

目 录

Chapter 1 Panoramic View	1
1.1 Overview	1
1.2 Geography of the United States	4
1.3 Climate & Environment	6
1.4 American Dream	8
Chapter 2 A Nation of Immigration	18
2.1 The Colonial Period	20
2.2 The Old Immigration	22
2.3 New Immigration	24
2.4 Most Recent Immigration	27
2.5 Contemporary immigration	31
Chapter 3 Ethnic Groups in the United States	41
3.1 White Americans	42
3.2 Black Americans	44
3.3 Asian Americans	49
3.4 Native Americans and Alaska Natives	53
3.5 Hispanic and Latino Americans	56
Chapter 4 History of the United States	66
4.1 Colonial Period	68
4.2 Formation of the United States of America	70
4.3 Civil War Era	74
4.4 Two World Wars	76
4.5 The Cold War Era	81

4.6	The World Superpower	85
Chapter 5	Politics of the United States	97
5.1	Federal, State and Local Governments	98
5.2	Political Culture	102
5.3	Political Parties and Elections	103
5.4	Law of the United States	114
Chapter 6	Religion in the United States	124
6.1	Christianity	126
6.2	Other Religions	128
6.3	Religion and Politics	132
Chapter 7	Education in the United States	142
7.1	Elementary and Secondary Education	145
7.2	College and University	158
7.3	Contemporary Education Issues	163
Chapter 8	Society and Customs	181
8.1	Social Class and Race	182
8.2	American Social Life	186
8.3	National Holidays	200
8.4	Food and Sport Cultures	207
Chapter 9	Media of the United States	225
9.1	Radio	225
9.2	Newspapers and Magazines	226
9.3	Television in the United States	229
9.4	Cinema of the United States	238
Chapter 10	American Literature	256
10.1	Colonial Literature	256

10.2	American Poetry	260
10.3	Realism, Post-World War II	261
10.4	Contemporary American Literature	268
Bibliography	280

Chapter 1 Panoramic View

1.1 Overview

The United States of America (commonly referred to as the United States, the US, the USA, or America) is a federal constitutional republic comprising fifty states and a federal district. The country is situated mostly in central North America, where its forty-eight contiguous(相连的) states and Washington, D. C., the capital district, lie between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, bordered by Canada to the north and Mexico to the south. The state of Alaska is in the northwest of the continent, with Canada to its east and Russia to the west across the Bering Strait. The state of Hawaii is an archipelago(群岛) in the mid-Pacific. The country also possesses several territories, or insular(岛屿的) areas, in the Caribbean(加勒比海) and Pacific.

At 3.79 million square miles (9.83 million km²) and with about 308 million people, the United States is the third or fourth largest country by total area, and the third largest by land area and population. The United States is one of the world's most ethnically diverse and multicultural nations, the product of large-scale immigration from many countries. The US economy is the largest national economy in the world, with an estimated 2008 gross domestic product (GDP) of US \$ 14.4 trillion (a quarter of nominal global GDP and a fifth of global GDP at purchasing power parity). It is a leading economic, political, and cultural force in the world.

Indigenous(土著的) peoples, probably of Asian descent, have inhabited what is now the mainland United States for many thousands of years. This Native American population was greatly reduced by disease and warfare after European contact. The United States was founded by thirteen British colonies

located along the Atlantic seaboard. On July 4, 1776, they issued the Declaration of Independence, which proclaimed their right to self-determination and their establishment of a cooperative union. The rebellious states defeated Great Britain in the American Revolutionary War, the first successful colonial war of independence. The Philadelphia Convention adopted the current United States Constitution on September 17, 1787; its ratification (批准) the following year made the states part of a single republic with a strong central government. The Bill of Rights, comprising ten constitutional amendments guaranteeing many fundamental civil rights and freedoms, was ratified in 1791.



Map of the United States

In the 19th century, the United States acquired land from France, Spain, the United Kingdom, Mexico, and Russia, and annexed (并吞) the Republic of Texas and the Republic of Hawaii. Disputes between the agrarian South and industrial North over states' rights and the expansion of the institution of slavery provoked the American Civil War of the 1860s. The North's victory prevented a permanent split of the country and led to the end of legal slavery in the United States. By the 1870s, the national economy was the world's largest. The

Spanish—American War and World War I confirmed the country's status as a military power. It emerged from World War II as the first country with nuclear weapons and a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. The end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union left the United States as the sole superpower. The country accounts for two-fifths of global military spending and is a leading economic, political, and cultural force in the world.

American Culture

The development of the culture of the United States of America — History, Holidays, Sports, Religion, Cuisine(烹饪), Literature, Poetry, Music, Dance, Visual Arts, Cinema, and Architecture — has been marked by a tension between two strong sources of inspiration: European ideals, especially British, and domestic originality.

American culture encompasses traditions, ideals, customs, beliefs, values, arts, and innovations developed both domestically and imported via colonization and immigration. Prevalent ideas and ideals from the European continent such as Democracy, various forms of Monotheism(一神论), and Civil liberties are present as well as those which evolved domestically such as important National holidays, uniquely American sports, proud military tradition, innovations in the arts and entertainment, and a strong sense of national pride among the population as a whole.

It includes both conservative and liberal elements, military and scientific competitiveness, political structures, risk taking and free expression, materialist and moral elements.

It also includes elements which evolved from Native Americans, and other ethnic subcultures; most prominently the culture of former African-American slaves and different cultures from Latin America. Many cultural elements, especially popular culture have been exported across the globe through modern mass media, but a few of the cultural elements have remained rather exclusive to North America.

1.2 Geography of the United States

Physiographic(地形的)Divisions

The eastern United States has a varied topography(地形学). A broad, flat coastal plain lines the Atlantic and Gulf shores from the Texas-Mexico border to New York City, and includes the Florida peninsula. Areas further inland feature rolling hills and temperate forests. The Appalachian Mountains form a line of low mountains separating the eastern seaboard from the Great Lakes and the Mississippi Basin. The five Great Lakes are located in the north-central portion of the country, four of them forming part of the border with Canada. The southeast United States contain subtropical forests and, near the gulf coast, mangrove(红树林) wetlands, especially in Florida. West of the Appalachians(阿巴拉契亚山脉[北美洲]) lies the Mississippi River basin and two large eastern tributaries, the Ohio River and the Tennessee River. The Ohio and Tennessee Valleys and the Midwest consist largely of rolling hills and productive farmland, stretching south to the Gulf Coast.

The Great Plains lie west of the Mississippi River and east of the Rocky Mountains. A large portion of the country's agricultural products are grown in the Great Plains. Before their general conversion to farmland, the Great Plains were noted for their extensive grasslands, from tallgrass prairie(草原) in the eastern plains to shortgrass steppe(大草原) in the western High Plains. Elevation rises gradually from less than a few hundred feet near the Mississippi River to more than a mile high in the High Plains. The generally low relief(地貌) of the plains is broken in several places, most notably in the Ozark and Ouachita(美国中南部沃希托山脉) Mountains, which form the US Interior Highlands, the only major mountainous region between the Rocky Mountains and the Appalachian Mountains. The Great Plains come to an abrupt end at the Rocky Mountains. The Rocky Mountains form a large portion of the Western US, entering from Canada and stretching nearly to Mexico. The Rocky Mountains generally contain fairly mild slopes and low peaks compared to many of the other great mountain

ranges, with a few exceptions (such as the Teton Mountains in Wyoming and the Sawatch Range in Colorado). In addition, instead of being one generally continuous and solid mountain range, it is broken up into a number of smaller, intermittent mountain ranges, forming a large series of basins and valleys.

West of the Rocky Mountains lies the Intermontane Plateaus (also known as the Intermountain West), a large, arid desert lying between the Rockies and the Cascades and Sierra Nevada (内华达山脉) ranges. The large southern portion, known as the Great Basin, consists of salt flats, drainage basins, and many small north-south mountain ranges. The Southwest is predominantly a low-lying desert region. A portion known as the Colorado Plateau, centered around the Four Corners region, is considered to have some of the most spectacular scenery in the world. It is accentuated in such national parks as Grand Canyon, Arches, and Bryce Canyon, among others.

The Intermontane Plateaus come to an end at the Cascade Range and the Sierra Nevada. The Cascades consist of largely intermittent, volcanic mountains rising prominently from the surrounding landscape. The Sierra Nevada, further south, is a high, rugged, and dense mountain range. It contains the highest point in the contiguous 48 states, Mount Whitney (14,505 ft; 4,421 m). These areas contain some spectacular scenery as well, as evidenced by such national parks as Yosemite and Mount Rainier. West of the Cascades and Sierra Nevada is a series of valleys, such as the Central Valley in California and the Willamette Valley in Oregon. Along the coast is a series of low mountain ranges known as the Pacific Coast Ranges. Much of the Pacific Northwest coast is inhabited by some of the densest vegetation outside of the Tropics, and also the tallest trees in the world (the Redwoods).

Alaska contains some of the most dramatic and untapped scenery in the country. Tall, prominent mountain ranges rise up sharply from broad, flat tundra (苔原) plains. On the islands off the south and southwest coast are many volcanoes. Hawaii, far to the south of Alaska in the Pacific Ocean, is a chain of tropical, volcanic islands, popular as a tourist destination for many from East Asia and the mainland United States.

The geography of the United States varies across their immense area. Within the continental US, eight distinct physiographic divisions exist, though each is composed of several smaller physiographic subdivisions. These major

divisions are:

- Laurentian Upland—part of the Canadian Shield that extends into the northern United States Great Lakes area.

- Atlantic Plain—the coastal regions of the eastern and southern parts includes the continental shelf, the Atlantic Coast and the Gulf Coast.

- Appalachian Highlands—lying on the eastern side of the United States, it includes the Appalachian Mountains, the Watchung Mountains, the Adirondacks and New England province originally containing the Great Eastern Forest.

- Interior Plains—part of the interior continental United States, it includes much of what is called the Great Plains.

- Interior Highlands—also part of the interior continental United States, this division includes the Ozark Plateau.

- Rocky Mountain System—one branch of the Cordilleran system lying far inland in the western states.

- Intermontane Plateaus—also divided into the Columbia Plateau, the Colorado Plateau and the Basin and Range Province, it is a system of plateaus, basins, ranges and gorges between the Rocky and Pacific Mountain Systems. It is the setting for the Grand Canyon, the Great Basin and Death Valley.

- Pacific Mountain System—the coastal mountain ranges and features in the west coast of the United States.

1.3 Climate & Environment

Climate of the United States

The United States includes a wide variety of climate types due to its large size, range of geographic features, and noncontiguous arrangement. In the contiguous United States to the east of the 100th meridian(子午线), the climate ranges from humid continental in the north to humid subtropical in the south. The southern tip of Florida is tropical. The Great Plains west of the 100th meridian are semi-arid. Much of the Rocky Mountains, the Sierra Nevada, and the Cascade Range are alpine(高山气候). The climate is arid in the Great Basin,

desert in the Southwest, Mediterranean(地中海气候) in coastal California, and oceanic in coastal Oregon and Washington. The state of Alaska—on the northwestern corner of the North American continent—is largely subarctic, with an oceanic climate in its southern edge and a polar climate in the north. The archipelago state of Hawaii, in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, is tropical.

Extreme weather is not uncommon—the states bordering the Gulf of Mexico are prone to hurricanes, and tornadoes(龙卷风) regularly occur in the area of the Midwest referred to as Tornado Alley. The United States has more tornadoes than the rest of the world combined.

Environment of the United States

Biota

With habitats ranging from tropical to Arctic, US plant life is very diverse. The country has more than 17,000 identified native species of flora(植物群), including 5,000 in California (home to the tallest, the most massive, and the oldest trees in the world). More than 400 mammal, 700 bird, 500 reptile(爬行类) and amphibian(两栖), and 90,000 insect species have been documented. Wetlands such as the Florida Everglades are the base for much of this diversity. The country's ecosystems include thousands of nonnative exotic species that often harm indigenous plant and animal communities.

Many plant and animal species became extinct soon after first human settlement, including the North American megafauna(巨型动物); others have become nearly extinct since European settlement, among them the American Bison(野牛) and California Condor(秃鹫).

Environmental Law and Conservation

In 1872, the world's first national park was established at Yellowstone. Another fifty-seven national parks and hundreds of other federally managed parks and forests have since been formed. Wilderness areas have been established around the country to ensure long-term protection of pristine habitats.

Altogether, the US government regulates 1,020,779 square miles (2,643,807 km²), 28.8% of the country's total land area. Protected parks and forestland constitute most of this. As of March 2004, approximately 16% of public land under Bureau of Land Management administration was being leased for commercial oil and natural gas drilling; public land is also leased for mining and cattle ranching.

1.4 American Dream

The American Dream is a national ethos(民族精神)of the United States of America in which democratic ideals are perceived as a promise of prosperity for its people. In the American Dream, first expressed by James Truslow Adams in 1931, citizens of every rank feel that they can achieve a “better, richer, and happier life”. The idea of the American Dream is rooted in the second sentence of the Declaration of Independence which states that “all men are created equal” and that they have “certain inalienable Rights” including “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness”.

The “American Dream” has been credited with helping to build a cohesive American experience but has also been blamed for overinflated expectations. The presence of the American Dream has not historically helped the majority of minority race and lower class American citizens to gain a greater degree of social equality and influence. Instead, the American wealth structure has often been observed to sustain class differences in which well-positioned groups continue to be advantaged.

In common parlance, the term American Dream is often used as a synonym for home ownership since homes have historically been seen as status symbols separating the middle classes and the poor. This usage, though, while common, is generally considered a very specific use of a more general term.

Since the early 19th century, the United States has regarded and promoted itself as a beacon of liberty and prosperity achieved through a combination of the philosophical and ethical principles propounded by its founders and implemented in their most perfect form. In tandem with this is its natural wealth and bounty within the New World.

The meaning of the ‘American Dream’ has evolved over the course of American history. While historically traced to the New World mystique — the availability of land and the continuing American expansion—the ethos today simply indicates the ability, through participation in the resonant society and culture of the United States, to bring prosperity to oneself.

America has been viewed as a land in which one’s prospects in life are defined by one’s talents and energy rather than by one’s family wealth or political connections.

According to the dream, this includes the opportunity for one’s children to grow up and receive an American education and its consequent career opportunities. It is the opportunity to make individual choices without the restrictions of class, caste, religion, race, or ethnic group.

According to researcher Tommi Uschanov, “american dream” actually characterizes better European societies in which people who born to lower social classes are—according to statistical data—more likely to reach upper social classes during their lives than in the United States.

Historian and writer James Truslow Adams coined the phrase “American Dream” in his 1931 book *Epic of America*:

“The American Dream is that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement. It is a difficult dream for the European upper classes to interpret adequately, and too many of us ourselves have grown weary and mistrustful of it. It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous (偶然的) circumstances of birth or position.”

In recent years, the concept of the American Dream as a national ideal has been studied by various organizations. The conclusions of these studies indicate that during the 1990s to the 2000s, a period of remarkable wealth for the US, an increasing number of people confess to having lost faith in the American Dream.

Questions

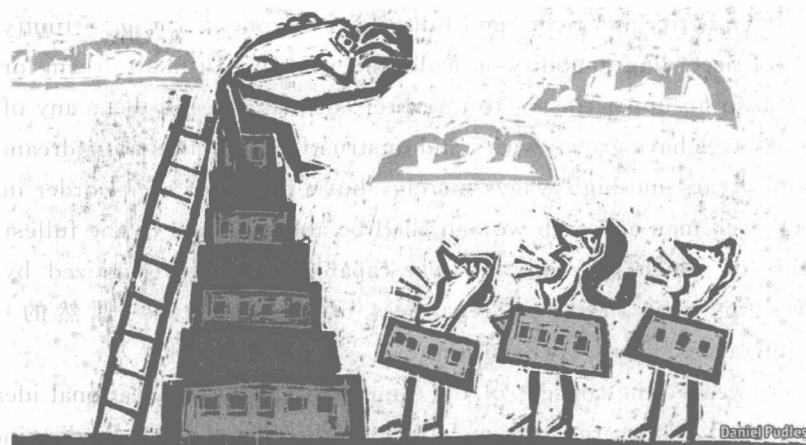
1. Three primary characteristics of the American landscape are its insulation from Europe and Asia (by the Atlantic and Pacific oceans), its expanse and variety of resources, and its natural network of waterways. How have these physical features encouraged national integration of the country?
2. Describe the geography of three or four regions in the United States.
3. Why is tornado a unique American climate phenomenon?
4. Discuss the importance of Mississippi River and Rocky Mountains?
5. How do you think of "American Dream"?

Supplementary Reading 1

The Gift of Tongues

By Michael Erard

What makes some people learn language after language?



Babel No More: The Search for the World's Most Extraordinary Language Learners

CARDINAL MEZZOFANTI of Bologna was a secular saint. Though he

never performed the kind of miracle needed to be officially canonised, his power was close to unearthly. Mezzofanti was said to speak 72 languages. Or 50. Or to have fully mastered 30. No one was certain of the true figure, but it was a lot. Visitors flocked from all corners of Europe to test him and came away stunned. He could switch between languages with ease. Two condemned prisoners were due to be executed, but no one knew their language to hear their confession. Mezzofanti learned it in a night, heard their sins the next morning and saved them from hell.

Or so the legend goes. In “Babel No More”, Michael Erard has written the first serious book about the people who master vast numbers of languages—or claim to. A journalist with some linguistics training, Mr. Erard is not a hyperpolyglot himself (he speaks some Spanish and Chinese), but he approaches his topic with both wonder and a healthy dash of scepticism.

Mezzofanti, for example, was a high-ranking clergyman born in 1774. In most of his interactions, he would have been the one to pick the topic of conversation, and he could rely on the same formulae he had used many times. He lived in an age when “knowing” a language more often meant reading and translating rather than speaking fluently with natives. Nonetheless, Mezzofanti clearly had speaking talent; his English accent was so good as to be almost too correct, an Irish observer noted.

To find out whether anyone could really learn so many languages, Mr. Erard set out to find modern Mezzofantis. The people he meets are certainly interesting. One man with a mental age of nine has a vast memory for foreign words and the use of grammatical endings, but he cannot seem to break free of English word-order. Ken Hale, who was a linguist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and died in 2001, was said to have learned 50 languages, including notoriously difficult Finnish while on a flight to Helsinki. Professional linguists still swear by his talent. But he insisted he spoke only three (English, Spanish and Warlpiri—from Australia’s Northern Territory) and could merely “talk in” others.

Mr. Erard says that true hyperpolyglottery begins at about 11 languages, and that while legends abound, tried and tested exemplars are few. Ziad Fazah, raised in Lebanon and now living in Brazil, once held the Guinness world record

for 58 languages. But when surprised on a Chilean television show by native speakers, he utterly flubbed questions in Finnish, Mandarin, Farsi and Russian (including “What day is it today?” in Russian), a failure that lives in infamy on YouTube. Perhaps he was a fraud; perhaps he simply had a miserable day. Hyperpolyglots must warm up or “prime” their weaker languages, with a few hours’ or days’ practice, to use them comfortably. Switching quickly between more than around six or seven is near-impossible even for the most gifted.

Does that mean they don’t really know them? Is instant availability of native-like competence the only standard for “knowing” a language? How should partly knowing a tongue be tallied? What if you can only read in it? Mr. Erard repeatedly peppers his text with such questions, feeling his way through his story as a thoughtful observer, rather than banging about like an academic with a theory to defend or a pitchman with a technique to sell.

Hyperpolyglots are more likely to be introverted than extroverted, which may come as a surprise to some. Hale’s son always said that, in his father’s case, languages were a cloak for a shy man. Another, Alexander Arguelles, has learned dozens of languages only to read them, saying “It’s rare that you have an interesting conversation in English. Why do I think it would be any better in another language?” Emil Krebs, an early-20th-century German diplomat who was also credited with knowing dozens of languages, was boorish in all of them. He once refused to speak to his wife for several months because she told him to put on a winter coat.

Different hypotheses may explain part of the language-learner’s gift. Some hyperpolyglots seem near-autistic. In support, Mr Erard points to the theory of Simon Baron-Cohen, of Cambridge University, that autists have an “extreme male brain” that seeks to master systems. Another hypothesis is the “Geschwind-Galaburda” cluster of traits. Supposedly resulting from abnormal antenatal exposure to hormones, this cluster includes maleness, homosexuality, left-handedness, poor visual-spatial skills, immune disorders, and perhaps also language-learning talent. Brain areas are also keyed to certain skills. The left Heschl’s gyrus is bigger than average in professional phoneticians. People who learn new vocabulary quickly show more activity in the hippocampus. Krebs’s brain, preserved in slices at a laboratory in Düsseldorf, shows various unusual

features.

The discovery of the FOXP2 brain gene, a mutation of which can cause language loss, was met with considerable excitement when it was announced over a decade ago. But the reality is that many parts of the brain work together to produce speech and no single gene, region of the brain or theory can explain successful language-learning. In the end Mr Erard is happy simply to meet interesting characters, tell fascinating tales and round up the research without trying to judge which is the best work.

At the end of his story, however, he finds a surprise in Mezzofanti's archive: flashcards. Stacks of them, in Georgian, Hungarian, Arabic, Algonquin and nine other tongues. The world's most celebrated hyperpolyglot relied on the same tools given to first-year language-learners today. The conclusion? Hyperpolyglots may begin with talent, but they aren't geniuses. They simply enjoy tasks that are drudgery to normal people. The talent and enjoyment drive a virtuous cycle that pushes them to feats others simply shake their heads at, admiration mixed with no small amount of incomprehension.

<http://www.economist.com/node/21542170>

Supplementary Reading 2

Harder for Americans to Rise from Lower Rungs

By Jason deParle

WASHINGTON — Benjamin Franklin did it. Henry Ford did it. And American life is built on the faith that others can do it, too: rise from humble origins to economic heights. “Movin’ on up”, George Jefferson-style, is not only a sitcom song but a civil religion.

But many researchers have reached a conclusion that turns conventional wisdom on its head: Americans enjoy less economic mobility than their peers in Canada and much of Western Europe. The mobility gap has been widely

discussed in academic circles, but a sour season of mass unemployment and street protests has moved the discussion toward center stage.

Former Senator Rick Santorum of Pennsylvania, a Republican candidate for president, warned this fall that movement “up into the middle income is actually greater, the mobility in Europe, than it is in America.” *National Review*, a conservative thought leader, wrote that “most Western European and English-speaking nations have higher rates of mobility.” Even Representative Paul D. Ryan, a Wisconsin Republican who argues that overall mobility remains high, recently wrote that “mobility from the very bottom up” is “where the United States lags behind.”

Liberal commentators have long emphasized class, but the attention on the right is largely new.

“It’s becoming conventional wisdom that the US does not have as much mobility as most other advanced countries,” said Isabel V. Sawhill, an economist at the Brookings Institution. “I don’t think you’ll find too many people who will argue with that.”

One reason for the mobility gap may be the depth of American poverty, which leaves poor children starting especially far behind. Another may be the unusually large premiums that American employers pay for college degrees. Since children generally follow their parents’ educational trajectory, that premium increases the importance of family background and stymies people with less schooling.

At least five large studies in recent years have found the United States to be less mobile than comparable nations. A project led by Markus Jantti, an economist at a Swedish university, found that 42 percent of American men raised in the bottom fifth of incomes stay there as adults. That shows a level of persistent disadvantage much higher than in Denmark (25 percent) and Britain (30 percent) — a country famous for its class constraints.

Meanwhile, just 8 percent of American men at the bottom rose to the top fifth. That compares with 12 percent of the British and 14 percent of the Danes.

Despite frequent references to the United States as a classless society, about 62 percent of Americans (male and female) raised in the top fifth of incomes stay in the top two-fifths, according to research by the Economic Mobility Project of