UNIT 4, Lesson 8, ex. 4

Sports in the United States is an important part of the United States’ culture. However, the sporting culture of the US is different from that of many other countries. Compared to any other nation, Americans prefer an unusual set of sports. For example, soccer, the most popular sport in the world, is not as popular in the US compared to the four most popular team sports – namely baseball, American football, basketball, and ice hockey.

Also, unlike many other countries, schools and universities sport competitions play an important role in the American sporting culture. Competitions between national teams is far less important than in the sporting culture of the rest of the world.

Baseball is the oldest of the main American team sports.

Auto racing, NASCAR, has grown from a Southern sport to nationwide and is followed by fans of all age all over the country.

Soccer, known in most of the rest of the world as ‘football’, is another popular team sport played in the United States. Almost as many girls as boys play soccer in the US, making the women’s team one of the world’s best.

Sports in Ireland are extremely popular, both in terms of playing them and watching them. Gaelic Football is Ireland’s most popular sport. It may look like football, but using the hands to carry the ball makes it a bit different. It's preferred by 34% of sports fans, followed by hurling at 23%, soccer at 16% and rugby at 8%. The All Ireland Football Final is the most watched event in Ireland’s sporting calendar.

Hurling is native to Ireland, and is very popular. It is another outdoor team sport like field hockey, although the ball is usually played in the air. The game, played mostly in Ireland, is thought to be the world’s fastest team sport in terms of game play.

Swimming, golf, aerobics, soccer, cycling, Gaelic football and billiards are the sporting activities with the highest number of sportsmen involved. Soccer is the most played team sport in Ireland and the most popular sport involving national teams.

Many other sports are also played and followed, particularly horse racing but also greyhound racing, boxing, baseball, basketball, cricket, fishing, handball, motorsport, tennis and hockey. Hockey is similar to ice hockey only it is played outdoors on the grass.

Sport is very popular in New Zealand and despite New Zealand being a very small nation, it has enjoyed great results in many sports such as rugby union (the national sport) and also rugby, cricket, netball, motorsport and many other sports.

New Zealand’s most popular sport is rugby union, the national sport. Other popular sports include cricket, which is said to be the national summer sport, rugby league, soccer and netball (the top ranking female sport by participation); golf, tennis, and a variety of water sports, snow sports such as skiing and snowboarding are also popular.

Netball is the most popular women’s sport in New Zealand. It is a ball sport played between two teams of 7 players. The sport is often called women’s basketball. It developed in 1890s in England, from where it spread to other countries. The national team, the Silver Ferns, is second in the world today. As in other netballing countries, netball is mainly women’s sport; men’s and mixed teams also exist.
The sporting culture of **Canada** consists of a large number of games. The most common are ice hockey, Canadian football, basketball, soccer, and baseball.

Ice hockey is Canada's most popular winter sport, and it's most popular with fans sport with the best results in international competition.

Lacrosse, a sport with Aboriginal origins, is Canada's oldest and official sport.

Canadian football is Canada's 2nd most popular sport, and the Canadian Football League's championship, the Grey Cup, is the country's largest sports event. Football, known in Canada as soccer in both English and French, has the most players of any sport in Canada, but not really very popular as a professional sport.

Other popular team sports include street hockey, cricket, rugby and softball. Cricket is the fastest growing sport in Canada at the moment. Popular individual sports include auto racing, boxing, cycling, golf, hiking, horse racing, ice skating, rodeo, skateboarding, skiing, snowboarding, swimming, and tennis. As a country with a generally cool climate, Canada has enjoyed greater results at the Winter Olympics than at the summer Olympics. 2010 Winter Olympics took place in Vancouver, Canada. It was the third Olympics hosted by Canada, as Montreal was home to the 1976 Summer Olympics and the 1988 Winter Olympics took place in Calgary.

**Sport in Australia** is very popular. The climate and economy make it enjoyable for Australians to take part in different outdoor activities and watch sports. Surfing is probably the most popular water sport, one can enjoy all year round. Swimming is very popular both in swimming pools and of course at a large number of Australia's beautiful beaches. Other sports to enjoy include walking, jogging, cycling and much more. In winter time Australia offers great excitement on the snow, with skiing and snowboarding being popular winter sports.

Australian sportsmen show fantastic results in all kinds of international competitions, especially in water sports and team sports.

Statistics say, the most popular sports in 2006-2009 were Australian football, horse racing, rugby, motorsport, cricket, and soccer. The most popular forms of physical activity among Australians aged 15 and over, in 2006-2009 were walking, aerobics/fitness, swimming, golf, tennis, soccer and Australian football. The long history of cricket in Australia makes this kind of sport a national sport. This is again a popular sport in Australia and the Australian Cricket Team is ranked the Best Cricket Team in the world. Golf is also very popular among the Australians and there are many golf clubs in the city that pays the golf players. Armchair sports fans make Australian football the most watched sport on Australian television.
GOMEL

**Founded:** the date is unknown  
**First mentioned:** in chronicles in 1142, one of the oldest cities in the country  
**Situated:** in the south-east of Belarus, on the right bank of the Sozh River, close to Ukraine  
**Population:** over 500,000 (the second largest city in Belarus)  
**Places of interest:** Rumiantsev-Paskevich’s Palace and Park Complex (18th – 19th centuries) with a swan lake, beautiful bridges over the Sozh River, a museum and a planetarium; a bridge over the Sozh River (1857); the Museum of History in the town of Vetka is known for its unique collection of old icons; at the beginning of the 19th century many of the original wooden buildings were replaced by brick ones  
**History:** suffered a lot during the World War II and after the 1986 Chernobyl disaster  
**Famous for:** world-famous tennis player Maria Sharapova’s parents used to live in Gomel as well as the grandparents of Michael Douglas – a Hollywood star

GRODNO

**Founded:** in the 11th century, began as a village founded by a Russian prince  
**First mentioned:** in chronicles in 1127  
**Situated:** in the west of Belarus on the banks of the Neman River, close to both Poland and Lithuania  
**Population:** over 300,000  
**Places of interest:** many of the old buildings have survived; the Orthodox Church of St. Boris and Gleb (the famous Kalozha Church on the picturesque banks of the Neman) has survived from the ancient times (1183); the remains of the Old Castle (built by Vytautas, the Grand Duke of Lithuania, and rebuilt by an Italian architect) date back to the 13th century; the New Castle (18th century); catholic churches (17–18th centuries); the Old Town  
**History:** has always been an important cultural and economic centre, was part of Poland, Lithuania and Russia  
**Famous for:** is known for its Medical University; Maxim Bogdanovich was born and lived in Grodno (his house has survived, there is a museum there)