

# NEWSLETTER FOR ENGLISH TEACHERS

October 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.*

## In this issue:

[Nobel Peace Prize for President Obama](#) • [Health Care Reform](#) • [Explore the United States](#) • ["Green Card Lottery"](#) • [Literature](#) • [Columbus Day](#) • [New eJournals USA](#) • [Articles](#) • [Suggested Web Sites](#) • [Upcoming Events](#)

## NOBEL PEACE PRIZE FOR PRESIDENT OBAMA

On October 9, "the [Norwegian Nobel Committee](#) has decided that the Nobel Peace Prize for 2009 is to be awarded to President Barack Obama for his extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples. The Committee has attached special importance to Obama's vision of and work for a world without nuclear weapons. [...] His diplomacy is founded in the concept that those who are to lead the world must do so on the basis of values and attitudes that are shared by the majority of the world's population." (Source: [Announcement of the Nobel Peace Prize](#), Oslo, October 9, 2009)



### Links

- ★ [The White House - Remarks by the President on Winning the Nobel Peace Prize \(Video\)](#)
- ★ [Nobel Foundation](#)
- ★ [Your Questions about the Nobel Peace Prize](#)

\*\*\*\*\*

## HEALTH CARE REFORM

The U.S. Congress is grappling with proposed legislation to substantially reform America's \$2.5 trillion health care system, despite the daunting challenge posed by solutions that may conflict with one another.

In a nationally televised address to a joint session of Congress September 9, President Obama implored representatives and senators to overcome doubts and considerable misinformation that has plagued debate on reform since earlier this year, and support his proposals. Five committees in the Senate and House of Representatives are considering comprehensive reform proposals and five have completed work on bills. The White House did not submit its own proposed legislation, but instead submitted its objectives.

It is likely that differences in legislation from the Senate and House will have to be resolved in a joint conference committee before a final bill can be sent to the president for his signature into law.

The U.S. Census Bureau reported September 10 that 46.3 million people in the United States had no health insurance at some point during 2008, a sharp increase from 45.7 million in the previous year. In 2006, the total stood at 47 million. Many economists have said recently that with the economic recession, the number of uninsured likely would surge along with rising unemployment. The Census Bureau also reported that the poverty rate in the U.S. reached 13.2 % in 2008, an 11-year high.



©AP Images/ Doctor treats a child in Lexington, Kentucky. Many Americans are concerned about health care costs.

*"I suffer no illusions that this will be an easy process. It will be hard. But I also know that nearly a century after Teddy Roosevelt first called for reform, the cost of our health care has weighed down our economy and the conscience of our nation long enough. So let there be no doubt: health care reform cannot wait, it must not wait, and it will not wait another year."*

(Source: [Speech of President Obama on February 24, 2009](#))

Supporters and opponents of health care reform share an overriding concern: how much reform might cost, and how it would be financed. The United States, unlike many other advanced economies, does not have a universal health care system funded by the national government or state governments. The country has a mix of private nonprofit and for-profit insurance coverage and public programs. [...]

**Cost and Spending:** According to Lyke's CRS report, the U.S. spends nearly 17 % of its gross domestic product (GDP), which is the total value of goods and services, on health care services and products, far more than other advanced economies. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reported that spending on health care in the U.S. increased from 7.2 % of GDP in 1970 to 12.3 % in 1990 and then 16.2 % in 2007, and to 17 % this year. [...]

At the same time that spending has risen for health care services, health insurance premiums on average rose by 114 % from 1999 to 2007, while the rate of growth in medical care prices between 1980 and 2007 rose 4.7 %, and the cost of living measured by the consumer price index over the same period rose 2.5 %, according to Lyke's report. (Source: [Obama Urges Congress to Pass Health Care Reform](#), *America.gov*, September 10, 2009)

\*\*\*\*\*

## EXPLORE THE UNITED STATES – THE NATIONAL PARKS, "AMERICA'S BEST IDEA"

President Obama and his family recently visited the Grand Canyon and Yellowstone National Park. Writer and historian Wallace Stegner called the national parks in the United States "the best idea we ever had. Absolutely American, absolutely democratic, they reflect us at our best rather than our worst." In 1872, Yellowstone National Park became the first national park in the world, its creation spawning a worldwide national parks movement.

"Over the course of more than 150 years, a once-radical idea has evolved into a cohesive national parks system, with a sometimes conflicting two part-mission: to make the parks accessible to all and to preserve them for future generations." Check out the [timeline](#) charting the evolution of the park system. (Source: [PBS](#))

**The National Parks: America's Best Idea**, a new documentary by Ken Burns premiered on PBS September 27.

The film chronicles a century of giving that created national parks from southern Florida to the frozen tundra of Alaska, from the rocky coast of Maine to the volcanic Hawaiian Islands. Premiering September 27th on PBS, the 12-hour, six-part documentary series traces the birth of the national park idea in the mid-1800s and follows its evolution for nearly 150 years. Told through the stories of the people who helped create them and save them from destruction, it is both a biography of compelling characters and of the American landscape. Read more [about the series](#).

- ★ [Episode One: 1851–1890 - The Scripture of Nature](#)
- ★ [Episode Two: 1890–1915 - The Last Refuge](#)
- ★ [Episode Three: 1915–1919 - The Empire of Grandeur](#)
- ★ [Episode Four: 1920–1933 - Going Home](#)
- ★ [Episode Five: 1933–1945 - Great Nature](#)
- ★ [Episode Six: 1946–1980 - The Morning of Creation](#)



© WhiteHouse.gov: [Reality Check](#)

**Public opinion polls** taken by news organizations after President Obama's address to Congress show that 67 percent of Americans who watched the speech favor his plans for reforming the health care system (*America.gov*, September 10, 2009)

- ★ **The White House** - [Remarks by the President to a Joint Session of Congress on Health Care](#), September 9, 2009 ([Video](#))
- ★ **The White House** - ['Health Care'](#)
- ★ **The White House** - ["The Obama Plan in Four Minutes"](#) (Video)
- ★ ["Health Care Reform: An Introduction,"](#) CRS Report by Bob Lyke, Congressional Research Service Report/ Library of Congress, July 29, 2009.



© AP Image/*America.gov*

### Watch selections of [video clips](#)

#### Links

- ★ [U.S. National Park Service](#)
- ★ **U.S. National Park Service** - [America's Best Idea Today / History & Culture](#)
- ★ [National Park Foundation](#)
- ★ **The White House Blog** - [America's Best Idea](#)

#### Teaching Material

- ★ [PBS Lesson Plans](#)

The lessons on this site were developed to help teachers use THE NATIONAL PARKS: AMERICA'S BEST IDEA in the classroom. Activities are appropriate for grades 7-10 but are easily adapted to different age ranges. Many of the lessons incorporate video clips from the film as well as additional resources found on this site.

## “New York’s 400<sup>th</sup>”

2009 marks New York’s Quadracentennial celebration commemorating 400 years of history on the Hudson River, New York Harbor and Lake Champlain.

In 1609, a decade before the Mayflower landed in New England, two European explorers simultaneously explored the northern and southern waterways of what is now New York State. With their voyages, the history of America began to take shape. That July, French explorer Samuel de Champlain, who had founded the city of Québec a year earlier, journeyed into another area of incredible splendor. Its most magnificent feature was a lake, now known as Lake Champlain, where he encountered Native American people.

Two months later, Henry Hudson, an Englishman serving the Netherlands, sailed into New York Bay on the Half Moon. While traveling up the river later named for him (reaching a point near present-day Albany), he noted the region’s beauty, natural abundance and commercial advantages. He also traded goods with Native Americans who lived along the shore.

These simultaneous journeys, coming within miles of meeting, changed the world forever. Within a century, the waterways explored by Champlain and Hudson would merge into one vital corridor at the epicenter of global commerce, politics and ideas.

(Source: [Explore New York’s 400<sup>th</sup>!](#))

- ★ **New York State website** – [New Year’s Day Kicks Off New York’s 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration](#)
- ★ [New York Celebrates 400th Anniversary of Hudson’s Voyage](#), *America.gov*, October 15, 2009

### Did you know?

★ Hudson’s expedition was commissioned by the Dutch West India Company, which 17 years later bought the island from the Canarsie Indians for the equivalent of \$23.70. The Dutch named their new land New Amsterdam and, with its population of 270 residents, the settlement had a fort, houses and farms.

★ In 1653, the governor had a 9-foot-tall barricade built to keep out potential invaders from the north. (The street upon which this wall was built remains today as the famous Wall Street.)

★ New York served as the United States’ first capital after the young nation won its independence from the British. George Washington, the first U.S. president, was sworn in at Federal Hall in 1789. (Source: [NASA Earth Observatory – Image of the Day: New York City](#))

\*\*\*\*\*

## “GREEN CARD LOTTERY”

### 2011 Diversity Visa Lottery Registration Opens October 2, 2008

Each year the U.S. government makes 50,000 permanent residence visas (“green cards”) available through the [Diversity Immigrant Visa program](#). Visa applicants are selected through a computer-generated, random lottery, which is open to persons from eligible countries who meet certain education or work experience requirements. (Source: [America.gov](#), October 9, 2009)

### Links

- ★ **U.S. Department of State** - [Diversity Visa Lottery Instructions](#)
- ★ [America.gov](#) - [Diversity](#)
- ★ [America.gov](#) - [Diversity Visa Lottery for 2011 Is Open Until November 30](#), October 9, 2009
- ★ **U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services** - [Green Card Through the Diversity Immigrant Visa Program](#)

\*\*\*\*\*



© NASA.

### Links

- ★ **Museum of the City of New York** – [The New York City 400](#) who have helped define New York City for the past four centuries.
- ★ **Voice of America** - [New York City Celebrates 400th Anniversary](#), by Martin Phillips, September 26, 2009
- ★ **English Teaching Forum** (2008, v46, #1): [New York, New York](#), by Thomas W. Santos  
[Lesson Plan: Exploring New York City](#), by Bradley Horn
- ★ **PBSkids.org** - [Big Apple History](#)

## LITERATURE

### Lisa See – *Shanghai Girls*

In 1937, Shanghai is the Paris of Asia, full of great wealth and glamour, home to millionaires and beggars, gangsters and gamblers, patriots and revolutionaries, artists and warlords. Twenty-one-year-old Pearl Chin and her younger sister May are having the time of their lives, thanks to the financial security and material comforts provided by their father's prosperous rickshaw business. Though both wave off authority and traditions, they couldn't be more different. Pearl is a Dragon sign, strong and stubborn, while May is a true Sheep, adorable and placid. Both are beautiful, modern, and living the carefree life ... until the day their father tells them that he has gambled away their wealth, and that in order to repay his debts he must sell the girls as wives to suitors who have traveled from Los Angeles to find Chinese brides. (Source: [Lisa See's official website](#))

#### Reviews

★ "Only the best novelists can do what Lisa See has done, to bring to life not only a character but an entire culture." – (Quote by Arthur Golden, author of *Memoir of a Geisha*)

★ "See is a gifted writer, and in *Shanghai Girls* she again explores the bonds of sisterhood while powerfully evoking the often nightmarish American immigrant experience." – (Source: *USA Today*, June 11, 2009)

★ "A buoyant and lustrous paean to the bonds of sisterhood." – (Source: *Booklist*, 2009)

Lisa See, author of the critically-acclaimed international bestseller, *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* (2005), has always been intrigued by stories that have been lost, forgotten, or deliberately covered up, whether in the past or happening right now in the world today. For *Snow Flower*, she traveled to a remote area of China – where she was told she was only the second foreigner ever to visit – to research the secret writing invented, used, and kept a secret by women for over a thousand years. Amy Tan called the novel "achingly beautiful, a marvel of imagination." Others agreed, and foreign-language rights for *Snow Flower* were sold to 36 countries. The novel also became a *New York Times* bestseller, a Booksense Number One Pick, and has won numerous awards domestically and internationally.

Ms. See was born in Paris but grew up in Los Angeles, spending much of her time in Chinatown. Her first book, *On Gold Mountain: The One Hundred Year Odyssey of My Chinese-American Family* (1995), was a national bestseller and a *New York Times* Notable Book. The book traces the journey of Lisa's great-grandfather, Fong See, who overcame obstacles at every step to become the 100-year-old godfather of Los Angeles's Chinatown and the patriarch of a sprawling family. (Source: Lisa See's website - [About the Author](#))

#### Quote

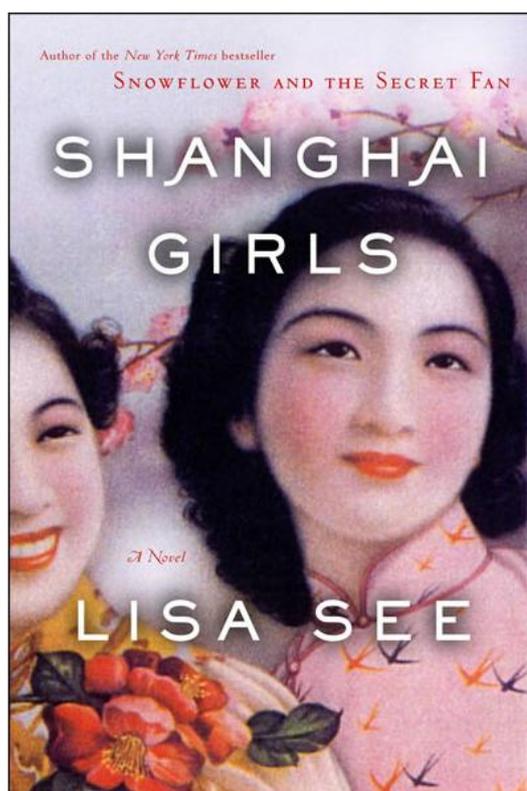
*People call me bookish, which even in 1937 is not considered a good thing. But as smart as I am, I don't know how to protect myself from my father's words.* -- Chapter 1, Page 1

#### Links

- ★ **LibraryThing** - [Lisa See](#). Lisa See is a [LibraryThing Author](#), an author who lists their personal library on LibraryThing.
- ★ **Random House** - [Lisa See](#)
- ★ **Barnes & Noble** - [Meet the Writers – Lisa See](#)
- ★ [For Lisa See, Los Angeles' Chinatown was always like](#)



© [LisaSee.com](#)



© [LisaSee.com – Shanghai Girls](#)

#### Links

- ★ *Shanghai Girls*: [Book Club Questions](#)
- ★ *Shanghai Girls* – [Q & A](#)
- ★ [Sample Chapter](#) - Chapter 1: Beautiful Girls

[stepping into her past](#), by Lisa See, *Los Angeles Times*, May 31, 2009  
\*\*\*\*\*

## **COLUMBUS DAY**

### **October 13**

Columbus Day, celebrated each year on the second Monday in October, commemorates the landing of Christopher Columbus in the New World. (Columbus landed on October 12, 1492 at San Salvador Island, also known as Watling Island, today part of the British Bahamas.) His voyage initiated an enormous migration of peoples, flora and fauna; and brought about a transformation of America and Europe, that for better or worse affected the entire world.

#### **Links**

- ★ **The White House** – [Columbus Day Proclamation](#), October 9, 2009
- ★ **U.S. Embassy Vienna website** - [Columbus Day](#)
- ★ **Library of Congress** - [1492 – An Ongoing Voyage](#)
- ★ **Ibiblio** - [Christopher Columbus - Man and Myth](#)
- ★ **Education World** - [Beyond Columbus: Teaching the Lessons of 1492](#)

#### **Articles**

- ★ Columbus Day. *Documents to the People*, Spring 2007, v35, #1.
- ★ Who Really Sailed the Ocean Blue in 1492? Spanish scholars are on a mission to demystify Christopher Columbus's life, long shrouded in a veil of mythic heroism, *Christian Science Monitor*, Oct 17, 2006. [Full Text](#)

**Discussion Question:** Is the term "New World" a Euro-centric view of the exploration of the Americas? Beyond Columbus: Teaching the Lessons of 1492. [Education World](#)

\*\*\*\*\*

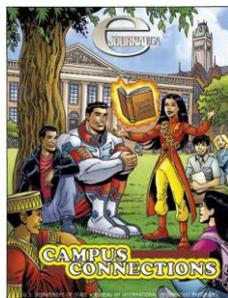
## **NEW eJOURNALS USA**

**Published by the Bureau of International Information Programs/U.S. Department of State**

### **Climate Change Perspectives**

**September 2009**

This *eJournal USA* offers perspectives of experts and activists in several key countries on effective policies to curb greenhouse gas emissions to mitigate global warming and adapt to irreversible changes, and features an introduction by U.S. special envoy Todd Stern. <http://www.america.gov/publications/ejournalusa/0909.html>



### **Campus Connections**

**August 2009**

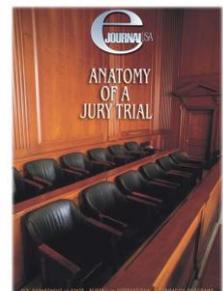
A globalized economy makes business and employment spill across national boundaries, so an education abroad is likely to make a young person better prepared for the world's future. Almost double the numbers of students travel abroad for an education today as compared with 20 years ago. *Campus Connections* examines the international study experience and its influence on individual growth.

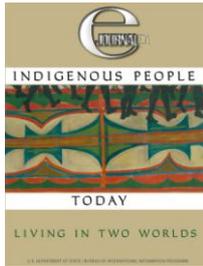
<http://www.america.gov/publications/ejournalusa/0809.html>

### **Anatomy of a Jury Trial**

**July 2009**

Juries — usually groups of 6 or 12 ordinary citizens — provide a crucial service for their fellow citizens: Just as in medieval England, where they got started, juries prevent government, even democratic government, from pursuing oppressive prosecutions. <http://www.america.gov/publications/ejournalusa/0709.html>





## **Indigenous People June 2009**

The June 2009 edition of *eJournal USA* provides insight into Native Americans and other indigenous peoples. Articles provide historical background and look at issues surrounding their languages and culture, their legal status, and how they are networking around the world.

<http://www.america.gov/publications/ejournalusa/0609.html>

\*\*\*\*\*

## **ARTICLES**

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

### ■ **Daydream Believers**

**By Rem Rieder, *American Journalism Review*, August/September 2009**

<http://ajr.org/Article.asp?id=4817>

"America has become a country filled with people who stubbornly continue to believe what they want to believe, regardless of the facts," says Rieder, using as examples the persistence of people who refuse to believe Obama was born in the United States and those who believe that there are in fact provisions for "death panels" in health-care reform proposals. This situation makes it all the more critical for journalists to go beyond the "he-said, she-said" reporting of the past and not hesitate to reach firmly expressed conclusions -- with fairness, of course. Mainstream journalism has long been uncomfortable about making and expressing conclusions, but according to Rieder, "as long as that conclusion is based on carefully reported evidence, not ideology, there's no good reason not to do it."

### ■ **FDR's Lessons for Obama**

**By David M. Kennedy, *Time*, July 8, 2009**

[http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1906802\\_1906838\\_1906745,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1906802_1906838_1906745,00.html)

The author, a professor at Stanford University, notes that Barack Obama took office amid circumstances similar to those of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Kennedy writes that the big question is if, like Roosevelt, Obama can seize the moment and come up with solutions. Roosevelt used the Depression as an opportunity to revolutionize American life for generations to come, realizing the irony that a Depression made achieving those objectives possible. Kennedy writes that Obama, who similarly faces an economic downturn and massive unemployment, may use his circumstances to bring about health care reform and other programs he considers necessary to improving the public welfare.

### ■ **Health Care Reform. Is Universal Coverage Too Expensive?** ***CQ Researcher*, August 28, 2009**

For the first time in 15 years, health-care reform has moved to the top of Washington's agenda. A new Democratic president and Democratic majorities in the House and Senate have declared two major goals: increase coverage to near-universal levels and stop the huge, annual cost increases that are gradually putting health care out of reach for small businesses and low-income families. Most proposals would subsidize insurance for low-income Americans and create new, government-regulated insurance markets for those without employer-provided coverage. One controversial scheme would create a publicly run insurance plan and require individuals to buy coverage.

### ■ **Taking the Great American Roadtrip**

**By Paul Theroux, *Smithsonian*, September 2009**

<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/The-Long-Way-Home-USA.html>

Paul Theroux is one of the masters of travel writing, but he opens this article for *Smithsonian* admitting that he has never seen a great deal of his own country. He begins his cross-country road trip in Los Angeles, heading to his home in Cape Cod, Massachusetts with the plan that the journey is the destination. Along the way, he makes many of the iconic stops of the American road trip -- the Las Vegas strip, the Red Rocks of Arizona, the memorial to victims of the Oklahoma City terrorist attack, and the blues bars on Memphis' Beale Street. He finds barren deserts, ferocious weather, and pastoral scenes which he likens to similar places he has seen in distant countries. But at the end of his more than 5,400 kilometer journey, Theroux observes that he experienced "not a moment of alienation or danger, no roadblocks, no sign of officialdom, never a second of feeling I was somewhere different."

■ **Nora Knows What to Do**  
By Ariel Levy, *The New Yorker*, July 6-13, 2009

Writer and motion picture director Nora Ephron is currently directing a film about famed chef Julia Child, starring Meryl Streep as the statuesque gourmet. Ephron first became well-known in the late nineteen-sixties, as a magazine journalist who wrote features about cultural institutions and media celebrities; in the early nineties, Ephron started directing her own movies. Her most successful since "Sleepless" was "You've Got Mail" (1998), loosely based on the Ernst Lubitsch movie "The Shop Around the Corner." In 2006, Ephron managed the almost impossible feat of becoming an "It" girl yet again, in her sixties, by publishing *I Feel Bad About My Neck*, which became a No. 1 best-seller, enhancing her glamour by writing about the distinctly dowdy subject of aging. About half of Ephron's movies have been firmly rejected by both critics and audiences, but the other half have become mainstays of their genre. In her latest, "Julie and Julia," Ephron wrote the screenplay based on two books about women, food and marriage: Julia Child's memoir *My Life in France*, which traces her evolution from spirited Embassy wife to revered foodie; and the blogger Julie Powell's book about cooking her way through every recipe in Child's *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, in a single year. Powell's blog echoed Ephron's own experience in the kitchen when she was in her twenties, cooking "at least half the recipes in the first Julia," as she has written, and having "imaginary conversations" with Child in the process.

■ **Out of the Kitchen, Onto the Couch**  
By Michael Pollan, *New York Times Magazine*, August 2, 2009  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/02/magazine/02cooking-t.html>

The author notes that the increasing popularity of cooking shows on television has coincided with a decrease in home cooking. The rise of cooking celebrities such as Julia Child, Alice Waters or Martha Stewart has been paralleled by the rise of fast food and home-meal replacements. The decline of home cooking has several causes -- women working outside the home; food companies persuading Americans to let them do the cooking; and advances in technology that made it easier for them to do so. Cooking is no longer obligatory, and for many people that has been a blessing. Ironically, the year Julia Child went on the air, 1963, was the same year Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique*, the book that taught millions of American women to regard housework and cooking as drudgery. Julia Child, the author notes, never referred to her viewers as "housewives" and never condescended to them; she tried to show that cooking, approached in the proper spirit, offered fulfillment and deserved attention.

■ **Parker Palmer: Know Yourself, Change Your World**  
By Sarah van Gelder, *Yes! Magazine*, Fall 2009  
<http://cms.yesmagazine.org/issues/learn-as-you-go/know-yourself-change-your-world/>

In this interview, educator and author Parker Palmer notes that most of us lack an understanding of our inner lives; reflection, which should be the fourth "R" of education, is not taught in schools. Parker says that "every line of work is deepened by bringing all of our human capacities to bear on whatever we are doing, and that includes our inner sensibilities as well as our externally oriented knowledge and skill." Schools are often not a place that promotes personal development, a chief reason why fifty percent of teachers are gone within five years, due to burnout. Parker notes that people who become aware of their inner life also become aware of the disparity between their integrity and the manner in which institutions around them operate. He cites Wall Street and the financial crisis as a prime example of an environment in which few insiders were brave enough to speak out about what was happening.

■ **Rescuing Children. Is the Global Community Doing Enough?**  
*CQ Global Researcher*, October 2009

The numbers are grim: Every day more than 25,000 children under age 5 — the equivalent of 125 jetliners full of youngsters — die from hunger, poverty or easily preventable illnesses, such as diarrhea and malaria. Millions of others are abandoned, trafficked into prostitution, forced into armed conflict or used as child laborers — mostly in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe. While governments and nongovernmental organizations struggle to help, aid cutbacks due to the world economic crisis could trigger 200,000–400,000 additional child deaths each year. Meanwhile, experts and policy makers disagree over how best to combat AIDS among children, and whether more foreign aid would do more harm than good. Others question whether the United States should ratify the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child. The United States is the only nation besides Somalia that hasn't adopted the treaty.

■ **This Is Not a Map**  
By Max Byrd, *Wilson Quarterly*, Summer 2009

The author notes that maps are not always "works of dutiful representation ... sometimes they are tickets to flights of the imagination," along with other childhood mainstays such as model trains and dollhouses. Writers such as Robert Louis Stevenson, Daniel Defoe, Thomas Hardy and A.A. Milne have used maps to create a fictional reality for their characters to live in. Fictional maps, like the

one of Brobdingnag in *Gulliver's Travels*, are intended to persuade readers that a story is true. One of the most poignant of all maps was drawn by William Blake to illustrate the land of "Allestone," an amazingly complex world invented by a friend's son who died young after a long and difficult illness, whose imagined country was an alternative to the painful one he lived in. Storytellers know there is a "powerful connection between a child's imagination and the blank spaces of earth."

■ **Why Does the Vaccine/Autism Controversy Live On?**

**By Chris Mooney, *Discover*, June 2009**

<http://discovermagazine.com/2009/jun/06-why-does-vaccine-autism-controversy-live-on>

Several recent court rulings that vaccines do not cause autism have done little to quiet the angry debate that began a decade ago, when a study first alleged that there was a connection between the use of a mercury compound, thimerosal, as a preservative in vaccines, and the growing incidence of autism among children. The anti-vaccine story has spread rapidly in the mass media and on the Internet, drawing many celebrity supporters. While there is still uncertainty on whether the reported increase in autism is merely due to increased attention to the condition or a range of environmental triggers, the vaccine-autism connection has been refuted by scientific research. The author notes that the scientific and medical community was slow to respond to the growing public reaction against vaccines, noting that "it's not hard to scare people, but it's extremely difficult to unscare them." The greater threat, notes the author, is holding back vaccines. The great success of vaccines in eradicating diseases is a reason why the antivaccination sentiment has thrived; few people today remember the devastation caused by these scourges. The major challenge today, Mooney notes, is to maintain public support for vaccination programs and to "explore how science and so many citizens fell out of touch."

■ **What IF?**

**By Steve Moyer, *Humanities*, July/August 2009**

<http://neh.gov/news/humanities/2009-07/WhatIf.html>

The author believes that it is difficult to take in all the ways that reading is changing in response to new technology. Bob Stein, co-director and founder of the Institute for the Future of the Book, is exploring how the digital revolution is transforming the way we read. One of Stein's recent projects was a kind of online book club in which seven women engaged in a close reading of Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*, then commented online in the margins of the electronic book, by means of an open-source software called CommentPress. Moyer explores the changes in the book in the past thirty years, noting that there have been more advances in the evolution of the book than there had been in the past five centuries.

\*\*\*\*\*

## SUGGESTED WEB SITES

■ **Holocaust Encyclopedia**

<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/>

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) has some tremendous online resources, and the recent addition of the Holocaust Encyclopedia continues in this tradition. The interactive Encyclopedia includes hundreds of articles that cover topics like the Third Reich, refugees, ghettos, and the liberation of Nazi camps. Each entry contains hypertext links to other entries and relevant resources, including timelines, photo galleries, and primary source documents. Visitors can use the "Browse Articles" to get started, and they should also note that the articles are available in French, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Turkish, Arabic, and six other languages. In the "Additional Resources" section, visitors will find a link to "The Holocaust: A Learning Site for Students" and a complete "A-Z" list of all the articles.



■ **National Geographic: Redwoods**

<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/redwoods/redwoods>

Astounding, beautiful, fantastical, and enormous, these are all apt descriptions of the redwoods of the Pacific coast. *National Geographic's* website offers a multimedia presentation about these majestic trees which includes the cover story, "The Super Trees," from their October 2009 magazine, and details under "Tune In," on when to watch the corresponding broadcast "Explorer: Climbing Redwood Giants." In addition to an online photo "Jigsaw Puzzle" of a 300-foot California redwood that visitors can time themselves putting together, there is also a great 2.5-minute "Video" of the photographer's attempt to create a composite photo of an entire redwood tree. The "Living Giants" interactive time line shows the historical moments a 2000-year-old redwood has lived through, including the reign of Genghis Khan, the signing of the Magna Carta, and the settlement at Jamestown.

- **American English Dialect Recordings**  
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/linguistics/>

The American Memory Project at the Library of Congress has struck gold again with this most excellent digital collection. The Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) Collection features approximately 118 hours of recordings documenting North American English dialects. These recordings were made from 1941 to 1984, and they reveal "distinctions in speech related to gender, race, social class, education, age, literacy, ethnic background, and occupational group." Visitors to the site can read the final report created by the CAL after the completion of this project, and they view an interactive map of the survey locations throughout the United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico. Browsing the collection is a snap, and visitors can look through the offerings here by title, name, subject, and place. Some of the subjects covered here include rabbit hunting, racial discrimination, tall tales, and Halloween.

- **American Experience: We Shall Remain**  
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/weshallremain/>

The American Experience series titled "We Shall Remain" consists of five episodes "spanning three hundred years [that] tell the story of pivotal moments in U.S. history from the



Native American perspective." The "Reel Native" and "Beyond Broadcast" tabs offer Native Americans telling their experiences and also provide activities for teachers. In addition to viewing the full episodes online, visitors to the website can go "Behind the Scenes" by clicking that tab, and can see such features as the "cast and crew", "featured videos", and "photo gallery". Furthermore, the "Get Involved" part of "Behind the Scenes" informs visitors of "native organizations and tribes, libraries, historical societies, museums, schools and other groups to plan and sponsor activities that promote understanding of local Native history and contemporary life." This area also provides an interactive map that allows a visitor to plot "shoot locations", "tribal colleges", "coalitions", and "native radio stations", by clicking on each corresponding tab.

- **Who Speaks for the Negro?**  
<http://whospeaks.library.vanderbilt.edu/>

In 1965, the writer Robert Penn Warren wrote a thoughtful book titled *Who Speaks for the Negro?* To prepare for the writing of this volume, Warren traveled across the United States to interview dozens of people involved with the civil rights movement, including James Baldwin, Stokely Carmichael, Ralph Ellison, Vernon Jordan, and Malcolm X. This wonderful resource created at Vanderbilt University features some of these conversations, digitized from their original reel-to-reel recordings. Visitors can get started by clicking on the "Listen to Interviews" area. Here they can search the interviews by keyword, or just browse the collection by interviewee or subject. For people looking for insights into American history, the civil rights movements of the 1960s, or the African-American experience, this site is one that will warrant numerous return visits.



- **Streetplay**  
<http://www.streetplay.com/>

Who hasn't whiled away a few hours playing "Ace-King-Queen" on the side of a bodega? Perhaps you haven't yet, but you might be inspired to do so after spending some time at the Streetplay website. The mission of this site is "to document the great city games that we know and love." Visitors can get a sense of these much-loved games by clicking on "The Games" area on the left-hand side of the homepage. Here they will find primers on stickball, handball, skully, and hopscotch. After that, visitors will want to move on to sections like "Stories." "Features." and a bit of "Fun & Prizes." The site also has a "Featured Articles" that cover topics like the street games of Spain, hanging out at the corner candy store, and there are even a few video highlights of celebrated street games.



\*\*\*\*\*



\*\*\*\*\*

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### ■ U.S. ECONOMIC NATIONALISM AND FREE MARKET SYSTEM

#### A talk by **Dr. Gary E. Bittner**

Wednesday, October 21, 2009, 6:30 pm

Austro-American Society

Stallburggasse 2, 1010 Vienna

### ■ WHERE PRIVATE INVESTMENT MEETS PUBLIC INTEREST

#### A lecture by **Joerg F. Maas**

Executive Director and President, Jugend Forscht e.V.

Member of the Board, Austro-American Institute of Education

Welcome Remarks by **Alexander Janda** (Director of the Austrian Fund for Integration;  
Chairman of the Board, Austro-American Institute of Education)

and **Margaret C. White** (Assistant Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Embassy, Vienna)

Friday, October 30, 2009, 6:30 pm

Amerika Haus

Friedrich-Schmidt-Platz 2, 1010 Vienna

\*\*\*\*\*

### Impressum:

American Reference Center • U.S. Embassy • Boltzmanngasse 16 • 1090 Vienna •

Phone: (01) 405 30 33 • Fax: (01) 406 52 60 • E-Mail: [arc@usembassy.at](mailto:arc@usembassy.at)

Internet: <http://www.usembassy.at/en/embassy/arc.htm>

Please send your comments to [arc@usembassy.at](mailto:arc@usembassy.at)