

Topic 3 THE USA – FROM COLONY TO SUPERPOWER

1 Complete the text using vocabulary from topic 3.

From colony to superpower

During a state visit to Ireland in 2011, President Barack Obama met with distant Irish cousins. It was revealed that Obama also has English, Scotch-Irish, Welsh, German, and Swiss ancestors besides African ancestry through his Kenyan father. If you ask an American about his roots, you will very often hear something very similar, showing that many Americans have a very diverse ancestry. What is the reason for this? The answer lies in the history of the United States.

Throughout its history, the United States has been a magnet for immigrants. The promise of opportunity, freedom from persecution and the vision of a better future for themselves and their children has motivated millions of people from around the world to leave their homes and start a new life in the United States.

The largest waves of immigration occurred in the 19th century when westward expansion allowed many people to receive free land to start a farm. The hope of getting rich quickly by finding gold during the gold rushes in California and elsewhere also inspired people to go west. The result is a high degree of diversity. The multicultural society of the USA is sometimes called a melting pot, in which people from very different backgrounds grow together as one. Others prefer to call it a salad bowl – people from many backgrounds live together, but retain their individual identities.

While westward expansion offered hope for many Europeans who yearned for a better life, Native Americans had to pay a high price – the loss of much of their land, and the eradication of their traditional way of life. Many lives were lost when Native Americans were relocated from their original homelands to reservations. To this day there continue to be conflicts between the US government and some Native American tribes.

Immigration to America was not always voluntary. From the early years of English settlement in North America, African slaves were sold in the colonies. The economy especially of the Southern colonies, where cotton and tobacco was grown, relied on slave labor. Slavery was only abolished after the American Civil War (1861-1865). Even then, racial equality was not established; until the 1960s, racial segregation was the norm in the USA. Only then were equal rights established by law as a result of the Civil Rights Movement. Even though in 2008 the USA experienced the election of its first black president, the issues of inequality and racial injustice are not over, as is shown by much publicized acts of police violence against black people to this day.

After the Second World War the United States emerged as the wealthiest and most powerful nation on the planet. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union it became the only remaining superpower. The U.S. is not only a military superpower, but due, in part, to its cultural diversity, has become the leading cultural influence in the world. From education and ideas to products and brands, from films and television series to popular music, the whole world is exposed to the influences of the American way of life.

2 Match the words on the left (1-8) with their synonyms on the right (A-H).

G	1	ancestry	A	hardly
H	2	to deprive somebody of something	B	border
E	3	to hail from	C	face
C	4	countenance	D	to imagine something
B	5	boundary	E	to come from
A	6	barely	F	to continue
D	7	to envision something	G	descent
F	8	to persist	H	to rob somebody of something

3 Match the words on the left (1-10) with their definitions on the right (A-J).

F	1	to forge	A	to give a number without having figured it out exactly
A	2	to estimate	B	the art of making beer
H	3	starvation	C	to jump high and far
J	4	to pave the way for something	D	to officially end something
G	5	to claim something	E	needing no proof
I	6	to reclaim something	F	to make an illegal copy of an official document or money
E	7	self-evident	G	to demand something or say that it belongs to you
B	8	brewing	H	lack of food that leads to extreme hunger
C	9	to leap	I	to ask to be given back something that was taken away from you
D	10	to abolish something	J	to make it possible for something to happen

4 *Fill in the gaps.*

1. Traditional Native American societies are often described as communal, that means that they focused more on the group than on the individual.
2. With the arrival of the European settlers, Native Americans were deprived of the land they were living off.
3. As a consequence, men and women were forced to do different jobs than they traditionally did; this means that traditional gender roles changed.
4. During the 19th century, many people were against slavery and some fought to end this inhumane system. These people are referred to as abolitionists.
5. After the abolition of slavery, African Americans were kept apart from white Americans in a system of racial segregation.
6. Today, many people appreciate the fact that the population of the United States is made up of so many different types of people; they celebrate the diversity of US society.
7. One of the main conflicts during the 20th century was that of the Communist Eastern block and the Capitalist West fighting each other as opposing forces.
8. Now it seems as though the United States has established itself as the only remaining superpower; it has taken on that position and it looks like it will stay in it for a long time.

5 *What is it in English?*

1. Klempnerei plumbing
2. Wahlrecht suffrage
3. etwas enthüllen to unveil something
4. überschüssig surplus
5. Schicksal, Bestimmung destiny
6. Abstammung ancestry
7. Anpassung assimilation
8. Einnahmen proceeds
9. Zuflucht suchen bei etwas to resort to something
10. Währung currency