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Auszug aus:

Ethnic minorities and their American Dream

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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, cartoons 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

Ethnic minorities in the USA

Facts

The basic ingredients of the American Dream are the belief in social progress, individual success, American exceptionalism, the challenge of ever new frontiers, the promise of liberty and equality, and the possibility of peaceful togetherness. These days, however, the American Dream in an increasingly multicultural American society is no longer one dream shared by all; rather, the concept has to be differentiated into a spectrum of diverse ethnic dreams. People say there might be a Korean, a Japanese, a Chinese, a Hispanic, an African American, a West Indian, and a Native American Dream, insisting, however, that despite the many new variations, the dream is still very much alive and remains what Jim Cullen called “an idea that shaped a nation.”

But the American society is beset by a sense of crisis. Seismic shifts have created a divided country of winners and losers, allowing unprecedented freedom while rending the social contract, driving the political system to the verge of a breakdown.

Notes on the material

To reactivate their pre-knowledge, students create a mind map. The first text of **Topic 1** looks at some major elements of the American Dream and its description by James T. Adams. A comprehension task follows which asks students to answer short questions on the text. To focus on the main ideas of the concept of the dream, students write a summary of the text. In pairs, students do some research on celebrities with extraordinary careers and write about their American Dream. Students then watch a video on people’s opinions of the American Dream. Students show their viewing and listening comprehension by taking notes on the various concepts of the American Dream as mentioned in the interviews. Using their notes, students write a comment.

Topic 2 focuses on several deadly cases of police violence. When white police officers murdered George Floyd, the American public was shocked. Students’ detailed comprehension is checked by a multiple choice exercise. Subsequently, students analyse

the text and decide whether it is factual or not. In pairs, they research the life of one of the mentioned victims and prepare a presentation on their findings. In a creative writing activity, students write about racial attacks on African Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic. An article by Sharon Austin, a professor of political science, African American studies and minority politics focuses on the inequality and injustice African Americans have to face in the USA. A note taking exercise and questions on the text check students' reading comprehension. A cartoon and several graphs illustrate the topic. In pairs, students describe and analyse the cartoon. The graphs focus on poverty and ethnicity and students' findings are compared with the percentages and facts in Professor Austin's article. A tip box helps students to analyse graphs.

Based on a newspaper article, **Topic 3** deals with different aspects of the disillusionment and frustration of the Mexicans / Hispanics at the Mexican American border. Comprehension of the article is checked by a completion exercise. Students then analyse relevant aspects of the text.

Asian Americans are the issue in **Topic 4**. The unit starts with a Burmese American student's story about her family coming to the USA. To demonstrate their comprehension, students work on a true / false exercise. A defective dialogue is a further exercise to demonstrate understanding of the text.

The teaching materials can be used for a **final exam** or a **mock exam**. They consist of an extract from Kamala Harris's victory speech after the U.S. presidential election in November 2020, a cartoon and a German text on the same topic. The cartoon focuses on the metaphor of "the glass ceiling", which stands for an invisible barrier blocking one's career. As women are most affected by this, Mrs. Harris's professional career (rising from a lawyer to district attorney, senator and vice-president) is an example that even women can overcome this barrier. The focus of the mock exam is the analysis of the speech, the cartoon and comment writing. In the first assignment, students focus on the main topics in Harris's victory speech and find parallels in a cartoon with her as the "superwoman" breaking all barriers. In the second assignment, students analyse the text and the cartoon with respect to textual and visual features and stylistic devices and their effects. As to the third assignment, students have a choice between a comment and a creative writing task.



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