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Методические указания

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Данные методические указания рекомендуются студентам для развития навыков устной речи на материале текстов профессиональной направленности. Часть I включает ознакомительные тексты, относящиеся к политическому устройству США, часть II содержит тексты по страноведению США для чтения, перевода и аннотирования, сопровождающиеся заданиями на активизацию тематического словаря.

Предназначены для студентов 2 курса, обучающихся по специальности 030201 Политология (дисциплина «Английский язык», блок ГСЭ), очной формы обучения.

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I. THE POLITICAL SYSTEM OF THE USA

The American System of Government

The governmental systems in the United States – federal, state, county, and local – are quite easy to understand. They are quite easy to understand, that is, if you grew up with them and studied them in school. One foreign expert complained, for example, that the complexity of just the cities' political and governmental structure is "almost unbelievable". The "real Chicago", he explained, "spreads over 2 states, 6 counties, 10 towns, 30 cities, 49 townships, and 110 villages. Overlaid upon this complex pattern are 235 tax districts and more than 400 school districts".

There are, however, several basic principles which are found at all levels of American government. One of this is the "one person, one vote" principle which says that legislators are elected from geographical districts directly by the voters. Under this principle, all election districts must have about the same number of residents.

Another fundamental principle of American government is that because of the system of checks and balances, compromise in politics is a matter of necessity, not choice. For example, the House of Representatives controls spending and finance, so the President must have its agreement for his proposals and programs. He cannot declare war, either, without the approval of Congress. In foreign affairs, he is also strongly limited. Any treaty must first be approved by the Senate. If there is no approval, there's no treaty. The rule is "the President proposes, but Congress disposes". What a President wants to do, therefore, is often a different thing from what a President is able to do.

Congress

Congress, the legislative branch of the federal government, is made up of the Senate and the House of Representatives. There are 100 Senators, two from each state. One third of the Senators are elected every two years for six-year terms of office. The Senators represent all of the people in a state and their interests.

The House has 435 members. They are elected every two years for two-year terms. They represent the population of "congressional

districts” into which each state is divided. The number of Representatives from each state is based upon its population. For instance, California, the state with the largest population, has 52 Representatives, while Delaware has only one.

Almost all elections in the United States follow the “winner-takes-all” principle: the candidate who wins the largest number of votes in a Congressional district is the winner.

Congress makes all laws, and each house of Congress has the power to introduce legislation. Each can also vote against legislation passed by the other. Because legislation only becomes law if both houses agree, compromise between them is necessary. Congress decides upon taxes and how money is spent. In addition, it regulates commerce among the states and with foreign countries. It also sets rules for the naturalization of foreign citizens.

Topical vocabulary

<i>Nouns</i>	<i>Verbs</i>	<i>Word expressions</i>
County	to complain	Tax district
Township	to propose	school district
Pattern	to dispose	System of checks and balances
Legislator	to spread	House of Representatives
Voter	to approve	Foreign affairs
Resident	to represent	to declare war
Compromise	<i>Adjectives</i>	the “winner-takes-all” principle
Politician	unbelievable	term of office
Treaty	legislative	congressional district
Senator	passed	to introduce legislation
legislation		

Exercises

Ex. 1. Find the pairs of synonyms:

Intricacy, dues, passed, legislative, election, real, to elect, for instance, basic, pattern, expert, to become adult, for example, complexity, alien, specialist, model, fundamental, choose, true, voting,

treaty, resident, inhabitant, agreement, lawmaking, approved, taxes, foreign, to grow up

Ex. 2. Find the pairs of antonyms:

Against, optional, to abolish, to dispose, foreign, unbelievable, to agree, compromise, necessary, to approve, to lose, boundless, slightly, to propose, complex, to find, limited, native, strongly, simple, to differ, for, ordinary, confrontation

Ex. 3. Complete the following sentences:

1. The governmental systems in the United States – federal, state, county, and local – are ...

2. There are, however, several basic principles which are found ...

3. One of this is the “one person, one vote” principle which says that ...

4. Another fundamental principle of American government is that because of the system of checks and balances, compromise in politics is ...

5. The rule is “the President proposes, but ...

6. What a President wants to do, therefore, is often a different thing from ...

7. Congress, the legislative branch of the federal government, is made up of ...

8. One third of the Senators are elected every ...

9. The number of Representatives from each state is based ...

10. Almost all elections in the United States follow the ...

Ex. 4. Answer the following questions:

1. Are the governmental systems in the United States – federal, state, county, and local – quite easy to understand?

2. Why is the complexity of just the cities’ political and governmental structure almost unbelievable?

3. What are the basic principles which are found at all levels of American government?

4. What does the “one person, one vote” principle say?

5. What is the other fundamental principle of American government?

6. Why is compromise in politics a matter of necessity, not choice?
7. What does the House of Representatives control?
8. What must the President have its agreement for?
9. Must any treaty first be approved by the Senate?
10. What is Congress, the legislative branch of the federal government, made up of?
11. How many senators are there from each state?
12. How often are the members of the House of Representatives elected?
13. What is the number of Representatives from each state based upon?
14. What principle do almost all elections in the United States follow?
15. Which house of Congress has the power to introduce legislation?
16. Why is the compromise between the houses of Congress necessary?
17. What does Congress decide upon?

Ex. 5. Make a summary of the text.

The President

The President of the United States is elected every four years to a four-year term of office, with no more than two full terms allowed. As is true with Senators and Representatives, the President is elected directly by the voters (through state electors). In other words, the political party with the most Senators and Representatives does not choose the President. This means that the President can be from one party, and the majority of those in the House of Representatives or Senate (or both) from another. This is not uncommon.

Thus, although one of the parties may win a majority in the midterm elections (those held every two years), the President remains President, even though his party (or, of course, in the future, her party) may not have a majority in either house. Such a result could easily hurt his ability to get legislation through Congress, which must pass all laws, but this is not necessarily so. In any case, the President's

policies must be approved by the House of Representatives and the Senate before they can become law. In domestic as well as in foreign policy, the President can seldom count upon the automatic support of Congress, even when his own party has a majority in both the Senate and the House. Therefore he must be able to convince members of Congress, the Representatives and Senators, of his point of view. He must bargain and compromise. This is a major difference between the American system and those in which the nation's leader represents the majority party or parties, that is, parliamentary systems.

Within the executive branch, there are a number of executive departments. Currently these are the departments of State, Treasury, Defense, Justice, Interior, Agriculture, Commerce, Labor, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Transportation, Energy, Education, and Veterans Affairs. Each department is established by law, and, as their names indicate, each is responsible for a specific area. The head of each department is appointed by the President. These appointments, however, must be approved by the Senate. None of these Secretaries, as the department heads are usually called, can also be serving in Congress or in another part of the government. Each is directly responsible to the President and only serves as long as the President wants him or her to. They can best be seen, therefore, as Presidential assistants and advisers. When they meet together, they are termed "the President's Cabinet." Some Presidents have relied quite a bit on their Cabinets for advice and some very little.

Topical vocabulary

Nouns

appointment
area
adviser
assistant

Verbs

to bargain
to convince
to establish
to indicate

Adjectives

uncommon
specific

Word combinations

state electors
midterm elections
domestic policy

Department of State
The Treasury Department
The Defense Department

foreign policy
to get legislation through
in any case
point of view
to be responsible for
executive department
quite a bit

Department of Justice
Interior Department
Department of Commerce
Department of Labor
Department of Health and Human Services
Department of Housing and Urban Development
Department of Veterans Affairs

Exercises

Ex. 1. Find the synonyms in the text:

Each, period, to permit, voter, straight, greater part, unusual, power, rarely, promotion, to persuade.

Ex. 2. Find the answers in the text.

1. For what period is the President of the United States elected?
2. Who is the President elected by?
3. Who must the President's policies be approved by?
4. In what spheres can the President seldom count upon the automatic support of Congress, even when his own party has a majority in both the Senate and the House?
5. Who must the President be able to convince of his point of view?
6. What is a major difference between the American system and those in which the nation's leader represents the majority party or parties, that is, parliamentary systems?
7. What executive departments are there within the executive branch?
8. What is each department responsible for?
9. Who is the head of each department appointed by?
10. Who must these appointments be approved by?
11. Why can't any of the Secretaries also be serving in Congress or in another part of the government?
12. Who is each of the Secretaries directly responsible to?
13. How long does any of the Secretaries serve?
14. How are Presidential assistants and advisers termed when they meet together?

Ex. 3. Agree or disagree with the following statements. Use the phrases: “You are wrong” or “I can’t agree with you” and “As far as I know...” or “According to the text...”.

1. The political party with the most Senators and Representatives chooses the President.

2. The President can be from one party, and the majority of those in the House of Representatives or Senate (or both) from another.

3. Within the legislative branch, there are a number of executive departments.

4. The President remains President, even though his party (or, of course, in the future, her party) may not have a majority in either house.

5. Such a result could easily hurt his ability to get legislation through the House of Representatives, which must pass all laws.

6. There is no necessity for the President to convince members of Congress, the Representatives and Senators, of his point of view.

7. Long ago within the executive branch there were the departments of State, Treasury, Defense, Justice, Interior, Agriculture, Commerce, Labor, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Transportation, Energy, Education, and Veterans Affairs.

8. Each department is established by electors.

9. None of these Secretaries, as the department heads are usually called, can also be serving in Congress or in another part of the government.

10. When they meet together, the Secretaries of the departments are termed Congress.

Ex. 4. Be ready to speak on the topic. Use the questions as a plan.

Political Parties

The Constitution says nothing about political parties, but over time the U.S. has in fact developed a two-party system. The two leading parties are the Democrats and the Republicans. There are other parties besides these two, and foreign observers are often surprised to learn that among these are also a Communist party and

several Socialist parties. Minor parties have occasionally won offices at lower levels of government, but they do not play a role in national politics. One does not need to be a member of a political party to run in any election at any level of government. When they register to vote, people can simply declare themselves to be members of one or two major parties. This, as a rule, allows them to vote in party primaries. Sometimes, the Democrats are thought of as associated with labor and the Republicans with business and industry. Republicans also tend to oppose the greater involvement of the federal government in some areas of public life which they consider to be the responsibility of the 40 states and communities. Democrats, on the other hand, tend to favor a more active role of the central government in social matters.

To distinguish between the parties is often difficult, however. Furthermore, the traditional European terms of «right» and «left», or «conservative» and «liberal» do not quite fit the American system. Someone from the «conservative right», for instance, would be against a strong central government in social matters. A Democrat from one part of the country could be very «liberal», and one from another part quite «conservative». Even if they have been elected as Democrats or republicans, Representatives or Senators are not bound to a party program, nor are they subject to any discipline when they disagree with their party.

While some voters will vote a «straight ticket», in other words, for all of the Republican or Democratic candidates in an election, many do not. They vote for one party's candidate for one office, and another for another's. As a result, the political parties have much less actual power than they do in other nations.

In the USA, the parties cannot win seats which they are then free to fill with party members they have chosen. Rather, both Representatives and senators are elected personally to serve the interests of the people and the areas they represent, that is, their «constituencies». In about 70 percent of legislative decisions, members of Congress will vote with the specific wishes of their constituencies in mind even if this goes against what their own parties might want as national policy. It is quite common, in fact, to find Democrats in Congress voting for Republican President's legislation, quite a few Republicans voting against it, and so on.

Topical vocabulary

Nouns

Democrat
Republican
Socialist
primary
involvement

Verbs

to register
to declare
to associate
to consider
to distinguish

Word expressions

to vote a «straight ticket»
to be subject to
to win a seat
to say nothing about
it is quite common

Exercises

Ex. 1. Find the pairs of synonyms:

Besides, to oppose, particular, to differentiate, several, to connect, strategy, eventually, to work out, personally, to astonish, amid, to develop, over time, also, quite a few, to surprise, among, specific, to associate, policy, to go against, individually, to distinguish

Ex. 2. Complete the following sentences:

1. The Constitution says nothing about political parties, but over time the U.S. has in fact developed...
2. The two leading parties are...
3. Minor parties have occasionally won offices at...
4. When they register to vote, people can simply declare themselves to be...
5. Sometimes, the Democrats are thought of as associated with labor and the Republicans with...
6. Democrats, on the other hand, tend to...
7. Someone from the «conservative right», for instance, would be against...
8. In the USA, the parties cannot win seats which they are then free to fill with...
9. In about 70 percent of legislative decisions, members of Congress will vote with...
10. It is quite common, in fact, to find Democrats in Congress voting for...

Ex. 3. Answer the following questions:

1. What are the two leading parties in the U.S.?
2. What other political parties are there in the U.S.?
3. Where have minor parties occasionally won offices?
4. What allows people to vote in party primaries?
5. What are the Democrats sometimes associated with?
6. What are the Republicans sometimes associated with?
7. What do the Republicans tend to oppose?
8. What do the Democrats, on the other hand, tend to favor?
9. Why is it difficult to distinguish between the parties?
10. The traditional European terms of «right» and «left», or «conservative» and «liberal» do not quite fit the American system, do they?
11. Why are Representatives or Senators not bound to a party program?
12. Why do the political parties have much less actual power than they do in other nations?
13. Can the parties in the USA win seats which they are then free to fill with party members they have chosen?
14. How will members of Congress vote in about 70 percent of legislative decisions?

Ex. 4. Discuss with your partner the party system developed in the U.S.

Elections

American citizens who are at least 18 years of age have the right to vote. They must, however, register as voters in order to be able to exercise this right. Each state has the right to determine registration procedures. A number of civic group, such as League of Women Voters, are actively trying to get more people involved in the electoral process and have drives to register as many people as possible. Voter registration and voting among minorities has dramatically increased during the last twenty years, especially as a result of the Civil Rights movement.

There is some concern, however, about the number of citizens who could vote in national elections but do not. In the national

election of 1988, for instance, only 57.4 percent of all those who could have voted actually did, and in 1992, 61.3 percent. But then, Americans who want to vote must register, that is put down their names in a register before the actual elections take place. There are 50 different registration laws in the U.S. – one set for each state. In the South, voters often have to register not only locally but also at the county seat. Of those voters in the United States who did register in the 1988 Presidential elections, 86.1 percent cast their ballots, in the 1992 elections, 89.8 percent. In European countries, on the other hand, “permanent registration” of voters is most common. Even there, however, there is a growing concern about the “apathy” of voters.

Another important factor is that there are many more elections in the U.S. at the state and local levels than there are in most countries. If the number of those who vote in these elections (deciding, for example, if they should pay more taxes so a new main street bridge can be built) were included, the percentage in fact would not be that much different from other countries. Certainly, Americans are much more interested in local politics than in those at the federal level. Many of the most important decisions, such as those concerning education, housing, taxes, and so on, are made close to home, in the state or county.

The national Presidential elections really consist of two separate campaigns. One is for the nomination of candidates at national party conventions. The other is to win the actual election. The nominating race is a competition between members of the same party. They run in a succession of state primaries and caucuses (which take place between March and June). They hope to gain a majority of delegate votes for their national party conventions (in July or August). The party convention then votes to select the party’s official candidate for the presidency. Then follow several months of Presidential campaigns by the candidates.

These primaries drag out the entire process. Yet they have several advantages, each of fundamental importance to democracy in the United States. First, they help to prevent a few party leaders from choosing the candidates. Anyone can run in the primaries, and anyone who wants to be nominated must run. Secondly, as a result, “new blood” can enter the race and sometimes, as Clinton did in 1992, win

the nomination of his party. And finally, when candidates from one party debate among themselves in public – “fighting it out in the open” – weaknesses and strengths can more easily be seen by all. For these reasons, several parties in several nations are now experimenting with primary systems of their own.

Topical vocabulary

<i>Nouns</i>	<i>Verbs</i>	<i>Adjectives and adverbs</i>
campaign	to exercise	civic
drive	to run	set
concern	to increase	entire
register	to gain	federal
apathy	to select	separate
convention	to follow	local
caucus	to drag out	dramatically
nomination	to determine	formally

Word combinations

to cast a ballot	primary system
state primaries	registration procedure
to fight out	electoral process
to go to the polls	Civil Rights movement
Electoral College	registration law

Exercises

Ex. 1. Answer the following questions:

1. What must American citizens do in order to be able to vote?
2. What groups are actively trying to get more people involved in the electoral process?
3. How has voting among minorities changed during the last twenty years?
4. When must Americans register if they want to vote?
5. How many registration laws are there in the U.S.?
6. Where must voters in the South register?
7. What is the percentage of those who registered and cast their ballots in the 1988 and 1992 Presidential elections?

8. What important decisions are made close to home, in the state or county?

9. What separate campaigns do the national Presidential elections really consist of?

10. What is the nominating race?

11. Who can run in the primaries?

12. When did Clinton win the nomination of his party?

13. When can weaknesses and strengths be seen more easily?

14. Why are several parties in several nations now experimenting with primary systems of their own?

Ex. 2. Match the words from 2 columns:

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. to drag out | a. использовать право |
| 2. to go to the polls | b. беспокойство |
| 3. civic | c. отдельный |
| 4. concern | d. затягивать |
| 5. Electoral College | e. голосовать |
| 6. primary system | f. гражданский |
| 7. separate | g. коллегия выборщиков |
| 8. to exercise a right | h. система предварительных выборов |

Ex. 3. Make a summary of the text.

Ex. 4. Discuss with your partner the problems concerning elections in the U.S.

Federalism: State and Local Governments

The fifty states are quite diverse in size, population, climate, economy, history, and interests. The fifty state governments often differ from one another, too. Because they often approach political, social, or economic questions differently, the states have been called "laboratories of democracy." However, they do share certain basic structures. The individual states all have republican forms of government with a senate and a house. (There is one exception. Nebraska, which has only one legislative body of 49 "Senators.") All have executive branches headed by state governors and independent

court systems. Each state also has its own constitution. But all must respect the federal laws and not make laws that interfere with those of the other states (for example, someone who is divorced under the laws of one state is legally divorced in all). Likewise, cities and local authorities must make their laws and regulations so that they fit their own state's constitution.

The U.S. Constitution limits the federal government to only very specific powers, but modern judicial interpretations of the Constitution have expanded federal responsibilities. All others automatically belong to the states and to the local communities. This has meant that there has always been a battle between federal and states' rights. The traditional American distrust of a too powerful central government has kept the battle fairly even over the years. The states and local communities in the U.S. have rights that in other countries generally belong to the central government.

All education at any level, for example, is the concern of the states. The local communities have the real control at the public school level. They control administration of the schools. They elect the school board officials, and their local community taxes largely support the schools. Each individual school system, therefore, hires and fires and pays its own teachers. It sets its own policies within broad state guidelines. Similarly, the U.S. does not have a national police force. The FBI is limited to handling a very few federal crimes, for instance kidnapping. Each state has its own state police and its own criminal laws (and the police from one state have no legal powers in any other). The same is true with, for example, marriage and divorce laws, driving laws and licenses, drinking laws, and voting procedures. In turn, each city has its own police force that it hires, trains, controls, and organizes. Neither the President nor the governor of a state has direct power over it. By the way, police departments of counties are often called "sheriffs' departments." Sheriffs are usually elected, but state and city police officials are not.

There are many other areas which are also the concern of cities, towns, and villages. Among these are the opening and closing hours for stores, street and road repair, or architectural laws and other regulations. Also, one local community might decide that a certain magazine is pornographic and forbid its sale, or a local school board

might determine that a certain novel should not be in their school library. (A court, however, may later tell the community or school board that they have unfairly attempted to exercise censorship.) But another village, a few miles down the road, might accept both. The same is true of films. Unlike in a number of other countries, a national "censor" of books or films does not exist in the United States.

Topical vocabulary

Nouns

official
responsibility
regulations
interpretation
battle
distrust
kidnapping
sale
censorship

Verbs

to approach
to share
to respect
to hire
to fire
to handle
to forbid
to attempt

Adjectives and adverbs

individual
powerful
judicial
unfairly
similarly

word combinations

court system
local community
police force
federal crime
school board

Exercises

Ex. 1. Answer the following questions:

1. Why have the states been called "laboratories of democracy"?
2. What powers does the U.S. Constitution limit the federal government to?
3. Why has the battle between federal and states' rights been kept fairly even over the years?
4. How do the local communities control public schools?
5. Who elects the school board officials?
6. What is the FBI limited to?
7. How are police departments of counties often called?
8. What other areas are also the concern of cities, towns, and villages?
9. What might a local school board determine?

10. Who can tell the community or school board that they have unfairly attempted to exercise censorship?

Ex. 2. Make a short summary of the text.

II. TEXTS FOR SUPPLEMENTARY READING

The Land of The USA

The nation's capital, Washington, D.C., has the 10th largest metropolitan population in the country, with a population of over 3.9 million. Laid out by the French architect Pierre L'Enfant in the late 18th century, it was the world's first city especially planned as a center of government.

The city of Washington, in the District of Columbia along the Potomac River, is the capital of a federal union of 50 states. When the United States declared its independence from Great Britain on July 4, 1776 (now celebrated as a national holiday), there were 13 original states – each one sovereign, each wanting to control its own affairs. The states tried to keep their sovereignty and independence within a loose confederation, but their attempt proved ineffectual. Therefore, in 1789, they adopted a new Constitution establishing a federal union under a strong central government.

The original 13 states were grouped along the Atlantic Coast. As the frontier moved westward, large areas of what is now the continental United States were added by purchase, treaty and annexation. As each state was settled, governments were first organized as territories and later entered the Union as states when their territorial legislatures petitioned the Congress for admission. There are now 50 states. Alaska and Hawaii, the last states to enter the Union, did so in 1959.

Under the Constitution, the states delegated many of their sovereign powers to this central government in Washington. But they kept many important powers for themselves. Each of the 50 states, for example, retains the right to run its own public school system, to decide on the qualifications of its voters, to license its doctors and

other professionals, to provide police protection for its citizens and to maintain its roads.

In actual practice, and in line with the American tradition of keeping government as close to the people as possible, the states delegate many of these powers to their political subdivisions – counties, cities, towns and villages. Thus, at the lowest political level, residents of small American communities elect village trustees to run their police and fire departments, and elect a board of education to run their schools. On the county level, voters elect executives who are responsible for roads, parks, libraries, sewage and other services, and elect or appoint judges for the courts. The citizens of each state also elect a governor and members of the state legislature.

In addition to the 50 states and the District of Columbia, citizens of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, the Virgin Islands and American Samoa vote in federal elections. United States possessions include the Pacific Islands of Wake, Midway, Jarvis, Howland, Baker, Johnston Atoll and Kingman Reef. The United States administers the Republic of Palau under United Nations auspices. Two entities, The Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands, have become sovereign self-governing states in free association with the United States.

Election Days

The United States has many election days because there are so many levels of government. Each state has its own elected officials, such as a governor – the chief administrative official – and state legislators, who make the state's laws. In addition, there are elections of mayors and other officials for all cities and smaller communities, and still other elections for county officials. (Counties are subdivisions of each state.)

States set their own election days for state and local officials. City and county elections take place on a variety of dates. Generally, however, state officials are elected on a day that was selected by Congress for national elections in the nation's early years. That day is the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. That rule may seem complicated, but there was a reason for it. Most Americans at

that time lived in small towns and in rural areas. Elections had to be held at a time when the weather was still good in northern states and when the harvest was over so farmers wouldn't have to worry too much about their work. It also had to be on a day of the week that was not a religious Sabbath (Saturday or Sunday). The November Tuesday rule was the result.

Presidential Election Day is held every four years – in all years divisible by four. That is the day Americans make their choice for president of the United States. On the same day, voters in all states name their choices for the lower house of Congress, the House of Representatives, and voters in one-third of the states vote for one of two Senators – members of the upper house – that represent each state. Government offices and businesses may give voters several hours off to vote, but Election Day is not a federal holiday.

Because members of the House of Representatives serve two-year terms and one-third of the 100 members of the Senate is elected every two years for terms lasting six years, congressional elections occur in all states every second year.

Population Trends

America has long been known as an ethnic "melting pot." Its current population is 252.5 million, made up of immigrants or their descendants from virtually every country in the world. It is believed that the first people to arrive – from Siberia, more than 10,000 years ago – were the Native Americans or the American Indians. Today, nearly 1.5 million American Indians and Eskimos live in the United States, many on tribal lands set aside for them in 31 states.

Europe, the major source of U.S. immigration, began sending colonists to America in the early 17th century, primarily from northern and western Europe. Immigration peaked in the period from 1880 to 1920, when tens of millions of immigrants entered the United States, with the largest percentage during that period coming from southern and eastern Europe.

African-Americans, who today number 30.79 million, constitute the largest single ethnic minority in the country. They were first brought to the New World as slaves in the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries. In the 20th century large numbers of blacks, who

historically lived in the South, migrated to the large industrial cities of the North in search of jobs and a better way of life. Hispanics, who number 20.5 million and live primarily in the Southwest, are the next largest ethnic minority group in the United States. Sixty percent are Mexican-Americans with the remainder from Central and South America. The Hispanic community is extremely varied, and includes large Puerto Rican populations in many eastern cities as well as a growing Cuban-American presence in Miami, Florida. The United States' population has also absorbed nearly 6.5 million Asians (from China, Hong Kong, Japan, Laos, the Philippines, Vietnam, South Korea, Cambodia and Thailand.) Many Asian Americans live in Hawaii, where more than two-thirds of the population claim an Asian or Polynesian heritage.

Once a nation of farmers, the United States has become increasingly urban since the turn of the century. Today, 77 percent of the population lives in or near cities, and only 1.9 percent of the population lives on farms. In 1988, the United States counted 10 metropolitan areas of over one million people, and 175 cities with 100,000 or more people

Since 1930, suburbs have grown faster than the cities (as middle-class residents have left the crowded living conditions of most large cities). Suburbs are defined as residential areas within commuting distance to large cities. Most people who live in suburbs own their own homes and commute to work in the city, or they work in nearby offices and factories that have relocated to the suburbs.

Americans as a nation tend to be quite mobile. Over a five year period, one family in 10 moves to a new state. In general, the population currently is shifting south and westward. California has passed New York as the most populous state, although the metropolitan area of New York City (population: 18.1 million) remains the nation's largest, with Los Angeles second (13.7 million), and Chicago third (8.181 million).

During the period from 1945 to 1964, the number of children born in the United States increased dramatically; a total of 76 million babies were born during this period. This sharp increase became known as the "baby boom." As this group, known as the baby

boomers, has grown to adulthood, it has brought significant economic, cultural and social changes to the American population.

Ethnic Observances

The United States is a nation of many religious and ethnic groups. Many of these have feast days, holy days or special customs related to their religion or to their nation of origin. People of the Jewish faith, for example, observe all of their traditional holy days, with employers showing consideration by allowing them to take days off so they can observe their traditions. The same is true for Moslems.

Some customs which hark back to traditions of other lands lend a great deal of color to American life. The celebration of Mardi Gras – the day before the Christian season of Lent begins in late winter – is a tradition in New Orleans, a major southern city located in the state of Louisiana. The celebration, marked by a huge parade and much feasting, grew out of old French traditions, since Louisiana was once part of France's New World empire.

In various places, other ethnic groups sponsor parades or other events of great interest, adding pageantry and merriment to American life. Just a few examples:

St. Patrick's Day in the United States is a time of celebration for people of Irish descent and their friends. One of the biggest celebrations takes place in New York City, where a parade is held on the Irish patron saint's feast, March 17.

Italian feasts in honor of patron saints are held in cities or neighborhoods where people from certain sections of Italy form a large part of the citizenry. Among these is a feast in honor of San Gennaro (St. Januarius), patron saint of Naples, and one in honor of St. Paulinus of Nola, both in New York City. In areas where Americans of Chinese descent live, and especially in the Chinatown sections of New York City and San Francisco, California, people sponsor traditional Chinese New Year's celebrations with feasts, parades and fireworks.

"Octoberfests" featuring German music, dancing and food are held wherever large groups of German-Americans live. In New York City, there seems to be a parade day for almost every ethnic group of

any size found in that city, including Americans whose origin goes back to Germany, Poland, Puerto Rico, Haiti and Norway.

Economy

The American economy is a free enterprise system that has emerged from the labors of millions of American workers; from the wants that tens of millions of consumers have expressed in the marketplace; from the efforts of thousands of private business people; and from the activities of government officials at all levels who have undertaken the tasks that individual Americans cannot do.

The nation's income and productivity have risen enormously over the past 70 years. In this period, the money for personal consumption tripled in real purchasing power. The gross national product per capita quadrupled, reflecting growth in worker productivity.

Together, all sectors of the American economy produce almost \$4,000 million dollars worth of goods and services annually, and each year they turn out almost \$ 190,000 million more. The consumption of these goods and services is spread widely. Most Americans consider themselves members of the middle economic class, and relatively few are extremely wealthy or extremely poor. According to U.S. Census Bureau figures, 9.6 percent of all American families make more than \$50,000 a year, and 7.7 percent of all American families have incomes less than \$10,000; the median annual income for all American families is about \$28,906.

Americans live in a variety of housing that includes single detached homes (62 percent) with a median cost of \$112,500. They also live in apartments, town-houses and mobile homes. Three-fourths of all married couples own their own homes. The size of all dwelling units has increased in living space. The median number of rooms occupied in each dwelling unit has increased from 4.9 rooms per unit in 1960 to 5.2 rooms today, despite the shrinking family size. About 3.6 percent of all Americans live in public (government-supplied or subsidized) housing.

The government plays an important role in the economy, as is the case in all countries. From the founding of the Republic, the U.S. federal government has strongly supported the development of transportation. It financed the first major canal system and later

subsidized the railroads and the airlines. It has developed river valleys and built dams and power stations. It has extended electricity and scientific advice to farmers, and assures them a minimum price for their basic crops. It checks the purity of food and drugs, insures bank deposits and guarantees loans.

America's individual 50 states have been most active in building roads and in the field of education. Each year the states spend some \$33.31 million on schools and provide a free public education for 29.1 million primary-school pupils and 11.4 million youth in secondary schools. (In addition, 8.3 million youths attend private primary and secondary schools.) Approximately 60 percent of the students who graduate from secondary schools attend colleges and universities, 77.2 percent of which are supported by public funds. The U.S. leads the world in the percentage of the population that receives a higher education. Total enrollment in schools of higher learning is 13.4 million.

Despite the fact that the United States government supports many segments of the nation's economy, economists estimate that the public sector accounts for only one-fifth of American economic activity, with the remainder in private hands. In agriculture, for example, farmers benefit from public education, roads, rural electrification and support prices, but their land is private property to work pretty much as they desire. More than 86.7 percent of America's 208.8 million farms are owned by the people who operate them; the rest are owned by business corporations. With increasingly improved farm machinery, seed and fertilizers, more food is produced each year, although the number of farmers decrease annually. There were 15,669,000 people living on farms in 1960; by 1989 that total had decreased to 4,801,000. Farm output has increased dramatically: just 50 years ago a farmer fed 10 persons; today the average farmer feeds 75. America exports some 440.9 thousand million worth of farm products each year. The United States produces as much as half the world's soybeans and corn for grain, and from 10 to 25 percent of its cotton wheat, tobacco and vegetable oil.

The bulk of America's wealth is produced by private industries and businesses—ranging from giants like General Motors, which sells \$96,371 million worth of cars and trucks each year—to thousands of

small, independent entrepreneurs. In 1987, nearly 233,710 small businesses were started in the U.S. Yet by one count, some 75 percent of American products currently face foreign competition within markets in the United States. America has traditionally supported free trade. In 1989, the U.S. exported \$360,465 thousand million in goods and imported \$475,329 thousand million.

In 1990, 119.55 million Americans were in the labor force, representing 63.0 percent of the population over the age of 16. The labor force has grown especially rapidly since 1955 as a result of the increased number of working women. Women now constitute more than half of America's total work force. The entry of the "baby boom" generation into the job market has also increased the work force. Part-time employment has increased as well – only about 55 percent of all workers have full-time, full-year jobs – the rest either work part-time, part-year or both. The average American work week was 41 hours in 1989.

American industries have become increasingly more service-oriented. Of 12.6 million new jobs created since 1982, almost 85 percent have been in service industries. Careers in technical, business and health-related fields have particularly experienced employee growth in recent years. Approximately 27 million Americans are employed in selling. Another 19.2 million work in manufacturing and 17.5 million work for federal, state and local governments.

Recently, unemployment in the United States was calculated at about seven percent. The government provides short-term unemployment compensation (from 20 to 39 weeks depending upon economic conditions) to replace wages lost between jobs. About 80 percent of all wage and salary earners are covered by unemployment insurance. In addition, both the government and private industry provide job training to help unemployed and disadvantaged Americans.

Traditions and Holidays

Americans widely observe other holidays which stem from traditions older than those of the United States. One is Easter, the Christian feast of the Resurrection of Jesus. Easter always falls on a Sunday. For most Americans, it is a day of worship and a gathering of

the family. Many follow old traditions such as the dyeing of hard-boiled eggs and the giving of gifts of candy eggs, rabbits and chicks for the children. Many households organize Easter egg hunts, in which children look for dyed eggs hidden around the house or yard or in a park. The President of the United States even has an annual Easter egg hunt on the lawn of the White House the day after Easter, known as "Easter Monday."

The other holidays stemming from old traditions are Christmas Day, December 25, and New Year's Day, January 1. The American traditions of those days are generally the same as those in other nations which observe them – but those who live in such nations may notice at least some differences.

Christmas is a most important religious holy day for Christians, who attend special church services to celebrate the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. Because it is a religious holy day, it is not an official holiday. However, since most Americans are Christian, the day is one on which most businesses are closed and the greatest possible number of workers, including government employees, have the day off. Many places of business even close early on the day before Christmas. When Christmas falls on a Sunday, the next day is also a holiday.

Naturally Christians observe Christmas according to the traditions of their particular church. Besides the strictly religious traditions, however, other common Christmas practices are observed by people who are not religious or who are not Christian. In this way, some Christmas traditions have become American traditions. Among them:

Gift-giving is so common at Christmas time that for most stores it means a sharp increase in sales. Stores, in fact, are full of shoppers from Thanksgiving time in late November until the day before Christmas. This situation has caused many religious people to complain that the religious meaning of Christmas is being subverted, that Christmas has become "commercial." Despite the criticism, Christmas shopping is a major activity of many Americans in the month of December. Gifts are given to children, members of the family and close friends. They are given to people who have done favors for others or who work for them. Some people bake cookies or make candies or other special food treats for friends and neighbors. Many businesses give their workers a Christmas "bonus" —gifts of

extra money – to show appreciation for their work. Christmas is also a time when most Americans show great generosity to others less fortunate than they. They send money to hospitals or orphanages or contribute to funds that help the poor.

Most Americans send greeting cards to their friends and family at Christmas time. Some people who are friends or relatives and live great distances from each other may not be much in contact with each other during the year – but will usually exchange greeting cards and often a Christmas letter telling their family news.

Santa Claus is a mythical man who is said to live at the North Pole, where he makes toys throughout the year. The Santa Claus character is derived from age-old stories about an early Christian saint named Nicholas, known for his giving of gifts. Santa Claus, pictured as a cheerful fat man with long white beard and dressed in a red suit, supposedly visits the home of good children on the night before Christmas and leaves them gifts. Very young American children look forward eagerly to Christmas morning, when they find gifts he has left behind.

The decorating of homes for Christmas is very common. Most Americans who observe Christmas have a Christmas tree in their homes. This may be a real evergreen tree or an artificial one. In either case, the tree is decorated and trimmed with small lights and ornaments. Other decorations such as lights and wreaths of evergreen and signs wishing people a "Merry Christmas" can be found inside and outside of many homes.

A Christmas dinner, often with turkey on the menu, for family and friends is also an American tradition; so are parties for friends, family and co-workers. Besides the Christmas dinner, many people hold other gala get-togethers just before and just after Christmas.

Although New Year's Day is also a Christian holy day, it has a long secular tradition which makes it a holiday for all Americans. Most of the celebrating of the holiday takes place the night before, when Americans gather in homes or in restaurants or other public places to enjoy food and beverages and to wish each other a happy and prosperous year ahead. Balloons and paper streamers and horns and other noisemakers are all around at midnight when the old year passes away and the new year arrives. One of the more colorful and

unusual observances of New Year's Day takes place in Philadelphia, where large groups of people wearing unusual costumes parade through the city with bands.

Thanksgiving Day

In the year 1620, a ship named the Mayflower brought 102 English men, women and children to the rocky coast of what is now Massachusetts, one of the 50 states of the United States of America. The ship's passengers were Puritans – members of a religious sect which was unpopular in Britain because its members wanted to reform the Church of England. They came to America to found a community where they could practice their religion without interference.

These Pilgrims – as they are usually known – came to an area uninhabited by other Europeans. The people living there were Native Americans, the people most Americans refer to as American Indians.

It was late in the year when the Pilgrims landed and founded the colony they called Plymouth. They had only the belongings that they had brought on the small ship. The winter was cold, and about half of the Pilgrims died. In the spring, with advice and help from the Indians, with whom they lived in peace, the Pilgrims planted corn (known also as maize) and other crops and prepared as well as they could for the next winter.

In October 1621, to celebrate the good harvest, the Pilgrims held a feast which featured, among many other foods, wild turkey, which is native to North America. They called this their day of thanksgiving, held to thank their God for his blessings.

The story of that Pilgrim feast is well-known among Americans. It is told and retold every year to young children in schools as one of the major American holidays approaches. The holiday is called Thanksgiving Day and is now observed on the fourth Thursday of November.

Other nations have days of thanksgiving, too, but Thanksgiving Day has a special significance for Americans because it is traced back to that group of people who were among the first to come to the New World in search of freedom.

Today, families – often including grandparents and aunts, uncles and cousins and grown children who live away from home – gather together, usually in a home but sometimes in a restaurant, for a traditional Thanksgiving dinner. This almost always includes some of the foods served at the first Thanksgiving, roast turkey and cranberry sauce, plus sweet potatoes and pumpkin pie. Other dishes vary according to family and regional traditions. In Minnesota and Wisconsin, for instance, wild rice is often served. In other areas, sauerkraut is sometimes on the menu. Often, relatives and friends contribute their own specialties to make things easier on the cook. Before the feast, families usually pause to give thanks for all their blessings – including the joy of being together on this day. And many families like to share the day with others, inviting to their dinner foreign students, military people stationed far from home, and people who have no families.

Many people attend religious services on Thanksgiving Day, and watching football games – sometimes in person but usually on television – is also a popular Thanksgiving Day activity. The next day, a Friday, most people return to work. But some people take the day off to begin shopping for Christmas gifts.

The day is one on which Americans also show increased concern for the poor. Gifts of food for a dinner are common, Charitable organizations and churches provide food or serve dinners for the needy.

"American" Holidays

Besides Thanksgiving Day there are seven other major holidays which might be considered uniquely American – although in some cases, other nations observe similar holidays. In addition to the widely recognized holidays listed below, two Sundays are also observed in special ways. One is the second Sunday in May, which is always Mother's Day, a day on which children honor their mothers, give them gifts, or perhaps take them to a restaurant for dinner. The other is the third Sunday in June, which is Father's Day, and children honor their fathers in some special way. These are included in any holiday list, even though every Sunday is a day of rest and recreation for most Americans.

The seven major "American" holidays in calendar order are:

Martin Luther King Day. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a black clergyman who is ranked among the greatest of black Americans because of his crusade during the 1950s and 1960s to win full civil rights for his people. Preaching nonviolence, much in the same way as had Mohandas K. (Mahatma) Gandhi of India, Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke out and campaigned tirelessly to rid the United States of traditions and laws that forces on black Americans the status of second-class citizens. Among these laws were those in some states which required black people to take back seats in buses or which obstructed voting by blacks. The world was shocked when Dr. King was assassinated in 1968. Ever since, special memorial services have marked his birthday on January 15. By vote of Congress, the third Monday of every January, beginning in 1986, is now a federal holiday in Dr. King's honor.

Presidents' Day. Until the mid-1970s, the birthday of George Washington, first president of the United States (February 22) was observed as a federal holiday. In addition, the birthday of Abraham Lincoln (February 12), president during the Civil War (1861-1865), was observed as a holiday in most states. In the 1970s, Congress declared that in order to honor all past presidents of the United States, a single holiday, to be called Presidents' Day, would be observed on the third Monday in February. In many states, however, the holiday continues to be known as George Washington's birthday.

Memorial Day. This holiday, on the fourth Monday of every May, is a day on which Americans honor the dead. Originally a day on which flags or flowers were placed on graves of soldiers who died in the American Civil War, it has become a day on which the dead of all wars and all other dead are remembered the same way. In many communities, special ceremonies are held in cemeteries or at monuments for the war dead by veterans of military services. Some hold parades and others hold memorial services or special programs in churches, schools or other public meeting places.

The "Memorial Day weekend" is also considered the beginning of the summer season. In many places, the weekend marks the opening of public beaches and public swimming pools. People who own summer homes quite often spend that weekend there. In the past

Memorial Day was the day on which people stopped wearing their heavier, warmer clothes and started wearing lighter, more summery apparel.

Independence Day. This day is regarded as the birthday of the United States as a free and independent nations. Most Americans simply call it the "Fourth of July," on which date it always falls. The holiday recalls the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. At that time, the people of the 13 British colonies located along the eastern coast of what is now the United States were involved in a war over what they considered unjust treatment by the king and parliament in Britain. The war began in 1775. As the war continued, the colonists realized that they were fighting not just for better treatment; they were fighting for freedom from England's rule. The Declaration of Independence, signed by leaders from the colonies, stated this clearly, and for the first time in an official document the colonies were referred to as the United States of America.

Generally, picnics with patriotic speeches and parades are held all over the United States on the Fourth of July. It is also a day on which fireworks displays fill the skies in the evening. The flying of flags, which also takes place on Memorial Day and some other holidays, is common. In 1876 and 1976, special centennial and bicentennial celebrations of Independence Day were held across the nation.

Labor Day. This holiday, which always is observed on the first Monday of September, has been a federal holiday since 1894, but was observed in some places before that day as a result of a campaign by an early organization of workers called the Knights of Labor. Its purpose is to honor the nation's working people. In many cities the day is marked by parades of working people representing the labor unions. For most Americans, it also marks the end of the summer season, during which most of them take vacations – although vacations can be taken at other times of the year. Public schools and other schools below the college level open just before or just after Labor Day.

Columbus Day. This day commemorates Italian navigator Christopher Columbus' landing in the New World on October 12, 1492. Most nations of the Americas observe this holiday on October 12, but in the United States, annual observances take place on the

second Monday in October. The major celebration of the day takes place in New York City, which holds a huge parade each year.

Veteran's Day. This holiday was originally called Armistice Day and was established to honor those Americans who had served in the First World War. It falls on November 11, the day on which that war ended in 1918. It honors veterans of all the wars in which the United States has been involved. Organizations of war veterans hold parades or other special ceremonies, and the president or other high official places a wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery outside Washington, D.C. There are soldiers buried there from each war the United States has fought in since World War I.

Not all Americans are free to celebrate holidays at all times. Whether they must work or not depends upon the importance of the holiday, the demands of seasonal work, holidays agreed to in union contracts and other factors. Many newspaper reporters, radio broadcasters, hospital workers, police, fire fighters and workers who provide other essential services must work on holidays. All working Americans, however, do get vacation time. Most take their vacations during the summer months – as is common in other nations. The amount of vacation time varies greatly, but most people get one or two weeks a year after working for the same company for a year or more. More vacation time is given after longer periods of work.

This brief description of holidays shows that for some of these special times, the customs of all or most Americans are very much the same. For others, however, the customs can vary greatly. Those who feel strongly about the labor unions, for example, see Labor Day as a day on which to demonstrate labor solidarity in a public way. For others, Labor Day means a day off to go for a ride in a car, to go for a final swim or to hold a family get-together.

What is it like to be a young person in the United States?

At 18 years of age, young people in the United States can take on most of the rights and the responsibilities of adulthood. Before this occurs, however, the American teenager (a common name for a young

person between the ages of 13 and 19), goes through the period of adolescence. Psychologists (specialists who study the science of human behavior) say that most young people experience conflict during this period of their lives. They are changing rapidly, both physically and emotionally and they are searching for self-identity. As they are growing up and becoming more independent, teenagers sometimes develop different values from those held by their parents. American teenagers begin to be influenced by the values expressed by their friends, the media (newspapers, television, magazines, etc.) and teachers. During this period of their lives, young people also begin to participate in social activities such as sporting events and church group projects, as well to do more things in the company of members of the opposite sex and fewer things in the company of their families.

While the teenage years for most American young people are nearly free of serious conflict, all youths face a certain number of problems. Some young people have difficulties in their relationships with their parents or problems at school which may lead to use of alcohol or drugs, the refusal to attend school or even to running away from home. In extreme cases, some might turn to crime and become juvenile delinquents (a lawbreaker under 18).

However, for every teenager experiencing such problems many more are making positive, important contributions to their communities, schools and society. Millions of young people in the United States are preparing for the future in exciting ways. Many teenagers are studying for college entrance exams or working at part-time jobs after school and on the weekends. Others are volunteering at hospitals, helping the handicapped, exhibiting projects at science fairs or programming computers.

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