



COVER STORY: The U.S. Affairs Annual, Atlas & Almanac (pp. 8-14)

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Individuals, groups, and institutions

How much do your students know about the country in which they live? This annual special issue helps readers become more acquainted with the United States geographically, statistically, and conceptually.

■ USA Basics

- **Relative size:** the world's fourth-largest country in area (after Russia, Canada, and China); second-largest country on the continent of North America.
- **Hemispheres:** Western Hemisphere; Northern Hemisphere.
- **Political units:** 50 states, 1 federal district (District of Columbia), 5 territories and possessions.
- **Government:** the President is the head of government. The legislative branch has two chambers, the Senate (100 members) and the House of Representatives (435 members). The third branch of the federal government is the Supreme Court.
- **Bounded by:** Canada to the north, the Atlantic Ocean to the east, the Gulf of Mexico and Mexico to the south, and the Pacific Ocean to the west.

■ Vocabulary

- **proficient (adj):** well advanced in ability, knowledge, or understanding.

■ Content-Area Questions

CULTURE/SOCIAL STUDIES

1. All of which state's 10 U.S. Representatives are Democrats? (Massachusetts)
2. Which two states have a U.S. Senator who is an independent? (Connecticut and Vermont)
3. According to our figures, which state has registered a negative job growth over the last five years? (Michigan)

GEOGRAPHY

1. Which Southern states are entirely at the lowest land elevation? (Louisiana and Florida)
2. The Black Hills straddle which two Western states? (South Dakota and Wyoming)
3. The Continental Divide runs through which states, north to south? (Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico)
4. Which of the Great Lakes does not border Canada? (Lake Michigan)

5. The nation's highest mountain is in the northernmost state. Name the state, the mountain, and the national park it's in. (Alaska, Mt. McKinley, Denali National Park)
6. How many of the 50 states share a border with Mexico? (four: California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas)

LANGUAGE ARTS

1. How many state names are derived from or refer to Native American names or words? (25)

MATH

1. What is the difference in public-school spending between Kansas and Nebraska? (\$680)
2. Population density is the number of people per square mile—a figure reached by dividing the population by the land area. Of these states, which state has the highest population density: Idaho, Michigan, or New Jersey? (New Jersey, with 1,115 people per square mile)

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News: The Top News of 2008 (pp. 3-5)

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People, places, and environments

There seems little doubt that 2008 will go down as one of the most significant years ever in U.S. history, with the election of the first African-American President and the worst financial meltdown since the Great Depression. This feature will help your students review some of the major events of this incredible year.

■ Backstory

In January 2008, presidential candidates had already been on the campaign trail for a year. Republican John McCain's campaign had been written off for dead just weeks before. On the Democratic side, the good money was for Hillary Clinton, then a New York

Senator, to take an early lead in the primaries and bury Barack Obama on Super Tuesday, February 5. Obama's victory in the Iowa caucuses on January 3, and McCain's in the New Hampshire primary five days later, began to change the political landscape.

■ Rapid Review

- What were two issues over which voters expressed their displeasure in this election? (the economy and the policies of President George W. Bush)
- How did Congress try to prevent the collapse of U.S. financial institutions? (It passed a bailout package of \$700 billion.)

- In which country where the U.S. military is involved did violence go down? (Iraq) in which did it rise steadily? (Afghanistan)

WEB LINKS

- The year and breaking news in politics: politico.com
- Final results and maps: [cnn.com /ELECTION/2008/results/president](http://cnn.com/ELECTION/2008/results/president)
- Explaining the economy to kids: [troubledteenblog.com /financial-crisis-and-families-how-to-explain-to-kids](http://troubledteenblog.com/financial-crisis-and-families-how-to-explain-to-kids)
- Who will be *Time* magazine's person of the year? [time.com /time/specials/packages /article/0,28804,1857576_1857573,00.html](http://time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1857576_1857573,00.html)



Skills: Snapshots From Around the United States (pp. 6-7)

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The value of charts and graphs is more than just the data they provide. Studying these two pages will hone students' visual literacy as well as provoke questions for students to ask, answer, and explore.

■ Foreign-Born Americans

The U.S. is often called a nation of immigrants. It is fascinating to note how the countries of origin of these newcomers have changed over the years. Compare the top seven countries of 1910 and those of a century later. How many countries are on both charts? What might account for the changes? What do you think the future face of the country will look like?

■ Rapid Review

- What proportion of children ages 5 to 17 speak a language other than English at home? (20.3 percent)
- In 1910, about what percent of immigrants were German? (17)
- In 2007, about what percent of immigrants were Mexican? (31)
- Where do nearly half of the people in the U.S. live? (suburban areas)

■ Food for Thought

Students may be interested to compare the "Faith in America" circle graph with the "Major Religions of the World" on p. 31 of our *World Affairs* issue: Christianity 33.3%; Islam 21.0%; Hinduism 13.2%; Chinese religions 5.8%; Buddhism

5.8%; ethnoreligions 4.0%; Sikhism 0.3%; Judaism, 0.2%; nonreligious or atheist 14.0%; other 2.4%.

Where are the most striking differences between the U.S. and the world as a whole? Why do you think the percent of Christians in the U.S. is so much more, and of Muslims so much less? How do the percents of Jews compare?

WEB LINKS

- The many faces of the country, in statistics:
- factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html
 - census.gov/compendia/statab
 - statemaster.com