred during the Christmas season. In 1828, the New York city council instituted the city's first police force in response to a Christmas riot. This catalyzed certain members of the upper classes to begin to change the way Christmas was celebrated in America. In 1819, best-selling author [Washington Irving](#) wrote *The Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon*, a series of stories about the celebration of Christmas in an English manor house. The sketches feature a squire who invited the peasants into his



Special holiday candies from 1868, Santa Claus Sugar Plums. © "Santa Claus Sugar Plums." Confection label. Color lithograph, copyright 1868. Prints & Photographs Division, [Library of Congress](#).

Links

- ★ [U.S. Embassy Vienna website - Christmas](#)
- ★ [U.S. Census Bureau - Facts for Features – the 2009 Holiday Season](#)
- ★ [History.com - Rudolph: The Ninth Reindeer](#)
- ★ [History.com - Christmas Around the World](#)

home for the holiday. In contrast to the problems faced in American society, the two groups mingled effortlessly. In Irving's mind, Christmas should be a peaceful, warm-hearted holiday bringing groups together across lines of wealth or social status. Irving's fictitious celebrants enjoyed "ancient customs," including the crowning of a Lord of Misrule. Irving's book, however, was not based on any holiday celebration he had attended – in fact, many historians say that Irving's account actually "invented" tradition by implying that it described the true customs of the season.

Teaching Material

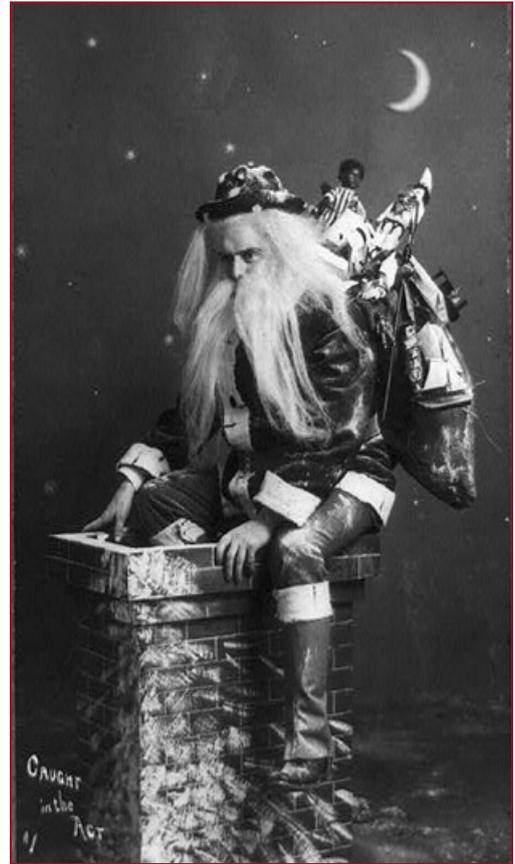
- ★ **TeacherVision** - [Christmas – Teacher Resources](#)
- ★ **Scholastic** - [Celebrating Holidays in the Classroom](#)
- ★ **LessonsPlans Page** – [What do You Do for Christmas?](#)
- ★ **LessonsPlans Page** - [Christmas Around the World](#)

Did you know? According to reports by [Captain John Smith](#), the first eggnog made in the United States was consumed in his 1607 [Jamestown settlement](#). Nog comes from the word grog, which refers to any drink made with rum.

Hanukkah. Hanukkah (also known as Chanukah, Hanukah, Hannuka and the Festival of Lights) is an eight-day Jewish holiday that usually takes place between late November and late December. It commemorates the victory of the Maccabees, a Jewish rebel army, over the Syrians in 165 B.C.E., as well as the subsequent rededication of the holy Temple in Jerusalem. Jews around the world celebrate with eight nights of merriment. Traditions include lighting the menorah, exchanging gifts and enjoying treats cooked in oil. (Source: [History.com](#) | [Video](#))

Kwanzaa. Kwanzaa is a non-religious African American holiday which celebrates family, community, and culture. It is celebrated for seven days: Dec. 26 - January 1. (Source: [History.com](#) | [Video](#))

Chinese New Year. A holiday that celebrates the beginning of a new year according to the lunar calendar. It is considered to be one of the most important holidays for Chinese families. The holiday is celebrated with big family gatherings, gift giving, the eating of symbolic foods and display of festive decorations--all focused on bringing good luck for the new year and celebrating the coming of Spring. Chinese New Year will be celebrated on February 14, 2010. (Source: [Kaboose](#))



The modern legend of Santa Claus says that Santa comes down the chimney on Christmas Eve to put presents under the tree and stuff stockings full of treats. © "Caught in the Act." Copyright 1900. [Library of Congress](#).

Census Bureau: It's in the Mail

19 billion - Number of cards, letters and packages the U.S. Postal Service expected to deliver between Thanksgiving and Christmas last year. The busiest delivery day was expected to be Dec. 17. On Dec. 15, the Postal Service expected to cancel the largest volume of mail of the season, with 960 million cards and letters processed. Source: [U.S. Postal Service](#)

ARTICLES

If you are interested in receiving the full text, please send an e-mail to: arc@usembassy.at

■ **Alaska's Great Wide Open**

By Pico Iyer, *Smithsonian*, November 2009

<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/The-Great-Wide-Open.html>

The state of Alaska celebrated its 50th year as a U.S. state in 2009, but this author writes that the great openness and wildness of the land create the feeling that America still has a frontier so unexplored that the visitor is awed. "Alaska plays havoc with your senses," Iyer writes and "turns everyday logic on its head." He discovered, for instance, that Alaska is more than twice the size of Texas, the largest state by far in the lower 48, but it has fewer miles of highway than Vermont, one of the nation's smallest states in area. The state's motto is "North to the Future," but Iyer writes that the future never arrives in a place where wild animals and the hazards of the wilderness are never far away.

■ **Online Privacy**
CQ Researcher, November 6, 2009

The Internet has become not only a primary means of communication but a place where millions of Americans store important personal data, from credit-card numbers and bank account information to family photos and histories of their online purchases. But that data does not have the same legal protection as data that Americans store in their homes. What's more, powerful new technologies are creating unexpected challenges to privacy online. Advertisers, for example, can now track the Web sites you visit, and actions you take on those sites, to analyze how to more effectively sell products to you. And they may sell the information they collect to others. Privacy advocates, and some lawmakers in Congress, say the growing threats to online privacy point to the need for stronger laws to protect users' data. But Republicans in Congress warn that overregulation may cripple the economic foundation of the Internet.

■ **Rewriting History**
CQ Global Researcher, December 2009

Every nation argues about its own history, seeking to find glory and a sense of identity by celebrating its heroes while downplaying the dark side of the past. Nations also argue with each other about the past, with one side's glorious victory still rankling as the other's ignominious defeat. And, frequently, a neighboring country that has been harmed by another's actions complains that the guilty nation is whitewashing the worst incidents. Currently, an attempt to normalize relations between Turkey and Armenia is proving a tough sell due to arguments about a mass slaughter that occurred more than 90 years ago. And Russia and its neighbors are engaged in heated debates about revealing the crimes of the Stalinist era. Like individuals, nations need to confront their own ghosts, but finding the balance between acknowledging past wrongdoing and learning to get along in the present can be a difficult feat. Such conflicts raise a fundamental philosophical question: Is historical accountability a human right?

■ **Terrorism and the Internet**
CQ Global Researcher, November 2009

A decade ago, terrorist organizations operated or controlled only about a dozen Web sites. Today there are more than 7,000. Terrorist groups use the Internet for many activities, ranging from raising funds to explaining how to build a suicide bomb. They find the Internet appealing for the same reasons everyone else does: It's cheap, easily accessible, unregulated and reaches a potentially enormous audience. As terrorist content spreads to chat rooms, blogs, user groups, social networking sites and virtual worlds, many experts, politicians and law enforcement officials are debating how government and industry should respond. Some want Internet companies to stop terrorists from using the Web, while others say that is not the role of Internet service providers. As governments enact laws based on the belief that the Internet plays a significant role in promoting terrorism, critics say the new measures often overstep free-speech and privacy rights.

■ **The Value of a College Education**
CQ Researcher, November 20, 2009

President Obama's \$12 billion American Graduation Initiative — announced in July — aims to help millions more Americans earn degrees and certificates from community colleges. The president wants the United States to have, once again, the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. Along with the administration, economists and many students and parents embrace the notion that higher education offers the most promising ticket to financial security and upward mobility. However, some argue that many young people are ill-prepared or unmotivated to get a four-year degree and should pursue apprenticeships or job-related technical training instead. The debate is casting a spotlight on trends in high-school career and technical education — long known as vocational education — and raising questions about the ability of the nation's 1,200 community colleges to meet exploding enrollment demand.

■ **Women in the Military**
CQ Researcher, November 13, 2009

The number of women serving in the military has reached historic highs in the past decade, with women now representing more than 14 percent of the total force. In 2008, Ann E. Dunwoody, the Army's top supply officer, became the first female four-star general. This fall the Army tapped Sgt. Maj. Teresa L. King to head its ultra-tough drill-sergeant training program, the first woman to hold the post. At the same time, controversy swirls around the under-the-table recruitment of Army and Marine women into some ground-combat missions in Iraq and Afghanistan — which is contrary to official military policy — as well as the Navy's plans to add women to submarine crews. Advocates of continuing to bar women from those jobs argue that sexual tensions and mistrust harmful to the military mission inevitably accompany gender-integration of combat teams. Meanwhile, women vets are suffering high levels of post-traumatic stress disorder and homelessness.

SUGGESTED WEB SITES

- **20 Years After: Life Beyond Communism in Central & Eastern Europe**
<http://20years.tol.org/>



What was life like for people twenty years ago in Eastern

Europe? Certainly it was a time of great social upheaval, and the Transitions Online (TOL) organization has created this website to collect articles, essays, and videos related to the revolutions that unfolded in 1989 in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania. The seven primary sections on the homepage include "Features," "Recollections," "Where Are They Now?," "Countries," "Video," and "Timelines." The interactive "Timelines" area is a great way to start looking around on this site, and it includes chronological listings of key events in both the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Visitors can click on tags related to each event, and they may be curious to learn of lesser-known policies, like the so-called "Sinatra Doctrine", which was announced by Mikhail Gorbachev on October 25, 1989. Moving on, the "Recollections" area contains fascinating first-hand remembrances from people who were part of this historical milieu, like Michael Horacek, a ground-breaking journalist who experienced and wrote about the Velvet Revolution first-hand. Finally, the "Where Are They Now?" section offers written and visual updates on publishers, politicians, activists, and others associated with this period of revolution.

- **Route 66 – Discover Our Shared Heritage Travel Itinerary**
<http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/route66/index.html>

Even though Route 66 hasn't formally existed in twenty years, it is part of America's love affair with cars, travel, and getting lost. This excellent travel itinerary created by the National Park Service's Heritage Education Services "aids the public to visit the historic places that recall those images and experiences that are reminders of our past and evidence of the influence of the automobile." The homepage features historic images of old motel facades and long-gone department stores along Route 66, mixed in with images of the Route today. To get a sense of the road's genealogy, visitors would do well to look through the illustrated "Essays." Here they can learn about the road's origins, its rise, decline, and renaissance over the past 85 years. Moving on, users can click on the "List of Sites" area to read about featured sites in each of the eight states that the road passes through. Finally, the "Learn More" area is a glorious cornucopia of related websites that tell the story of the places and people associated with the road, including Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket in Hinsdale, Illinois and the Seligman Historic District in Arizona.

- **Lincoln Memorial Interactive**
<http://www.nps.gov/featurecontent/ncr/linc/interactive/deploy/index.htm#/introduction>

It is hard not to be moved by the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., and this engaging and interactive exhibit captures the essence of this moving tribute to the nation's 16th president. The site is divided into two areas, "Reflections" and "Memorial." In the "Reflections" area, visitors can listen and watch park rangers talk about their own memories and remembrances of this august and somber place. There are seven separate profiles here, and it's a good idea to start with Kawther Elmi's thoughts on her childhood in East Africa. The "Memorial" area includes dramatic and multi-perspective views of the Lincoln statue and the Memorial grounds. Visitors may also use the "Downloads" area to download audio files of the ranger's talks, along with images of the Memorial.

- **The Supreme Court Database**
<http://scdb.wustl.edu/index.php>

As important as the U.S. Supreme Court decisions are, accessing, reading, and deciphering them can be an arduous task. However, the Supreme Court Database can help relieving some of the difficulty with "SCDB Web 101." Visitors should click on "View the 101 Lessons" on the far right hand side of the page, to get started. There are four lessons, and they include "Running Your First Online Analysis," "Making Adjustments to an Analysis" and "Recalling a Previous Analysis." The database includes the decisions from 1958-2008, and visitors should click on "Analysis" to start their search. For those who know the name of the case, or the volume and page, the search function on the far right hand side, top of the page, will accommodate that. Those visitors looking for cases by "issue," "outcome," "type of party," "court era," or "writer of the majority or minority opinion" should use the form starting in the middle of the page. This website allows for some great results for those interested in trying to establish themes or similarities across Supreme Court jurisprudence.

- **Film Literature Index**
<http://webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/fli/index.jsp>

This very ambitious project from Indiana University was funded by the National Endowment



for the Humanities, and it continues to be updated on a regular basis. The Film Literature Index (FLI) annually indexes 150 film and television periodicals from 30 countries in their entirety, along with 200 other periodicals selectively for articles on film and television. The FLI database can be searched by subject headings, names, production titles, or by corporate names. Visitors can browse around, or perform advanced searches as their needs require. More information about the project can be found in the "About FLI" section, which can be accessed at the top of the homepage. Here visitors can learn about the history of the FLI, and also read about various papers and presentations that document the creation of the FLI Online site.

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