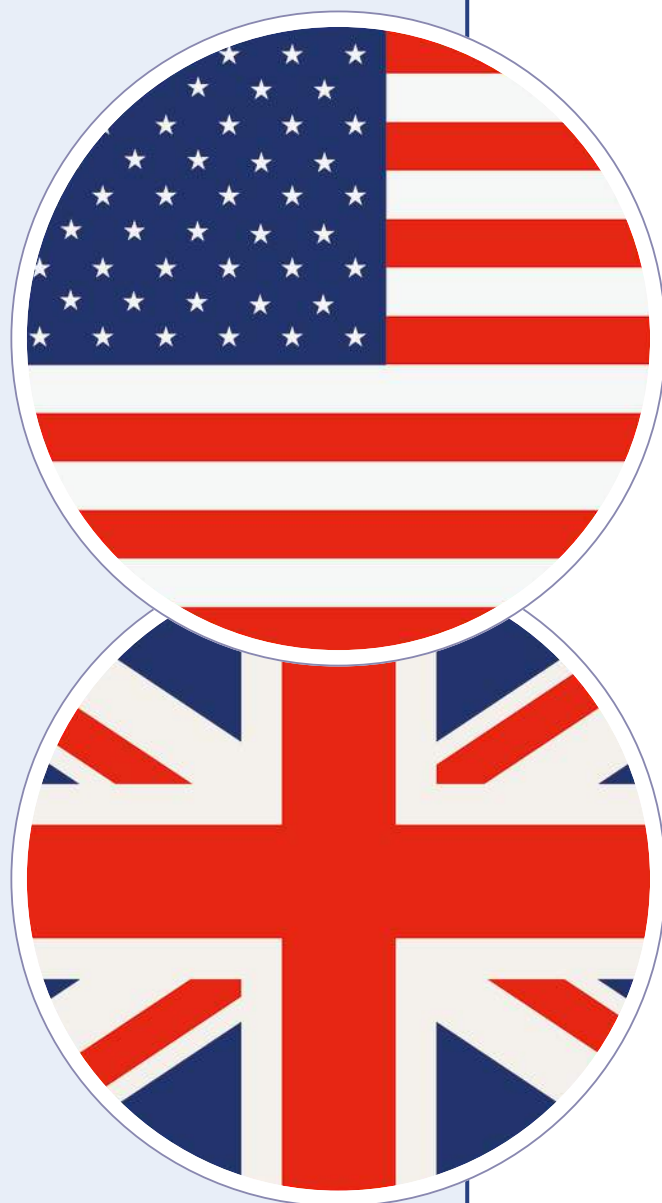


Englisch betrifft uns

# EBU on the Web 2020/5

Topical texts in  
English lessons

- *Comprehension*
- *Analysis*
- *Creative writing*
- *Background information*



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### The Topic

#### ***The Coronavirus Crisis in the USA***

Donald Trump's disastrous crisis management has made the United States the new epicenter of the global coronavirus pandemic. In addition to that the country is facing an unprecedented economic crash. The president was warned about the growing crisis in mid-January, but he played down the seriousness of the virus and gave false assurances to the American public. For weeks he tried to calm the Americans by continuing the same advice, e.g. "We have it under control.", "USA in great shape.", and called the warnings "Fake news". Instead of leaning on the World Health Organization for support, the president stopped the U.N. agency's funding, accusing it of close cooperation with China. What is more, Trump stepped up his attacks on Beijing over the coronavirus crisis, saying he had seen evidence linking a Wuhan lab to the contagion.

### Ties to obligatory topics

Issues related to American society; analyzing newspaper articles, analyzing the language and style of newspaper articles

### Background information – further links

<https://www.theguardian.com/global/video/2020/apr/30/trump-says-coronavirus-will-be-eradicated-as-us-death-toll-passes-60000-video>

Links to various articles and video clips related to the corona crisis in the USA and Donald Trump's statements

<https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/coronavirus-polls/>  
"How Americans View the Coronavirus Crisis and Trump's Response": the results of opinion polls about how concerned Americans are about the corona crisis and what they think about the government's response to the outbreak

### The Text

“Trump offers rosy predictions for coronavirus testing as US passes 1m cases”  
(Julian Borger, *The Guardian* 29 April 2020)

### The Link (URL)

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/apr/28/donald-trump-coronavirus-us-economy-testing>

### Annotations

**appropriate** – correct or suitable for a particular time, situation, or purpose

**briefing** – *here*: a meeting at which people are given detailed information

**bullish** – feeling confident about the future

**complacency** – a feeling of satisfaction with a situation or with what you have achieved, so that you stop trying to improve or change things

**death toll** – the total number of people who die in an accident, war etc.

**to evaporate** – *here*: to slowly disappear

**fall** – (B.E.) autumn

**fatality** – a death in an accident or a violent attack, e.g.

**fortune** – *here*: chance or luck

**grim** – making you feel worried or unhappy

**hostage** – someone who is kept as a prisoner by an enemy so that the other side will do what the enemy demands

**to imply** – to suggest that something is true, without saying this directly

**intelligence agency** – a state organization that gathers or deals with information

**to modify** – *here*: to change slightly to become more effective

**rebound** – to rebound: if prices, values etc. rebound, they increase again after decreasing

**scale** – the size or level of something, or the amount that something is happening

**spurt** – a short sudden increase of activity, effort, speed, or emotion

**to surpass** – to be even better or greater than someone or something else

**tremendous** – very big, fast, powerful etc.

**ultimately** – finally

**unanimous** – agreeing completely about something

**Wall Street Journal** – a respected US daily newspaper, which is also sold in many other countries and which deals mainly with business and economics

**Washington Post** – a serious US newspaper produced in Washington, D.C., and sold all over the country

**wholesale** – *here*: affecting almost everyone

## Assignments

### Pre-reading assignments

1. What do you know about the spreading of COVID-19 in the US?
2. What do you know about President Trump's reaction to this pandemic?

### Analyzing the newspaper article

3. What is the main idea within this newspaper article?
4. How does the journalist make this idea clear to the reader?

5. President Trump is directly quoted here. Analyze the language and style he uses to present his thoughts.

### Post-reading assignments

6. Imagine President Trump has just read this article, is infuriated by its criticism of him and his actions and so he writes a note to his press secretary. Write down what this note might say.
7. President Trump could also express his anger in a tweet. Write down what he might say.

## Suggested Solutions

1. Individual answers
2. Individual answers
3. The main idea which pervades this article is that US President Donald Trump, in connection with the coronavirus pandemic, repeatedly makes claims which cannot be fulfilled. In addition to that he consistently puts the blame for any mistakes or failings onto other people or institutions, aiming to exonerate himself while doing so.
4. The most striking way of making this clear to the reader is Julian Borger's juxtaposition of Trump statements with concrete facts and expert opinions, e.g. in paragraph 1 Trump is quoted as predicting a "great" economic rebound in the fall with more than "5 million diagnostic tests per day". Experts, however, claim that more tests than that will be necessary and that to be effective this figure must be reached at a much earlier date. The president seems to be unaware that current testing in the US only runs at 200,000 per day. Reminded of his statement in February that the pandemic would be overcome "within a couple of days", the president vaguely claims that this will ultimately be true, ignoring the fact that he has missed his target by a considerable way. The journalist points out that on 28 April there were more than 1m coronavirus cases in the US and thousands of deaths. The fact that wholesale testing in the US only began much later than in other countries is blamed by Trump on a "broken test" inherited from the former administrations. This test was in fact produced under the auspices of the Trump administration. His claim that experts underestimated the global threat of coronavirus ("experts got it wrong") is countered by

the statement that the alarm over the global threat of the virus was already raised in the first two months of 2020 and that the president was repeatedly warned of its dangers by his own intelligence agencies, warnings which he obviously ignored or played down.

5. Donald Trump's language can be characterized as relatively simple and repetitive. He largely employs a paratactical sentence structure, which is extremely easy to understand. This entails, however, a lack of causality, emphasis and differentiation as well as information and background about the topic at hand. Repetitions, lack of variety: "I think..", "we'll be able to... We'll be able to..", "...it's going to go away... This is going to go", "Many very good experts... very good people", "...it wouldn't affect... it wouldn't affect". The president's vocabulary is characterized by a high proportion of relatively simple words and phrases from everyday life. There are no words or phrases from the scientific or economic field, he even employs the word "broken" for a diagnostic test, which is a rather unusual choice to say the least. The journalist follows this up with the word "faulty" in connection with the tests. Self-praise and positive vocabulary with reference to the US also mark his statements, e.g. "great", "successful", "tremendous", "spurt".
6. When dealing with tasks 6 and 7 students should be very aware of the language they use. They can in fact refer to and implement their observations in solution 5 and also remember that President Trump can be very insulting towards people he feels badly treated by.