

American icons

A **huge** country with **50 states** which include Alaska and Hawai.

The capital : **Washington, DC** where the president lives in **the White House**

The Flag : **The stars and stripes** : 50 stars=50 States of the USA + 13 stripes= first colonies).

The National Anthem : **The Star-Spangled Banner**

The emblem : A bald **eagle**

The Statue of Liberty : located in New York Harbor

Ellis Island : Island in NY Harbor where poor immigrants were processed and had to go through medical & intellectual tests before being allowed in the US.

The American Dream : The USA is a land of freedom, equality, opportunity to everyone.

Myth of the **self-made man** : anyone can become rich & successful thanks to his hard work.

« **Uncle Sam** » is a friendly way to address the country (Marianne en France)

The Democratic Party (symbol : a donkey)= Obama ≠ **The Republican Party** (symbol : an elephant)= Romney

The money : **The dollar bill** with **the pyramid** representing the 3 powers, the bold **eagle**, the eye of **god** & the 1st American president, **Georges Washington**

The food : **Fast foods** (Mac Donald 's, Coca-Cola...) = problems of people becoming overweight.

Economy : the world leading economic power (big companies, food-producing regions, electronics : the Sillicon Valley(Fb, Microsoft...), yuppies : young urban professionals, malls, research companies in biology & genetics, film industries...

Art : famous music (negro Spirituals, jazz, Swing : Glen Miller + Louis Armstrong, country & western, pop music : Elvis Presley, musicals (Gerschwin, Bernstein...), The Pink Floyd's, the hippies : Bob Dylan, glam rock : The Bee Gees, Abba, disco : Travolta, Elton John, Queen, new pop : Dire Straits, Madonna, Mickael Jackson, rap and hip-hop, DJs, techno...

Famous artists : sillent films : Charlie Chaplin, the golden age of cinema : westerns, gangster films, musicals, cartoons, melodramas, comedies, the « film noir » (Humphrey Bogart), epic entertainment, tortured young heroes (Marlon Brando, James Dean), Marilyn Monroe, Dustin Hoffman, Alfred Hitchcock (suspense), Steven Spielberg...

A few historical facts :

1492 : **Christopher Columbus** discovered America.

The **first settlers** : In 1607 they founded the first colony in **Jamestown** (Virginia) and developed the culture of Tobacco. They introduced **African slaves** to work in the plantations.

In 1620 : The **Pilgrim Fathers** were puritans who fled on board **the Mayflower** and founded the New England colony = **13 first colonies**. they founded Plymouth.

The Boston Tea Party: the colonists didn't want to pay taxes to GB (the father country) = **the Revolution**

1776 (on July,4th) : The Continental Congress declared the **independence** of the USA.

1787 and 1789 : **The American constitution** was adopted in Philadelphia and **George Washington** became the 1st president of the USA

1800 : **Immigration** of Irish (fleeing the Potato Famine), Germans, Austrians, Scandinavians who fled poverty and made with the Dutch the « **WASPs** » = **White Anglo-Saxon Protestants**. Then the Chinese arrived to build the Pacific railways.

1830-90 : The **Indian genocide**

1848 : The **gold rush** : the « **Frontier** » was pushed back and the conquest of the West began.

1861-1865 : **The civil war** (the Secession between the Confederate and the Union States). The Northern states (the Union States) won with Lincoln's « Emancipation Proclamation Act », freeing all slaves. They were free but still not equal as **segregation** (separate) still remained.

1880 : **Immigration** from eastern, central and southern Europe, Chinese and Japanese

1914-18: **WWI** then « the lost generation »

1920 : As men went to war, women started to work & then they got the **right to vote** (cf the suffragettes)

1920's : Mass production (Ford) and rapid growth of industry. Age of consumerism : « **the American way of life** » : the radio, the new mass media, advertising, cars... + The **prohibition laws** (« booze » or alcoholic beverages were forbidden but the mafia with Al Capone sold illegal drinking)

1921-24 : The **quota laws** limiting immigration by nationality.

1929 (on October, 24th : collapse of **the Wall Street Stock Exchange** = « Black Thursday ». 12 M° people are unemployed.

1932-45 : « **The New Deal** » with Roosevelt (=introduced a Welfare State= Federal State intervention + many social measures)

1940 : Isolationism then Pearl Harbour attack = **WWII + Hiroshima nuclear bombing.**

1945 : **The cold war** (the democratic ideology vs the communism)

1950-53 : **The Korean war**

1950-53 : **Mc Carthysm** (fear of communism in his party & everywhere and start of a « **witch hunt** »)

1960 : **John F. Kennedy** president (beginning of the **Civil Rights Movement** (= right to vote + equality for black people + Cuba : he favoured an invasion of Cuba in the Bay of Pigs to overthrow Castro).

1954-75 : **The Vietnam War.**

1970-80 : **immigration** from Spanish-speaking countries (Puerto-Rico, Cuba= the « boat people », Mexico= the « wetbacks » crossing the Rio Grande + South America) : they fled poverty and illegally settled in California & Florida.

1970-90 : Nixon, Carter, Reagan, Bush, Clinton, W. Bush, Obama, ?

2001 : **9/11** : America under terrorist attacks : destruction of the World Trade Center Twins Towers by 2 hijacked passenger planes = Afghanistan war where Osama Bin Laden, a wealthy Saudi Islamist extremist was hiding. They found him in 2011 in Pakistan & Am. troops killed him.

2003 : **Iraq war** (accused of hiding weapons of mass destruction)

2008 : Bush has the **Mexico-United States barrier** (= the border fence) built. Finally the idea was too expensive (cameras...) & abandoned.

2008: Subprime mortgage crisis (people couldn't refund their house).

2012 : On November, 6th : The United States **presidential election (Romney vs Obama)**

