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# Vorwort

Liebe Schülerinnen, liebe Schüler,

in den Englisch-Lehrplänen werden neben sprachlichen Fertigkeiten auch landeskundliche bzw. soziokulturelle Kenntnisse und interkulturelle Kompetenz gefordert. Geographisches, historisches, politisches und kulturelles Wissen ist unabdingbar zum Verständnis aktueller Entwicklungen in den wichtigsten englischsprachigen Ländern. Dieser Band hilft Ihnen bei der **Vorbereitung auf Ihre Klausuren und das Abitur**, indem er das relevante Wissen über die Vereinigten Staaten übersichtlich und prägnant vorstellt.

Land und Leute in den USA kann man erst begreifen, wenn man die **Wurzeln der amerikanischen Nation** kennt, und z.B. die politischen Gegebenheiten, die Aufgabenteilung zwischen den Staaten und der Bundesregierung, die Rolle des Supreme Court und die Rolle der Medien.

Dieses Buch ist in **verständlichem Englisch** verfasst, um Sie an das Niveau der mündlichen und schriftlichen Prüfungen zu gewöhnen. Jedes Kapitel ist in sich abgeschlossen und **sinnvoll untergliedert**, sodass Sie sich gezielt über abiturrelevante Aspekte der einzelnen Themenbereiche informieren können. **Zahlreiche Bilder** veranschaulichen die im Text erläuterten Fakten, **Schaubilder** stellen wichtige Zusammenhänge dar.

Ich wünsche Ihnen viel Erfolg bei Ihrer Vorbereitung und hoffe, dass Sie auch einige bisher unbekannte Seiten des „Landes der unbegrenzten Möglichkeiten“ für sich entdecken.



Rainer Jacob



### George Washington

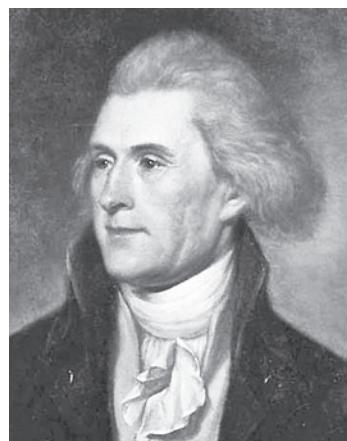
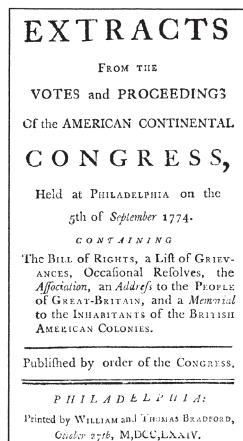
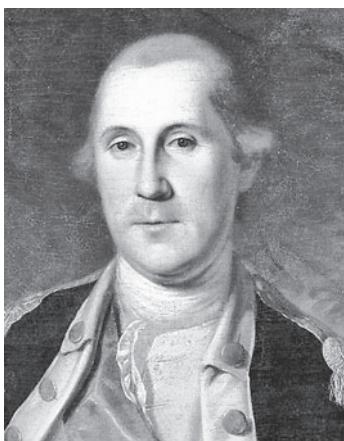
On May 10, 1775, the **Second Continental Congress** assembled in Philadelphia and made George Washington (1732–1799) commander of the American forces. The command was an honour, but Washington knew very well that it was a formidable task, too. He had to organize an army out of about 16,000 men, who were inexperienced in fighting and lacked military discipline. Baron von Steuben, a Prussian officer, joined the American forces and helped to drill and organize the troops. Out of necessity, Washington applied a new fighting technique. His men did not confront the enemy in formation, but attacked in small groups, spreading themselves all over the place. On July 4, 1776, the colonies declared their independence from Britain. In the winter of the same year Washington crossed the Delaware, captured the city of Trenton and took about one thousand prisoners. The British soldiers – called Redcoats because of their uniform – fought back but had great problems in trying to transport men and weapons because Washington's army frequently cut their supply lines. The tables turned when in May 1778, the French, Britain's old enemy from the Seven Years' War, came to the aid of the colonists. The British commander Lord Cornwallis surrendered his entire army at Yorktown on October 19, 1781, and two years later, in 1783, the final peace treaty, the **Treaty of Paris**, was signed. George Washington, the hero of the new nation, who had led the United States to victory over Britain, was **elected president** in 1789 and re-elected in 1792. Both times he received every vote cast by the electors.

### The Declaration of Independence

The **Declaration of Independence** was written in 1776 and adopted by the American Congress in Philadelphia on 4 July of the same year. Since then, the **4th of July** has been celebrated as **Independence Day** in the United States. When the Declaration was signed, a bell was rung, the Liberty Bell, which has become one of the most famous symbols of American independence. It was cast in England, in 1752, originally to commemorate Pennsylvania's Charter of Privileges. When the bell reached America, it was cracked and had to be recast. Until 1835, when it cracked again, it was rung every 4th of July. In 1976, to mark the Bicentenary of the Declaration of Independence, Queen Elizabeth presented a new bell to the people of the USA. Engraved on this new bell, which was from the same foundry as the Liberty Bell, are the words "Let Freedom Ring". Taken from a hymn, these words were used on August 28, 1963, by Martin Luther King in his speech "I have a dream".

## Historical Background

In 1776 – the 13 colonies were still at war with Britain – many people believed that a solution to the problems between the colonists and the mother country would eventually be found. Only a minority believed in complete independence. But as anger towards the British grew, Congress decided that all links with the mother country should be cut. Five of the members of Congress were asked to write a formal Declaration of Independence. Among them was **Thomas Jefferson** (1743–1826), a representative of the state of Virginia, who later became the nation's third president (1801–1809). He wrote the first draft of the original document, working at his desk in the home of a young German bricklayer, Jacob Graff. Jefferson finished his work in two weeks, Benjamin Franklin and John Adams later made some minor changes.



From 1774 to 1789 delegates of the North American colonies convened at several meetings. The first of these congresses was held in Philadelphia in 1774. Among the representatives assembled were George Washington

(picture on the left) and John Adams. In 1775, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson (picture on the right) joined the delegates.

## Equality and Human Rights

The Declaration of Independence begins with an indirect attack on the British king for his tyrannical rule. The colonists derive their right to resistance from the monarch's unfair administration. They hold George III responsible for the revolution and justify their rebellion. In the second sentence Thomas Jefferson and his co-authors express two revolutionary concepts, which have made the Declaration of Independence so influential, the ideas of **equality and natural rights**. Jefferson proclaims that "all men are created equal", which means that birth and position are irrelevant. It is not important whether somebody is

not the government, are the best stewards of our country's God-given natural resources ... And this means returning to the people and the states the control that belongs to them. It is the control and the power to make their own decisions about what's best for themselves and their families and communities" (Republican Platform 2016). Consequently, when Republicans such as Reagan (1981–1989) or Bush (George H.: 1989–1993; George W.: 2001–2009) were in government, welfare programmes were reduced substantially – a measure which hit the poorer classes, in particular.

On the other hand, Democrats, such as Kennedy (1961–1963), Johnson (1963–1969), Clinton (1993–2001), Obama (2009–2017) and Biden (since 2021) have always seen themselves as advocates of the less fortunate and for minority groups. Shortly after taking office in January 2021, President Joe Biden took steps to redress the failure of the Republican administration to competently respond to the Covid-19 pandemic, the rise in unemployment and increasing poverty. Biden's American Rescue Plan of roughly \$1.9 trillion represented one of the most generous expansions of aid in recent history. The money was targeted towards low-income and middle-class Americans, who had been especially hard hit by the pandemic and helped them pay for food, rent and health services.

In the field of **foreign policy** Republican presidents tended to follow the doctrine of unilateralism, which means they adhered to the idea that the United States ought to conduct its foreign affairs without the advice or involvement of other nations. For example, President George W. Bush declared the "war on terrorism" (2001) and ordered the invasion of Iraq (2003) without the support of multilateral institutions such as NATO or the United Nations. The Democrats, on the other hand, favour a security strategy which involves a closer cooperation with America's allies.

Party	Origins	Symbol	Colour
Republican Party	formed in 1854	elephant	red
Democratic Party	dating back to the 1790s	donkey	blue

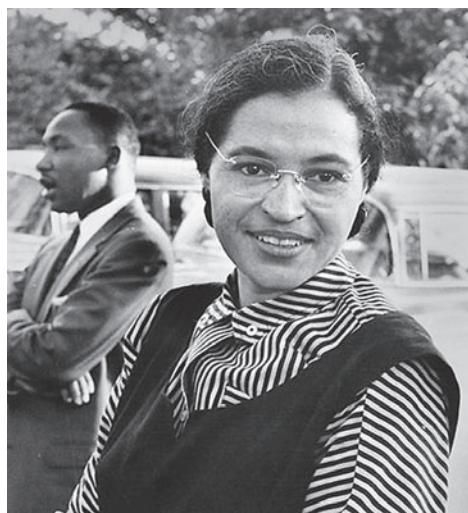
the desegregation of the armed forces, in view of the fact that Blacks had fought bravely as US soldiers in the war.

In 1954, the United States Supreme Court took a historic decision. In the legal case “Oliver **Brown versus Board of Education** of Topeka, Kansas”, the Supreme Court decided unanimously on May 17, 1954, that the “separate but equal” concept was unconstitutional, thus overthrowing its ruling of 1896. This decision not only paved the way for school desegregation but also marks the beginning of a mass movement of Blacks, and White sympathisers to end the segregationist practises and racial inequalities across the nation and particularly in the South.

## Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement

### Montgomery Bus Boycott

It was a small incident in Montgomery, Alabama, which triggered off a mass protest and gave the Civil Rights Movement new impetus. On a cold December evening in 1955, 42-year-old **Rosa Parks**, who worked as a seamstress in a factory, was on her way home from work riding on a bus. According to the strict segregation rules of the Montgomery City Bus Lines Black passengers had to sit in the back and had to give up their seats if the White section in the front of the bus became occupied. Ms Parks was sitting in the first row of the rear section designated for Blacks. It was a busy day and when the White section of the bus was filled, the driver ordered Ms Parks to give up her seat for a White man. The tired woman was fed up with being treated like a second-class citizen, so she refused and was arrested. The news of her arrest aroused the leaders of the Black community to action. They met at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church to discuss the issue. Among them was a young minister, **Martin Luther King Jr.**, who had been pastor in Montgomery for little more than a year. It was agreed to start a bus boycott in protest against segregated seating on the city buses. The boycott eventually lasted much longer than anyone had expected – 381 days – and the



Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King (around 1955)

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### America's Role in the 21st Century

Profound changes came when America was attacked on **September 11, 2001** by Islamist terrorists. The death of 3,000 innocent people and the destruction of the twin towers of the World Trade Center, the symbols of Western capitalism, have had a fundamental impact on America and the world. The United States government set itself the target of not only defending the American territory but also of ridding the world of authoritarian regimes which, in the eyes of the US administration, represented a threat to security and world peace. For states like Iraq and other dictatorial regimes – the so-called “rogue states” (“Schurkenstaaten”) – **President George W. Bush** coined the term “axis of evil”, an axis which by producing weapons of mass destruction posed a grave and growing danger to America and the free world. To combat these dangers, he proclaimed the **war on terror**, beginning in 2001 with the Americans invading Afghanistan. Bush counted on America's allies to join him



The towers of the World Trade Center after being struck by the captured planes on September 11, 2001

in the effort. Supported by Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair, he went on with his crusade with the **invasion of Iraq** in March 2003. With this decision Bush acted against the advice of the majority of the Security Council and several European nations (e.g. France, Germany) who expressed their wish to prolong the mission of the UN inspectors in Iraq whose job was to look for weapons of mass destruction – which eventually were never found. Instead the American government categorized countries into either good or evil ones – those who backed the American decision and those who did not. Thus, the debate over whether to go to war in Iraq provoked deep divisions between Europe and the US.

The election of **Barack Obama** in 2008 opened up a new era of US foreign policy. Whereas Republican presidents Bush (father and son) had kept to Reagan's philosophy “peace through strength”, which meant America should use its military power to guard its interests and influence worldwide, Democrat Barack Obama redefined America's role in the world. He aimed at addressing worldwide issues in a more cooperative way so that challenges such as the financial crisis, global warming



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