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This edition of *Pop Culture Versus Real America* is intended for the sixth- to seventh-grade level students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or English as a Second Language (ESL). It was adapted from the original publication *Pop Culture Versus Real America* (2010).

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This book is the learner's edition of *Pop Culture Versus Real America*. It shows how characters in popular American TV shows and films are not always like real Americans. Each chapter gives a description of a TV show or movie along with a story about a real person who is a doctor, lifeguard or cowboy.

Some words are in **boldface** type. You will find their meanings, or definitions, in a colored box on the same page. You will also find them at the end of the book in the glossary, which is a list of words and their meanings.

As in other languages, English has many words that may have two, three or more meanings. In this book, only the meaning of a word as it is used on that page is listed. If you want to learn other meanings or ways the words in this book can be used, go to the library or, if you have access to the Internet, free dictionaries are available. Dictionaries that you may find in the library are also online, such as the *Merriam-Webster Learner's Dictionary* of English, at the website www.learnersdictionary.com. There you will find every form and meaning of each word and many examples in sentences.

Also, along with this book you may have received a CD. On it is a person reading the entire book. If you listen while you read, you can hear exactly how each word is pronounced.

If you are an English teacher, you can use this book as another tool to help your students learn new words and the different ways they are used. If you use the Internet, you can find the recorded book online and a Portable Document Format (PDF) of the book.

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Introduction



© AP Images

People throughout the world think about Americans in a certain way. American tourists are sometimes seen as loud and insensitive to other cultures. But they can be warm and friendly, too. People around the world watch American television shows on satellite television. But these TV shows do not always show Americans in a good way.

At a restaurant in Italy, a quiet European might compare a loud, talkative American to Homer Simpson. Homer is a main character on the TV show *The Simpsons*. This popular cartoon series is a **spoof** on American lifestyle and **stereotypes**. It is an international hit, and is watched by millions of people around the world.

“I know that the stereotypes of the United States are out there,” President Obama told a group of university students in Istanbul in 2009. “And I know that many of them are informed not by direct exchange or dialogue, but by television shows and movies and misinformation.”

This book tries to change some of these false stereotypes. American **pop culture icons** — such as Homer Simpson, or the fantasy lifeguards on *Baywatch* — can give people the wrong impression about Americans. If they do not know Americans personally, they might think these **fictional** characters are like real Americans.

Sometimes the fictional characters and their situations can seem a little realistic. This makes good comedy! However, it does not tell the whole story. The loud American in the Italian restaurant may seem like a stereotype. But at home, he

Spoof: a humorous show that copies something in a silly and exaggerated way.

Stereotype: an often unfair and untrue belief that many people have about all people or things in a group that is different from their own.

Pop culture: (short for “popular culture”) what is popular now in art and entertainment.

Icon: a person who is very successful and admired.

Fictional: not real, made up.

may volunteer to help disadvantaged members of his community. He might tutor children, or donate money to **charity**. In 2008, Americans volunteered 8 billion hours to community service. They also donated more than \$300 billion to charity.

In this book, the pop culture image of Americans is contrasted with the real thing. *The Simpsons*' Krusty Burger is paired with a story about farmers markets in "Farm to Table: Fresh for the Picking." *Baywatch* lines up against real California lifeguards in "Saving Lives Takes More Than a Nice Tan." The **petty**, fictional teens of *Gossip Girl* are put to shame by the story of young Katheryn Conde in "Helping Her Friends, Family and Community." Conde, who tutors classmates and helps poor children in her free time, cannot understand the **shallow** *Gossip Girl* characters. "It seems like all the girls are focused on the social part of their lives," she says.

Television and movies wrongly show all Americans as vain, self-obsessed and violent. In contrast, this book shows real Americans. The articles here do not show caricatures or misrepresentations. Instead, they show ordinary people — who work hard, are generous and care about others.

Charity: an organization that helps people in need.

Petty: being concerned about trivial things, in a small-minded or spiteful way.

Shallow: not caring about serious or important things.

Doctor

© Frank Ockenfels/ABC/Photofest



POP CULTURE

Grey's Anatomy

The popular television drama *Grey's Anatomy* takes place at the fictitious Seattle Grace Hospital in the real city of Seattle in the state of Washington. This state in the U.S. **Pacific Northwest** is also the setting for the famous *Twilight* books and films. Doctors and medical interns are the main characters in the fast-paced *Grey's Anatomy* series, which has been on TV since 2005. The doctors treat very difficult medical conditions, performing at least one miracle cure in each TV episode. The show is often as concerned with the **tangled** romantic relationships of the doctors as with healing the sick. The doctors spend much of their time taking care of each other. One doctor, Alex Karev, falls in love with a woman who came to the hospital after a ferryboat accident. A young intern named Izzie becomes engaged to a handsome patient named Denny Duquette. Relationships among the staff are the usual focus. The background stories of the main characters complicate their relationships with each other. Some of the puzzling medical situations seem far-fetched. With all these personal and professional challenges, there's never a routine day for the physicians on *Grey's Anatomy*.



Above: Members of the *Grey's Anatomy* cast portray doctors with intense personal lives.

Pacific Northwest: North American region between the Pacific Ocean and the Rocky Mountains, including the U.S. states of Oregon and Washington.

Tangle: a mix-up or complication, like yarn that gets snarled or knotted.



Seth Harrison

REAL AMERICA

A Passion to Serve

M. Natalie Achong, **M.D.**, grew up in a **working-class** New York City family. Most of her neighbors were other **African-American** families. Her parents were not rich, but they were caring and encouraged her to succeed. Her parents and the close-knit community of the neighborhood instilled **ethnic** pride and **civic** responsibility in her. Everyone at her elementary school was African American. Achong learned about African-American history and struggles. She learned how African Americans contributed to the United States, and these stories inspired her to contribute, too. Achong became a woman with a strong African-American identity. Because she liked helping people, Achong grew up and became a physician. Today, she helps people both inside and outside of the hospital where she works.

Achong's parents wanted her to be successful. Her father was from the Caribbean island of Trinidad. He worked hard and told his children to do the same. Achong did very well in the New York City public schools she attended because her parents supported and encouraged her. She graduated from high school. She was accepted to all the **Ivy League** universities where she applied for admission. Instead, she decided to do a special program at the City University of New

Above: Dr. M. Natalie Achong is committed to helping the needy both on the job and in her community.

M.D.: short for "doctor of medicine." In America, both "doctor" and "physician" are used. "Physician" is more formal. "Doctor" is used in everyday language. Example: "I have to call my doctor for medicine." / "Please contact your physician for questions about medication."

Working class: people who earn money usually by doing physical work. They are not rich or powerful.

African American: an American who has African ancestors.

Ethnic: sharing a common culture, language or ancestry, for example, African Americans or Chinese Americans.

Civic: refers to citizenship or activities in a city. Civics is the study of how to be a good citizen.

Ivy League: eight colleges and universities in the eastern United States that are known for academic excellence: Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Columbia, Brown and Cornell universities, the University of Pennsylvania and Dartmouth College. They are among the oldest U.S. institutions of higher learning.



York. This **accelerated** program would enable her to become a doctor by age 22. This was very young for an American student. Most American doctors go to medical school for four years after they graduate from university.

Achong went to the **Deep South** while she was studying. She worked with poor teenage mothers in Mississippi. These mothers didn't have access to good medical care, but Achong helped them access medical care. This was her first time away from home. The experience made her feel that she could make a difference in the lives of young women. She decided to specialize in **obstetrics** and **gynecology**.

Achong saw that poor people had terrible health problems. Although she could earn more money at private medical practices, she decided to work in hospitals in New York that treated needy patients. Achong says she likes helping people who can't afford expensive doctors. She also volunteers her time in community programs. "It's not just about making money as a physician," she says. "It's also about doing my best to support my family and also give back to the community."

As a mother of two and busy professional, Achong needs to be organized and have a lot of energy. She is dedicated to her work. She gets up every morning at 5:00 for prayer and meditation before her busy day begins. During the week, she gets her two children ready for school. She takes them to school, helps them with their homework and participates in their extracurricular activities. "I have the work that I do at the hospital and the work that I do at home," she says. "Doctors lead lives that are complicated and pressured. And as a mother raising kids, it really is a juggling act."

She also teaches at the Yale School of Medicine and the St. Vincent's Medical Center. She spends more than half her time doing things other than seeing patients. She is active in the National Medical Association and writes articles on her research for scientific journals. She volunteers in free medical clinics in other countries, such as the Dominican Republic and Ghana.

She says that with such a busy schedule, it is hard to stay fit and balanced. "It's hard to do that when you are being pulled in so many directions." She jokes that real doctors do not look cool and glamorous at all hours of the day or night like they do in TV dramas.

Achong regularly speaks to doctors, nurses and health care workers about how to help low-income people get better medical care. She believes that women's health is especially important. "More often than not, women are the ones who decide health care issues," she says. "They're the ones who take the kids to the doctor. They're the ones who take care of the sick children."

It's true for physicians who are mothers, too. "They're still the ones that tend to the sick and the home."

Accelerate: to move faster, or make something move faster.

Deep South: the states in the southeastern United States, especially Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina, Louisiana and Mississippi. East Texas and Florida are sometimes included as part of the Deep South.

Obstetrics: a branch of medicine that deals with the birth of children and the care of women before, during and after childbirth.

Gynecology: the study of the female reproductive system and related diseases.



FOR DISCUSSION

A. Look for the answers to the following questions after you read the text about Dr. Natalie Achong and discuss the answers with a partner.

1. What are Dr. Achong's various responsibilities?
2. Why did she become a physician?

B. Find the following details in the text. Then write short answers to the questions.

1. About how old do you think Dr. Achong is? Explain.
2. What were the influences on her when she was a child?
3. What was unusual about her medical education?
4. What types of patients does she serve in the hospitals where she works?
5. What interests does she have outside of her career?
6. Why does she travel overseas to places like the Dominican Republic and Ghana?
7. What is the role of women in family health care?

C. Write short answers to the questions below using your understanding of the text. Circle the part of the text that helped you understand the answer.

1. Do you think Dr. Achong's working-class background influenced her career as a physician? Why or why not?
2. How did her background, experiences and training help her care for patients?
3. What do you think of her decision to help needy patients instead of joining a private practice to earn a lot of money?
4. Why does she have a busy schedule outside of her medical responsibilities?
5. What is her opinion of television medical dramas?

D. Discuss with a partner the following questions about doctors:

1. Do you know any doctors? What are some reasons people become doctors?
2. What do people study to become doctors?
3. How many different types of doctors do you know about? Describe what each does.
4. How is being a doctor different from other jobs?
5. What does a doctor's daily schedule look like?

Above: Achong helps a mother with her new baby. Interacting with people is an important part of being a doctor.

Andrew Eccles/The CW/Landov



POP CULTURE

Gossip Girl

"**G**ossip Girl here — your one and only source into the scandalous lives of Manhattan's elite. And who am I? That's the secret I'll never tell," says the voice on the credits.

Just who is the Gossip Girl? She's a blogger whose avid readers are students at the **fictitious** Constance Billard School, an exclusive girls' academy on New York City's wealthy Upper East Side. Nobody knows the blogger's identity, but the girls all read her posts and text messages. *Gossip Girl* is a television program that follows the lives of wealthy, privileged girls in their teenage years.

The plot follows Serena, who is back at school after a mysterious, yearlong disappearance. Serena left even without telling Blair, her best friend and social rival. Blair became jealous because Serena lured her boyfriend Nate away from her. Serena and Blair **squabbled** at parties, designer fashion shows and elsewhere before eventually rebuilding their friendship. Complicated relationships and competition among the girls, their boyfriends and their parents keep the story going. The girls continually vie for social status and the affections of boys. Some of the boys have problems at home; others love to flirt with the girls and party. Often, adults in the show behave as immaturely as their children. That leads Nate at one point to ask his friend Chuck: "Do you ever feel that our whole lives have been planned out for us? That we're gonna end up just like our parents?"

"That's a dark thought," Chuck replies.

Above: These wealthy, spoiled teens in New York City create the drama on the *Gossip Girl* TV show.

Manhattan: the name of the island on which New York City is built.

Credits: on a TV show or movie, the list of actors and other crew members that appears on the screen before and after the show begins.

Fictitious: not real, an invented story.

Squabble: an argument.



David Paul Morris

REAL AMERICA

Helping Her Family, Friends, and Community

On this summer afternoon in August, Katheryn Conde's California home is **socked in** with fog. Conde is 18 years old and lives with her parents in a working-class neighborhood in San Francisco. Her family's modest green house is well-kept but has no **luxuries**. Other houses on her street need a new coat of paint.

Conde, who likes to be called Kathy, graduated in 2009 from an all-girls Catholic school. She enjoys spending time with friends and playing with her big dog, a Great Dane named Toby. She was a **cheerleader** during her second year of high school. For fun, Conde and her friends watch DVDs at each other's houses. They did not do a lot of clothes shopping in high school because their school requires uniforms. No one in her group has a car.

Conde describes her friends as **supportive** of one another. They are not mean or competitive. They often tell each other about their problems and rely on each other for advice, especially about boys. She doesn't have a boyfriend right now, but she attended her high school **prom** with a friend from another school. At prom, a lot of Conde's classmates danced. Some listened to the music. Others checked out the tuxedos and gowns because a lot of the students were really dressed up.

Students at Conde's school like to have fun and **throw parties**, but they also study and work hard. Conde says American TV

Above: Kathy Conde (second from left) is devoted to her family.

Socked in: a slang term taken from airport traffic control used when clouds and fog prevent seeing far.

Luxury: an extra comfort that is not necessary and may be expensive, as in "A home swimming pool is a *luxury*."

Cheerleader: a person who leads songs or chants to encourage a sports team. It can also mean someone who is a vocal supporter of a person or group.

Supportive: giving help or encouragement to someone.

Prom: a formal dance for high school students held at the end of the school year.

Throw a party: organize and host a party. "Let's *throw a party* to celebrate graduation!"

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