

高等学校英语专业规划教材



# 美国国家概况 与文化

● 主编 姚宗立

*American Society and Culture*



华中科技大学出版社

<http://www.hustp.com>

高等学校英语专业规划教材

# 美国国家概况与文化

**American Society and Culture**

主 编 姚宗立

编 者 胡 娟 王小慧 任惠平

华中科技大学出版社

中国·武汉

### 图书在版编目(CIP)数据

美国国家概况与文化/姚宗立 主编. —武汉:华中科技大学出版社,2010.12  
ISBN 978-7-5609-6732-5

I. 美… II. 姚… III. ①英语-阅读教学-高等学校-教材 ②美国-概况 IV. H319.4:K

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2010)第 220623 号

## 美国国家概况与文化

姚宗立 主编

策划编辑:杨 鸥 刘 平

责任编辑:张 欣

封面设计:刘 卉

责任校对:何 欢

责任监印:周治超

出版发行:华中科技大学出版社(中国·武汉)

武昌喻家山 邮编:430074 电话:(027)87557437

录 排:华中科技大学惠友文印中心

印 刷:武汉中远印务有限公司

开 本:787mm×1092mm 1/16

印 张:15

字 数:388 千字

版 次:2010 年 12 月第 1 版第 1 次印刷

定 价:25.60 元



本书若有印装质量问题,请向出版社营销中心调换  
全国免费服务热线:400-6679-118 竭诚为您服务  
版权所有 侵权必究

## 前 言

语言与文化的关系是如此密切，以至于可以说，对一个国家或民族的文化不甚了解，也不会精通相应的语言。学习英语语言文学的学生，要想在听力理解和阅读理解上进一步提高，要想说出和写出地道的英语句子，要想译出准确而传神达意的译文，都要依赖对两个最主要的英语国家——英国和美国——文化的熟悉。为达此目的，我国高等学校的教学大纲中为英语专业的学生设计了“英美概况”和“西方文化导论”这类课程。编写本书的目的旨在为英语学习者提供美国的基本国情资料和文化背景知识。

对许多中国人来说，美利坚合众国，这个大洋彼岸的国度，似乎十分熟悉却又有几分陌生，人们常常不解：为什么美国有那么多黑人？为什么美国人说英语，却又有那么多与英国人不同的表达方式？美国怎样成为了世界上的超级大国？美国人为什么有那样的价值观？诸如此类问题，希望能在本书中找到答案。

本书分为两大部分。第一部分是概况介绍，简明地介绍了美国的地理位置、地形地貌、山川河湖、人口分布、种族结构、主要城市、历史演进、政体制度以及经济发展各方面的基本情况。在这部分，收集了许多史料和资料。被认为是“死资料”的东西也有“活”的演化。例如，人们普遍所知美国的人口有二亿多，其实，美国的人口在2006年就达到了三亿。美国的第二大城市芝加哥，按人口数量排位，已为洛杉矶所代替。被许多书画中描绘的纽约第一摩天大楼——世界贸易中心双子塔已于2001年被恐怖分子所摧毁，不复存在了。本书的资料也“与时俱进”，力图准确性和现实性。例如，在关于美国经济的章节里就讲到，美国在2008年下半年由次贷危机而引发的金融危机，进而引起了持续的全球性的经济危机；还简述了美国产生次贷危机的原因。第二部分为美国文化的专述，突出这个移民国家文化的多元性和兼容性，从美国的教育、文学艺术、大众传媒、文娱体育、宗教信仰、社会生活、饮食起居、风俗礼仪、节日庆典诸方面阐述美国文化的内涵和特点。谈起美国文化，人们习惯用“大熔炉”这一形象的比喻来总括其特点，本书多次指出一个不争的事实，那就是这座大熔炉始终没有熔掉中华民族的文化，生活在美国的华人在接受美国文化的同时，却始终保持了“龙的传人”文化。

本书由四人通力合作写成。姚宗立担任第一部分一至四章的编写，任惠平担任第一部分五至七章和第二部分的第十五章的编写。王小慧编写第二部分的八至十一章，胡娟编写第二部分的十二至十四章和十六、十七章。在编写过程中，我们除以严谨的态度对待事实内容外，还力求英语表达正确，文句规范地道。但由于编者的知识水平和语言能力有限，书中不免有错误和不当之处，还望读者批评指正。

姚宗立

2010年6月

# Contents

<b>Part One A General Introduction to the United States of America</b> .....	(1)
<b>Chapter 1 Geographical Situation and Topographical Features</b> .....	(1)
1.1 Situation, size, region and time zones .....	(1)
1.2 Plains and mountains.....	(4)
1.3 Rivers and lakes.....	(6)
<b>Chapter 2 The Immigrant Nation</b> .....	(9)
2.1 Population.....	(9)
2.2 Ethnicity.....	(9)
2.3 Main cities .....	(13)
<b>Chapter 3 History (1)</b> .....	(33)
3.1 Discovery of America.....	(33)
3.2 British colonies in North America.....	(34)
3.3 The revolution of American Independence.....	(37)
<b>Chapter 4 History (2)</b> .....	(42)
4.1 Expansion of American territories.....	(42)
4.2 The American Civil War.....	(44)
4.3 America and the two World Wars .....	(47)
<b>Chapter 5 Political System</b> .....	(53)
5.1 The U.S. Constitution.....	(53)
5.2 Separation of powers.....	(57)
<b>Chapter 6 The Two-Party System and the Election of American President</b> ....	(69)
6.1 The Two-Party System .....	(69)
6.2 The election of American President .....	(72)
<b>Chapter 7 American Economy</b> .....	(78)
7.1 Features of American economy.....	(78)
7.2 Sectors in US economy .....	(82)
7.3 American agriculture.....	(86)
<b>Part Two American Culture</b> .....	(91)
<b>Chapter 8 American Cultural Values</b> .....	(91)
8.1 Multicultural heritage .....	(91)
8.2 Traditional American values and beliefs.....	(92)
8.3 Cultural regions .....	(99)

Chapter 9	Education in the United States.....	(107)
9.1	A brief introduction .....	(107)
9.2	Orientation and characteristics .....	(109)
9.3	Education system.....	(111)
9.4	Problems in education .....	(119)
Chapter 10	Science and Technology.....	(123)
10.1	Development of science and technology in America.....	(123)
10.2	Research institutions and scientists .....	(126)
Chapter 11	American Literature.....	(136)
11.1	A panorama of American literature .....	(136)
11.2	Poetry.....	(140)
11.3	Fiction.....	(145)
11.4	Drama .....	(153)
Chapter 12	American Art .....	(158)
12.1	The fine arts.....	(158)
12.2	Film.....	(164)
Chapter 13	Sports and Games in America .....	(171)
13.1	Sports and American values .....	(171)
13.2	Popular sports in the United States.....	(171)
13.3	Recreations and individual sports .....	(176)
Chapter 14	Mass Media in America.....	(178)
14.1	Newspapers and magazines.....	(178)
14.2	Radio, television and internet.....	(183)
Chapter 15	Religions and Beliefs.....	(189)
15.1	Religion and society .....	(189)
15.2	Religion and politics.....	(192)
15.3	Major religious sects in America.....	(193)
Chapter 16	Social Life.....	(203)
16.1	American family and family problems .....	(203)
16.2	Food and drinks.....	(209)
16.3	Etiquettes at dinner table .....	(211)
16.4	Some social etiquettes .....	(213)
Chapter 17	Holidays and Festival Customs .....	(219)
17.1	Federal holidays .....	(219)
17.2	Other holidays or festivals.....	(227)
References.....		(231)

# **Part One A General Introduction to the United States of America**

## **Chapter 1 Geographical Situation and Topographical Features**

### **1.1 Situation, size, region and time zones**

Usually people use the term *America* to refer to the vast country on the other side of the ocean. The country's official name is the United States of America, or the United States for short, or just the States in spoken language.

The United States of America is composed of two parts: the Continental America, also known as the Mainland America<sup>1</sup>, and the two separate states, Alaska and Hawaii. The Mainland America is situated in the south of the North American Continent, containing 48 states. To the east of the Mainland of America lies the Atlantic Ocean, and to the west, the Pacific Ocean. On the north of the Mainland America the country is bounded by Canada, and on the south, by Mexico and the Gulf of Mexico. Outside the continental America, Alaska is situated in the northwestern part of North America, and Hawaii is far away in the central Pacific Ocean, 3 200 kilometers from the mainland.

The continental America stretches 4 500 kilometers from the Atlantic coast to the Pacific coast, and 2 570 kilometers from north to south. The total area of the United States, including Alaska and Hawaii, is 9 372 614 square kilometers. It is the fourth largest country in the world in size, just after Russia, Canada and China. To help understand how large the country is, some facts can be referable: a fast railroad train, traveling 96 kilometers an hour, takes more than 48 hours to cross the country; a jet plane crosses the continental America from east to west in about five hours. Another way to consider the size of the country is to compare distances in the United States with other distances that may be more familiar to us. For example, the distance from New York to Washington, D.C. is about the same as London to Paris. The distance from New York to Los Angeles is greater than that from Moscow to Montreal. New York to Chicago is similar in distance to Manila<sup>2</sup> to Hong Kong.

The United States of America is composed of 50 states. According to the geographical features the country can be divided into eight geographical regions.

#### **(1) New England**

This region is in the northeastern corner of the Mainland America, containing six states,

namely, Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island. New England is the place where the first group of English pilgrims on the Mayflower and some earliest immigrants from England landed and settled. The region played an important role in the American Revolution of Independence, and for that reason New England has been known as the birthplace of America.

## (2) The Middle Atlantic region

The region lies on the south of New England, along the middle Atlantic coast. There are six states in this region: New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland and West Virginia. All six states, except West Virginia, are among the oldest of the United States.

As the region is rich in coal, iron and other natural resources, it is a highly industrialized area. The nation's largest city—New York—is in this region.

## (3) The Midwest

On the west of the Middle Atlantic region, along the south banks of the Five Great Lakes lies the Midwest region. This region includes twelve states: Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Missouri, Iowa, Minnesota, Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota. The rich mineral resources, fertile soil and good climate make the Midwest one of the richest parts of the country. The Great Lakes are the nation's leading center of heavy industry.

The central plain is the nation's major agricultural area, especially the State of Kansas, where grows the country's wheat of the best quality. The area is known as "the basket of bread". The famous City of Chicago is the economic center of the region.

## (4) The South

The South region refers to the large section of the country on the south of the Middle Atlantic region. The region includes thirteen states: Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Louisiana and Texas. Most of the states in this region border on either the Atlantic Ocean or the Gulf of Mexico.

In the history of early America, the South was the region where black slaves toiled on the plantations growing cotton and tobacco. The region is now still an important area of industrial crops. In Florida grows a large amount of subtropical fruits. Florida is also a vacation resort both in summer and in winter. The pleasant climate and good beaches attract large crowds of tourists.

The region is rich in oil and mineral resources. The states of Oklahoma, Louisiana and Texas are the country's most important oil-producing region.

## (5) The West

The West region refers to the vast area on the west of the Great Plains, embracing the four Rocky Mountains States—Montana, Wyoming, Colorado and New Mexico; the four plateau states—Idaho, Utah, Nevada and Arizona; and the parts of the Pacific coast states—Washington, Oregon and California. As it is a mountainous area, most of the region is not heavily populated, nor can it be



cultivated. Cattle and sheep herding and raising become the chief occupation in the region. The region is abundant in nonferrous metals, such as gold, silver and copper, so mining is an important industry here.



Topographical features in this region create such natural wonders and marvelous landscape as the Yellowstone Park in Wyoming and the Grand Canyon<sup>3</sup> in Arizona. In the desert of Nevada sits the world-famous gambling town Las Vegas. All these hold the attraction for holidaymakers. So the tourist trade is an important industry in this region.

Salt Lake City, the state capital city of Utah, and Denver, the state capital city of Colorado, are among the principal cities in this region.

#### (6) The region of the Pacific coast

This is the region on the west side of the Rocky Mountains along the Pacific coast, including the western parts of Washington State and Oregon State and nearly all of California State. The greater part of the region is low mountain ranges and river valleys rich in mineral and forest resources. The region has well-established industries. California is an up-and-coming economically and technologically developed state. The world famous Silicon Valley<sup>4</sup> is situated near San Francisco, California.

San Francisco, Los Angeles and Seattle are famous large cities in this region.

#### (7) Alaska

Alaska, the forty-ninth state of the United States, separated from the Mainland America, is situated in the northwestern corner of North America. It is a large peninsula, stretching northward into the Arctic Ocean, and southward into the North Pacific Ocean. On the east side Alaska is bordered by Canada, and in the west Alaska is separated from Russia's Siberia<sup>5</sup> by the Bering Strait<sup>6</sup>. Of the fifty states in the United States Alaska is the largest in size. The temperature in the Arctic Circle is very low. The native inhabitants in Alaska are Eskimos. Alaska's chief economy is fishing, and the important industry is lumber and wood-pulp production. After World War II, some modern industries were established in Alaska, for example, oil industry and mining.

The state capital city of Alaska is Juneau<sup>7</sup>.

## **(8) Hawaii**

Hawaii, the fiftieth state of the United States, is located in the central Pacific Ocean about 3 857 kilometers west of San Francisco. Actually, Hawaii is composed of eight big islands and more than one hundred small islets, some 2 575 kilometers long from southeast to northwest like a chain of beads. The Hawaii islands were formed by volcanoes. Even today, the world's largest active volcano is on Hawaii islands, and erupts from time to time. Of the islands group, Hawaii Island is the largest one, but the best known and most important one is Oahu<sup>8</sup>, the third largest one of the group. Honolulu<sup>9</sup>, the largest city of the state, and also the capital city of the state, is the center of Hawaiian life. Not far to the northwest of the city of Honolulu lies Pearl Harbor, the navy base of the U. S. Pacific Fleet.

Sugar cane and pineapple are the two main crops in Hawaii. Other important crops are fruits, coffee and vegetables. Tourism is Hawaii's most important industry. Waikiki<sup>10</sup> on Oahu has the world's best beach with bright sunlight and soft fine sands, to which holiday makers from every corner of the world swarm the year around.

Apart from the above-mentioned eight regions, the United States has some overseas colonies and trust territories: Puerto Rico<sup>11</sup>, Virgin Islands<sup>12</sup>, Guam<sup>13</sup>, Eastern Samoa<sup>14</sup>, Marshall Islands<sup>15</sup>, the Caroline Islands<sup>16</sup> and Mariana Islands<sup>17</sup>. They are all islands either in the Atlantic or in the Pacific Ocean.

Because of the vastness of the United States, the territory of the mainland America is divided into four different time zones between the east and the west coasts. They are

- ① Eastern Standard Time Zone;
- ② Central Standard Time Zone;
- ③ Mountain Standard Time Zone;
- ④ Pacific Standard Time Zone.

For instance, when it is 12:00 noon in New York City, or in Washington, D. C., it is 11:00 a.m. in Chicago, or in St. Louis, it is 10:00 a.m. in Denver, or in Salt Lake City, while in San Francisco or in Los Angeles, it is just 9:00 a.m..

## **1.2 Plains and mountains**

The landforms of the Mainland America vary from east to west. Generally, plains are in the east along the coast and in the central part of the country, and mountains are in the east and in the west of the country.

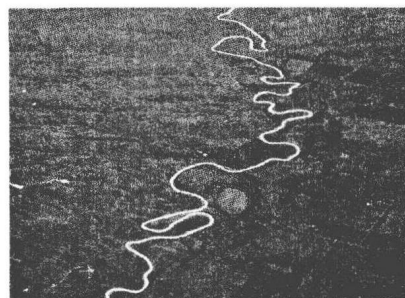
From New York City southward to the Florida peninsula, along the Atlantic coast, there is a wide strip of level country which is known as the Atlantic coastal plain. The south end of the Atlantic coastal plain merges with the wide Gulf Plain, a plain along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico.

The Atlantic coastal plain is made of low land. On the coast line there are many fine beaches. Some seaside cities such as Atlantic City, Ocean City and Miami are well-known for their beaches with soft white sands.

The coastal plain is bordered on the west side by the “Fall Line”, which is a series of hills where rivers suddenly fall to a lower level. To the west of the Fall Line lies a mountain chain running from southwest in central Alabama to northeast in north Maine, covering a distance of about 3 000 kilometers. This mountain range is known as Appalachian Mountains. But Appalachian Mountains are not high. The average altitude is about 800 meters because of the old geological structure and long-term natural weathering. Appalachian Mountains are famous for their scenic beauty. Trees grow all over the mountains, especially the maple trees which turn red in late autumn.

To the west of Appalachian Mountains lies a large area of great plain known as the Great Mississippi River Basin, or Central Plain. The great plain stretches from the Great Lakes in the north to the Gulf of Mexico in the south, from Appalachian Mountains in the east to Rocky Mountains in the west, covering a distance of about 2 000 kilometers in width. This area occupies about half of America’s landmass on the continent. As the Mississippi River and many of its tributaries run through this area, facilities of water irrigation and fertile soil make the great plain the “Barn of America”.

To the west of the Central Plain are Rocky Mountains, running from the Canadian border in Montana and Idaho, through Wyoming, Utah and Colorado, into New Mexico. As its north end stretches into the Arctic Ocean and its south end into Mexico, Rocky Mountains are usually regarded as “the backbone of the North American Continent”.



The geological structure of Rocky Mountains is rather young, so the mountains are much higher than Appalachian Mountains, having an average altitude of more than 3 000 meters above the sea level. Most of the peaks in the Rocky Mountain ranges are snow-capped all the year round.

The unique geological structure in this area offers striking scenery. There are more national parks than any other areas in America. The world-known Yellowstone National Park located in the northwestern part of Wyoming covers an area of some 8 956 square kilometers. It is famous for its hot springs, geysers, canyons, deep caves and waterfalls. The most famous and attractive geysers in the park—Old Faithful—can erupt more than 30 meters in the air at regular intervals. Another world-famous sight is National Grand Canyon Park situated in northern Arizona on the west side of the Rocky Mountains. It is really a magnificent natural wonder cut by the Colorado River. The canyon measures about 367 kilometers in length, 29 kilometers in width, and more than 1 600 meters in depth. Every year hundreds of thousands of tourists from every part of the world come to take a view of this marvelous sight.

The Rocky Mountain system also includes some other mountain ranges on the west side of the Rockies. The big ones are Sierra Nevada Mountains in eastern California and Cascade Mountains in Oregon and Washington. Between these two mountain ranges are big valleys. The valley in California is known as Great Central Valley, some 692 kilometers long and 80 kilometers wide. In the east of California there is a large area of desert known as Death Valley, which is 86 meters below sea level. Death Valley is the lowest point with the highest temperature in the whole of North

America.

Along the Pacific coast are the lower Coast Ranges composed of hills covered with dense forest. Unlike the Atlantic coast, the Pacific coast is basically a rocky one full of cliffs. This type of coast is suitable for the building of a commercial harbor or a naval port.

### 1.3 Rivers and lakes

According to the place of river rise, direction of river flow, and the place of river pour, the rivers in the United States can be divided into three river systems: the Atlantic river system, the Pacific river system, and the Gulf river system. All the rivers, rising in the east side of Appalachian Mountains, flowing eastward and finally pouring into the Atlantic Ocean, belong to the Atlantic river system. The rivers of this system are usually not long.

The Atlantic river system includes the following important rivers: the St. Lawrence River<sup>18</sup>, which forms part of the boundary between the United States and Canada; the Hudson River<sup>19</sup>, running through the City of New York and emptying into the Atlantic; and the Delaware River<sup>20</sup> that forms the boundary of New Jersey State and Pennsylvania State. The Potomac River<sup>21</sup> runs through Washington, D.C. as a traditional dividing line of the country between the North and the South.

The Pacific river system has two important rivers: the Colorado River and the Columbia River. Both rivers rise in the west side of Rocky Mountains and finally empty into the Pacific Ocean. The rivers here are usually swift and rich in water power resources. The Grand Coulee Dam on the Columbia River and Hoover Dam<sup>22</sup> on the Colorado River produce large amounts of electricity every year. The Columbia River rises in Canada, and runs down south into the United States, and then turns west towards the Pacific Ocean. The Colorado River runs 2 230 kilometers through mountains and the Grand Canyon and empties into the Gulf of California.

Nearly all the rivers east of Rocky Mountains and west of Appalachian Mountains flow and finally empty into the Mississippi River. The Mississippi River and its many tributaries form a large network of waterways in the central part of the United States. The Mississippi River is the most important one in the Gulf river system.

The Mississippi, meaning "the Father of Waters" in American Indian, the largest river in the United States and one of the longest rivers in the world, rises in North Minnesota, and runs down south about 6 300 kilometers to the Gulf of Mexico. Before the building of American railroad system, the Mississippi River had played an important part in the transportation of the Middle West.

The Mississippi has two large and important tributaries: the Missouri River and the Ohio River. The Missouri River, 3 725 kilometers long, rises in southwest Montana and joins the Mississippi at St. Louis. The Ohio River, 1 500 kilometers long, rises in east Pennsylvania and joins the Mississippi at Cairo, Illinois.

In the Gulf river system, the only longer one that empties into the Gulf of Mexico instead of joining the Mississippi is the Rio Grande<sup>23</sup>. The Rio Grande rises in the southern Rocky Mountains, running 3 200 kilometers. The river forms the boundary between the United States and Mexico.

There are also many lakes in the United States. The most important lakes are the Great Lakes. The Great Lakes are composed of five big lakes, they are Lake Superior<sup>24</sup>, the largest among the five lakes; Lake Michigan<sup>25</sup>; Lake Huron<sup>26</sup>; Lake Erie<sup>27</sup> and Lake Ontario<sup>28</sup>. The five lakes, stretching about 1 600 kilometers from east to west, are situated side by side on the borderline between the United States and Canada except Lake Michigan, which is completely on the side of the United States. The Great Lakes are the largest lake groups in the world, and they are joined together by canals and are linked to the Mississippi River, thus forming a complete network of waterways.

The five lakes gradually slope down towards the east. As there is a drop of more than 50 meters from Lake Erie to Lake Ontario, the Niagara Falls<sup>29</sup>, the second largest waterfalls in the world, is located here.

### Notes

1. Mainland America: 美国本土, 指位于北美大陆上相互连接在一起的 48 个州。
2. Manila: 马尼拉。
3. Grand Canyon: 大峡谷。
4. Silicon Valley: 硅谷。
5. Siberia: 西伯利亚。
6. Bering Strait: 白令海峡。
7. Juneau: 朱诺, 阿拉斯加州首府。
8. Oahu: 奥阿胡岛, 又译瓦胡岛, 夏威夷群岛中的大岛之一。
9. Honolulu: 火奴鲁鲁, 或称檀香山, 夏威夷州首府。
10. Waikiki: 怀基基, 夏威夷海滨小城。怀基基海滩闻名全球。
11. Puerto Rico: 波多黎各。
12. Virgin Islands: 维尔京群岛。
13. Guam: 关岛。
14. Eastern Samoa: 东萨摩亚。
15. Marshall Islands: 马绍尔群岛。
16. Caroline Islands: 加罗林群岛。
17. Mariana Islands: 马里亚纳群岛。
18. St. Lawrence River: 圣劳伦斯河。
19. Hudson River: 哈得孙河。
20. Delaware River: 特拉华河。
21. Potomac River: 波多马克河。
22. Hoover Dam: 胡佛大坝。
23. Rio Grande: 格兰德河。
24. Lake Superior: 苏必利尔湖。
25. Lake Michigan: 密执安湖, 又译密歇根湖、密西根湖。
26. Lake Huron: 休伦湖。
27. Lake Erie: 伊利湖。
28. Lake Ontario: 安大略湖。

29. Niagara Falls: 尼亚加拉瀑布。

### ***Exercises***

I. Explain the following geographical terms.

1. Mainland America
2. New England
3. Great Mississippi River Basin
4. Great Lakes
5. Niagara Falls

II. Answer the following questions.

1. How do you define the American geographical situation?
2. What is the area of the United States? Illustrate the largeness of the United States in size.
3. What time is it in Los Angeles when it is 8 o'clock in the morning in Philadelphia?
4. Where are the plains in the United States? What plains are they?
5. Where are the mountain ranges in the United States? What mountains are they?
6. Make an analysis of the features of the American rivers.
7. What is the longest river in the United States? Tell what you know about this river.
8. What advantages do you think the American geographical situation has?

## **Chapter 2 The Immigrant Nation**

### **2.1 Population**

It is universally acknowledged that the United States of America is a nation of immigrants. Nearly all the people in the United States are immigrants and descendants of immigrants. In 1607, the first group of English settlers came to America and set up the first English settlement—Jamestown—on the coast of Virginia. In 1620, the first group of English Puritans came by the Mayflower to New England, and then established the first English colony—the Massachusetts Bay Colony—in North America. After that, more English Puritans and English settlers came to the New World. In the ensuing years, more and more Europeans from the Netherlands, Germany, Ireland, France and other countries followed them into this New World. By the time when the thirteen English colonies had been established, there were about 2 million immigrants living in North America.

In 1790, the United States of America took the first census. The American population at that time was 3.929 million. Since then census has been done every other ten years.

The nineteenth century brought more immigrants into the United States. Within 100 years from 1814 to 1914, there are three waves of immigration into America. The immigrants came not only from Europe but also from Asia and Hispanic countries<sup>1</sup>. The population in the United States greatly increased in number. In 1915, the population in the United States crossed 100 million. Fifty years later, in 1967, America's population rose to 200 million.

The census of 2000 showed that the United States had a population of 281.421 million. Now the United States of America is the third most populous country in the world, only after China and India.

### **2.2 Ethnicity**

As the United States of America is a nation of immigrants, there are more ethnic groups in the United States than in any other nation. The ethnic groups in the United States number 100 more. The term “melting pot” is usually used to describe this immigrant nation, meaning that the United States is a multinational country on one hand, and on the other hand the immigrants' old and traditional culture and ways of living gradually melt into a new culture. The comparison is true in a sense, but it is not utterly true. Chinese culture of the Chinese-Americans, for example, has never been melted away. It is well kept among the Chinese who immigrated into the United States, although they have taken in some Western ways of living.

Most of the inhabitants in the United States are white people of European origin, who account

for over 75 percent of the total population. The first permanent settlement in North America, Jamestown, was established by a group of English settlers in 1607. Some 13 years later, in 1620, about 102 English Puritans were brought by the ship Mayflower to North America for religious toleration. Then in 1629 they set up Massachusetts Bay Colony. The coming of the Mayflower and the establishment of settlement of Plymouth is now commonly regarded as the real beginning of the United States of America, so the first group of the English Puritans brought up by the Mayflower has been taken as the forefathers of the American people, known as "the Pilgrim Fathers". The early immigrants were mainly from England. The English immigrants and their descendents constituted the mainstream of the American population in the early stage of American history. These people were generally known as WASP, that is, the White Anglo-Saxon Protestants. As more and more immigrants came to America from other European countries, things changed. The present census data show that there are more people who have German or Irish origin in the United States population.

The largest ethnic minority in the United States is the black people. The number of the black people is just next to that of the white, accounting for over 12 percent of the United States population, more than 33 million altogether. The black people were first brought to North America from Africa as slaves in the early 17th century. In the cruel Triangle Trade<sup>2</sup>, a large number of native Africans were caught, enslaved, and shipped to America, but only a small part of them could survive. The famous American black scholar Dr. Du Bois<sup>3</sup> and American historian Herbert Aptheker make an authoritative study of the history of black slavery. In his work *Colonial Era*, Herbert Aptheker stated, "In the four hundred years of the African slave trade something like 15 million Africans were brought, alive, to the Western hemisphere. For every one who reached these shores alive, about five or six had died—in the wars in Africa, during the trek to the coast, while in the barracoons waiting for the slave ships to arrive, in the frequent insurrections aboard ships, and in the course of the horrors of the six or eight or ten weeks of the Middle Passage<sup>4</sup>."

The American black slaves led a miserable life, toiling from morning till night on the plantations. They did not have any personal freedom. They were but the private properties of the slave-owners. The existence of black slavery aggravated the conflict between the North and the South, and finally led to the outbreak of the American Civil War. In September 1862, President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, announcing the abolition of slavery:

"On 1st day of January, 1863, all persons held as slaves within any state, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free."

The American black slaves were legally freed. By the law the blacks were granted citizenship rights. But in reality, the black people enjoy no right at all. Prejudice and discrimination against the black people prevailed as before after the Civil War, especially in the southern states of the United States. Shortly after the end of the Civil War, the Ku Klux Klan—a notorious white racist organization—appeared in the South. The K. K. Klanners cruelly persecuted and even lynched the black people.

Of course, the resistance to the racial discrimination and the struggle for equal rights of the black people have never ceased. In the 1950s and 1960s, the black movements for the civil rights



were waged one after another on a large scale. On August 28, 1963, Martin Luther King, Jr.—the leader of the black civil rights movement—delivered the most impressive oration “I Have a Dream”, on the occasion of the March on Washington. The movement resulted in the adoption of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. However, it is still a long way for the black people to enjoy freedom, equality and full rights. Today, racial discrimination is still a serious problem of the American society.

The white and the black are all outcomers from the outside of America. The original inhabitants on the American continent were the Indians. They were the native people and the masters of the land for centuries before the first Europeans landed on the continent. The name of the Indians was mistakenly given by Christopher Columbus.

After the Europeans came to America, the Indians began to suffer a great deal. Their land was taken away by the white. Quite a number of the Indians were killed by the white. Many died in warfare or of disease. The number of the Indian people greatly decreased. The survivors were driven to the desert Indian Reservations. The American Indians, only about 2 million in number, the former masters of the American continent, are now reduced to an ethnic minority, and the second-class citizenship in American society.

Another big ethnic group is composed of the immigrants from Latin American countries, known as the Hispanics. They are Spanish-speaking people, numbering over 30 million, accounting for over 12 percent of the total American population. Of all the American Hispanics, Mexican-Americans or Chicanos, make up the largest group, and quite a lot of the Mexican-Americans live in some southern and western states such as Texas, New Mexico and California, and some big cities, as these states were formerly a part of Mexico. After this tract of land became the territory of the United States, the original Mexicans living there thus became American citizens. Furthermore, every year, many Mexicans secretly cross the American-Mexican boundary and steal into America, trying to find their paradise beyond the boundary. Some other Mexicans are migrant farm labourers who came to America as the hired workers in the harvest seasons, and then returned home after they earned a sum of money.

Besides the Mexicans, there are the Cubans, the Puerto Ricans, and people from other Latin-American countries, who also belong to the ethnic group of the Hispanics. Many Hispanics are either in lower-paying jobs or out of work at all.

There are about 6 million Jewish people in the United States, who constitute another ethnic group of the American minorities—the Jewish-American. The Jewish-Americans have higher social status than other ethnic groups of the American minorities. The first Jewish immigrants, a group of 23 Sephardic Jews, came to settle in New Amsterdam, later known as New York, in 1654. When the United States of America was founded in 1776, there were only 2 500 Jews in America. In the late 19th century and the early 20th century a large number of Jews swarmed into America from Europe to seek a better life, as they were discriminated against and persecuted in many European countries because of their religious belief. During World War II, to escape the massacre by Adolph Hitler and

