AMERICA TODAY

I. America's institutional quandaries

1. The First Amendment: The Separation of Church and State
2. The Second Amendment: the Gun Issue
3. The Eighth Amendment: the Death Penalty

Notes typographiques

. *Le vocabulaire thématique en gras ; je vous recommande de vous constituer des FICHES THEMATIQUES de vocabulaire. L'enrichissement de votre vocabulaire passe nécessairement par l'apprentissage par cœur de telles listes. Toutefois, il peut être plus facile de retenir le vocabulaire en contexte, d'où son inclusion ici au sein de phrases rédigées.*

. *Les informations les plus importantes sont soulignées.*

. *Le vocabulaire en italique est utile pour les essais (mots de liaison, connecteurs logiques etc)*

Les notes de bas de page :

. *les notes en rouge concernent la civilisation et l'histoire*

. *les notes en vert concernent le vocabulaire, les questions de langue, la grammaire*

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Introduction

I hope you will find here the necessary keys to current events and debates. Many of these issues (guns, the death penalty, the character of George W. Bush) are controversial, or at least trigger personal reactions. You must not be afraid of asserting your enthusiasm or disagreement with these topics and with the way America views them. On the contrary, a shy candidate, with a dull presentation of the topic is uninteresting for the jury. If you are questioned about such a « hot » debate, you must bring in the controversy, and your opinion. My advice is that 1. you conjure up both sides of the debate, with specific references, and, 2. ultimately you take position. I will not personally comment and discuss these events, it is your job to develop your own opinion about it, and the arguments (in English) that you'd like to put forward if asked about them. My point here is to provide the vocabulary and the historical and political background that will be expected from you. You must clearly understand what is expected from you : any opinion is respectable, you cannot be judged and penalized upon your opinion, but if you do not inform your presentation and position with examples and references, you will not be convincing, and therefore will have failed the requirements of the essay or the oral examination.

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I. America's institutional quandaries

1. The First Amendment: The separation of Church and State

You read last month about the American Constitution, I will refer to it in several *occurrences*[1] and I strongly recommend that you should[2] do the same: this will be one of the assets[3] of your (oral or written) presentation, if you are able to quote specific references that allow to *grasp*[4] the debate better –again, I too often hear candidates judging Americans without suggesting first what might be the cause of such and such feature of American life. Only once you have reminded the hard facts and objective references, can you[5] propose your critical opinion.

The **First Amendment** to the American Constitution guaranties freedom of religion[6], as a consequence of the **Separation of Church and State**. According to this principle, and contrary to a Monarchy (and especially contrary to Great-Britain), no religious references can be involved in the political life. I hope you are already bothered by my statement for there are so many *infringements*[7] to this rule in the American public life, that you are *bound* to[8] think of at least one occasion when this principle is certainly not respected.

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[1] A noter dans votre vocabulaire à la place de « several times ».

[2] I recommend (I order, I demand etc.) + action irréelle (qui n'est pas vraiment arrivée mais qui est souhaitée, demandée, projetée). Cet « irréel » correspond pour nous au subjonctif (je demande, j'exige que tu fasses…). Il s'exprime aussi en anglais, même s'il n'existe pas de mode spécifique, comme le subjonctif en français.

Forme GB : I demand (j'exige) that **he should attend** the meeting. (qu'il soit présent…)
Forme US : I demand that **he attend** the meeting

Forme GB : avec « should »
Forme US : avec une forme « infinitive »

[3] One of the + PLURAL

[4] to grasp : sens propre : saisir (un objet)
sens figuré : saisir (un sens)
Très bon vocabulaire pour vos présentations : « In order to fully grasp the meaning of the journalist's analysis, I think it is necessary to remind the background of the issue etc. »

[5] Un des rares cas d'inversion sujet / verbe en anglais => lorsque l'adverbe est placé en tête de phrase.

Often have I seen him argue with his brother.
Never will I do such a thing to you.
Only by being honest, can you win this fight.

[6] And what else ? In which cases is the First Amendment constantly quoted ? You must be able to answer these questions from last month.

[7] To infringe on the law : violer la loi

[8] This was bound to happen = c'était inévitable

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