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Titel:	Detroit – The downfall of a former economic stronghold
Reihe:	Arbeitsblätter der Reihe „Englisch – aktuell“
Bestellnummer:	73450
Kurzvorstellung:	<p>Diese fertig ausgearbeiteten Arbeitsblätter zur englischen Landeskunde setzen sich mit dem ökonomischen Wandel in den USA und dem Niedergang Detroit auseinander, das mittlerweile traurige Berühmtheit als ärmste Großstadt der USA erlangt hat. Die Schülerinnen und Schüler setzen sich mit den ökonomischen und gesellschaftlichen Problemen auseinander.</p> <p>Die Schüler können den Inhalt selbständig erarbeiten und das individuelle Lerntempo jeweils anpassen. Dies gewährleistet die Binnendifferenzierung ohne gesonderte Aufgabenstellung.</p>
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Changing tides - The USA at the turn of the century



(commons.wikimedia.org / gemeinfrei)



(commons.wikimedia.org / gemeinfrei)

1. Use the pictures above to explain what the term “new economy” could mean.
2. Read the article below and analyze the problems regarding the new economy.
3. Form a group of four and fill in the place mat with the company that you think shaped our present the most.

Today, computers have a large influence on everyday life. Whether it is by means of communication, in the economy, or for industrial uses, the world relies on them. This development began in the 1980s. Before that time, industry relied on human workers and heavy industry, but over time new technologies began to reign over large parts of the industry. While this cost jobs almost everywhere in the world, the United States managed to improve their economic growth. The productivity growth, indicating how fast goods can be created, was at an all-time high. This caused an increase in employment. How big the influence of computers on the economic growth in the US actually was is being debated. While some scholars believe that the new technology was one of the major reasons why US economy skyrocketed in the 90s, others believe that the contrary is the case.

Regardless on their actual influence in the increase in businesses in the 90s, computers and new technologies have had a remarkable influence on the development of technology. Parts of the inventions of the New Economy are the Internet, nanotechnologies, and bionics. The Internet was without a doubt *the* invention of the 1990s. When it went online for commercial use in 1995 it had about 18 million users worldwide. Today, more than 3 billion people use the Internet.

When the Internet first went online people soon started to realize the enormous potential that it had as a market. Even at present times, the Internet is being described as a new frontier. This alludes to the few restrictions that there are on the Internet. In the beginning there were even fewer. In the first years of the Internet it was uncharted terrain that allowed nearly every possible use. This caused a big boom on the financial markets that hungered for new, innovative ideas for the Internet. In the mid-90s, hundreds of companies were funded in the hopes that they would make their creators millionaires overnight. This craze was fueled by investment companies that gave credit to people with outrageous ideas, but without coherent business plans.

One of the most prominent dotcom failures was that of pets.com. The company that sold pet food over the internet lost \$147 million within less than a year and went bankrupt in the year 2000. It existed for less than two years. Another idea from that time that now is becoming popular again is grocery deliveries. Webvan.com was the first company to offer grocery deliveries to the customers' door and in 2001, the company was valued \$1.2 billion. However, the company had too few customers for the huge amount of money that they were handling. The company failed in 2001 and had to lay off 2000 workers. These two companies are only two representatives of the burst dotcom bubble that caused the US economy to decline. The recession that followed the burst was only short-lived. Even though many of the companies at the time failed because they were simply over financed, their ideas are today being put into practice. Examples of this are: online retailers, social media, car sharing, online media companies, online advertising and online dating.

Changing tides - The USA at the turn of the century (Solutions)

Possible answers may include any of these. Please do note that these are only suggestions and not the only possible answers.

5. Use the pictures above to explain what the term “new economy” could mean.



(commons.wikimedia.org / gemeinfrei)



(commons.wikimedia.org / gemeinfrei)

Possible solution: In the foreground of the left picture, there are a lot of cars, pylons, and industrial chimneys. The air is full of smog. The shape of the cars is quite edgy which could mean that the picture was taken in the 1970s. The right picture shows a laptop from which columns of “ones” and “zeros” emerge. The picture is taken in front of a skyline of a large city. In contrast to the first picture, the air seems to be clean. If these pictures are seen with regard to the term “new economy” it could mean that the left picture represents the old industry, which is full of heavy environment polluting heavy machinery. If this is the old economy, then the right picture shows the new economy. The new economy relates to an industry that is fueled by computer technology and solves problems digitally. Therefore, new economy is not only a technologically advanced form of industry, it is also one that uses less polluting technologies.

6. Read the article below and analyze the problems regarding the new economy.

New economy	Refers to a form of economy that relies heavily on computers. The term came up in the 1980s. Around this time, computers were able to do work that humans did before in the industries which caused immense job losses.
Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Job losses due to computerization - The internet was and is a largely unregulated market which does not, or hardly, prescribed to the concept of national borders - Due to a lack of regulations, the new economy and especially the Internet caused so called “bubbles”. Bubbles occur when hedge funds invest huge sums of money in certain companies, or their ideas, in the hope of high monetary returns. If, however, these companies are unable to return the money invested in them, this can cause bankruptcy, leading to massive job losses. In extreme cases, even banks can go bankrupt over this.

Detroit – Poverty in a former economic stronghold

A STORY OF DECLINE – RIDING THE BUS IN DETROIT

Yesterday I sat at a bus stop near Trinity Cemetery, next to 57-year-old Ben Chandler and he told me his story. The last time he had a job was in 1997. He said, "I was one day short of making permanent. One more day and I would've earned \$11 instead of \$5." \$5 was the minimal wage in that year. Ben belongs to those who suffer from the work laws in Michigan. People who are in jobs without labor unions can be laid off without reason. Also, in order to become a permanent employee in Michigan, you have to be at the company for 90 consecutive days.



Figure 1 Lafayette building, former seat of Michigan Supreme Court
(commons.wikimedia.org / gemeinfrei)

Ben was laid off on day 89. Since then, he is part of the many people struggling in Detroit, the city in the United States with the highest unemployment record and one of the cities with the highest crime rate. Poverty is at close to 40%. Even though Detroit is one of the largest cities in the US, it cannot nearly provide enough jobs for its residents. The city had exploded in the pre-war era, when automobile companies such as Ford set up huge plants. After the war, however, this would change when fewer workers were needed for the manufacturing process.



Figure 2 Detroit's skyline
(commons.wikipedia.org / Shawn Wilson)

The real struggle for the people of Detroit began when the educated white middle class started to leave the city. Racial segregation and reckless politics left African-Americans and White-Americans deeply skeptical of each other. The alienation left behind those with low income and caused the cities' financial system to go bankrupt. Ever since these days, Detroit has tried to get back on track. While the city put serious efforts into creating a more attractive downtown area, most of its residents can't even afford the parking in the area. The people

working in the service industry of Detroit mostly come from out of town.

Aside from the fancy downtown area, many districts of the city are deserted. They are in fact so empty that they are being described as urban prairie. In 2010 Mayor Bing even suggested bulldozing parts of the city, so that the remainders would cause Detroit's shaken population to live closer together. The idea was put forth because the city is virtually unable to maintain its services, such as public transfer, the police, and the firefighters. However, all this means little for citizens such as Ben.



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