To the Instructor

I designed *What Makes America Tick?* as a comprehensive package of instructional materials for intermediate-level ESL/EFL courses as a bridge into simple advanced skills. I designed it for instructors like you who care about teaching the four skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening within an authentic context in which culture, vocabulary, and sociolinguistic appropriateness are also stressed and the relationships between all elements of language are explored. My controlling philosophy while producing these study materials was that lower-proficiency language students should be offered the opportunity to study language as it is applied to higher-level thinking activities and that such activities can be based on cultural artifacts such as art, music, literature, and history of the target culture. These higher-level topics have traditionally been reserved for those students who “already” possess advanced-level vocabulary and structures.

The objectives of the study materials are to:

- Advance reading skills by engaging learners in intermediate-level readings pertaining to some important events in modern U.S. history.
- Increase learner proficiency in high-frequency vocabulary words and their derivatives.
- Advance formal and informal writing skills via personal responses to events portrayed in the text and in optional journal keeping.
- Improve formal presentation, informal discussion, and personal speaking skills in class discussions and more structured peer interview situations.
- Enhance listening skills via peer and instructor interaction.
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- Expose learners to and provide practice opportunities for sociolinguistically appropriate usages of U.S. American English.
- Provide interaction with authentic cultural artifacts from the 20th century including literature, poetry, artwork, sculpture, photography, speeches, etc., and make explicit their contextual importance.
- Create opportunity for learning and putting into practice a working knowledge of some of the important historical events of the 20th century as well as an understanding of their relationship to current U.S. American institutions, politics, attitudes, and values.

*What Makes America Tick?* consists of eight units, each containing an intermediate-level reading; authentic photos; vocabulary lists and activities; various cloze and open response activities for reading, speaking, listening, and writing; and a “Link to Today” section that examines the current effects of history on younger target language speakers. Additional activities and individual project ideas are available on the book’s Web site [www.press.umich.edu/esl](http://www.press.umich.edu/esl).

I have made it a point to engage students in meaningful, cross-cultural comparisons of politics, attitudes, and values with the aim of elicitng their observations and reactions regarding various policies, movements, and events in U.S. American history, as well as having them engage in meaningful, communicative information-gap activities. It was not possible to include every significant historical event in the 20th century, so the focus is on those events with cultural implications throughout the century and ones with the most far-reaching social implications on ESL students.

Despite my efforts to make this text as culturally rich and authentic as possible, copyright constraints made it difficult to include many things that I think students would enjoy. For this reason, links to sources for materials such as the Andy Warhol artwork (Unit 3) and the Martin Luther King, Jr., speech (Unit 4) as well as other helpful resources are also available on the Web site. In addition, I strongly encourage you to depart from my materials at any time to include other realia that could not be included in the book.

My teacher’s heart will rest happy knowing that you are out there teaching the materials that I could not include as an author and engaging the students in ways that simply were not feasible via the medium of a textbook. Help them understand what makes America tick!