**THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA – GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION**
 The United States is a varied land — of forests, deserts, mountains, high flat lands and fertile plains. Almost every kind of climate may be found, but the country lies mostly in the temperate zone. The continental United States stretches 4,500 kilometers from the Atlantic Ocean in the east to the Pacific Ocean in the west. It borders on Canada in the north, and reaches south to Mexico and the Gulf of Mexico. A fast railroad train, traveling 96 kilometers an hour, takes more than 45 hours to cross the country.

A jet plane crosses the continental United States from east to west in about five hours. Taking off from an Atlantic coast airport, the plane is soon flying over the gentle slopes of the Appalachian Mountains. Then, for hundreds of kilometers it crosses the fertile fields of the farm belt of the great Middle West. To the north, on clear days, passengers may see the five Great Lakes located between the United States and Canada. Continuing into the west, the plane flies over vast prairies and rough cattle-grazing country. Soon the snow-topped Rocky Mountains appear in the distance. After crossing these high ranges, the plane can almost glide down into the rich valleys of California and, finally, to a landing not far from the beaches of the Pacific Ocean.

Including the states of Alaska and Hawaii, the United States covers an area of 9 million square kilometers. Alaska borders on north-western Canada. Hawaii lies in the Pacific 3,200 kilometers from the mainland. Alaska is the largest in area of the 50 states, and Texas, in the southern part of the country, is second in size. Texas alone is larger than France, and Alaska is twice as big as Texas.
From the Appalachian Mountains in the east to the Rocky Mountains in the west, the centre of the country is drained by the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers and their branches These rivers form a 19,000-kilometer system of waterways that are connected to the Great Lakes in the north by a canal.
Other important rivers are the Yukon in Alaska; the Rio Grande, which forms part of the United States — Mexico border; the Columbia, which rises in western Canada and continues in the United States west of the Rocky Mountains; and the Colorado, which begins in the Rocky Mountains and flows south-west. Other well-known rivers include the Hudson, which meets the Atlantic Ocean at New York City; the Potomac, bordering the national capital at Washington; and the Ohio, which flows west from the Appalachian Mountains to meet the Mississippi.