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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

The American Dream

“From rags to riches, from dishwasher to millionaire” – the hope of self-improvement and success is traditionally expressed in the term “American Dream”. For many it has been a vision, an aspiration – and for others an illusion. Some of the immigrants who emigrated to the United States believed that in the “the land of promise” the streets would be paved with gold. The more realistic immigrants, however, simply hoped for a better life. They firmly believed that in America personal success was possible and within reach of each individual because of the social, economic and political conditions for hard-working people. The American Dream implies **liberty, justice** and the **pursuit of happiness**, as expressed in the American Declaration of Independence of 1776.

The belief and trust in personal achievement based on private initiative has become the foundation of American society. However, this dream of a democratic and prosperous society guaranteeing “liberty and justice for all” has not yet been achieved for all groups in America. In the 1960s, in his famous speech “I have a dream” Martin Luther King referred to the ideal of equality as “a dream deeply rooted in the American Dream” and expressed his optimism that it would come true for Black people too. In 1997, President Clinton reminded the American people to continue striving for the realisation of the American Dream for all Americans: “Martin Luther King’s dream was the American Dream.”

However, this optimistic outlook has almost vanished in the last two decades as the pursuit of that dream of happiness and prosperity has become much harder for many Americans. Worse still, instead of making it to the top or at least leading a decent life, many people are left without a job, struggling for survival. They see their future, their American Dream, destroyed because of racism, or the technological advances of automation or the negative effects of globalisation. An increasing number of White workers blame the influx of immigrants, especially from Latin America, who, they argue, take away their jobs and opportunities. This is why Republicans advocate more effective immigration controls, especially between the US and Mexico, by building an “impenetrable wall” along the 3200 km-long southern border to replace the various types of fences and structures which already exist.

The Frontier

In the view of the settlers, the “**frontier**” was the dividing line between the White settlements and, as they saw it, the free unoccupied land beyond. It was the border country between civilisation and “the wilderness”. The early colonists had built their homes and cities on the east coast, but very soon adventurers like Daniel Boone began to explore and open up new lands outside the boundaries, first north and then west, eventually to the Pacific coast. In 1803, President Thomas Jefferson ordered an expedition led by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to trace the Mississippi River to its source and to find the best way to the Pacific Ocean. The report of the successful expedition, published in 1814, informed the American public about the potential of the territories in the **Far West**.

Fifty years later, after the end of the **Civil War** in 1865, the move west began, pushing the frontier further and further into unknown territory. The driving forces behind the **westward movement** were the quest for cheap land and natural resources, economic opportunities, better living conditions for families and self-improvement. The first Whites to move into the unknown were the hunters and **trappers**, followed by the backwoods settlers who were half hunters, half farmers. Then came the **farmers**, many of them optimistic and idealistic immigrants from Europe, who were drawn into the wilderness by the abundance of land. The main lines of migration came from the East and South. Important routes, like the Santa Fe Trail and the Oregon Trail, both of which followed old Indian paths, opened new lands to adventurous and daring pioneers. A favourite starting point was the town of Independence in Mis-

souri. Many pioneers set out from there in their wagons on a 3,000 km overland route which took them down the Missouri River, through the **Great Plains** across the Rocky Mountains and finally into Oregon. People took time in migrating to the West, pausing for a year or more in several places before reaching their final destination. When settle-



Family with their covered wagon during the Great Western Migration, 1866

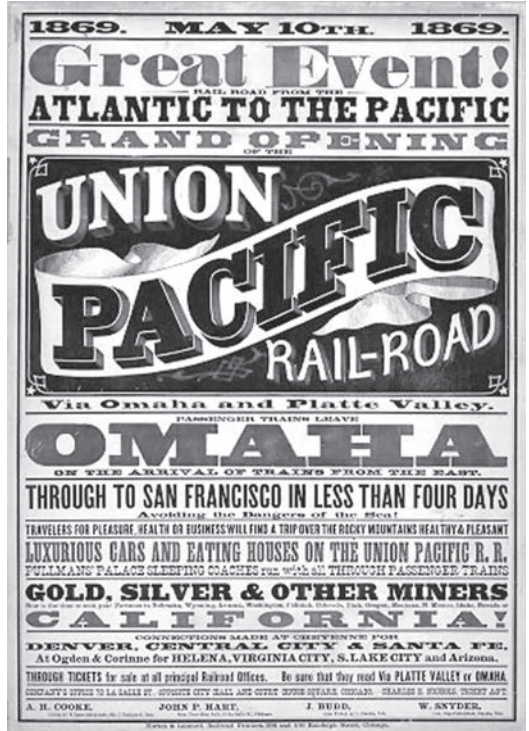
ments eventually grew in size and villages and towns developed, the third wave of the pioneer movement arrived. Merchants, doctors, bankers and lawyers came to provide services to the growing population.

The building of a **system of railroad lines** across the continent and the discovery of **gold in California** played an important part in the settlement of the Far West. When in 1848 James Marshall found nuggets of gold in a river in northern California, the news spread like wildfire, and more than 100,000 miners poured into the country. Some prospectors struck it rich, others were less lucky, but eventually stayed in the new land. In 1859, reports of gold and silver discoveries in Colorado and Nevada caused an influx of fortune hunters. Realising the overall importance of a reliable and efficient transport system, the American government encouraged railway companies to lay tracks across the United States by giving them free land and financial support. The Union Pacific Railroad started in the east, the Pacific Railroad in the west, in California. When both lines met in Promontory

in Utah, the first transcontinental railway line was completed. Between 1870 and 1900, the Whites had settled more land than in the 150 years before, completing the conquest of the West, America's frontier.

The Pioneering Spirit

Frederick Jackson Turner was among the first American historians to explain how deeply the conquest of the frontier influenced the development of the American nation and the character of its people. Ever since the initial colonisation of the continent, the American people have been a "people in motion" and mobility has become a unique trait that distinguishes Americans from Europeans. Charles Dickens saw the West as "peopled by a vast human army,



Poster for the Union Pacific Railroad opening-day, 1869

consisting of people who had dedicated their lives to leaving home after home behind.”

Since the days of the frontier movement Americans have always placed high value on independence, self-confidence and individualism – the virtues of pioneer life. When seen from the positive side, the pioneering spirit has promoted people’s ability to overcome difficulties through private initiative and invention. On the other hand, however, in many heroic frontier stories and Hollywood Western movies the pioneers’ individualism was reduced to a frequent use of guns and “trigger-happy gunmen” set the scene. These colourful pageants paint a distorted picture of the past because in reality the pioneers made little use of rifles and revolvers – most of them were farmers and homesteaders who were inexperienced in the handling of weapons. However, the **glorification of the frontier spirit** led to a culture where firearms were regarded as symbols of freedom. Not surprisingly, America’s gun laws are more permissive than in any other nation and weapons can be bought fairly easily. The consequences of this liberal way with firearms are evident: Whenever there are lethal shootings in American schools, for example, sensible people question the individual’s right to purchase and carry a gun and liberal politicians call for stricter gun control. Up to now, however, all efforts have been squashed by the powerful National Rifle Association and its supporters.

The Fate of the Native Americans

The conquest of the West was a triumph for the independent, optimistic, hard-working settlers, and a tragedy for the continent’s original inhabitants, the Native Americans. The frontier movement ended in a genocide of the native people of America, diminishing their population to a mere 248,000 in 1890 through fighting, disease and starvation. In 2010, the United States officially apologised “for the many instances of violence, maltreatment, and neglect inflicted on Native Peoples by citizens of the United States”.

In the beginning, the relationship between the first Europeans and the Indians was mainly friendly, and the settlers depended on the help of the natives to survive in a hostile environment. However, the situation changed as more and more “sod-busters” – the farmers who cleared the land and started their farms in the wilderness – tracked west and occupied Indian territory. They drove the natives relentlessly off the land of their ancestors, killing thousands who were unwilling to make room and be moved into reservations, usually barren, infertile grounds the Whites did not want. To justify the

cleansing of the Indians the concept of “**Manifest Destiny**” was propagated, according to which it was the Godly mission of the White man to conquer the wilderness and civilise the “inferior and culturally primitive savages”.

The myth of “Manifest Destiny” helped push waves of American settlers westward to the Pacific, displacing native peoples and devastating their culture and traditional way of life. The resistance the Indians put up against the White invaders was weak, as they were not united among themselves and tribal warfare was frequent. The greatest Indian victory was won in 1876 when Sioux warriors defeated and annihilated the 7th Cavalry commanded by the over-ambitious and reckless George Armstrong Custer at Little Bighorn. Most of the time, however, Indian uprisings, which were often protests against the fact that the Whites had broken earlier treaties or promises, were crushed with utter brutality during the Indian wars in the second half of the 19th century. Subsequent federal government **Indian policies** always safeguarded the interests of the Whites and neglected those of the original inhabitants. Laws like the **General Allotment Act** of 1887, also called Dawes Act, facilitated the acquisition of land for the White settlers and the Indians were moved into ever smaller reservations.

In the 20th century, the Indian policy of the government aimed at the integration of Native Americans into urban centres, thus hastening the termination, and extinction, of tribes. These efforts at forced assimilation (“termination policy”) were not successful, however, and given up in the 1960s by the Johnson administration. Since the 1970s, after Indian protestors had occupied Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay to alarm the public about the misery of the disadvantaged native population, a new policy, called “self-determination”, has been in effect. It has kept the protective role of the federal government – providing Native Americans with education and various forms of support – and has increased the participation of the tribes in important areas of local government.

About one-third of today’s 2.9 million Native Americans live in the states of California, Arizona and Oklahoma. Where natural resources (coal, oil, natu-



Reviving Native American heritage: Powwow in northern Wisconsin

ral gas or uranium) are found, the Indians lease out exploitation rights to White companies, others live from farming or tourism. Some tribes run casinos, the profits of which go back to the members. The urban Indians try to survive in the cities accepting all sorts of menial jobs. The living conditions of the majority of Native Americans are still appalling, despite efforts of the **Department of Housing and Urban Development** (HUD). Unemployment, alcoholism and frequent disease are constant threats, which altogether make the Native Americans the poorest ethnic group in the USA. In spite of all this there is a silver lining on the horizon. On many reservations the Native Americans make efforts to revive their tribal heritage, their languages and religious ceremonies and restore in their children the pride of belonging to the continent's original inhabitants.

20th Century Immigration and Newcomers Today

In the early days of mass immigration, most newcomers were welcomed because they contributed to the success of the new-born nation that desperately needed more strong hands to conquer its vast territory and build its economy. Today, Americans are divided in their attitude towards immigration. According to a recent poll of the Pew Research Center, the population is evenly split on the question whether growing immigration is good or bad for the country, with positive attitudes to immigration having increased in the last decade.

Because of the influx of non-European immigrants **America's ethnic structure** has already changed. In the 21st century the population of the United States will continue to grow increasingly diverse, with Asia and Central America remaining the major sources of immigration. Today, the Hispanic population has already outnumbered the Black population. By 2050, according to estimates, approximately 46 per cent of the population in the United States will be Whites, 30 per cent Hispanic, 15 per cent African-American, and 9 per cent Asian.

Hispanic Immigration

By 1910 the great period of immigration was over, and after the two world wars, Congress passed new and stricter immigration laws with set quotas for each country which de facto closed the doors to the United States. It took many years before immigrants were admitted again in greater numbers. Fifteen years after the end of World War II, in the 1960s, the US government changed its immigration policy. The government dropped ethnically based



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