

英语国家文化与生活 ②

This Is America

美国



出国留学英文版

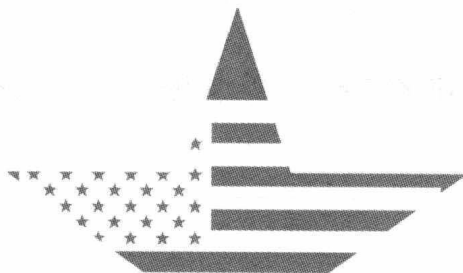
[加] 杰姬·盖伊 (Jackie Gay) / 著

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Chapter 1

An Introduction to America



“Nín hǎo!”

Or as we say here in America—“Hi!”—and welcome to this unique guide to the United States of America for Chinese learners of English.

In these pages you will learn **not only** the history, culture and language of the USA, but also intriguing details of the people, places and hidden secrets of this ancient land in the modern world. In fact, you will be so **carried away** by the journey through place and time that you could almost forget that you’re practicing your language skills at the same time.

So just in case you do... each chapter has a **glossary** and **vocabulary** (with words and phrases highlighted in **bold**), practice questions, and practice activities and comprehension exercise included in the text. These activities are designed to reinforce the practical information, practice English language skills and enhance cultural understanding.

This way you can show your teachers and parents that you really are doing your homework!

So... where is America? What is America? Let’s start with your ideas



on the United States of America (to give the country its proper name), also known as the US, USA, America, “The States”, and “Stateside”.

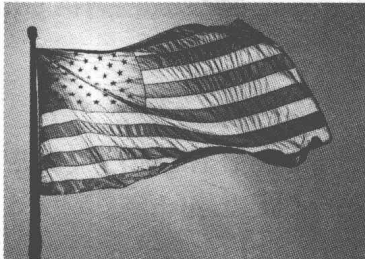
What are the first ten words that come into your mind when



you think of America? Your words could be a person (*Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Elvis Presley, Pocahontas, Louisa May Allcott*); a



place (*New York City, The Grand Canyon, Hollywood, Key West, The Golden Gate Bridge, The Colorado River*); or an historical event (*The Civil War, The Battle of the Alamo, “First Contact,” the first moon landing, The Great Depression*).



Your first thoughts might be ideas (*“The American Dream”, “Freedom of speech”, “The Right to Bear Arms”, “Go West, young man”, “In God We Trust”*.) or **inventions** (*the transistor, the Voyager space station, the iPhone, 3D printing, Tupperware*). Your mind

may go straight to music (*Heartbreak Hotel, Good Vibrations, In the Mood, Respect*) or films (*The Godfather, Jaws, Pulp Fiction, Gone with the Wind*). Or maybe **landscapes**, animals and symbols such as the Statue of Liberty or the Bald Eagle are the first things to enter your mind. Do you think of the flag (*The Stars & Stripes*) or the **National Anthem** (*The Star-Spangled Banner*), and if so which **version**—a military band, singer Whitney Houston or guitarist Jimi Hendrix?

It’s clear from the start that the USA is many things to many people, so this book is designed to help you learn about America from the inside out. The first thing to understand is that the USA is *huge*! Huge in size, in **diversity** and in **aspiration**. America sees itself as the land of opportunity, where anything is possible and dreams become reality. So let us start with some facts and then work our way through the geography

and history; the myths and legends of this great country. Let us travel together on an all American “Road Trip” through time, place and people.

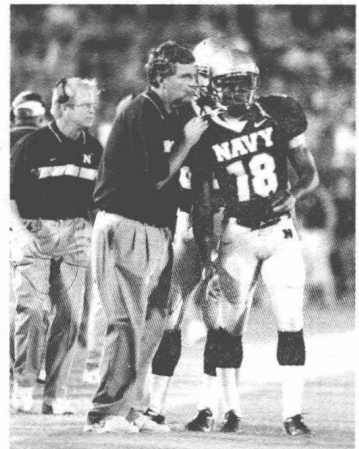
Some facts about America:

- The United States of America is a **federal** republic of 50 states, 48 **contiguous** and 2 others—Alaska and Hawaii.
- The population is 320 million people (and growing).
- The land area is 3,794,083 square miles, 9,826,630 square kilometers, making it the third largest country in the world.
- Its borders are the Atlantic Ocean in the east, the Pacific Ocean in the west, Canada to the north and Mexico to the south. It is more than twice the size of the European Union.
- There is no official language—the most common languages are English and Spanish.
- The major mountain ranges are the Rockies in the west and the Appalachians in the east, with a vast central plain and lowest point at Death Valley (-86 meters).
- The currency is the dollar. Dollar notes come in \$100, \$50, \$20, \$10, \$5, \$2 and \$1 bills. They are the same size and color but have different pictures and famous people and places on the front and back (4). Coins come as 1 dollar, 50 cents (half dollar), 25 cents (quarter), 10 cents (dime), 5 cents (nickel) and 1 cent (penny). Look at the coins carefully when you arrive, as they can be confusing—for example a dime is smaller than a nickel, even though it is worth more.



And here are some lesser known “fun” facts...

- In more than half of all U.S. states, the highest paid public **employee** in the state is a football coach.
- The state of Alaska is 429 times larger than the state of Rhode Island. But Rhode Island has a much larger population than Alaska does. Alaska also has the largest





percentage of people who walk to work (a chilly **commute!**). The state was purchased from Russia in 1867 and is the largest state in the US by land area.

-
- Manhattan's Chinatown in New York City has the most Chinese residents in the Western **Hemisphere**.
 - George Washington had false teeth made out of **whalebones**. He used to grow **hemp**. He had to borrow money to go to his own **inauguration**.

Here are a few questions for you to research:

- How many towns in the United States have the name "Santa Claus"? Where are they?
- Where is the only place in the United States where coffee is grown commercially?
- Name some symbols of the USA. How did they come to represent this country?



Chapter 2

The History of America



For centuries, native peoples lived across the vast **expanse** that would become the United States of America. In the early 17th century, settlers moved from Europe to the “New World” and established **colonies**, displacing the native peoples. European nations came to the Americas to increase their wealth and **influence** over world affairs. The Spanish were among the first Europeans to explore the New World and the first to settle in what is now North America. By 1650 however, the English had become the **dominant** presence on the Atlantic coast.

The settlers fought for their independence from Britain in the late 18th century and formed a union of states based on a new **constitution**. The nation continued to expand westward and although the country is still a young nation, it has become a global power since declaring independence from Britain on July 4, 1776.

Today’s America has its **roots** in the English colony established in Jamestown, Virginia in 1607, and has been **shaped** by the major events in its history: War against the British, westward **expansion**, **slavery** and **abolition**, the Civil War, the Great Depression and the post-war **boom**. This section will guide us through the major events and characters in American history to help us understand these events and how they relate to the America we know today.

Pre-colonial America

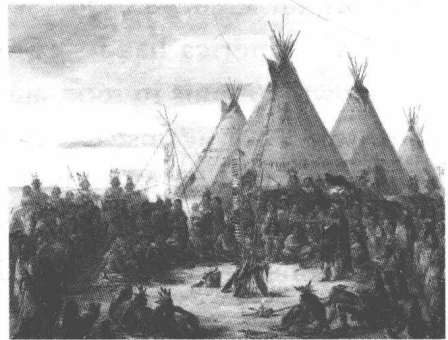
Known to some **indigenous** people as “Turtle Island”, the first people to reach North America came from Siberia. Many thousands of years before Christopher Columbus’ ships landed in the Bahamas, the **nomadic** ancestors of modern **Native Americans** hiked over a “land bridge” from Asia to what is now Alaska more than 12,000 years ago. No one knows how many people lived in what is now the USA before European **settlement**,



estimates range from two to 50 million. There were many distinct peoples with different ways of life in regions such as the Arctic (Inuit), the Plains, the Southwest, California, and the Northwest Coast. There were hundreds of tribes with more than 300 languages and there is evidence of significant **prehistoric** cultures such as the Puebloans who lived on the Colorado Plateau and whose cliff dwellings still survive.

However, the cultures of the Great Plains have come to **epitomize** “Indians” in the American imagination, partly because they put up the longest fight against westward expansion. Before the arrival of European traders and explorers, the area was settled by hunters and farmers. After European contact, and especially after Spanish **colonists** brought horses to the region in the 18th century, the peoples of the Great Plains became much more nomadic. Groups like the Crow, Blackfeet, Cheyenne, Comanche and Arapaho used horses to follow great herds of buffalo across the **prairie**. The most common dwelling for these hunters was the **teepee**, a bison-skin tent that could be folded up and carried anywhere.

As white traders and settlers moved west across the Plains region, they brought many **damaging** things with them: goods like knives and kettles, which native people came to depend on; guns; and disease. By the end of the 19th century, white sport hunters had nearly **exterminated** the area’s buffalo herds. With settlers building **homesteads** on their lands and no way to make money, the Plains natives were forced onto government **reservations**.



The Northwest Coast area, along the Pacific coast to Northern California, has a mild climate and many natural resources. In particular, the ocean and the region’s rivers provided almost everything its people needed—salmon, especially, but also whales, sea otters, seals and fish and shellfish of all kinds. Because of these riches, the Indians of the Pacific Northwest were secure enough to build permanent villages that housed hundreds of people. A person’s status was **determined** by his closeness to the village’s chief and by the number of possessions such as blankets,

shells and skins, canoes and even slaves that he had. Goods like these played an important role in the **potlatch**, an **elaborate** gift-giving ceremony.

Colonial America (1492—1763)

In 1492, the Italian **explorer** Christopher Columbus voyaged west from Europe looking for a sea route to India. He found the Bahamas. Spanish explorers followed and **conquered** present-day Mexico, whilst the Dutch and English explored the eastern coast of the USA. They were looking for wealth and influence and they left in their wake diseases **devastating** to the Native population. Between 50 and 90% of the Native population was killed and the **once-thriving** communities were in **turmoil**.

By 1650, England had established a **dominant** presence on the Atlantic coast, many of the settlers were escaping **religious persecution** in Europe. The first colony was founded at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607. Earlier settlements had failed and Jamestown only survived with help from local tribes such as the Wampanoag; many of the settlers died from sickness and starvation.

The Pilgrims—radically religious **Puritans**—founded Plymouth, Massachusetts, in 1620 arriving from England in the ship the Mayflower. They, too, only survived with the help of natives to grow local food. To the Puritans, the new colonies were a “**divine opportunity**” to create a new society. By the early 1700s, African slaves made up a growing percentage of the population. By 1770, more than 2 million people lived and worked in Great Britain’s 13 North American colonies.

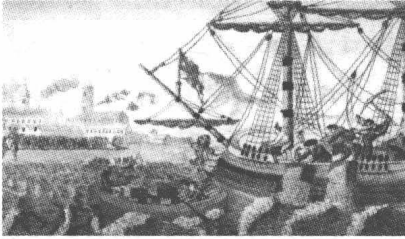


Revolutionary Period (1764—1789)

For the next two centuries, European powers **competed** for **territory** in the New World and changes in North America reflected changes in European politics. England, especially, made big profits from the colonies, and slavery was slowly **legalized** to support the **plantation economy**.



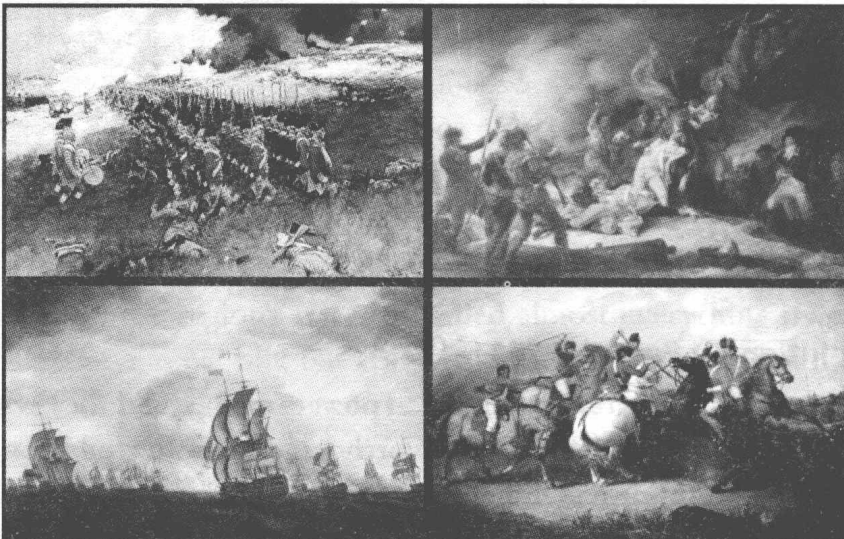
The British left the American colonists to govern themselves with town meetings and assemblies; however, war in Europe had cost Britain a lot and the British tried to shift some of their taxes to the Colonies.



Not surprisingly, the settlers didn't like this. The Stamp Act of 1765, which taxed all legal documents, newspapers and other documents, was met with a great **uproar**. The tax was **repealed**, but it was just the beginning of the problems between the

colonists and the British. In 1773, to protest a British tax on tea, settlers in Boston dressed as Mohawks, **boarded** British ships and tossed their tea overboard. This event became known as The Boston Tea Party and gave its name to the Tea Party movement which still exists today as an anti-taxation political group.

In 1775, British troops clashed with armed colonists in Massachusetts. This is known as “the shot heard around the world”, and the Revolutionary War began, led by George Washington. In 1776 the Declaration of Independence was written—largely by Thomas Jefferson—explaining what the fight was for: a **declaration** of individual rights and **republican** government. Americans wanted freedom from the British Monarchy and they would fight to achieve it.



It had been difficult for the colonists to become **established** in this new land, and in a **similar** way, the war was no easy **task**. The Americans were poorly armed and nearly **starved** at Valley Forge in 1777–1778. They needed friends, and Benjamin Franklin persuaded France—enemy of the British for hundreds of years—to provide troops and sea power.

The British finally surrendered on October 19, 1781. Two years later, the Treaty of Paris formally recognized the “United States of America”. The USA was officially independent of Britain and set about establishing their own government.

“New Nation” (1790—1828)

In the early years, the loose group of states was hardly “united” and the founding fathers had to work hard to strengthen their government. In 1787, the founders gathered in Philadelphia and drafted a new **Constitution** with a strong **federal** center and “**checks and balances**” to keep centralized power under control. In 1791, the Constitution was amended to include a Bill of Rights for citizens. These developments were a **compromise** on the original revolutionary values, for example rich landowners were allowed to keep their property (including slaves); Native Americans and women were excluded from politics.

Who Were the “Founding Fathers”?

The Founding Fathers were leaders in their communities—the thirteen British Colonies in North America—who were educated and wealthy. They led the American Revolution against the British Crown and established the United States of America. After winning the Revolutionary War, they signed the declaration of Independence and drafted the Constitution of United States. These were the men who installed the first ideals into American society.

Now, the Founding Fathers are American icons—with their faces on dollar notes and coins, and their achievements revered and preserved in monuments. All Americans live their daily lives in the world their ideals helped create.

America’s Founding Fathers include George Washington, John



Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, James Monroe and Benjamin Franklin. These men, together with several other key players of their time, structured American democracy. The term “Founding Fathers” also refers to those who either signed the Declaration of Independence in 1776 or who were delegates to the 1787 Constitutional Convention and took part in drafting the Constitution of the United States.

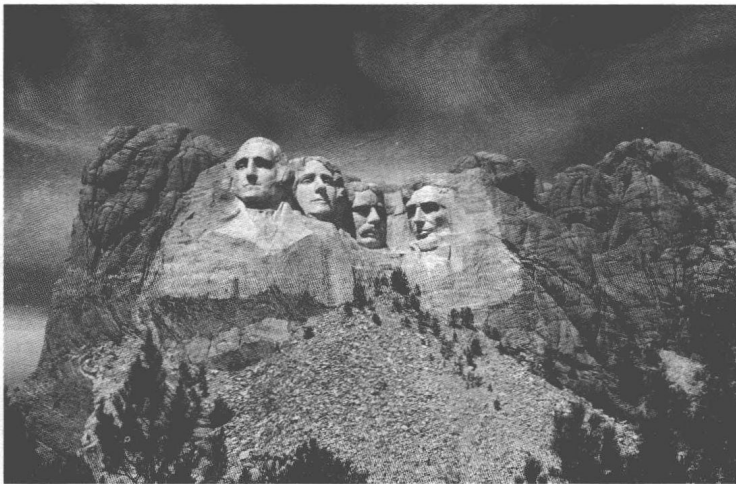
John Adams was a member of First Continental Congress and was active in drafting the Declaration of Independence.

Thomas Jefferson played major role in the Revolutionary War, later went on to become the third American President.

George Washington became the first President of United States after playing a critical role in the American Revolution as the commander of the Continental Army.

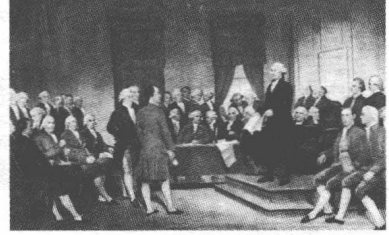
Benjamin Franklin was a writer, diplomat and inventor before his involvement in the American Revolution. He later served as US Ambassador to France and Governor of Pennsylvania.

James Madison is regarded as the “Father of the US Constitution”. Before becoming the fourth President of the US, he wrote the first ten amendments in the US Constitution.



Two of these men are commemorated at the famous monument at Mount Rushmore, South Dakota—George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, along with later USA Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and

Abraham Lincoln. This famous monument has appeared many times in popular culture and receives millions of visitors every year. However, it is still the subject of controversy because the land had previously been granted to the Lakota Indians.



After independence, there were two major political parties: the Federalists and the Republicans. Americans had a lot to deal with during this period. They had to increase taxes to pay for the American Revolution as well as manage divided opinions over the revolution in France. However, new **technology** such as the **cotton gin** allowed agriculture to expand and **commerce** increased. Under President Jefferson, the country expanded westward with the purchase of the



Louisiana territory for \$15 million from Napoleon, the new nation now extended from the Mississippi to the Rocky Mountains. Jefferson also backed the Lewis and Clark expedition to the Pacific Ocean.

The War of 1812 against Britain, sometimes called the Second War of American Independence, lasted three years without much gain on either side, except that the USA vowed to avoid Europe's “**entangling alliances**”. Instead, Americans focused on events and issues at home, and **nationalist fervor** increased. Many Americans felt it was their destiny that all the land should belong to their country.

Western Expansion (1828—1859)

This idea of destiny was **embraced** by Presidents Andrew Jackson, James Polk, and John Tyler: to them, they were expanding for “**liberty**” and this meant going west. In 1836, a group of Texans rebelled against Mexico and in this same year the Mexicans launched an attack on the



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Alamo **mission** near present-day San Antonio. All the Texans were killed. However, many settlers were inspired to join the Texan army and ten years later the US **annexed** the Texas Republic and California, too.

In a **remarkable coincidence**,

only days after the signing the 1848 treaty with Mexico, gold was discovered in California. Immediately, a cross-country **gold rush** saw 60,000 “forty-niners” (miners) head to the Pacific coast. San Francisco’s population expanded from 850 to 25,000 and “rivers” of wagon trains headed west.

The American Civil War (1860—1865)

While **pioneers** headed west to California, some Americans were challenging the idea of what “liberty” in America meant in a different way. The US constitution had not ended slavery, but it had given Congress the power to approve (or not approve) slavery in new states. Southern politicians defended slavery as “natural and normal”, whereas the New York Times called it “**insanity**”. The stage was set for a battle.

In 1860 there were more than four million slaves in the USA, mostly held by Southern plantation owners. The 1860 presidential election became a **referendum** on this issue, and after Abraham Lincoln—who favored limiting slavery—was elected President, 11 Southern states withdrew from the Union. They set up an independent government, the Confederate States of America. It was the nation’s greatest crisis. President Lincoln had two choices: either let the Southern states **secede**, or wage war to keep the union intact.

So in April 1861, the American Civil War began. It was a brutal four years with some of the most **gruesome** combat the world had known

TO BE SOLD & LET
 BY PUBLIC AUCTION,
 On **MONDAY the 18th of MAY, 1829,**
 UNDER THE AUCTIONEER'S Mallet.

FOR SALE,
 THE THREE FOLLOWING
SLAVES,

THE
 HANNIBAL, about 20 Years old, an excellent House Servant, of good Character.
 WILLIAM, about 20 Years old, a Laborer.
 NANCY, an excellent House Servant and Nurse.
 The above Persons to be sold, and the proceeds to pay a debt.

TO BE LET,
 On the usual conditions of the Hiree finding them in Food, Clo'th, &c. &c. &c.

**MALE and FEMALE
 SLAVES,**

HENRY BAGLEY, about 20 Years old, a good Laborer.
 WILLIAM BAGLEY, about 15 Years old, a good House Servant.
 JOHN BAGLEY, about 10 Years old, a Laborer.
 JOHN BAGLEY, about 5 Years old, a Laborer.
 JOHN BAGLEY, about 3 Years old, a Laborer.
 JOHN BAGLEY, about 2 Years old, a Laborer.
 JOHN BAGLEY, about 1 Year old, a Laborer.
 JOHN BAGLEY, about 6 Months old, a Laborer.
 JOHN BAGLEY, about 3 Months old, a Laborer.
 JOHN BAGLEY, about 1 Month old, a Laborer.

Also for Sale, at Eleven o'Clock,
 Fine Rice, Gram, Paddy, Books, Muslins,
 Needles, Pins, Ribbons, &c. &c.

AT ONE O'CLOCK, THAT CELEBRATED ENGLISH HORSE
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 AND HIS MATE, THE ENGLISH HORSE