

The Religious Right in the USA – Inhaltliche und analytische Auseinandersetzung mit unterschiedlichen Textsorten (S II)

Ekkehard Sprenger, Preetz

M 1 The religious right in the USA – an introduction

Tasks

1. Together with your partner, brainstorm what you know about religion in the USA.
2. Draw a table like the one below in your exercise books. Fill in the results of your brainstorming in the left column.

What I already know	What I want to learn	What I have learned

3. Have a look at the quotations, the picture and the anthem below. They are thematically related to the texts you are going to read in this unit. Write down questions on what you want to learn about religion in the USA in the middle column of the table.

“I don’t have an issue with what you do in the church, but I’m going to be up in your face if you’re going to knock on my science classroom and tell me they’ve got to teach what you’re teaching in your Sunday school. Because that’s when we’re going to fight.”

Neil deGrasse Tyson, an American astrophysicist, cosmologist and author

The Capitol and the Ten Commandments



Illustration by Greg Groesch/The Washington Times



“And this be our motto
 ‘In God is our trust!’
 And the star-spangled banner
 In triumph shall wave
 O’er the land of the free
 And the home of the brave.”

From *The Star-Spangled Banner*, National Anthem of the USA

“Under the guidance of their charismatic leaders, they refine the ‘fundamentals’ so as to create an ideology that provides the faithful with a plan to live. [...] They fight back a skeptical world.”

Karen Armstrong, a British religious scientist in her book *The Battle for God* (2001)

V

3. Although the excerpt from the drama deals with a serious topic, the scene does not turn into a sharp confrontation. Identify incidents that make the excerpt humorous.

A moment of **comic relief** in a serious play amuses the audience. For a short time there is less tension. Comic relief can also create suspense because the development of the action is held up for a moment.

E. Going beyond the text

1. Almost 50 years after *Inherit the Wind* was published, another play quoted a Baptist minister:

“My dear brothers and sisters: I am here today to bring you the Word of the Lord. Now, I have a simple truth that I tell to my colleagues and I’m going to tell it to you today: The word is either sufficient or it is not.

Scientists tell me that human history, that the world is five or six billion years old – after all, what’s a billion years give or take. The Bible tells me that human history is six thousand years old.

The word is either sufficient or it is not.”

Source: Moises Kaufman et al., *The Laramie Project* (Vintage Books: New York, 2001, 2014), p. 21.

Together with a partner, relate the Baptist minister’s statement to the drama excerpt from *Inherit the Wind* and comment on it.

2. On the day after the trial, the local newspaper’s front page reads: “Drummond and Brady clash on Bible”. Write an article to the headline (app. 150 words).

How to write a newspaper article

Before writing

- Decide whether you are going to inform or to evaluate.
- Take notes about the “who”, “what”, “where”, “why” and “how” of the event.
- Decide on the order of the points.

While writing

- Begin your article with an introduction to the event.
- Use your notes.
- Divide your article into paragraphs.
- Come to a short conclusion.
- Do not use the first person singular – make it neutral.

After writing

- Does the article contain enough information? Add more if necessary.
- Is the article interesting and easy to understand?



Extra task: The authors Lawrence and Lee set the time of *Inherit the Wind* as “Not too long ago” and therefore indicate the trial might have taken place yesterday but could also take place tomorrow. Should the teaching of Christian belief influence what is taught in your school?

Work in groups of 4.

1. Students A and B: Discuss how Christian belief should not influence what is taught in your school. Take notes.
2. Student C and D: Discuss how Christian belief should influence what is taught in your school. Take notes.
3. Students A, B, C and D: Discuss your findings in your group.

M 3 The Moral Majority – conservative Christians and their role in politics

V

The following text excerpt from *Religion in America* informs you about the influence of the Christian right on American politics.

A. Approaching the text

The wordle contains words and phrases from the text which you will read. Together with your partner, choose one of the words and research its meaning in the context of the USA. Explain the word in not more than three sentences.

Excerpt from *Religion in America* (2008) by Timothy Beal

These days [...] we have all grown very aware of how politically charged religion in America is. Conservative Christian values organizations are the primary movers on numerous fronts that concern specific policy issues: abortion, stem cell research, prayer in schools, teaching “intelligent design” as an alternative to evolution in science classrooms, and so on. There has never been a non-Christian president of the United States, and all save one (Kennedy) have been Protestant. No doubt 5 Mitt Romney’s run for the Republican nomination in 2008 was hurt by his Mormonism, which steered many conservative Christian voters toward other candidates like Baptist preacher Mike Huckabee. Since the contested win of George W. Bush over Al Gore in 2004, the general public has become much more aware of the conservative, Republican-leaning “evangelical vote,” which 10 most consider to have been the deciding factor in that election. But the influence of evangelical Christianity in election politics has been binding for decades. Ironically, it was a liberal Democrat, Jimmy Carter, who first “came out” as an evangelical Christian in an election. “The most important thing in my life,” he often said during his 1976 campaign, “is Jesus Christ.” Describing himself as an evangelical born-again Christian – language that was at the time unfamiliar in mainstream 15 news – Carter earned the endorsements of several prominent evangelical leaders. At the 1976 Southern Baptist Convention, he was introduced as the only candidate whose “initials are the same as our Lord’s.” He easily won the election, earning more than 50 percent of the evangelical vote. As president, however, Carter’s support of the Equal Rights Amendment, the *Roe v. Wade* decision, and other progressive initiatives, alienated him from many conservative Christians. Disappointed 20 in him but bolstered by a new sense of political power and influence, charismatic Christian media entrepreneurs and televangelists like Pat Robertson, James Robison, and Jerry Falwell began to organize themselves politically into what came to be known as the New Christian Right. The most powerful organization was Falwell’s Moral Majority, founded in 1979 with the political goal of unifying and mobilizing evangelical voters – as well as like-minded non-evangelicals – to 25 remove Carter from office and deliver a president, congress, and Supreme Court that would help legislate their agenda, which included outlawing abortion, encouraging public prayer in schools, and supporting traditional, patriarchal family values. Falwell famously declared three priorities for all Americans: to be saved, to be baptized, and to vote. In that order. Ronald Reagan’s catering to the Moral Majority and other conservative evangelical leaders won him the presidency in 1980, and 30 the New Christian Right was born. [The former President] George W. Bush, himself a born-again evangelical Christian with an agenda explicitly in line with Christian Rightist organizations, is its greatest success.

Source: Timothy Beal. *Religion in America. A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press: New York, 2008. pp. 53 ff.

1 **charged:** a situation or topic that is charged causes strong feelings or arguments – 2 **mover:** here: a powerful and influential person – 5 **save:** except – 6 **Mitt Romney:** the Republican Party’s

V

M 7 The religious right – wrapping it up

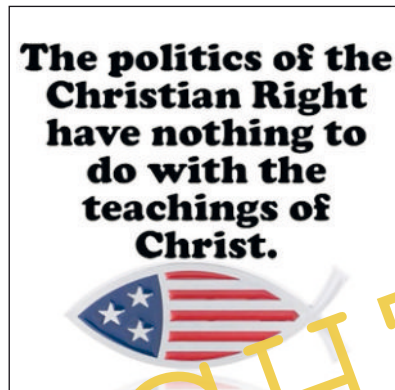
In this unit you have learned about the Christian right in the USA and its influence on society and politics. Discuss the issue.

Tasks

1. *Simulation*

The illustration on the right reflects an attitude towards the Christian right. Imagine that Drummond, Brady, Falwell, Joe, Mike, Helen and Deacon Chase come together to discuss their reaction to the illustration.

- a) Work in 7 groups. Each group adopts the view of one of the 7 characters. Carefully re-read the relevant text and take notes on the views and attitudes of your character.
- b) Form new groups of 7. This time each of you represents the view of one of the characters. Discuss your opinion on the illustration.



Source: facebook.com/the-reprimandproject

2. *Assessment*

- a) Use the table below to assess what you have learned about the Christian right in the United States. Under "Pluses", write down all the possible positive aspects of the Christian right. Under "Minuses" write down all the negative aspects. Under "Interesting", write down all of the interesting implications and possible results, if their agenda was to become more influential.

Pluses	Minuses	Interesting

- b) Work in groups of 4 and prepare a presentation on your assessment. Use the info

How to give a convincing presentation

Your goal is to present your assessment to convince others. The following guidelines will help you do so.



- I will begin and end with a strong, sincere, and enthusiastic appeal.
- I will present several points of evidence organised in a logical way.
- During my presentation, I will select a few major points, and expand on them by using examples from the texts I read. To ensure that the audience does not miss the important points supporting our position, I will make the point, say it again in different words, illustrate the point with an example, and then state it once more.
- I will make eye contact with all members of the audience.
- I will keep my presentation within the time limit.
- I have developed visual aids for my presentation.
- I have practised my presentation.

Kompetenzen

unterschiedliche Textsorten analysieren

den Einfluss der christlichen Rechten in den USA anhand literarischer und nicht-literarischer Beispiele nachvollziehen, verstehen und diskutieren

die interkulturelle Kompetenz erweitern

Niveau

Klasse 10–13

Dauer

8–10 Unterrichtsstunden (je nach Auswahl der Materialien)

Einbettung

Die Einheit kann unabhängig vom Lehrwerk eingesetzt werden. Inhaltlich bietet sich eine Anknüpfung an das Thema „*American traditions and values*“ an.

Hinweise

Welcher Kandidat wird das Rennen um die Präsidentschaftskandidaturen am 8. November 2016 gewinnen? Eins scheint gewiss: Kein republikanischer Kandidat wird ohne die Stimmen christlich-konservativer Wähler eine Chance auf die Präsidentschaft haben. Der Kern der christlichen Rechten ist klein, doch die Bewegung kann auf die Sympathie von insgesamt etwa 80 bis 100 Millionen Wählern zählen.¹ Ob gleichgeschlechtliche Ehe, Familienplanung oder Gesundheitsreform – die christliche Rechte und ihre Anhänger fühlen sich zunehmend durch die Entwicklungen in der modernen amerikanischen Gesellschaft bedroht. Vertreter der Bewegung sind nicht nur in der Politik, sondern auch in der Jurisdiktion vertreten und üben so Einfluss auf politische Entscheidungen aus. In der Unterrichtsreihe untersuchen Ihre Schülerinnen und Schüler² die Thematik nicht nur vor ihrem geschichtlichen Hintergrund, sondern auch anhand aktueller Bezüge. Abschließend entwickeln sie auf Grundlage des Gelernten einen eigenen Standpunkt und vertreten diesen in einer Präsentation.

Zur Durchführung

1. Stunde: The religious right in the USA – an introduction (M 1)

Der **Einstieg** in die Einheit erfolgt mit einem *advance organiser*. So erhalten die Schüler einen **Überblick** über das **Thema**, nutzen ihr Vorwissen und lernen zum Teil selbstbestimmt. Zu zweit sammeln sie in einem **Brainstorming**, was sie bereits über Religion in den USA wissen (**task 1**). Anschließend erstellen die Lernenden eine **K-W-L-Tabelle** (*know, want to know, learned*), in der sie stichpunktartig ihr **Vorwissen** festhalten (**task 2**). In **task 3** formulieren sie **Fragen** zu den Zitaten, dem Bild und dem Textauszug aus der Nationalhymne, deren Beantwortung für sie in Bezug auf das Thema wichtig ist. Die Lehrkraft informiert die Schüler, dass sie die K-W-L-Tabelle im Laufe der Unterrichtseinheit am Ende jeder Stunde ergänzen werden.

Tipp: Auf der beiliegenden **CD 17** finden Sie eine **Kopiervorlage** für eine **K-W-L-Tabelle**.



¹ Chris Hedges. *The Christian Right and the War on America*. New York: Free Press, 2006. S. 266.

² Im weiteren Verlauf wird aus Gründen der besseren Lesbarkeit nur „Schüler“ verwendet.