

Ethnic minorities in the USA – American Dream(s) and nightmares

by Waltraud Feger, Siegen



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Das Herzstück des amerikanischen Traums war stets die Verheißung, dass alle Menschen, ungeachtet ihrer Herkunft, sich auf der sozialen Leiter nach oben bewegen können. An diesem Glauben halten auch heute noch viele Amerikaner fest. Doch ist es wahr, dass alle Menschen – auch die ethnischen Minoritäten – gleichberechtigt nach der Verwirklichung ihrer Träume und Ziele streben können? Ist es nicht vielleicht sogar für einige leichter als für andere? Diese Unterrichtseinheit ermöglicht den Lernenden eine Auseinandersetzung mit unterschiedlichen Sichtweisen auf den „American Dream“, gerade auch unter Berücksichtigung der aktuellen gesellschaftlichen und politischen Situation in den Vereinigten Staaten. Die Lernenden erhalten die Gelegenheit, ihr Bild der USA zu hinterfragen und sich sowohl mit Klischees als auch mit der amerikanischen Realität auseinanderzusetzen.

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Competences and skills

The overarching goal of this unit is to broaden students' **cultural competence**. By working with texts, a video, cartoon and graphs, students enhance their **reading comprehension, listening and viewing comprehension** as well as their **analytical and interpretive skills**. Students develop their comment writing and creative **writing skills**, along with **communicative competences** through cooperative methods.

Overview:**List of abbreviations:****A** Analysis**C** Comment**D** Discussion / debate**M** Mind map / visualising**P** Working with a picture / cartoon**PR** Presentation**R** Research**RC** Reading comprehension**S** Summary**T** Working with the text**W** (creative) Writing

Topic	Material	Method / Skill
1: The American Dream now and then	M1–M3	D, M, R, RC, S
2: Black Lives Matter	M4–M7	A, C, P, PR, R, RC, T, W
3: The Mexican Americans' plight	M8–M9	RC, T, W
4: The Asian Americans' experience	M10–M11	RC, S, T, W
Mock exam		A, C, P, RC, T, W

Topic 1: The American Dream now and then

M1 Text – The American Dream: a summary



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At the beginning of the 17th century, European settlers arrived at the American shore. The first of them, the Pilgrims, had left the old world (England) as they were persecuted because of their religion. The reason for many millions of people to come in the following centuries was not only religious persecution in their home countries, but also political oppression and economic hardship. Starting in 1886, when they arrived by boat from Europe, the first sight of their new home was the Statue of Liberty that promised freedom and shelter, which Emma Lazarus described in her famous poem at the pedestal of the statue: "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses, yearning to breathe free ..."¹. Others may have been lured² by the pledge of the Declaration of Independence that promised "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness". This, of course, was not

Working with the text

4. Write a short summary of the text.

The text deals with the phenomenon of the American Dream which seems to have been started with the arrival of the Pilgrims in America in the 17th century. They were desperately looking for religious freedom. Later, millions of people – mostly from Europe –, attracted by the promise of the Declaration of Independence, flooded the American coasts. Their main ideals were freedom and equality, which they later denied the Africans whom they had imported and used as slaves. For centuries the American Dream was attainable only for white people. It seems as if some Americans even today deny that African Americans are human beings.

Further activities

5. With a partner, choose one example of an American VIP (e.g. Arnold Schwarzenegger, Madonna, Jennifer Lopez, Oprah, Jay-Z etc.) and go online to research his / her American Dream.
Individual results.

Key M3: Worksheet – The Americans and their American Dreams

Working with the video

- Watch the video https://raabe.de/ck/en_um>YourAmericanDream (2:15 min [last access: 19/01/2021]). UCLA students and others are interviewed on campus: Is the American Dream still alive?
 - Watch the video. What is your first impression of the interviewees and their opinions? Take notes on a grid like the one given.
 - Watch it a second time closely with the focus on their kind of 'dream' and their main point of interest. The grid may help you.
 - Watch it a third time and find out how many interviewees may follow these different types of the American Dream.



Source: © Luo Jie/China Daily

Info: A mirage is something you see when it is extremely hot, e.g. in a desert, and which appears to be quite near but is actually far away or does not really exist.
In German: Fata Morgana

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Material B: Two graphs

- Study the two graphs and read the background of the text M6 – describe and compare them. Find out whether the author’s findings are justified.

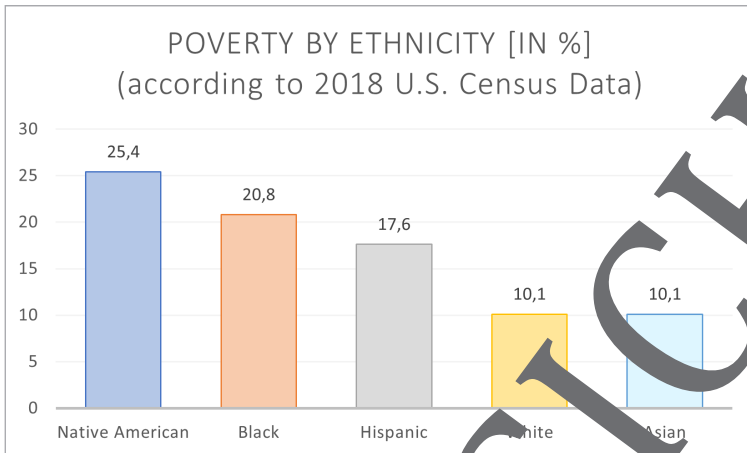
How to describe a chart

Mention the date and time of the chart and its origin / link. In the first sentence, say what kind of a chart it is. The most important are: bar chart, line graph, pie chart, thematic map (showing statistics by location) you are faced with and its topic.

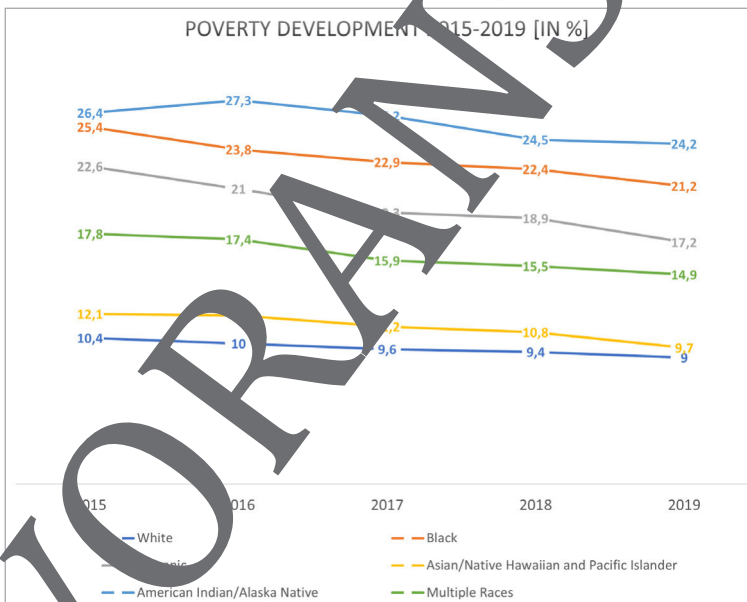
Useful phrases:

This line graph from ... shows the development of ... from ... to ...
The vertical axis shows the number / percentage / amount of ...
The horizontal axis indicates the time ...

The chart makes clear that ...
Comparing the charts for ...
Since then there has been ...
In conclusion, the development can be interpreted as ...



Data Source: PovertyUSA, 2021, found at <https://www.povertyusa.com/facts/> [last access: 14/01/2021]



Data Source: Kaiser Family Foundation, 2021, found at <https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/poverty-rate-by-raceethnicity/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D> [last access 14/01/2021]

Topic 4: The Asian Americans' experience

M10 Text – The Asian Americans' Dream



Living in the bay area¹ of California, I come across many Asian Americans who shared the same dream of living in America. I hear many stories from [of] a simple life style changes to many challenges improving later. Today, I am telling a story of my families who immigrated to California.

5 In [the] early 1970s, my great aunt immigrated to San Francisco from Myanmar (Burma) with the dream of a life in America. She was a single mother with 3 young children. Although she was educated and lived a wealthy life in Myanmar, [everything changed]: when she came to United States, she lived in a very tiny basement, worked [in] a low-paid job, and raised the children. She
10 struggled to earn a living. There were times she did not have work a job [sic]. There were times her children were sick, and she had no help. Yet, she made it and lived her dream.

[In the] late 1980s, my great aunt welcomed my father to U.S.A. for to get a better education. My mother was 47 years old when she decided to come here, just like everyone with a beautiful dream of living here. When she arrived, it was not easy for her. She did not speak English. When she started her middle school, she faced cultural differences as she walked into the classroom. There
15 were was no one [who] spoke her language, and she had no friends. She came home and there weren't parents next to her where who she could put her arms
20 around to snuggle², or to give bear hugs!

In her first year in America, she gave up a lot to live here. It was a fall season, as she wanted to school but tears rolling down her cheeks as the leaves fallen came down [she] and [were] scattered on the sidewalk³, with a cold windy breeze. She did not have parents who attended the school events, nor took [did
25 anyone collect her to after school activities. She was determined [to stay]. She sacrificed living in the warm nest of her parents to fulfil her dream of living in America. Yet, my mother becomes became an educator. Not only did she fulfilled her dreams, she is now [even] being a mentor and educator of many Asian Americans. As for me, I am the first generation of the Asian Americans. I was born into a warm cosy home, where my parents nurtured me [sic] and [I am] surrounded by all my family in the house. My parents made a good living

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