Н.А. Новик

СТРАНОВЕДЕНИЕ. США: география, история, экономика, культура

N.A. Novik

COUNTRY STUDIES. USA: geography, history, economy, culture

CD-ROM inside

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COUNTRY STUDIES. USA: geography, history, economy, culture

Допущено
Министерством образования Республики Беларусь
в качестве учебного пособия
для студентов учреждений высшего образования
по специальностям «Государственное управление»,
«Лингвистическое обеспечение межкультурных
коммуникаций (по направлениям)», «Экономика
и управление туристской индустрией»

(с электронным приложением)

Минск
«Вышэйшая школа»
2015

УДК 811.111(075.8)
ББК 81.2Англ-923
Н73

Рецензенты: кандидат филологических наук, доцент, декан факультета иностранных языков для руководящих работников и специалистов ИПК и ПК учреждений образования «Минский государственный лингвистический университет» *Л.В. Шимчук*; кафедра английского языка экономических специальностей факультета международных отношений учреждения образования «Белорусский государственный экономический университет» (кандидат филологических наук, доцент *С.А. Дубинко*)

Новик, Н.А.

Н73 Страноведение. США: география, история, экономика, культура = Country Studies. USA: geography, history, economy, culture : учеб. пособие : (с электрон. прил.) / Н.А. Новик. – Минск : Вышэйшая школа, 2015. – 245 с.

ISBN 978-985-06-2664-6.

Представляет собой учебное пособие по дисциплинам «Страноведение», «Лингвострановедение» и «Культура страны изучаемого языка». Содержит тексты о географии, истории США, культуре американцев, национальной политике, экономике, языке, вкладе иммигрантов в формирование и развитие американского государства. Тексты сопровождаются словарем, кратким содержанием, ключевыми вопросами по теме и тестами для контроля понимания пройденного материала. Электронное приложение включает иллюстрированное изложение учебного материала, его музыкальное сопровождение, тесты и справочный материал.

Предназначено для студентов вузов и лицеев, изучающих английский язык и межкультурную коммуникацию, старшеклассников, преподавателей, переводчиков, персонала туристических фирм, деловых людей, а также для широкого круга лиц, изучающих английский язык.

УДК 811.111(075.8)
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ISBN 978-985-06-2664-6 (отд. изд.)
ISBN 978-985-06-2663-9

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PREFACE

This textbook is designed to introduce the students majoring in intercultural communication and cross cultural studies to the world of U.S.A. It incorporates the study of geography, economy, history, politics, literature, art, culture, education, American stereotype, population growth and structure, and American English.

Within modern memory people all over the planet have become remarkably conscious of the U.S.A. No wonder, the U.S. dollar is still one of the most convertible currencies. Even remote villagers know about this land "from sea to shining sea," about California and the White House. "When America sneezes, the world gets a cold," they say.

So, the subject of this textbook is the U.S.A. or America. A key goal is to stimulate the students' curiosity about the U.S.A. While reading it the students will become better informed and more experienced in understanding American culture and people. Furthermore, understanding of cultural difference leads to an ability to communicate across difference, even if we don't share the same beliefs, values, and objectives, etc.

This course entails studying a complex and balanced picture of the U.S.A., identifying good and bad in the country's social, political, and cultural life. It shows that the U.S. is more diverse than Hollywood westerns, Fourth-of-July bravado, and MTV would lead foreigners to believe.

The book brings together ideas, concepts and facts from a wide variety of sources. Structurally, it is divided into twelve units; each unit offers the following *four tools*:

First, a statement of the major themes to be found in it;

Second, a list of key words and proper names;

Third, a structured text complemented by additional information under the heading *Interesting to know*;

Fourth, a summary of key points with a series of discussion questions.

A set of tests to better comprehend the material contained in each unit is placed at the end of the textbook followed by the keys to each test and a list of references or sources.

Moreover, the textbook is supplied with a disc containing the basic information mentioned in the book.

Hopefully, with the knowledge improved and expanded by this course, University graduates will have the expertise necessary to gain employment in the field of their major.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Mr. Mark K. Crawley for the valuable advice he has given me in the writing of this book.

I am also grateful to Mr. Richard Grafstein for his helpful recommendations about American cultural traits.

Unit

1

GEOGRAPHICAL AND CULTURAL REGIONS OF THE U.S.A.

This unit will describe the land, physical features, and climate of the United States of America, and cover the following items:

- the U. S. political geography and political divisions;
- origin of states' names;
- the capital and largest cities of the U.S.;
- U.S. politics;
- U.S. physical geography: major lakes and river systems, mountains, and deserts;
- climate and environment;
- American regional diversity and Americanization;
- cultural regions in detail: the Northeast, the South, the West, the Midwest, the Southwest.

Key Words and Proper Names: adjacent, arid (semi-arid), as of 2013 U.S. Census Bureau estimates, contiguous, converge, county,

cultural identity, drainage, drawl, extant political entities, extraction, fossil fuel, freight, gorge, homogenizing influence, intermixing of cultures, level off regional differences, metro area, offshore rig, parish, precipitation, pronounced peculiarities, resentment, reverence for the past, startling, statehood, thrift, tolerance, township, tribe, tributary, urban sprawl;

the Appalachian Mountains, the Adirondacks, the Cordilleran system, the Great Plains, the Interior Highlands, the Interior Plains, the Ozark Plateau, the Intermontane Plateaus, the Laurentian Highlands, the Rocky Mountains; the Great Lakes (the Superior, Huron, Michigan, Ontario, and Erie), the St. Lawrence River, the Mississippi-Missouri rivers; the Chihuahuan Desert, the Colorado Desert, the Great Basin, the Mojave Desert, the Sonoran Desert, Sunbelt and Frostbelt;

Flannery O'Connor, William Faulkner, Katherine Anne Porter, Amerigo Vespucci, Martin Waldseemüller, Robert Penn Warren, Tennessee Williams, Thomas Wolfe.

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA is a constitutional federal republic, which comprises 50 states and one federal district, and has several territories in the Caribbean and Pacific.

To call the country America is not absolutely correct. It is called the *United States, the U.S., the U.S.A., the U. S. of A., America, the States,* or (poetically*) Columbia* depending on a degree of formality.

In 1507, German cartographer Martin Waldseemüller made a world map on which he named the lands of the Western Hemisphere as "America" after Amerigo Vespucci, Italian explorer and cartographer.

The country's modern name was first used in the Declaration of Independence, as the *"unanimous Declaration of the 13 united States of America"* adopted by the *"Representatives of the United States of America"* on July 4, 1776. The current name was finalized on November 15, 1777, when the Second Continental Congress adopted the Articles of Confederation, which state, *"The Stile (name) of this Confederacy shall be 'The United States of America'"* [25].

The United States of America is the third largest country in the world after Russia and Canada with an area of 9,826,675 sq km [33].

The estimated U.S. population as of August 29, 2015 was 321,628,000 people including an approximate 11.2 million illegal immigrants. So, in size of population it is also the third in the world behind China and India.

The US political geography: The U.S. has the longest undefended ground border in the world with Canada and also shares a long ground border with Mexico.

The country is divided into three distinct sections: a) the continental United States also known as the lower 48; b) Alaska, which is physically connected only to Canada, c) and the archipelago of Hawaii in the central Pacific Ocean. 49 states (all except Hawaii) lie on the North American continent; and 48 of them (all except Alaska) are contiguous and form the continental United States.

The state's names are: *Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming.*

As said above, the U.S. also holds several other territories, districts and possessions, first of all, the federal district called the District of Columbia, which is the nation's capital, and several overseas areas. The most significant of them are Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, and the United States Virgin Islands. The U.S. Navy has held one military base called Guantanamo at an occupied portion of Guantanamo Bay on Cuba since 1898.

The 50 U.S. states vary widely in size and population. The largest states in area are Alaska with an area of 1.7 million sq km, followed by Texas, and California. The smallest state is Rhode Island, with an area of 4,002 sq km. The state with the largest population is California (35.8 million people), followed by Texas, and New York. A little more than 500,000 people live in Wyoming, which is also the least populous state. New Jersey, on the other hand, is the most densely populated state.

Interesting to know: State names speak to the circumstances of their creation. We may find:

British names. Southern states on the Atlantic coast originated as British colonies named after British monarchs: Georgia, the Carolinas, Virginia, and Maryland. Some northeastern states, also former British colonies, take their names from places in the British Isles: New Hampshire, New Jersey, and New York.

Native American names. Many states' names are those of Native American tribes or are from Native American languages: Nebraska, Kansas, Massachusetts, Hawaii, Connecticut, Missouri, Idaho, Iowa, Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota, the Dakotas, Mississippi, Texas, Utah, and others.

Spanish names. Many states in the southeast and southwest have Spanish names, because they are on territories previously controlled by Spain

or Mexico. They include Colorado, New Mexico, Florida, California and Nevada.

French names. Because it was previously a French colony, Louisiana is named after Louis XIV (King of France at the time).

Thus, some of the names that appeared on the map starting with the 16th century were those of English and French kings and queens, or some famous people, living and dead. Some names were taken from history and literature. There were names taken from geology, others were connected with important events in the life of the people. The new places got the names of places the people had come from. Along the east coast of the United States, such English names as Plymouth, Cambridge, London, and Boston can be found. English names often appear with the word "new" as a prefix: New England, New Britain, New York.

The first people to arrive in America from Holland built a town that they named New Amsterdam, in honor of the capital of their country in Europe. But forty years later, when Holland was at war with England, an English fleet under the command of the Duke of York appeared before New Amsterdam. The town had no army; the English occupied the town and renamed it New York. And this is the name that has remained to this day. Its correct name is New York City, whereas just New York is the name of the whole state. Washington, D.C. also has its namesake state – Washington, named after the first President which is situated in the northwest of the country, on its Pacific coast.

The state of New York has Borodino. One of the hottest places in the Californian desert was called Siberia, which, no doubt, produces a humoristic effect on those who know the geography of Russia. There are twenty-two towns in the United States that are called London, or New London, eighteen towns named Bristol, many named Chester, Windsor or New Windsor. There are towns named Philadelphia in four states, besides the Philadelphia that is the largest city in the state of Pennsylvania. Moscow can be found in eleven American states. In the mid-19th century there emerged five or six Sevastopols on the map of the USA. Odessa is met nine times, and only two of these are situated on the seashore, the rest of them are inland towns. All this explains the American tradition of writing the name of the state as well as the name of the city.

Washington, D.C., or the District of Columbia (also known as *the Nation's Capital; the District;* and, historically, *the Federal City*) is the capital city and administrative district of the U.S.A.

Washington, D.C. is a part of the Baltimore-Washington Metropolitan Area, which includes parts of Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia. It

should not be confused with the U.S. state of Washington, located in the Pacific Northwest.

The District of Columbia is a federal district. As specified by the U.S. Constitution, the District is ruled by the U.S. Congress, though it is unrepresented in that body. The population of the District of Columbia is more than 5 million people.

The centers of all three branches of the U.S. federal government are situated in Washington, D.C., as well as the headquarters of most federal agencies. Washington also serves as the headquarters for the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Organization of American States, and other international (and national) institutions. Washington is also the site of numerous national landmarks, museums, and is a popular destination for tourists.

Largest cities: The U.S. has dozens of major cities, including several important global cities such as New York City, Los Angeles, and Chicago. The figures expressed below are for populations within 10 city limits (as of 2014 U.S. Census Bureau estimates) [34].

Rank	City	Population	Region
1.	New York City	19, 949,502	Northeast
2.	Los Angeles	13,131,431	West
3.	Chicago	9,537,289	Midwest
4.	Dallas	6,810,913	South
5.	Houston	6,313,158	South
6.	Philadelphia	6,034,678	Northeast
7.	Washington, D.C.	5,949,859	Northeast
8.	Miami	5,828,191	South
9.	Atlanta	5,522,942	South
10.	Boston	4,684,299	Northeast

Extensive areas of urban sprawl exist in larger metropolitan areas such as Los Angeles, California; Chicago, Illinois; and New York City.

U.S. politics: The states are generally divided into smaller administrative regions, including counties, cities and townships, with the exception of Louisiana, where counties are called parishes. They incorporate cities, villages, towns. Altogether, there are about 85,000 extant political entities in the U.S. including counties, municipalities, townships, school districts, and special districts.

U.S. politics is represented by 50 state governments plus the government of the District of Columbia, and further down the ladder are still smaller units that govern counties, cities, towns, boroughs and villages.

Like the national government, state governments have three branches: executive, legislative, and judicial; these are roughly equivalent in function and scope to their national counterparts. The chief executive of a state is the

governor, elected by popular vote typically for a four-year term (although in a few states the term is two years). Some state judges and cabinet officers are appointed by the governors of the respective states, while others are elected by popular vote.

All states have a bicameral legislature, the upper house is usually called the Senate and the lower house is called the House of Representatives, or the House of Delegates, or the General Assembly, except for Nebraska, which has a unicameral legislature.

There are three general types of city government*: the mayor-council, the commission,* and *the council-manager.* These are the pure forms; many cities have developed a combination of two or three of them. Almost all city governments have some kind of *central council,* elected by the voters, an *executive officer* or *mayor*, assisted by various department heads, to manage the city's affairs, a *judge* as well as *a sheriff* to provide law enforcement services.

51st state: The phrase *51st state* refers to the territories considered candidates for addition to the 50 states of the country. The District of Columbia is widely recognized to be one of the most likely candidates for statehood. Currently Puerto Rico claims its statehood.

At the same time the phrase *51st state* is often used in a humorous or even negative context referring to associates, which act based on American influences, such as Israel, Canada or the United Kingdom. This term also signifies excessive negative American influence. In Europe, for example, people who believe their local or national culture has become too Americanized sometimes use the term "51st state" in critical reference to their respective countries and governments.

Physical geography: The geography of the U.S. varies across its immense area from temperate forestland to deserts and rain forests, Alaska's tundra and the volcanic, tropical islands of Hawaii.

Within the continental U.S., there are 8 distinct physiographic divisions. They are:

- *Laurentian Highlands* – is a part of the Canadian Shield that extends into the northern U.S. Great Lakes area.
- *Atlantic Plains* – are coastal regions of the eastern and southern parts including the continental shelf, the Atlantic Coast and the Gulf Coast.
- *Appalachian Highlands* – lying on the eastern side of the U.S., include the Appalachian Mountains, Adirondacks and New England province.
- *Interior Plains* – as a part of the interior continental U.S. include much of what is called the Great Plains.
- *Interior Highlands* – as a part of the interior continental U.S. include the Ozark Plateau.
- *Rocky Mountain System* – is one branch of the Cordilleran system lying far inland in the western states.

• *Intermontane Plateaus* – is a system of plateaus, basins, ranges and gorges between the Rocky and Pacific Mountain Systems. It is the setting for the Grand Canyon, the Great Basin and Death Valley.

• *Pacific Mountain System* – is a system of coastal mountain ranges and features in the west coast of the U.S.

Interesting to know: Lowest point of the U.S.A. is Death Valley, Inyo County, California, 282 feet below sea level (-86m); highest point: Mount McKinley, Denali Borough, Alaska, 20,320 feet above sea level (+6,194m).

Major lakes and river systems: All the waters east of the Rockies finally reach the Atlantic; all the waters to the west of the Rockies finally arrive at the Pacific. For this reason the Rocky Mountains are known as *the Continental Divide*.

Two enormous drainage systems dominate the U.S. landscape: *the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River* and *the Mississippi-Missouri rivers* drainage areas. More than 75% of the freight transported along U.S. inland waterways moves on these waterways.

A list of *the major 10 rivers of the USA* and their length in km [33]:

Name	Length (in km)
1. Mississippi-Missouri – Red Rock	5,970,371
2. Mississippi	3,770,234
3. Missouri	3,725,232
4. Yukon	3,190,198
5. Rio Grande	3,050,190
6. Arkansas	2,350,146
7. Colorado	2,330,145
8. Columbia	2,000,124
9. Snake	1,670,104
10. Ohio	1,579,981

The Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River system serves the northern reaches of the country, from the Midwest to the eastern seaboard. *The St. Lawrence Seaway*, an extensive network of waterways and locks, allows ship traffic to pass between *the Great Lakes (Superior, Huron, Michigan, Ontario, and Erie)*, and the Atlantic Ocean.

The *Mississippi-Missouri River drainage system* covers much of the central U.S. This huge system also includes the Ohio River, and the Tennessee River. The *Mississippi* is one of the world's greatest continental rivers. The waters of the Mississippi are gathered from 2/3ds of the U.S. Together with the

Missouri River (its chief western branch), the Mississippi flows from its northern sources in the Rocky Mountains to the Gulf of Mexico and is one of the longest water sourses known. The Mississippi has been called "*the father of waters*".

The two great rivers of the Pacific side are *the Colorado* and *the Columbia***.** In the dry western country, both rivers are important and necessary sources of life.

The Rio Grande is the foremost river of the Southwest. It forms a natural boundary between Mexico and the U.S. The two governments have built irrigation and flood control projects of mutual benefits. *The Yukon* is the largest river in Alaska, and together with its tributaries makes the rugged interior regions of Alaska accessible.

The Central Valley of California depends on irrigation networks linked to *the Sacramento* and *San Joaquin* rivers.

U.S. deserts: North America's arid lands can be divided into four distinct deserts: the Great Basin, the Sonoran Desert, the Mojave Desert, and the Chihuahuan Desert.

The *Great Basin* is an arid area in the western U.S. It includes most of Nevada and portions of Utah, Oregon, Idaho, and California and forms a triangle, widest at the north, with an area of 544,000 sq km. The basin is an area of interior drainage, that is, its waterways drain into desert flats, not into the sea.

The Mojave Desert is an arid region in southern California, part of the Great Basin. It has an area of 52,000 sq km. *The Colorado Desert* is adjacent.

The Sonoran Desert is an arid region lying primarily in southwestern Arizona, southeastern California, and northwestern Mexico. It covers about 310,799 sq km. The Sonoran Desert accounts for only 20% of Arizona's land area, but more than 80% of the state's population lives there, mainly in the rapidly growing areas of Phoenix and Tucson. The desert supports numerous Native American reservations and U.S. military bases and air force. Large portions of the desert are preserved as parkland.

The *Chihuahuan Desert* occupies deserted southern areas of Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas and vast territories of Mexico. It is famous for its cactus vegetation. One of the characteristic plants which define the Chihuahuan Desert is the agave lechuguilla. According to the World Wide Fund for Nature the Chihuahuan Desert may be the most biologically diverse desert in the world as measured by species richness or endemism.

Climate: The climate varies along with the landscape, from *tropical* in Hawaii and southern Florida to *tundra* in Alaska and atop some of the highest mountains.

Most of the North and East experience a *temperate continental climate*, with warm summers and cold winters. Most of the American South

experiences a *subtropical humid climate* with mild winters and long, hot, humid summers. Rainfall decreases markedly from the *humid forests* of the Eastern Great Plains to the *semiarid short grass prairies* on the High Plains near the Rocky Mountains. *Arid deserts* extend through the lowlands and valleys of the American Southwest from Texas to California and throughout much of Nevada. Some parts of the American West, including San Francisco, California, have a *Mediterranean climate. Rain forests* line the windward mountains of the Pacific Northwest from Oregon to Alaska.

Traditionally the 48 contiguous states are divided into 2 broad patterns of continental climate: *the humid East* and *the arid West*. The dividing line is 100 degrees west longitude, extending through the Great Plains from Texas to North Dakota.

Extreme weather is not uncommon – the states bordering the Gulf of Mexico are prone to hurricanes, and most of the world's tornadoes occur mainly in the Midwest's Tornado Alley.

Different climatic zones create a terrific diversity of the vegetation.

The U.S. has within its borders substantial **mineral deposits**. America *leads the world* in the production of phosphate, an important ingredient in fertilizers, and *ranks second* in gold, silver, copper, lead, natural gas, and coal. Petroleum production is *third in the world*, after Russia and Saudi Arabia. The U.S. huge fields of natural gas and oil are concentrated in the mid-continent fields of Texas and Oklahoma, the Gulf Coast region of Texas and Louisiana, and the North Slope of Alaska. President Barack H. Obama promised that by 2015 the U.S. would have taken the world leadership in the export of oil. Important minerals mined in the U.S. include *gold, copper, iron ore, zinc, magnesium, lead, silver, coal, molybdenum, uranium, bauxite, mercury, nickel, potash, tungsten, natural gas, timber.*

Environment issues: As the U.S. economy developed, the natural environment changed. Nowadays sewage and industrial waste pollute rivers and coastal waters, particularly in the heavily industrialized Midwest and Northeast. Acid rain is quite common there. The environmental contamination from American gigantic industrial enterprises contributes to the *deterioration of the ozone gas layer* in the earth's atmosphere and *global warming*.

Oil spills from offshore oil drilling rigs pollute beaches and wetlands along the Gulf Coast. The *BP Deepwater Horizon* oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico that began in April 2010 became the largest peacetime oil disaster in history. There have also been problems in the nuclear energy industry. An accident at the *Three Mile Island* nuclear facility in Pennsylvania in 1979 released small amounts of radioactive gas into the atmosphere.

Big country with many differences: The U.S. is a spacious country of varying terrains and climates. Roughly it can be divided into 4 main **cultural regions** – *the Northeast, the South, the Midwest, the West,* and *Southwest* often treated together.

Interesting to know: **The Northeast** consists of **New England**: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont; and **Mid-Atlantic states**: Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Washington D.C. **The South** consists of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia. **The Midwest** consists of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin. **The Southwest** consists of Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. **The West** consists of Alaska, Colorado, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

Each of these regions maintains a certain degree of cultural identity. People within a region generally share common values, economic concerns, and a certain relationship to the land, and they are usually identified with the history and traditions of their region.

But today, *we are witnessing the gradual convergence of these regional identities* as a result of globalization. The mobility of people and the spread of pop culture through television and other mass media have greatly advanced this convergence.

However, some regional differences are noticeable, *e.g.,* **the food Americans eat**. Most of it is standard wherever you go. A person can buy packages of frozen peas bearing the same label in Idaho, Missouri, and Virginia. Cereals, candy bars, and many other items also come in identical packages from Alaska to Florida. Generally, the quality of fresh fruits and vegetables does not vary much from state to state. On the other hand, it would be unusual to be served *hush puppies* (a kind of fried dough) or *grits* (boiled and ground corn prepared in a variety of ways) in Massachusetts or Illinois, but normal to get them in Georgia.

American speech also often differs according to which part of the country you are in. Southerners tend to speak slowly, in what is referred to as a "Southern drawl." Midwesterners use "flat" [æ] (as in *bad* or *cat*), and New York City features a number of Yiddish words *(schlep, nosh, nebbish)* contributed by the city's large Jewish population.

Among differences there are also regional **attitudes and outlooks,** *e.g.,* the attention paid to foreign events in newspapers. In the East, where people look out across the Atlantic Ocean, papers tend to show greatest concern with what is happening in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Western

Учебное издание

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Страноведение. США: география, история, экономика, культура

Учебное пособие
(с электронным приложением)

Редактор *Л.Д. Касьянова*
Художественный редактор *Е.Э. Агунович*
Технический редактор *Н.А. Лебедевич*
Корректор *Л.Д. Касьянова*
Компьютерная верстка *Н.В. Шабуни, Л.В. Ковальчук*

Подписано в печать 11.11.2015. Формат 60×84/16. Бумага офсетная. Гарнитура «Таймс». Офсетная печать. Усл. печ. л. 14,42. Уч.-изд. л. 16,5. Тираж 600 экз. Заказ 461.

Республиканское унитарное предприятие «Издательство "Вышэйшая школа"».
Свидетельство о государственной регистрации издателя, изготовителя, распространителя печатных изданий № 1/3 от 08.07.2013.
Пр. Победителей, 11, 220048, Минск. e-mail: market@vshph.com http://vshph.com

Открытое акционерное общество «Полиграфкомбинат им. Я. Коласа».
Свидетельство о государственной регистрации издателя, изготовителя, распространителя печатных изданий № 2/3 от 04.10.2013.
Ул. Корженевского, 20, 220024, Минск.