The American people

Native Americans

The first people migrated to the USA 30,000 years ago. They walked from Russia to Alaska, across the Bering Strait, and then they moved south. These people are Native Americans.

In 1500, European settlers, started to arrive in America. They brought new diseases to America and many Native Americans died from them. The settlers also killed many Native Americans for their land.

Today, most Native Americans live in towns and cities, but some of them live on Native American reservations. The most famous Native American tribes are the Cherokee and the Navajo. Famous Native Americans include Sitting Bull and Pocahontas.
Early European settlers

People came to America from many different European countries in the 1500s. Spanish immigrants settled in California and Texas. French immigrants went to Louisiana and Florida. But the greatest number of settlers came from Britain. These British immigrants lived in the north-east of the USA. Many of these settlers went to America to escape religious persecution and to start a new life.

The first Africans

From around 1650 African slaves started to arrive in North America. These people became the first African Americans. Life for the slaves was very hard. But in 1865 America abolished slavery.

Today, there are about 40 million African Americans in the USA. Famous African Americans include civil rights campaigner Martin Luther King and President Barack Obama.

President Barack Obama
The 19th century

In the 19th century immigrants started to come to America from other European countries. At first they came from Germany and Ireland. Later they came from Scandinavia, Italy and Russia. These immigrants all wanted a better life.

Many of the Russian immigrants were Jewish and they wanted to escape from discrimination in Europe. Famous Jewish Americans include the singer Bob Dylan and Mark Zuckerberg – the man who developed Facebook.
New immigration

From the 1930s large numbers of Mexicans started to arrive in the USA. Then, after the Cuban Revolution in 1959, many Cubans went to live in the USA, too. This was the first wave of immigration from Latin America. Today, there are more than 50 million Latin Americans in the USA and many of them speak Spanish at home. Famous Latin Americans include the actresses Cameron Diaz and Jessica Alba.

At the end of the 20th century large numbers of immigrants came to America from Asia. Many of them came from the Philippines, Vietnam, India, Pakistan and China. The mix of all these people from different countries around the world makes America a ‘melting pot’ of cultural diversity.