

BACKGROUND TO THE



美国背景

USA

R. 穆斯曼 著

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美 国 背 景 (附中文注释)

麦克米伦出版有限公司

世界图书出版公司

北京·广州·上海·西安

1994

内 容 简 介

本书是为非英语国家的学生编写的英语知识性读物。为方便读者使用,特将书中的难点加上中文注释,附于书末。

本书共收入 36 篇短文,内容涉及美国的各个方面,如美国的人民、历史、城市、河流、环境、体育、文化生活及美国的生活方式等。每篇短文后配有词汇、课文提问、语法、语言功能等练习。本书图文并茂,语言通俗易懂,是一本很好的中级英语读物。

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R. Musman

Macmillan Publishers Ltd.

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责任编辑 周增瑚

麦克米伦出版有限公司出版

世界图书出版公司北京公司注释重印

北京朝阳门内大街 137 号

北京中西印刷厂印刷

新华书店北京发行所发行 各地新华书店经售

*

1995 年 2 月第一版

开本:850×1168 1/32

1995 年 2 月第一次印刷

印张:5.5

印数:0001—10000

字数:12.6 万字

ISBN 7-5062-2004-0/H·116

定价:6.00 元

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What is an American ?



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Unit 1 Gateway to the USA

Perhaps no single monument in the USA is as famous as the Statue of Liberty. Standing on a small island in New York Harbor¹, the crowned lady, holding aloft in her right hand the torch of freedom and in her left hand a tablet which is inscribed "July 4th, 1776," is a symbol of American democracy. She is colossal. She is 151 ft. high and the pedestal on which she stands is almost as much. An elevator² takes visitors to the top of the pedestal, around which a balcony runs. A spiral staircase goes up to the crown, and another to the torch. The Statue of Liberty was a gift to the USA from France in 1886, as a mark of friendship and also in memory of the aid France gave the Americans during the American Revolution.

For millions of immigrants, the Statue was their first sight of the promised land, and for a few it was also the last, as they sailed back home again to a desolate future. About a mile from Liberty Island, there is another small island, called Ellis Island, which was looked upon with dread by the immigrants. For it was here that they had to wait their turn to be examined by doctors and officials. Most of the immigrants could not speak a word of English. But only two out of



[By permission of]

[The Brooklyn Daily Eagle.

A FINER SCREEN NEEDED.

An American cartoon of 1904 suggesting that the immigration laws of the USA are not strong enough.

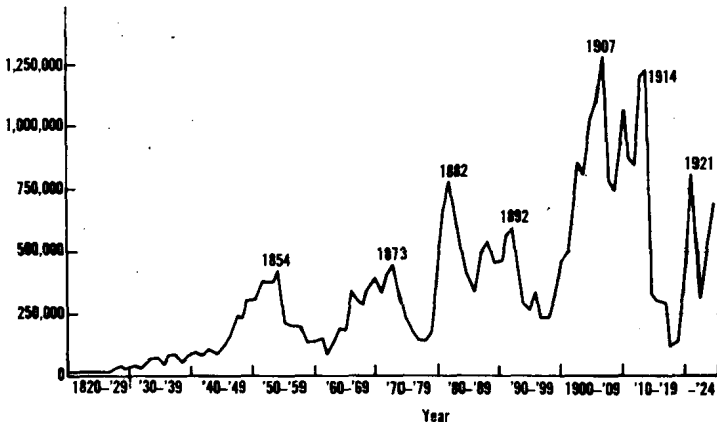
¹  harbour ²  lift

100 immigrants were refused admission to New York City. Often the person refused turned out to be a grandmother or a weary, frightened girl mistakenly labeled¹ "feeble-minded." Sometimes husbands and wives were parted because one of them happened to have a bad cough and was suspected of having tuberculosis.

New York City was a bitter disillusionment to some immigrants. Far from being a city paved with gold, it was a city teeming with overcrowded, unhealthy and unsafe ghettos. The immigrants looked for earlier immigrants of their own nationality or religion. So Italian, Polish, Irish, Jewish neighborhoods² grew up. Because they could not speak English, the newcomers found it difficult to get work at once, and their living quarters were often slums.


However, they found in the USA opportunities of bettering themselves and of escaping from the tyranny which many of them had suffered in their own countries. To that extent, the Statue of Liberty did give them an honest welcome.

Today immigrants no longer have to endure the indignities of Ellis Island. The grim buildings were closed down in 1924. In 1976, Ellis Island became an historic monument.



The number of immigrants arriving in the USA by years for the period 1820-1924

¹  labelled

²  neighbourhooods

Most immigrants from Europe now pass through New York City via Kennedy Airport. But for immigrants from Asia — Koreans, Filipinos, Chinese — the gateway to the USA is San Francisco, not New York City.

A Vocabulary

- 1 Try to find a few other words which have the same meaning as *colossal*.
- 2 What is an *immigrant*?
- 3 For what reasons were immigrants *disillusioned* with New York?
- 4 Why was the future of the immigrants who failed to pass the examination so *desolate*?
- 5 Why wouldn't the Americans accept *feeble-minded* immigrants?
- 6 What is meant by *teeming*?
- 7 What is the meaning of the word *neighborhood* in American English?
- 8 Why did the immigrants regard the USA as a *promised land*?

B Questions on "Gateway to the USA"

- 1 Why was the Statue of Liberty among the immigrants' first sights of New York City?
- 2 What does the Statue of Liberty commemorate?
- 3 What made the immigrants look on Ellis Island with dread?
- 4 To what special place in New York City did immigrants of the same religion or same nationality go?
- 5 Which "gateway to the USA" do most Oriental immigrants pass through?

C Grammar

- 1 Give the abstract nouns corresponding to the following adjectives:
famous, desolate, bitter, honest

4 Gateway to the USA

2 Select either an active or passive verb in the correct tense for the following sentences:

- a Mrs. O'Brien was one of the 2% of immigrants who entry by Ellis Island officials.
- b "You us like animals," said Mr. O'Brien.
- c Just as a doctor up to him to explain why his wife was being refused, Mrs. O'Brien to cough.
- d "Your wife tuberculosis," the doctor
- e "It is just a cold," her husband argued. "She better in a few days."
- f The doctor his head. "You a choice," he said. "Either you here alone, or you your wife back to Ireland."
- g "We never separated yet, so we together," Mr. O'Brien replied.

D Function

Asking for information (1)

The following questions and answers of a tourist and a guide are mixed up. Rearrange them so that they form a dialogue, e.g.

Tourist ?

Guide

What's on the tablet she's holding in her left hand?/Yes, a spiral staircase goes right up into the torch./Is there an elevator that goes right up to the crown?/Not really. It was a gift from the French in 1886./Is the statue very old?/July 4th, 1776. That's Independence Day./Why did the French give us the statue?/No, only to the top of the pedestal./Is it possible to climb right up her right arm and get a view from the very top?/To commemorate the help they gave us during the American Revolution.

E Imagine that you are an immigrant writing to a friend you have left behind. Describe your new life in the USA.


Unit 2 America—the Melting Pot?

Is the United States a melting pot? In other words, have immigrants to the USA merged with the native Americans and ceased to be Germans, Japanese, Poles, Irish, etc.? It has been suggested that a "pot of stew" might be a more suitable word than "melting pot", for in a stew the meat and vegetables keep their own characteristics, but thanks to the spices and the way it is cooked, the stew has a distinctive flavor¹ of its own.

The implications of "melting pot" disturb American social workers and language teachers, many of whom feel that racial and national groups should be encouraged to preserve their customs, traditions and languages. At the same time it is agreed that all Americans, whatever their origins, must learn to speak English clearly and fluently, and that they must learn to adapt themselves to the American way of life.

However, there are ethnic groups who still stick together, who speak their own languages and have preserved many of their old customs. There are Hispanic communities, e.g. Mexicans, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, most of whom still speak Spanish as their first language. There are the American Indians and various Asian groups, all of whom speak their own languages. Then there are the 20 million blacks who, though they speak English, for the most part live separately.

Many descendants of European immigrants have also stayed together in groups. Large numbers of the hundreds of thousands of Italians live together in neighborhoods which are predominantly Italian. There are large German and Irish neighborhoods in cities like Chicago, and German and Scandinavian farming communities on the Great Plains² and in Michigan. The little city of Frankenmuth, Michigan, founded by German missionaries in 1840, still has a population which is about 90% German in origin. Fifty percent of the people still speak German, and there are special German services in the Lutheran church every Sunday. With the exception of the Anglo-Saxons, the Germans are the largest ethnic group in the USA. Americans of German ancestry have made a considerable contribution to their adopted land and have helped to enrich a distinctive American English language. It is a little known fact that there were already half a million Germans in America at the time of the American Revolution. The commanders-in-chief in both world wars were of German ancestry — General Pershing in World War I and

¹  Flavour ² W. central USA

America—the Melting Pot?

General Eisenhower in World War II. Some Irish Americans whose ancestors came to the USA in the middle of the 19th century still think of themselves as Irish, and still express their resentment of the British who treated them with such cruel indifference during the Great Potato Famine of 1848, when a ½ million Irish men, women and children died of starvation and neglect.

Many blacks are beginning to trace their roots right back to the African tribes from which their ancestors were torn in the days of slavery and some of them are identifying themselves more and more with Africa. Some black leaders disapprove, reminding them that their culture and their language are not African. They are American. But many blacks are too bitter against white culture to feel American.

The Oriental Americans have proved very successful immigrants, although between them they add up to less than 1% of the population. The Chinese in their Chinatowns are very self-contained and indus-

Chinatown, San Francisco



trious. Japanese Americans were shamefully treated during World War II but have re-established themselves and have come to gain the respect and admiration of their fellow Americans.

The pattern of immigration to the USA has been roughly as follows:

1820–1860: 5 million, mostly British, Irish and Germans.

1860–1920: 30 million, mostly mid-Europeans and Russians.

The make-up of the population in the USA has been roughly as follows:

1760: about 1.7 million (mostly English, except for ½ million Germans).

1860: about 30 million (predominantly English, Scottish and Irish).

1980: more than 210 million (probably less than 45% English, Scottish and Irish).

A Vocabulary

- 1 What is an *ethnic group*?
- 2 What is the difference between a *melting pot* and a *pot of stew*?
- 3 What would you have to do to *adapt yourself* to a new way of life?
- 4 What does *predominantly Italian* mean?
- 5 What is the purpose of a *missionary*?
- 6 "The USA is my *adopted country*" suggests you have made a decision. What decision?
- 7 What is a *potato famine*?

B Questions on "America – the Melting Pot?"

- 1 What distinguishes Hispanics from other groups?
- 2 Name some of the large ethnic groups which live together in city neighborhoods and farming communities.
- 3 Many blacks are identifying themselves more and more with Africa. Why are some of their leaders worried about this?
- 4 Give an example of the large part German Americans have played in American history.
- 5 Why do some Irish Americans still resent the British?

8 The "Anglo-Saxons" and the American Character

C Grammar

- 1 Give the past tense and past participle of these verbs:
speak, think, trace, treat, feel, prove
- 2 Make adverbs out of the following adjectives which appear in the text:
suitable, national, special, considerable, bitter, successful, industrious, cruel, large

D Function

Disagreement (1)

- 1 Someone makes a statement on race relations with which you disagree strongly. Use five different phrases or sentences to express that strong disagreement, e.g. "I never heard anything so stupid in my whole life."
- 2 Someone makes a statement on immigration with which you agree wholeheartedly. Use five different phrases or sentences to express that strong agreement, e.g. "I'll go along with that 100%."

- E Debate the proposition that the USA should become a "melting pot" rather than a "pot of stew".

Unit 3 The "Anglo-Saxons" and the American Character

"Anglo-Saxon" Americans, those Americans of British ancestry, rarely think of themselves as an ethnic group. First, many of them are descendants of the original settlers. Second, they are widely distributed throughout the nation. Third, they range, as regards income, from the poor farmers and coal miners of the Appalachians in Tennessee to wealthy oil men in Texas to the skilled professional classes of New England. Nevertheless, the "Anglo-Saxons" remain the



America — the affluent society — street in Chicago

largest single ethnic group in America, comprising about 45% of the population.

It would be a mistake to imagine as some foreigners do that Americans of other ethnic groups have imitated an “Anglo-Saxon” way of life or adopted “Anglo-Saxon” customs. In the middle of the 19th century, the people of the USA were still predominantly “Anglo-Saxon”, but even before the flood of non “Anglo-Saxon” immigrants, the Americans were already far more American than they were British.

Whatever their ethnic origins, the Americans of New England, the Midwest, the Far West, the South and Southwest all have special characteristics of their region. Yet they also have certain things in common.

Most Americans have great vigor¹ and enthusiasm. They prefer to discipline themselves rather than be disciplined by others. They pride themselves on their independence, their right to make up their own minds. They are prepared to take the initiative, even when there is a risk in doing so. They have courage and do not give in easily. They will take any sort of job anywhere rather than be unemployed. They

¹  vigor