



全人教育英语专业本科教材系列
ENGLISH TEXTBOOK SERIES FOR HOLISTIC EDUCATION

总顾问 | 仲伟合 刘润清
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ENGLISH COUNTRY PROFILES

英语国家概况 (下册)

主 编 | 谢世坚



 中国人民大学出版社



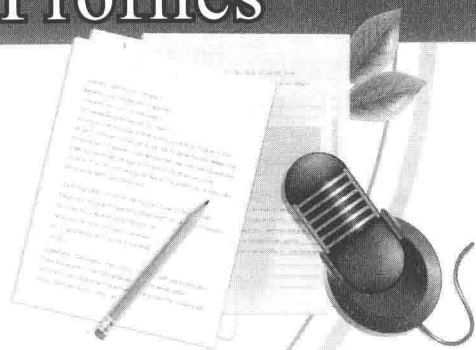
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中国人民大学出版社
· 北京 ·

图书在版编目 (CIP) 数据

英语国家概况 / 谢世坚主编. —北京: 中国人民大学出版社, 2016.6

全人教育英语专业本科教材系列 / 文旭总主编

ISBN 978-7-300-22728-3

I. ①英... II. ①谢... III. ①英语-阅读教学-高等学校-教材 IV. ①H319.4

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2016) 第069200号

全人教育英语专业本科教材系列

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Yingyu Guojia Gaikuang

出版发行 中国人民大学出版社

社 址 北京中关村大街31号

电 话 010-62511242 (总编室)

010-82501766 (邮购部)

010-62515195 (发行公司)

网 址 <http://www.crup.com.cn>

<http://www.ttrnet.com> (人大教研网)

经 销 新华书店

印 刷 北京宏伟双华印刷有限公司

规 格 200 mm × 252 mm 16 开本

印 张 44

字 数 1 090 000

邮政编码 100080

010-62511770 (质管部)

010-62514148 (门市部)

010-62515275 (盗版举报)

版 次 2016年6月第1版

印 次 2016年6月第1次印刷

定 价 78.00 元

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USA

The United States of America

Chapter 1 Land and People

Chapter 2 History

Chapter 3 Politics

Chapter 4 Economy

Chapter 5 Education

Chapter 6 Religion

Chapter 7 Literature

Chapter 8 Sports, Holidays and Festivals

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Chapter 10 Foreign Relations



USA

Chapter

1

Land and People



Focal Points

1. The United States of America is a country located in Central America with a total area of 9,826,675 square kilometers including its mainland states and other possessions and territories.
2. The United States has a long coastline of 8,000 kilometres without counting the islands.
3. Located mainly in the Northern Temperate Zone, the United States has a climate which is generally temperate with some subtropical zones. But owing to its large size and varied landforms, there are different types of climates in different regions across the country.



Pre-class Work

1. What is the geographical location of the United States? What are the regions in its mainland area?
2. What are the different climates in the United States?

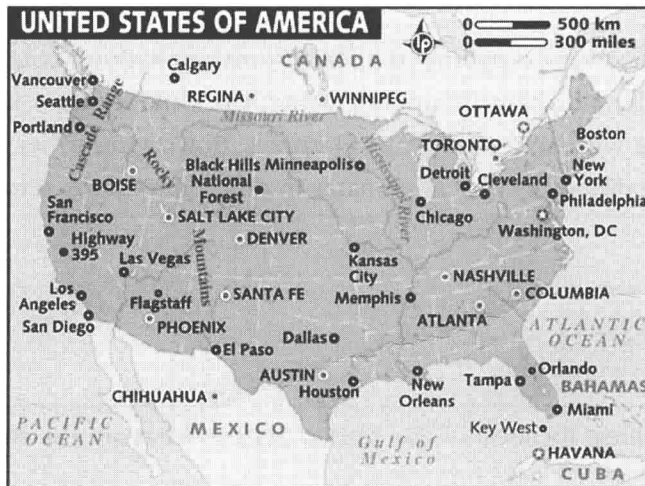
1.1 An Overview

The United States of America, often shortened to the US or America, is a country located in

Central America between Canada and Mexico. The total area covers 9,826,675 square kilometers (according to the *CIA World Factbook*) and the country has a population of about 310 million (2010). The national capital, Washington District of Columbia (Washington, D.C.), is located in the State of Maryland.

Geographically, the US lies in the western hemisphere between latitudes 25° N to 49° N, and longitudes 70° W to 130° W. The United States shares land borders with Canada to the north and Mexico to the south, and a territorial water border with Russia in the northwest, and two territorial water borders in the southeast between Florida and Cuba, and Florida and the Bahamas. Ranking the third largest country by land area in the world, the US is made up of 50 states, among which 48 are located in the mainland while two states, Alaska and Hawaii, are located respectively in the far northwest corner of the continent and the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

In addition, the US has a long coastline of 19,920 kilometers. The 48 states on the continent are bounded by the Pacific Ocean on the west, the Atlantic Ocean on the east, and the Gulf of Mexico to the southeast. For the other two separated states, Alaska borders the Pacific Ocean to the south, the Bering Strait to the west, and the Arctic Ocean to the north, while Hawaii lies far to the southwest of the mainland in the Pacific Ocean. Besides the 50 constituent states, the US territory also includes other separated possessions, such as territories of Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands in the Caribbean and the territories of Guam, American Samoa, Samoa and the Northern Mariana Islands in the Pacific, together with other uninhabited islands, adding another 17,600 square kilometers to its total area.



Map of the US

1.2 Physiographic Divisions

As a vast country lying across the Central America, the US has a varied topography. Generally,



the geological and topographical outline of the US is formed around a large interior lowland, which is the heartland for agriculture and mineral wealth. From the east to the west, a diversity of topographic features around this lowland can be found. In the east, a broad, flat coastal plain lines the Atlantic and Gulf shores from the Texas-Mexico border in the south to the New York City in the north, and includes the Florida peninsula. However, rolling hills and temperate forests are the main features of the inland area. The Appalachian Mountains, which run from the north to the south and form a line of low mountains, separate the eastern part from the Great Lakes and the Mississippi Basin.

Located in the north-central portion of the country, the five Great Lakes, including Lake Erie, Lake Huron, Lake Michigan, Lake Ontario and Lake Superior, form the largest group of freshwater lakes on Earth. Four of them form part of the border with Canada, with only Lake Michigan situated entirely within the United States. Down in the south, the southeast area features subtropical forests and, near the gulf coast, mangrove wetlands, especially in Florida.

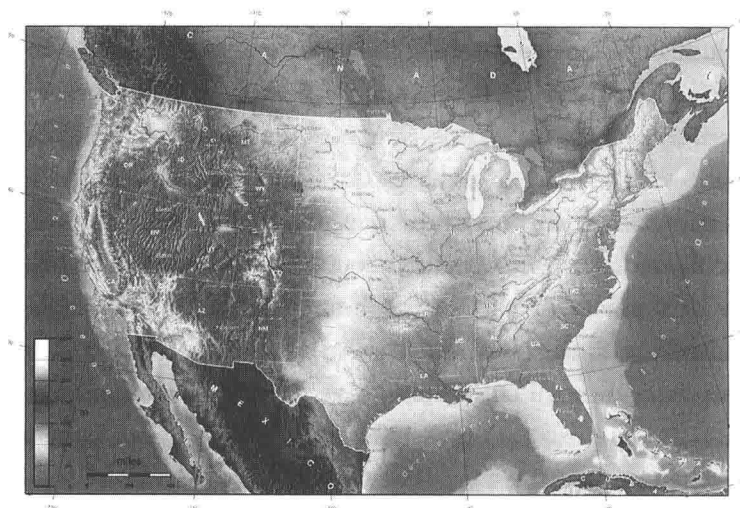
West of the Appalachians lies the Mississippi River, which is the geographic symbol for the dividing line between the east and the west. The Great Plains lie west of the Mississippi River and east of the Rocky Mountains. A large portion of the country's agricultural products are grown in the Great Plains. This part of the land has a large number of its population. The lowland rises gradually toward the north, from less than a few hundred feet near the Mississippi River to more than a mile high in the High Plains, where it thrusts against the wilderness bulwark of the Canadian Shield. The Ozark and Ouachita Mountains break the overall lowland in some places, which form the US Interior Highlands, the only major mountainous region between the Rocky Mountains and the Appalachian Mountains.

The Rocky Mountains(落基山脉), which form a large portion of the western US, puts an end to the Great Plains. The Rocky Mountains enter from Canada and stretches nearly to Mexico, and this region is the highest region of the United States by average elevation. The Rocky Mountains generally have mild slopes and wider peaks. The highest peaks of the Rockies are found in Colorado, with the tallest peak being Mount Elbert(厄尔柏山) at 4,400 meters. Quite different from the Appalachians which last unbroken without remarkable scenery, the Rocky Mountains are broken up into a number of smaller, intermittent mountain ranges and boasts of some of the most spectacular, and well-known scenery in the world.

Lying west of the Rocky Mountains are the Intermontane Plateaus(山地中部高原), which is a system of plateaus, basins, ranges and gorges between the Rocky and Pacific Mountain Systems. The Intermontane Plateaus consist of a large area of salt flats called the Great Basin, a low-lying desert in the southwest and the Colorado Plateau where some of the most wonderful scenery in the world can be found.

The Intermontane Plateaus come to an end at the Cascade Range(喀斯喀特山脉)and the Sierra Nevada(内华达山脉). The Cascades consist of largely intermittent, volcanic mountains,

many rising prominently from the surrounding landscape. A series of valleys lie west of the Cascades and Sierra Nevada, 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.



Topography of the US

Usually, the United States is divided into three geographical areas: the eastern part, the western part and the Great Plains in between.

The Eastern Part

In the eastern part, there are highlands formed by the Appalachian Range, which takes up one sixth of the continental American territory. The Atlantic coast of the United States is low, with few exception. The average elevation is only 800 meters. The eastern coast Appalachian system, which was originally forest-covered, now is bordered on the southeast and south by important coastal plains. The Appalachian Range, which covers 3,200 kilometers, begins from the northeastern border with Canada and stretches to central Alabama far down in the south.

The Western Part

While the Atlantic coast is relatively low, the Pacific coast in the western part is generally hilly or mountainous. The western part of America, includes high plateaus and mountains extending from the Canadian border to the south. The Rocky Mountains, with an average altitude of 4,000 meters above sea level and stretching more than 4,830 kilometers from Montana and Idaho into New Mexico, have the most spectacular view in the western plateaus.

The Great Plains

Lying between the Appalachians in the east and the Rocky Mountains in the west, the Great Plains holds one third of the American landmass on the continent. This area begins from the Great Lakes in the north and extends to the Gulf of Mexico in the south.



With regard to the other two states, Alaska has tall, prominent mountain ranges rising up sharply from broad, flat tundra plains. On the islands off the south and southwest coast are many volcanoes. Hawaii, lying separately far to the south of Alaska in the Pacific Ocean, is a chain of tropical, volcanic islands, which is a popular tourist destination for many people from East Asia and the mainland United States.

1.3 Six Regions

The total territory of the United States is made up of Washington, D.C., and 50 states, 48 of which are located in the mainland and Alaska and Hawaii are located respectively in the far northwest corner of the continent and the middle of the Pacific Ocean, and other offshore islands. The 48 states on the main continent are, namely, Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming.



States of the United States

According to history, geography as well as economy, the United States can be divided into six regions. The six regions are, New England, the Mid-Atlantic States, the South, the Midwest, the Southwest and the West.

New England, which boasts of its long history, is the location of the first European settlement. Geographically, this region features mountains, valleys and rivers. This region includes 6 states in the northeastern part of the country, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. Historic cities and towns concentrate in this region and there are many famous universities and colleges like Harvard, and Yale.

The Mid-Atlantic States include the central states along the Atlantic Ocean. They are, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, and Delaware.

The South consists of 12 states and the District of Columbia. The South is an area rich in precipitation and plantations. The 12 states are, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee, Louisiana, and Arkansas.

The Midwest traditionally refers to the states lying in the area of the Great Lakes and the Great Plains in the northern part of Central America. There are 12 states in this region, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota.

The West is composed of 9 states, including Washington, Montana, Oregon, California, Colorado, Nevada, Utah, Wyoming, and Idaho. California lies on the coast of the Pacific, and there are some large cities in the state, such as San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego. With a huge fertile central valley, the state is also the center of agriculture as well as high-tech industry.

The Southwest consists of New Mexico, Arizona, Oklahoma and Texas.

Alaska, a state lying in the northwestern part of America, is far from the mainland continent. The state became a part of the American territory in 1959. Stretching southward from the Arctic Ocean to the Pacific, the state is known for its glaciers, waterfall and lakes. Eskimos are the native people in Alaska.

1.4 Climate

The United States is mainly located in the Northern Temperate Zone. The climate is generally temperate with some subtropical zones. Owing to its large size and varied landforms, the United States has different types of climates in different regions. The climate is temperate in most areas, subtropical in the Southern United States, tropical in Hawaii and southern Florida, polar in Alaska, semi-arid in the Great Plains, Mediterranean in coastal California and arid in the Great Basin.

The eastern part of the country is usually humid. The area which lies on the Canadian border is a region of northern forest which extends from Maine across northern New England and the upper Great Lakes. There are long winters in this part. Moving southward, the temperature gradually moderates and there are shorter cold winters and hot summers. However, the South, including Florida and Hawaii has a tropical climate.

Quite opposite to the east, the west is rather dry and arid where there are deserts lying in the Sierra Nevada and Cascade Mountain Ranges. There is little rainfall in this region with an average precipitation of less than 15 inches.

Between the east and the west, there is a large zone of humid-arid transition. There are large stretches of farmland with fertile soil. This is an area for grazing and agriculture. The mountains



of the west receive abundant precipitation and very heavy snowfall. The Cascades are one of the snowiest places in the world, but the lower elevations closer to the coast receive very little snow.

Across the Rocky Mountains, a Mediterranean climate is predominant in the western states. Rainfall differs in regions. Much of California sometimes has excessive rainfall from October to April and nearly no rain the rest of the year. However, in the Pacific Northwest, rain falls year-round, but is much heavier during winter and spring. The west coast has a moderate temperature all year long due to the westerly winds from the ocean. The cities in the west enjoy cool summers and mild winters.

The Southwest is a hot desert, with temperatures exceeding 37.8 °C for several weeks at a time in summer. The Southwest and the Great Basin are also affected by the monsoon from the Gulf of California from July to September, which brings severe thunderstorms to the region. During the summer months the temperature in the region can reach as high as over 38 °C while in winter, daily temperatures in the southwest are cooler. In winter there is more rainfall. After winter storms from the Pacific have concluded and before the southwestern summer “monsoon” begins, this area enters the dry season and June is often the driest month. The states, such as New Mexico, Utah and northern Arizona have a temperate semi-desert to desert climate, with colder and snowier winters and less-hot summers.

To classify the climate of the United States, in northern areas, the climate is usually humid continental; however, it changes to be humid temperate in the central and middle Atlantic coast regions. Then down in the Gulf and south Atlantic regions, it is humid subtropical. The southern tip of Florida is tropical. In the areas of higher elevation like the Rocky Mountains, the Wasatch (瓦萨奇山脉) and Big Horn Mountain Ranges, the Sierra Nevada, and the Cascade Range, the climate is alpine. The climate along the coast of California is Mediterranean, while the upper West Coast areas in coastal Oregon and Washington are cool temperate oceanic. The separate state, the state of Alaska, lying on the northwestern corner of the North American continent, is largely subarctic with a polar climate in the north but a cool oceanic climate in the southeast, southwestern peninsula and Aleutian Islands. The other separate archipelago state in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, Hawaii has a tropical climate, with rainfall concentrated in the cooler season from November to March.

1.5 People

1.5.1 Demography

The United States has been a population destination for people from other backgrounds. Being the third most populous nation in the world, the US has a total population of 314 million in 2012, ranking only after China and India. The population of the US has been increasing all the time.

The distribution of the population in the U.S. is unbalanced. Half of the population are living in the northeastern part of the country, which occupies only a quarter of the total area. However, the Great Plains have only a small population. In the South, there are about 100 million people while the West is not densely-populated since most of its people are concentrated in several metropolitan centers such as Los Angeles and San Francisco.

According to the *CIA World Factbook*, as of 2012, the age group 0–14 accounted for 19.8 percent of the total population, and the number of female and male was almost equal, with 31.639 million males and 30.305 million females; and the age group of 15–64 covered 66.8 percent, with 101.612 million females and 104.577 million males altogether; the last age group included those over 65 with a number of 41.50 million (23.17 million females and 18.33 million males). Due to the declining births at the beginning of the 21st century, there is a smaller number of children aged five to nine, but in recent years with the growing births, the category of 0 to four years is broadening. At higher ages, females outnumber males in general and also, females have long life expectancy than the counterparts.

1.5.2 Immigration

The US has been a multinational and multi-ethnic society in its history. Immigration throughout the time has enriched its citizenship. With people from different cultural traditions, ethnic customs, and national origins as well as races, the United States has formed its own unique identity with the name “the new men, called Americans.”

The earliest immigrants to arrive on the American continent were a group of Asians as early as 12,000 years ago. After the discovery of the New World by Columbus, a group of Europeans came to the land boarding the ship “Mayflower” in 1620. These people were the first immigrants and now a majority of Americans are descendants of the European immigrants. In the early years of the United States, immigration was fewer than 8,000 people a year, including French refugees from the slave revolt in Haiti. After 1820, immigration gradually increased. From 1836 to 1914, over 30 million Europeans migrated to the United States.

After the early settlements, the first large wave of European migration after the Revolutionary War came from Northern and Central-Western Europe between about the 1830s and the 1840s. Most of these immigrants were from Ireland, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, and Britain, among whom there were many Roman Catholics.

The second wave of European Americans arrived from the mid-1890s to the 1920s, mainly from Southern, Central and Eastern Europe, as well as Ireland. This wave included Irish, Italians, Greeks, Hungarians, Portuguese, Ukrainians, Russians, Poles and others. Meanwhile, large numbers of immigrants arrived from Spain, Mexico, Spanish Caribbean, and South and Central America. During that period, America was going through a shift from an agricultural country to an industrialized nation. A number of immigrants settled in cities and found jobs in factories.



However, since these immigrants only sought to make a living on low wages, other workers in labor unions regarded these people as threats and such opposition led to the Immigration Act 1924, which restricted immigration, especially from Europe. The immigrants concentrated in different areas.

Since the early 1600s, Africans were brought to the American South. Since then, more ships brought Africans to America. These Africans were treated as slaves and servants. By 1860, there were 3.5 million to 4.4 million enslaved African Americans in the United States due to the Atlantic Slave Trade, and black people suffered from great discrimination until the mid-20th century. In modern times, African immigrants arrived in large numbers in the United States. As reported in 2005, the number of Africans immigrating to the United States, in a single year, surpassed the peak number who were involuntarily brought to the United States during the Atlantic Slave Trade.

The first group of Asian immigrants to the United States were the Chinese who came to work in the gold mines during the Gold Rush. Later, more Chinese arrived to build the transcontinental railroad. However, the Congress passed a series of laws culminating in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which banned Chinese immigration until 1943. Between the 1880s and 1908, a large number of Japanese arrived and settled on the West Coast and small groups of Koreans and East Indians followed to the islands and western states. Meanwhile, other Asians like Filipinos also immigrated to Hawaii. However, the Asian immigrants declined due to the restrictive immigration laws in the 19th century. In 1965, the new Immigration and Nationality Act Amendments enabled Asian immigrants to enjoy equal chance of immigration, which led to great waves of Asians immigrating to America. In modern times, Asian immigrants have become a major source of immigration in the United States.

Throughout the history, the US has received successions of immigrants from other parts of the world, Africa, Asia, America, and Europe, which have helped to establish the multicultural communities and contributed to the economic and social development of the US.

1.5.3 Ethnic Groups

The United States is a nation of immigrants. In different historical periods, waves of people coming from different backgrounds arrive in America. There are varied ethnic groups in the country; therefore, the country is called a melting pot. Now, the majority of American people are descendants of the European immigrants. There are other ethnic groups, among which some are distinct, the Indians, the Hispanics, Black Americans, and Asian Americans.

Native American Indians

Before Columbus discovered the American Continent in 1492, a group of people called



Indians lived on the land. It is thought that these people crossed the land bridge between Alaska and the Asian Continent and arrived about 40,000 years ago. They settled across the land in North, Central and South America and lived a hunter-gatherer lifestyle with some by fishing and herding. Gradually, these Native Americans developed cultures and organizational structures. However, the societies and languages of these people were simple.

When the continent was discovered in 1492, the population of Indians was about 10 million. With more and more European settlements, the Native Americans suffered from European discovery of gold and other treasures. Conflicts arose between the Indian inhabitants and Europeans. With the Westward Movement, these Indians met destruction. The Indians were driven out of their traditional land and their community life was disturbed. Eventually, these Indians were moved to federally designated land called "Indian Reservations." Throughout the history, the American Indians generally resisted racial assimilation. They have kept themselves separate and continued their distinct lifestyle. However, the population has decreased to 2.9 million at present and these Indians suffer from poverty and unemployment on their reservations. In 2005, about 1 percent of American population identified themselves as Indians and half of them lived on federal reservations. Most of the American Indians live by farming.

The US federal and local governments have spent large amounts of money on the Native Americans to provide their living with health, social and educational services. Despite this, the American Indians are still poorer than other ethnic groups in terms of income.

Europeans

European Americans are a subset of White Americans. Among the ethnic groups, they form the largest one with a total population of 228,474,000 by 2013, covering 74% of the total U.S. population. European Americans come from different origins, including Germany, England, Italy, France, Ireland, Austria, Russia, Sweden and a number of European countries. According to the 2013 American Community Survey, the four largest self-reported European ancestry groups in the United States are German Americans 14.6% of the total ethnic population, Irish Americans 10.5%, English Americans 7.7% and Italian Americans 5.4%, forming 38.2% of the country's total population.

Europeans were early settlers on the American land. Since America was established as a colony, Europeans have been the largest group of immigrants. Before 1881, the vast majority of European immigrants, almost 86% of the total, came from Northwest Europe, principally Great Britain, Ireland, Germany, and Scandinavia. After the Revolutionary War, a large number of Europeans arrived from Ireland, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, and Britain. Between 1894 and 1914, immigrants from Southern, Central, and Eastern Europe accounted for 69% of the total. Since 1607, some 57 million immigrants have come to the United States from other lands.

European settlements are distributed throughout the country and the New York Metropolitan



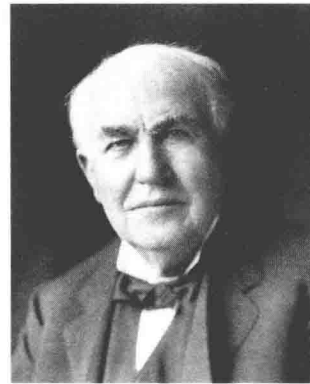
Area is home to the largest European population in the United States. And their culture forms the mainstream culture of the country. Actually, the American culture has developed from a special branch of British culture to an independent and influential culture in the West, which can be attributed to its large number of European communities. From the very beginning of the American history, European immigrants have made themselves prominent in every aspect of American life, including the presidents, novelists, economists, and etc., for example, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, scientists like Thomas Edison, famous stars like Marilyn Monroe, Madonna, and best-known writers like Mark Twain, Earnest Hemingway.



Mark Twain



Marilyn Monroe



Thomas Alva Edison

Hispanic Americans

Hispanic Americans and Latino Americans refer to the descendants of the peoples of the countries of Latin America and Iberia. According to the report in 2014, the Hispanic American population reached 55,387,539, about 17.37% of total U.S. population. The American Census Bureau includes people of the following countries as Hispanic or Latino: Spain, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, El Salvador, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela. And at present, Hispanic Americans are the second fastest-growing ethnic group in the United States after Asian Americans. The United States has the second-largest community of people of Hispanic origin other than Mexico.

In history, Spanish explorers were pioneers in the territory of the present-day United States and now the Hispanics are the oldest ethnic group to inhabit the land only after Native Americans. In 1513, Juan Ponce de León made the first confirmed European landing in the continental US. Since the 16th century, Hispanics have been settled continuously in the territory of the United States. In the later years after the landing, the Spanish became the first Europeans to reach the Appalachian Mountains, the Mississippi River, the Grand Canyon and the Great Plains. In 1565 the Spanish created the first permanent European settlement in the continental United States, at St. Augustine, Florida.