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SOME ASPECTS OF GREAT BRITAIN AND THE USA

PART I (THE USA)

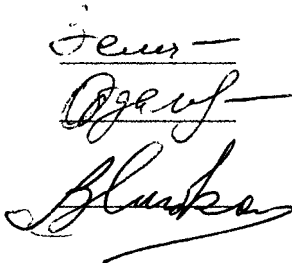
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Данное пособие предназначено для студентов неязыковых специальностей и аспирантов. Целью пособия является углубить знания обучающихся в области страноведческих тем программы. Главной задачей пособия является развитие коммуникативных способностей. Упражнения и задания направлены на развитие видов чтения и общения на заданную тему.

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AMERICAN GEOGRAPHY

PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY

The USA naturally presents a tremendous *variety* in physical features (and climate), ranging from moist rain forest to arid desert and bald mountain peaks. Mount McKinley in Alaska at 20,320 feet (6,194 metres) is the highest point in the United States, while part of Death Valley in California is 282 feet (89 metres) *below* sea level.

The eastern coast of the United States is a long, gently rolling lowland area known as *the coastal plains*. These coastal plains, which stretch from Maine to Texas, are very flat (nowhere in Florida is more than 350 feet above sea level, for example) and often swampy. In general the soil is very poor, except in the fertile southern part, where the plain reaches many miles inland (*the Cotton Belt* of the Old South and the citrus country of central Florida).

At the western edge of the Atlantic coastal plain, there is a chain of low, almost unbroken mountains, stretching from the northern part of Maine southwest into Alabama, called *the Appalachian Mountains*. These mountains contain enormous quantities of easily accessible coal and iron (which helps explain the huge concentration of heavy industry along the lower region of the Great Lakes). The Piedmont hills, to the east of the main peaks, are the most highly productive agricultural land in the country after the Midwest.

The heart of the United States is a vast plain, broken by the Superior Upland and Black Hills in the north and the Ozark Plateau in the south, which extends from central Canada southwards to Mexico and from the Appalachian Mountains westwards to the Cordillera. These *interior plains*, which rise gradually like a saucer to higher land on all sides, are divided into two major parts: the wetter, eastern portion is called the *Central Plains* and the western portion the *Great Plains*, both of which have good soil.

To the west of the Great Plains is the *Cordillera*, which accounts for one-third of the United States. It is a region of tremendous variety, which can be sub-divided into various other regions. On its eastern border *the Rocky Mountains*, a high, discontinuous chain of mountains stretching from mountainous Alaska down to Mexico, rise sharply from the Great Plains. These rugged mountains contain many important metals such as lead, uranium and gold.

The western edge of the Cordillera is characterized by a coastal chain of high mountains, among which there are broad, fertile valleys.

The most important ranges are the *Sierra Nevada* and the *Cascades* in the eastern part and the *Coastal Ranges* along the western coast. There is no Pacific coastal plain and between these two sets of mountains there is a large plateau region, with steep cliffs and canyons, basins and isolated ranges. Many basins are rich in resources such as oil and natural gas.

Hawaii is a chain of twenty islands, only seven of which are inhabited. The mountainous islands were formed by volcanic activity and there are still a number of active volcanoes.

The United States has several immensely long rivers. There are a large number of rivers in the eastern part of the nation, the longest of which is the *Missouri* (3,942 km), a tributary of the *Mississippi* (3,760 km); the Mississippi-Missouri-Red Rock system extends for 6,176 km before entering the Gulf of Mexico near New Orleans. Two other tributaries of the Mississippi - the *Ohio* and *Tennessee* - are more than 1,250 km long. In the West the *Rio Grande*, which forms part of the United States-Mexico border, flows for 3,016 km and only the *Colorado* (2,320 km), *Columbia* (2,240 km) and the *San Joaquin-Sacramento* river systems reach the Pacific.

Exercises:

1. *Read carefully the following words:*

Tremendous, desert, bald, lowland, except, swampy, fertile, citrus, enormous, accessible, rugged, uranium, plateau, interior.

2. *Say what is implied by the following definitions. Choose the appropriate word from those given in brackets:*

Sandy piece of land; lower than surrounding land; able to produce many fruits or seeds; that produces well or much; going towards the South; part which is inside; stream or river that flows into a larger river; large stretch of level land.

(Tributary, plateau, interior, southward, productive, fertile, lowland, desert.)

3. *Suggest the Russian for:*

Variety in physical features; ranging from moist rain forest to arid desert; stretch from... to; to reach inland; to be highly productive; to account for; the most important ranges.

4. *Complete the sentences according to the text:*

1. The surface of the country ranges from...
2. The highest peak in the USA is...
3. Death Valley is situated...

4. The Coastal Plains stretch...
 5. The Appalachian Mountains extend from...
 6. The interior plains are divided into...
 7. The Cordillera consists of...
 8. The Missouri falls into...
 9. The Mississippi falls into...
 10. The Rio Grande forms...
 11. The Columbia River drains...
5. *Describe briefly:*
- the Coastal Plains
 - the Rockies
 - the Appalachian Mountains
 - the interior plains
6. *Complete this table:*
- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| Highest mountain | |
| Lowest point | |
| Flattest areas | |
| Longest river | |
| Most northerly state | |
| Most westerly state | |

HUMAN GEOGRAPHY

Population

With more than 245,000,000 inhabitants the United States is the fourth country in the world in terms of population. About 75% of the population live in urban areas and there are 170 cities of more than 100,000 inhabitants, 24 of which have populations of over 500,000. Most of these urban centres lie along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, the Gulf of Mexico and the Great Lakes. The most populous area is the relatively small Northeast, which accounts for nearly one fourth of the nation's population.

In 1990 the US Bureau of Census conducted a new census of the American people which showed that some important demographic changes were taking place.

Census awakens new power cities**Re-ranking cities**

1990 Census	1980 Census
1. New York City	(1)
2. Los Angeles	(3)
3. Chicago	(2)
4. Houston	(5)
5. Philadelphia	(4)
6. San Diego	(8)
7. Dallas	(7)
8. Phoenix	(9)
9. Detroit	(6)
10. San Antonio	(11)

Source: Census Bureau

By William Dunn USA TODAY

The once-sleeping giants of the South and West are the new power cities of the 1990s, preliminary Census figures show.

San Diego; San Jose, Calif.; and Jacksonville, Fla., all grew by more than 20% since 1980 – and San Antonio by nearly that much.

The 1990 figures released Wednesday confirm the shift of the USA's power and money away from the North and East.

And they underscore the importance of Sun Belt cities seldom heard from 20 years ago, handing them more federal dollars, a larger voice in Washington and – even more than before – the power to sway presidential elections.

The 1990 Census counted 245,837,683 people in the USA, but is still considered preliminary. Many cities and states will appeal the numbers.

New York is one.

"Do you ... honestly believe that everybody who should be counted has been counted?" asked Gov. Mario Cuomo, referring to his state's smaller-than-expected growth.

But the trend is clear.

- New York City remained the nation's largest – about 7 million – but the Census said it lost almost 40,000 residents.
- Among the USA's next biggest – Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston and Philadelphia – only the Sun Belt cities grew.
- The USA's fastest growing city in the top 50 was Fresno, Calif., a farm town turned high tech. It grew by 61% and has more than 350,000 residents.

Exercises:

1. Suggest the Russian for the following:

In terms of population; a larger voice in Washington; the power to sway elections; appeal the numbers; the most populous area; underscore the importance; re-ranking cities.

2. Answer the questions:

1. Which is the most densely populated area of the United States?
2. What important demographic changes are occurring?
3. Which is the largest city in the United States?
4. Which was the fastest growing city in the 1990 census?

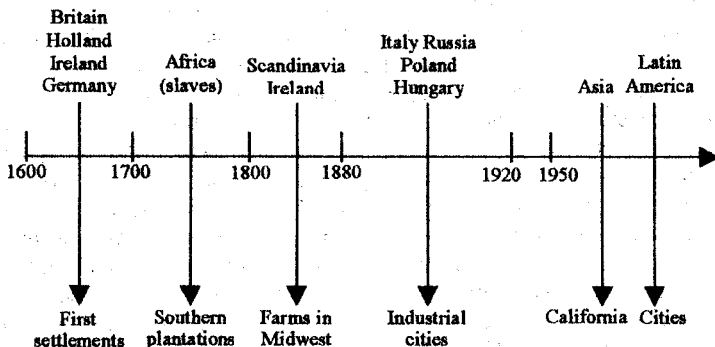
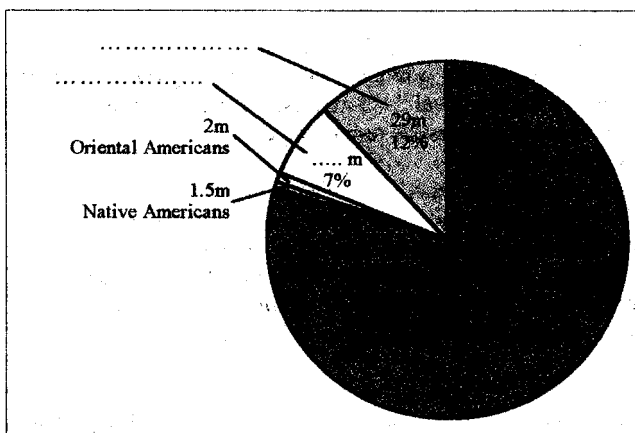
3. Describe briefly the process of re-ranking of the cities in the period between 1980 and 1990 using the chart given above.

Ethnic groups

The vast majority of the population was *WASP* (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) until about 1860. Between 1860 and 1920 almost 30 million immigrants arrived from central and southeastern Europe in particular. These mainly Italian, Russian, Polish and Hungarian immigrants quickly formed their own culturally homogeneous neighbourhoods ('Little Italys', etc) and became a second economic class behind the WASPs. The almost 12% of the population that are black are bottom of the economic and educational table, with far higher unemployment than whites, especially as a result of racial discrimination. The most rapidly growing ethnic group is the Hispanics (almost 7% of Americans), who still continue to use Spanish in their homes even though the vast majority were born in the United States. Like the blacks, they have a generally lower economic and educational level than the rest of the population. There are also almost 2 million generally prosperous Oriental Americans (predominantly from Japan, China and the Philippines), who are concentrated mainly in California. The 1.5 million Native Americans live mainly in reserves in the southwestern states in usually deep poverty and there has been little or no integration into American society.

Exercise:

1. *Complete the pie chart with the missing information. Then give a brief description of immigration to the United States using the information in the pie chart and the flowchart.*



NATURAL RESOURCES

The United States possesses vast non-fuel natural resources. The major resource is *iron*, three-quarters of which comes from the Lake Superior region of the Great Lakes. Other basic metals and minerals mined on a large scale are *zinc*, *copper*, *silver* and *phosphate rock* (used for fertilizers). This wealth is distributed throughout most of the country, but Texas and the West (especially California) are the most important mineral-producing areas. Mining and quarrying account for only about 2% of GNP¹.

The United States produces one-quarter of the world's *coal* and one-seventh of its *petroleum*, with sufficient coal reserves to last for hundreds of years. About half of the nation's *electric power* comes from coal-fired power stations, while natural and manufactured *gas* supply more than 33% of the nation's power. The main gas fields are found near the main oil fields in Texas, Louisiana and Alaska. *Nuclear power* is also used in many places, using uranium mined in New Mexico and Wyoming, and produces over 10% of the nation's energy output.

Note:

¹GNP (Gross National Product) – валовой национальный продукт

Exercises:

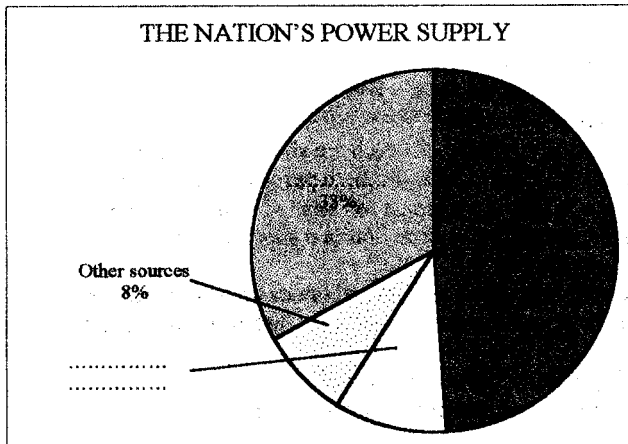
1. *Read carefully the following words:*

Iron, throughout, petroleum, sufficient, half, supply, uranium.

2. *Suggest the Russian for:*

Non-fuel natural resources; mineral-producing areas; account for; with coal reserves to last for hundreds of years; coal-fired power stations; mining and quarrying.

3. *Complete the pie chart with information about the nation's power supply.*



TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

The vast network of *rivers* and *lakes* in the eastern part of the United States have been of great importance to the economic development of the nation. The Mississippi and its tributaries are all easily navigable and the five Great Lakes, four of which are shared with Canada, are linked to this system by a series of canals. These waterways, together with pipelines and railways, are important for the transport of bulk freight.

By the late 1860s it was already possible to travel from the Atlantic Coast to the Pacific Coast by rail and there is now a vast *railway network* extending over almost the entire country. Railway transport has been largely replaced by *air transport* for long-distance passenger travel, as there is a highly developed network of airline services connecting most towns of importance (and it costs less to travel by air than by train even on comparatively short journeys). Railways are still important for the carriage of certain types of freight, however.

Cars and *trucks* are the most important means of transport for both passengers and goods, and an interstate highway system has been built which provides a route to nearly every major city. On many of these roads a toll has to be paid and the top speed limit anywhere is 55 mph¹.

Note:

¹ mph – miles per hour

Exercises:

1. *Read carefully the following words:*

Series, canal, entire, certain type, route, toll.

2. *Suggest the Russian for:*

Easily navigable; four of which are shared with Canada; bulk freight; by the late 1860s; for both passengers and goods; interstate highway system; a toll has to be paid; top speed limit.

3. *Complete these sentences to obtain a summary of transport systems in the US.*

1. The majority of passengers and goods are transported by ...
2. The most important form of long-distance passenger transport is ...
3. Railway transport is used for ...
4. Water traffic is particularly important in ...

NATIONAL PRODUCTION

The United States is the world's greatest economic power in terms of both Gross National Product and per capita GNP, with its exports accounting for more than 10% of all world trade.

Industry

Although the importance of industrial production is falling and that of services growing (as in most of Western Europe), the United States remains the world's greatest maker of industrial goods and around 20 million Americans are still employed in *manufacturing*. The industrial heart of the nation is the Midwest around the Great Lakes, especially in the region stretching from southern Michigan through northern Ohio and into the Pittsburgh area of Pennsylvania. Another important industrial region is the Northeast, which is the home of the major *computer manufacturers*. *Service industries* are also very important in this region and New York is the country's *banking* and *insurance* capital. The nation's fastest growing region, however, is the Southeast, where the *chemical industry* and *high-technology industries* are now catching up with the traditional *textile* industry as many firms exploit the warm climate and low labour costs.

Exercises:

1. *Read carefully the following words:*

Manufacturing, insurance, chemical industry.

2. *Suggest the Russian for:*

Greatest economic power; in terms of; account for; maker of goods; is the home of the major computer manufacturers; service industries; insurance capital; are catching up; low labour costs.

3. *Complete this table:*

Main industrial area
Computer industry
Banking and insurance
Fastest growing area

The top twenty companies**INDUSTRIAL CORPORATIONS**

RANK 1988 '87	COMPANY	HEAD- QUARTERS	INDUSTRY	SALES \$ Millions	PROFITS \$ Millions
1 1	GENERAL MOTORS	DETROIT	MOTOR VEHICLES	121,085.4	4,856.3
2 4	FORD MOTOR	MICHIGAN	MOTOR VEHICLES	92,445.6	5,300.2
3 3	EXXON	NEW YORK	PETROLEUM REFINING	79,557.0	5,260.0
4 2	ROYAL DUTCH/SHELL	LONDON/ THE HAGUE	PETROLEUM REFINING	78,381.1	5,238.7
5 5	INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS MACHINES	NEW YORK	COMPUTERS	59,681.0	5,806.0
6 8	TOYOTA MOTOR	TOYOTA CITY (JAPAN)	MOTOR VEHICLES	50,789.9	2,314.6
7 10	GENERAL ELECTRIC	CONNECTICUT	ELECTRONICS	49,414.0	3,386.0
8 6	MOBIL	NEW YORK	PETROLEUM REFINING	48,198.0	2,089.0
9 7	BRITISH PETROLEUM	LONDON	PETROLEUM REFINING	46,174.0	2,155.3
10 9	IRI	ROME	METALS	45,521.5	921.9
11 11	DAIMLER-BENZ	STUTTGART	MOTOR VEHICLES	41,817.9	953.1
12 16	HITACHI	TOKYO	ELECTRONICS	41,330.7	989.0
13 21	CHRYSLER	MICHIGAN	MOTOR VEHICLES	35,472.7	1,050.2
14 18	SIEMENS	MUNICH	ELECTRONICS	34,129.4	757.0
15 17	FIAT	TURIN	MOTOR VEHICLES	34,039.3	2,324.7
16 19	MATSUSHITA ELECTRIC INDUSTRIAL	OSAKA	ELECTRONICS	33,922.5	1,177.2
17 15	VOLKSWAGEN	WOLFSBURG (GER.)	MOTOR VEHICLES	33,696.2	420.1
18 12	TEXACO	NEW YORK	PETROLEUM REFINING	33,544.0	1,304.0
19 14	E.I DU PONT DE NEMOURS	DELAWARE	CHEMICALS	32,514.0	2,190.0
20 20	UNILEVER	LONDON/ ROTTERDAM	FOOD	30,488.2	1,488.6

Exercise:

1. Answer the questions:

1. How many of the world's 20 biggest companies are American?
2. In which two sectors do the majority of the companies in the table operate?

3. In which part of the US are most of the American companies located?

THE RICHEST NATION ON EARTH
Freed from Greed?

The past decade brought growth, avarice and an anything-goes attitude. But the '90s will be a time for the U.S. to fix up, clean up and pay up.

BY OTTO FRIEDRICH

The good news is that the U.S. gross national product doubled during the 1980s, from \$2.7 trillion to \$5.3 trillion. The bad news is that much of this was done by borrowing. The U.S. national debt tripled, from \$909 billion to almost \$2.9 trillion (interest alone now amounts to \$165 billion a year, roughly the equivalent of the budget deficit). Corporate and personal debts both soared. All in all, the U.S. consumed \$1 trillion more than it produced in goods and services.

The good news is that lots of people prospered. This was the age of financial wizards making fortunes in their 20s, and roughly 100,000 Americans became millionaires every year. Michael Milken, the junk-bond king at Drexel Burnham Lambert, set the record by earning \$550 million in 1987. The bad news is that while the top 20% of American families' earnings rose more than \$9,000 (after adjustment for inflation), to an average of nearly \$85,000, the bottom 20% dropped by \$576, to a hungry \$8,880. The Government estimates that 32 million Americans – 12.8% of the population – live in poverty, compared with 11.4% a decade ago. And Michael Milken has been indicted on 98 counts of fraud and other misdeeds.

The good news is that 20 million new American jobs were created during the 1980s. The bad news is that these new jobs did not come in the FORTUNE 500 companies, which actually cut their work forces by 3.5 million; many of the new 1980s jobs were low-paying service positions.

The good news is that booming international trade is spreading wealth around the world. The bad news is that the U.S. was the world's largest creditor in 1980 but went into the red¹ in 1985, and has become the world's largest debtor. Its trade deficit runs about \$150 billion a year. Foreign holdings in the U.S. now amount to \$1.5 trillion, compared with \$1.2 trillion in U.S. assets abroad. And meanwhile, the grinding poverty of the Third World, by now \$1 trillion in debt, has not improved at all. ...

Note:

¹ to go into (the) red – (амер.) приносить дефицит, становиться убыточным

Exercises:

1. *Read carefully the following words:*

Double, debt, roughly, deficit, corporate, fortune, millionaire, average, estimates, spread, wealth, grinding.

2. *Find words close in meaning:*

gross national product	twice as great as many
to borrow	having little money
debtor	to buy and use goods
to consume	rich
to prosper	to calculate
to make a fortune	to get (money) by working
to earn	to become successful
to estimate	he who borrowed
wealthy	to take smth for some time intending to return
poor	to become rich
double	total quantity of goods produced by a nation

3. *Answer quickly "yes" or "no".*

1. The national production grew in the 1980s.
2. A lot of Americans improved their living conditions.
3. Average American families' earnings did not grow.
4. There was a growth of the proportion of the poor population.
5. 20 million of new jobs were created by the Fortune 500 companies.
6. The U.S. went into the red in the 1980s.

4. *Describe briefly:*

- gross national product
- national debt
- millionaires
- poverty
- new jobs
- trade deficit

5. *List all the positive and negative changes that occurred, according to the article, in the US economy in the 1980s.*

Positive changes

1.
2.

Negative changes

1.
2.

Agriculture and fisheries

47% of the land area of the United States is *farmland*, of which 152 million hectares are harvested *cropland* and 560 million hectares are permanent *pasture land*, yet only 6.2 million people live on the nation's 2,300,000 farms. The Midwest is the most important agricultural region in the United States (though California is the number one state in terms of the value of its agricultural products) and alone produces almost twice as much as the American people can consume; corn and wheat are the main crops, and livestock and dairy farming are also carried out on a large scale. Although the South is still important for traditional crops, such as tobacco, corn and cotton, there is now far greater variety, while Texas is the nation's leading producer of cattle, sheep, cotton and rice. The West is important for cattle and wheat farming in the Great Plains area, and for fruit in the fertile valleys of the states that border the Pacific. Yet agriculture (together with fishing) accounts for less than 3% of GNP.

Exercises:

1. *Suggest the Russian for:*

Harvested cropland; in terms of value; twice as much as; corn and wheat are the main crop; far greater variety.

2. *Complete this table with reference to farmland in the USA.***Farmland**

152m hectares
 560m hectares

Principal products

Midwest
 South
 West
 Texas

AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS

THE CONSTITUTION

The American Constitution is based on the doctrine of the *separation of powers* between the *executive*, *legislative* and *judiciary*. The respective government institutions - *The Presidency*, *Congress* and *The Courts* - were given limited and specific powers; and a series of *checks and balances*, whereby each branch of government has certain authority over the others, were also included to make sure these powers were not abused. Government power was further limited by means of a dual system of government, in which the *federal government* was only given the powers and responsibilities to deal with problems facing the nation as a whole (foreign affairs, trade, control of the army and navy, etc). The remaining responsibilities and duties of government were reserved to the individual state governments.

Article V allowed for *amendments* to be made to the Constitution (once passed by a two-thirds majority in both houses of *Congress* and then ratified by the *legislatures* of three-fourths of the states). The Constitution finally ratified by all thirteen states in 1791 already contained ten amendments, collectively known as the *Bill of Rights* (the freedoms of religion, speech and the press, etc), to protect the citizen against possible tyranny by the federal government. So far only twenty-six amendments have been made to the Constitution.

Exercises:

1. *Read carefully the following words:*

Doctrine, executive, legislative, judiciary, specific, series, authority, abuse, reserve, tyranny, dual.

2. *Find the word according to definitions:*

A principle or set of principles; having the power to make laws; having the duty to carry out laws; a group of things of some kind; use badly (wrongly); government by a cruel ruler with complete power; a change made in or suggested for a statement; to charge (accuse) with a serious crime; official power to refuse permission for something; a spoken or written piece of information passed from one person to another.

(Message, doctrine, veto, amendment, series, tyranny, abuse, to convict, legislative, executive).

3. *Suggest the Russian for the following:*

A series of checks and balances; to make sure these powers were not abused; once passed by a two-thirds majority; overriding a veto; failing to approve treaties; convicted of federal crime; appealing to the people; ruling that laws are unconstitutional.

4. Answer the questions:

1. What is the basic principle of the American Constitution?
2. Why was it progressive at the time of its adoption?
3. When was it adopted and ratified?
4. What three branches is the US Government divided into?
5. In what way is the power of each branch guaranteed from abuse?
6. What is the idea of introducing a dual system of government?
7. What is the Bill of Rights?

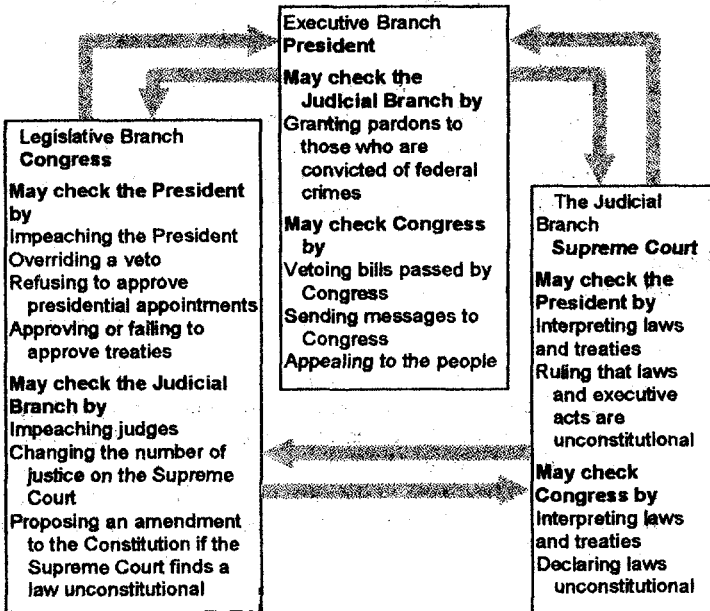
5. Make notes on the American constitution under these headings:

Based on:

Restrictions:

Flexibility:

6. Look at the chart below and say how the President, Congress and the Judiciary check one another.



THE PRESIDENCY

The President (any natural-born citizen over 34) is elected for a term of four years and can only be re-elected for one more term (*22nd amendment* - adopted after Franklin D. Roosevelt's four successive terms). The President was originally intended to be little more than a ceremonial Head of State, as well as Commander in Chief of the armed forces, but the federal government's increasing involvement in the nation's economic life and its prominent role in international affairs, where secrecy and speed are often essential, has increased the importance of the Presidency over Congress.

The President now proposes a full legislative programme to Congress, although the President, the *Cabinet* and staff are not, and cannot be, members of Congress. This means that the various bills must be introduced into the House of Representatives or Senate by their members. The President is consequently completely powerless when faced by an uncooperative Congress. Given also the difficulties in ensuring that the laws passed are effectively implemented by the federal bureaucracy, it has been said that the President's only real power is the power to persuade.

The role of the Vice-President is not very well defined by the Constitution, which gives him or her no other task than presiding over the debates in the Senate, where he may only vote in the case of a tie. Yet the Vice-President takes over from the President in case of death, resignation, or sickness, which has already happened on eight occasions. To try and attract able men to this otherwise unimportant, mainly ceremonial post, Vice-Presidents have recently been given more important tasks, especially in foreign affairs.

Exercises:

1. *Read carefully the following words:*

Ceremonial, essential, various, Senate, bureaucracy, persuade, preside.

2. *Suggest the Russian for the following:*

Any natural-born citizen; four successive terms; ceremonial Head of State; government's increasing involvement in the nation's economic life; when faced by an uncooperative Congress; given also the difficulties; vote in the case of a tie; he takes over from the President; Vice-Presidents have recently been given more important tasks.

3. Complete the following statements according to the text:

1. The President can be re-elected for ...
2. Originally the President was to be ...
3. Nowadays the Presidency combines...
4. The President may be powerless when...
5. It is the Vice-President who...

4. Make notes on the functions of the President and Vice-President.

	President	Vice-President
Original functions:
Recent functions:

CONGRESS

The legislative branch of national government consists of two houses - the Senate and the House of Representatives - each with a different role, different powers and a different electoral procedure.

The House of Representatives

The House of Representatives is the dynamic institution of the federal government. The states are represented on a population basis and are divided into *congressional districts* or *constituencies* of roughly equal size (around 520,000 people). There are currently 435 members, who are elected every *two* years. All states must by law adopt the system of single-member constituencies with a simple majority vote. Vacancies arising from death, resignation, etc, are filled by *by-elections*.

The chairman of the House of Representatives, the *Speaker*, is elected by the House and has important responsibilities, giving him considerable influence over the President. Moreover, should the President and Vice-President die before the end of their terms, it is the Speaker who becomes President.

The Senate

The Senate is the conservative counterweight to the more populist House of Representatives. Each state has two senators who, since 1913 (*Seventeenth Amendment*), have been chosen directly by the electorate in the way decided by the state legislature in each state. Senators are elected every *six* years, but the elections are staggered so that one-third of the Senate is elected every two years. A vacancy caused by death or resignation is filled until the next congressional elections by the nomination of the State Governor. There are currently 100 senators.

The Senate has the special privilege of *unlimited debate* to safeguard the rights of minorities, but this can enable a small group of Senators to prevent the passage of a bill (*filibustering*).

FUNCTIONS OF CONGRESS

Although Congress can legislate, its most important task has become that of scrutinizing the policies and actions of the executive, and upholding the interests of states and districts. Indeed, since Representatives and Senators depend on the voters in their various states or constituencies for re-election, they tend to satisfy the particular interests of constituents and special groups rather than tackle the problems of the nation as a whole. Congress also controls the nation's finances and its permanent specialist staff helps Congress consider and change the budget presented each year by the President.

Exercises:

1. *Read carefully the following words:*

Procedure, dynamic, roughly, vacancy, counterweight, legislature, electorate, caused, filibustering, scrutinize, finances.

2. *Suggest the Russian for the following:*

On a population basis; congressional districts or constituencies; single-member constituency; conservative counterweight; in the way decided by the state legislature; elections are staggered so that...; scrutinizing the policies; rather than tackle the problems.

3. *Use prepositions or conjunctions. Consult the text.*

Consist ...; ... a population basis; divide ...; adopt ... law; arise ...; influence ...; ... the way decided by the state; staggered ...; ... the nomination of; task ... scrutinizing; depend ...; nation ... whole.

4. *Make up 10 questions about Congress.*

5. *List the differences between the House of Representatives and the Senate.*

House of Representatives

dynamic

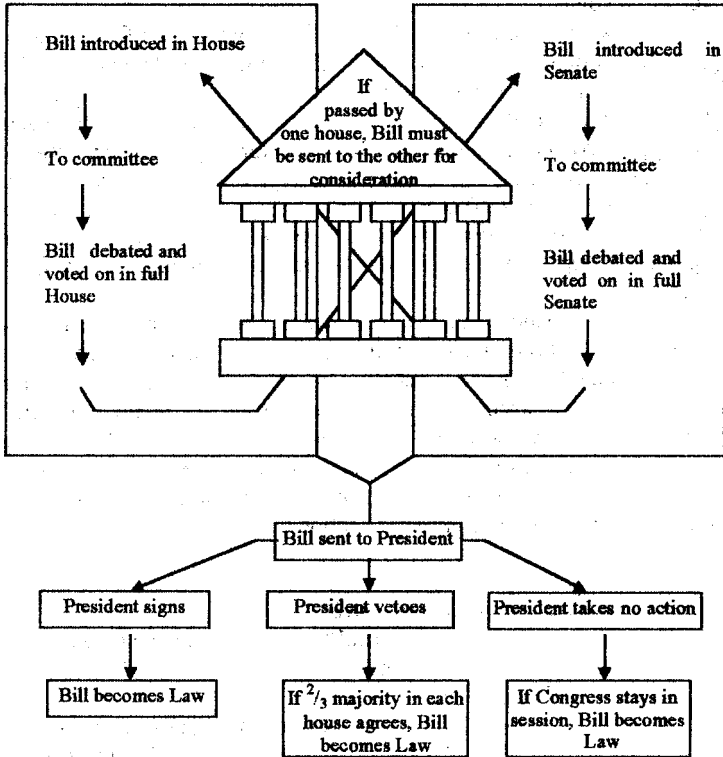
Senate

conservative

6. *List the four functions of Congress.*

1 3
2 4

How a Bill becomes a Law



Exercise:

1. Look at the chart above and describe how a Bill becomes a Law.

ELECTIONS AND POLITICAL PARTIES

Each US State is free to determine its own electoral laws, subject to certain limitations imposed by the Constitution, national legislation and the Supreme Court. This has enabled many states, particularly in the South, to prevent blacks and other minorities from voting by such means as *poll taxes* and *literacy tests*. After the 1965 Voting Rights Act (giving federal government officials the job of registering voters in states where literacy tests are used) and the abolition of poll taxes (24th

Amendment), black voters are now proportionally only 10% fewer than white voters.

The President is elected on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November of a leap year and takes office at noon on January 20. The President is not elected directly, but by an *Electoral College*. The Electors who actually choose the President are now completely pledged in advance to one person and their names have almost entirely disappeared from the *ballot papers* to be replaced by the names of the candidates themselves. The candidates who win the most votes within a state receive all its Electoral College votes (equal to the number of senators and representatives from that state), no matter how small the majority.

Presidential candidates are selected by their respective party's national conventions in the summer of each election year. The delegates attending that convention are associated with a particular candidate and are normally chosen either at state conventions of party members (the *caucus* system) or at *state primary elections* held in the preceding months. In a *closed primary* only registered party members can vote, while in an *open primary* any voter can participate (obviously voting in only one party's primary election).

Exercises:

1. *Read carefully the following words:*

Determine, subject, poll, actually, pledge, candidate, delegate, caucus, primary, college, leap year.

2. *Suggest the Russian for:*

Subject to certain limitations; to prevent blacks from voting; completely pledged in advance; candidates are selected by their respective party's national conventions.

3. *Correct if necessary the following statements:*

1. Electoral laws in separate states are determined by the states themselves (independently).
2. After the 1965 Voting Rights Act the proportion of black and white voters changed in favour of the whites.
3. The American President is elected by universal suffrage every leap year.
4. Electoral College's numerical composition is different in various states.
5. Presidential candidates are nominated by delegates of parties' national conventions.

4. *Answer these questions to obtain a summary of the passage:*
1. Who decides who has the right to vote?
 2. What is the Electoral College?
 3. How do the members of this Electoral College decide how to vote?
 4. Who chooses a party's presidential candidate?
 5. How are the delegates at the national party conventions chosen?
 6. What is the difference between a closed and an open primary?
5. *Look at the Bush-Dukakis election results and explain why Dukakis received 46% of the votes cast, but only around 20% of the 538 electoral college votes.*

US elections at a glance

How the White House was won	BUSH	DUKAKIS
Popular vote	46,580,418 or 54 per cent	39,852,496 or 46 per cent
Electoral College	426	112
The state of the parties	REPUBLICANS	DEMOCRATS
Senate	44 (46 previously)	56 (54)
House	173 (177)	262 (258)
Governors	22 (23)	28 (27)

Political parties

Political parties or 'factions' were not mentioned in the original Constitution. Differences over the role of the federal government led to the first national parties – the Federalists and the Republicans. Since then two major parties have dominated political life. The Democratic Party has existed in one form or another since the beginning of the 1800s and has been opposed in successive eras by the Federalist, Whig and Republican parties. The Republican Party was founded in 1854 and was originally the anti-slavery party.

There is very little ideological difference between the Democratic and Republican parties, as both parties defend the free-enterprise capitalist system, accepted by almost all Americans as the basis of American society. The Democrats, unlike the Republicans, tend to favour some Government intervention, but both parties have liberal

and conservative wings, and in Congress the liberal and conservative wings of the two parties often side with each other against the other wing. It is broadly possible to say that poor people vote for the Democrats and wealthy people for the Republicans. American politics are the politics of pragmatism and a party will always alter its *platform* to try and catch the mood of the nation, *the middle ground*.

On the same day as the electors vote for the President, they also vote for Senators, members of the House of Representatives, state governors and a host of minor officials. It was once common for people to vote *the straight ticket*, whereby a single cross against the party label on the ballot paper means a vote for every one of the party's candidates from the President downwards, but this is now rare. This explains why there have been a succession of Republican Presidents and Democrat majorities in Congress.

Exercises:

1. *Read carefully the following words:*

Successive era, ideological, accept, favour, alter, straight, candidate, downwards, rare.

2. *Find words close in meaning:*

faction	generally
oppose	unusual, not common
accept	set of things (people)
to favour	a large number
alter	to believe in plan, idea
ground	to change
host	to agree to smth
rare	to be or act against
succession	parliamentary party
broadly	argument, position

3. *Suggest the Russian for the following:*

The Democratic Party has been opposed in successive eras by...; the Democrats tend to favour some Government intervention; it is broadly possible to say; to catch the mood of the nation; it was once common; to vote the straight ticket; succession of Republican Presidents and Democrat majorities.

4. *Complete the following statements according to the text:*

1. The first national parties...
2. The Democratic Party is older than the Republican. It has existed...

3. Originally the Republican Party was...
 4. The Democrats tend to ...
 5. It is broadly possible to say...
 6. On the same day as electors vote for the President...
 7. It was once common for...
 8. A Republican president can face a democratic majority in the Congress because...
5. List the similarities and differences between the two parties:
- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| <i>Similarities</i> | <i>Differences</i> |
|---------------------|--------------------|

THE FEDERAL JUDICIARY

In the federal system there are 90 *District Courts* presided over by a district judge which hear criminal cases involving breaches of federal law and civil cases on federal matters (disputes between states, non-payment of federal taxes, etc). Appeals can be made to the United States *Court of Appeals*, where an appeal is heard by three judges, although in very important cases all nine appeal judges sit together. In the vast majority of cases this court's decision is final and sets a precedent for future cases, although this precedent is not always binding on the Supreme Court.

Although not explicitly given the power of *judicial review* - the power to decide whether the actions of the President, Congress or state governments violate the Constitution - this is the important role that the *Supreme Court* has developed in the legal system. The Supreme Court judges, of whom there are normally nine (though Congress may alter this number) are nominated for life by the President after being approved by the Senate.

Exercises:

1. Read carefully the following words:

Breach, dispute, precedent, binding, explicitly, violate, nominate.

2. Find words close in meaning:

breach	not fulfilling
matter	case
appeal	break
precedent	clear
binding on	obligatory
explicit	call for

review
violate
nominate

example or rule for present action
reconsider
appoint

3. *Say whether the following statements are true or false. Correct any false statement to obtain a summary of the passage:*
1. The Federal courts only deal with important crimes.
 2. All final appeals go to the Supreme Court.
 3. The Supreme Court's most important role is that of judicial review.
 4. Judicial review gives the Supreme Court the power to decide that an action of the President is illegal.

STATE GOVERNMENT

There is very little in the Constitution about state government - the Tenth Amendment (1791) merely says that those powers not specifically delegated to the federal government are reserved for states. While the fifty state constitutions differ widely, they all include *the separation of powers* and a system of *checks and balances*, and share the underlying American belief that government should be kept to a minimum. Each state has a *Governor*, a *Legislature* and a *State Judiciary*. The Governor is elected directly in a state-wide election. All the states except Nebraska have bicameral legislatures, normally called the Senate and House of Representatives.

The judicial systems of the states vary greatly in structure and procedures. Generally speaking, however, at the lowest level there are Justices of the Peace Courts, presided over by elected lay magistrates, which deal with minor offences. Then come the County Courts, which deal with the majority of civil and criminal cases. Appeals go to the District Court of Appeals, while the State Supreme Court has the same role as the United States Supreme Court in the federal system. The most controversial aspect of state judiciaries is that in more than two-thirds of the states judges (including those in the Supreme Court) are elected.

Exercises:

1. *Read carefully the following words:*

Merely specific, reserve, bicameral, vary, procedure, magistrate, county, controversial, delegate.

2. *Find words close in meaning:*

merely	contradictory
specific	administrative unit
to delegate	set of actions
reserve	differ
vary	to store, keep
procedure	empower
county	particular
controversial	just, only

3. *Suggest the Russian for the following word constructions. Consult the text:*

Powers delegated to; constitutions differ widely; they share the underlying belief; in a state-wide election; to vary greatly; presided over by elected lay magistrates.

4. *Complete the following sentences to obtain a summary of the text:*

1. All the state constitutions are based on...
2. And in every state there is...
3. Nebraska is the only state which...
4. A controversial aspect of most state judiciaries is that...