

CONTENTS

PART 1

1. Physiography	8
2. Human Geography	14
3. Demography	24
4. Immigration	28
5. Minorities	34
■ Vocabulary	46
■ Tables	47

PART 2

1. The Constitution	52
2. The Government	60
3. Parties and Elections	74
4. Federalism	78
■ Vocabulary	82
■ Tables	83

PART 3

1. The Economy	88
2. Work	100
3. Social Protection	110
4. Social Problems	116
5. The American Way of Life	126
■ Vocabulary	138
■ Tables	138

PART 4

1. Religion	144
2. Education	162
3. The Media	176
4. Foreign Policy	190
■ Vocabulary	202
■ Tables	203

SOMMAIRE

PARTIE 1

1. Géographie physique.....	9
2. Géographie humaine	15
3. Démographie.....	25
4. L'immigration.....	29
5. Les minorités.....	35
■ Lexique.....	46
■ Repères.....	47

PARTIE 2

1. La Constitution.....	53
2. Le gouvernement.....	61
3. Les partis et les élections	75
4. Le fédéralisme	79
■ Lexique.....	82
■ Repères.....	83

PARTIE 3

1. L'économie	89
2. Le travail	101
3. La protection sociale	111
4. Les problèmes sociaux.....	117
5. Le mode de vie américain	127
■ Lexique.....	138
■ Repères.....	138

PARTIE 4

1. La religion.....	145
2. L'éducation.....	163
3. Les médias	177
4. La politique étrangère	191
■ Lexique.....	202
■ Repères.....	203

1

“We the people of the United States”

1

« Nous, le peuple des États-Unis »

PHYSIOGRAPHY

1. General Features

a) Continental US

The US territory (including Alaska and Hawaii) covers 3,539,289 sq.miles of land area, of which about 85% (2,962,031 sq.miles) forms a continental set of 48 contiguous States that stretch, in one piece, from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean over 3,400 miles from east to west and 1,800 miles from north to south. Such territorial spread for one single country compares only with China (3,696,100 sq.miles) or Australia (2,966,200 sq.miles). Continental Europe (from the Atlantic to the Ural) is slightly larger in size (4,593,796 sq.miles) but remains so far multinational.

The metropolitan US (i.e. without Alaska and Hawaii) has natural boundaries on the east and west, representing 3,700 miles of coastline along the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico, and 1,293 miles of coastline along the Pacific Ocean. The northern and southern boundaries, on the other hand, are political: the border with Canada, in the north, extends over 3,987 miles of land and water (Great Lakes) between Maine and Washington State; the border with Mexico, in the south, runs through 1,933 miles of mostly desert terrain, from San Diego to the mouth of the Rio Grande.

Gigantism is but one among the many geophysical features of the North American continent, yet its importance in the history of the US should not be underestimated: remoteness and distance represented a challenge throughout the period of the nation's territorial development. Besides, the US offers samples of almost all recognized types of reliefs and of climates, which produce remarkable contrasts between people's lifestyles and activities throughout the country. There exist regional differences that political unity can but imperfectly veil.

b) Regional US

Dividing the US into regions, however, may prove to be a very unscientific endeavor as many, possibly conflicting, criteria (geographical, historical, political, economic, cultural) must be taken into account to legitimize the divisions. We will here identify seven continental regions (an eighth one could gather "outlying areas" and overseas possessions), yet consider that none of them is perfectly homogeneous: