

GUN CONTROL IN THE US

Après le massacre survenu à l'école élémentaire Sandy Hook dans le Connecticut, le président Obama s'est proposé de renforcer le contrôle des antécédents de tous les acheteurs d'armes à feu. Pourtant, la puissante « National Rifle Association » (NRA) s'oppose à toute restriction en ce domaine, en mettant en avant le second amendement de la constitution. L'Amérique reste ainsi divisée sur un sujet qui empoisonne la vie publique depuis près de 50 ans.

ÉTAPE 1 LECTURE D'UN DOSSIER DE PRESSE

Vous allez trouver ci-dessous trois articles adaptés et réécrits au niveau B2/B2+, lesquels traitent la plupart des points débattus à ce sujet dans les médias américains :

Document 1 ■ An age-old debate about gun control

The debate over gun control has always started off after revolting murders and laws passed in response. In 1994, quite a few years after the assassinations of the Kennedys and Martin Luther King, President Clinton proposed bills to crack down on assault weapons and create a national system of background checks as regards gun purchases. But some months later, the age-old debate was to be bogged down again.

Those who support gun control point to the powerful National Rifle Association, whose 4.3 million members keep on lobbying in Washington. The NRA relies on the Bill of Rights, the American Constitution, which guarantees the individual right to own a gun in fewer than 27 words: "A well-regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed".

Despite a series of horrific mass shootings, notably in schools, including the killing of 32 people at Virginia Tech in 2007 and also the shooting of Representative Gabrielle Giffords of Arizona and 18 others in 2011, the bills that were introduced came almost to nothing. However, in December 2012, after a young gunman carrying semi-automatic weapons killed 27 people, including 20 kids, at the Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Connecticut, the age-old debate became topical again.

Supporters of stricter gun laws had some hope that the tragedy might be a vehicle for change. President Obama called on Congress to toughen America's gun laws because what had happened in Sandy Hook was just outrageous. Unfortunately, many Republican members of Congress put forward another proposal which did not go that far. The lack of consensus is obvious and many Democrats have become increasingly frustrated by this political impasse. However, some state gun laws are ludicrous because they make permit

regulations much tougher for handguns than for long guns. Other issues in public view are likely to include limits on high capacity magazines and expand the current assault weapons ban to cover the semi-automatic weapon used in the Sandy Hook shooting.

Federal law now requires anyone who is “engaged in the business” of gun sales to obtain a licence as a dealer and submit any purchases for law enforcement background checks. But anyone else who sells guns and can claim the sales as not their primary business can avoid the system entirely. That has opened up a huge hole through which, government officials say, 40 percent or more of gun sales now take place. Not surprisingly, loopholes have been easily found. That’s serious thinking for democracy and the President would like to enact a federal law against gun trafficking.

Adapté du NYT March 9, 2013 – Scott Olson.

Document 2 ■ President Obama *versus* NRA

The gun control measures President Obama announced in last month would make the biggest changes in federal firearms laws since 1968. The administration’s proposal would require that all gun sales or transfers go through background checks, with only limited exceptions such as a parent giving a gun to a child.

At a White House press conference a month after the Sandy Hook school massacre, Obama said the US had waited too long to tackle gun violence and it was time to act. Obama said his reforms are intended to reduce not just these killing sprees but the everyday gun violence suffered across the US. In the month since Newtown, 900 Americans had been killed by guns. “In the days ahead, I intend to use whatever weight this office holds to make them a reality”, he said.

The National Rifle Association immediately vowed all-out opposition to his proposals, warning it was preparing for “the fight of the century”. Wayne LaPierre, the NRA executive vice-president, said: “I warned you this day was coming and now it’s here. It’s not about protecting your children. It’s not about stopping crime. It’s about banning your guns”.

Obama, having abandoned any faint hopes of winning round the NRA after Newtown, has opted to confront the NRA head-on, calculating that the emotion over the deaths of 20 children and six teachers has changed the national mood in favour of tougher controls. On stage with him at his press conference were four children who wrote to him after the shooting expressing concern. There were also in the audience the parents of a child killed in Newtown. In a particularly poignant part of his speech, Obama spoke about that child, Grace McDonnell, describing her favourite colour and ambitions, and reflected not only on her short life but the potential that had been lost. The president revealed that he has a painting by Grace, given to him by her parents, on the wall of his study. But the president faces an enormous struggle to get his more ambitious proposals through Congress because of almost certain opposition from Republicans.

Reince Priebus, chairman of the Republican National Committee, denounced Obama’s proposals as an “executive power grab that may please his political base but will not solve the problems at hand”.

Obama acknowledged it will not be easy getting legislation through but said he had to try. “If there is even one thing we can do to reduce this violence, if even one life can be saved, we have an obligation to try. Significant changes will require legislation”, Obama said.

The most high-profile reform Obama proposed to put to Congress on Wednesday is a tougher version of the 1994 law introduced by Bill Clinton that banned automatic – and semi-automatic weapons but which was criticised by the gun control lobby as having too many loopholes. Legislation will also be needed to reduce the number of bullets in magazines to 10, which pro-gun control activists argue could limit the number of casualties in mass shootings.

Most shockingly, gun sales have soared in recent weeks. In the month since the Newtown shooting 250,000 more people have joined the NRA. The group called for schools to be protected by armed guards and said that steps other than gun control, including cracking down on criminals and fighting violence in the media, would be more effective.

Adapté du *Guardian*. co.uk, Thursday 17 January 2013 – Ewen MacAskill.

Document 3 ■ Media coverage

Gun advocates have many reasons to gripe about the frantic coverage, mainly on television, that follows every mass killing. They may be mistaken, however, to criticize progun control propaganda; the real culprit in the wings of this histrionic display can rather be found in ratings and muckraking media that have updated the “if it bleeds, it leads” catchword with a credo that fits the round-the-clock news environment; “if they’re dead, we’re live!”

Judging from the huge coverage dedicated to school shootings perpetrated by youngsters, some in their early teens, it is amazing how little reporting has dealt with the campaign set up by the NRA and the gun industry to sell guns to the youth. A Violence Policy Center report, “Start ‘Em Young: Recruitment of Kids to the Gun Culture”, develops graphic details of advertising campaigns aimed at luring kids, even preteens, to feel how fun shooting a gun is. Until 1994, those “arms merchants” even had leaflets reading “When Your Youngster Wants a Gun”, the main idea of which was that “some youngsters are ready to start at the age of 10” as gun possessors.

Sticking to the facts, not bias, more and more reporters point out that because of the large amount of guns circulating in the country, the death rate is many times higher in the States than in any other advanced industrial country (in 1994, there were 142.4 gun deaths per million in the US as against 4.1 in England and Wales and only 0.5 in Japan). Of course most NRA advocates reproach reporters for jumping to a conclusion by connecting statistical comparisons with stricter gun regulation in most advanced countries. Nonetheless, a link between gun control (or absence of gun control) and gun deaths is too obvious to dismiss. As a matter of fact, another key factor, which is very often left out in the press, is the correlation between a higher violent crime rate and poverty-stricken districts.

The US appears to be the only advanced industrial country with so much gang-rule violence. However, discoursing on media and poverty would require hundreds of pages. If we want to stick to current gun control, and whatever happens in Capitol Hill about it, we can assert that new laws won’t change the mentalities overnight. For instance, are new laws relevant enough to compel gun owners to keep their weapons out of the reach of children? Well, certainly not. So, the only thing that can really change such behavior would be a cultural shift, a belief that laws are more effective than guns. In other words, law is made to defend innocent people, not guns. As the saying goes: “Violence breeds violence”.

Adapté de *Fairness and Accuracy in reporting* – Feb. 2000 – Jeff Cohen.
<http://fair.org/article/gun-control-the-nra-and-the-second-amendment/>

ÉTAPE 2 COMPRÉHENSION ÉCRITE

Trouvez chronologiquement dans les différents documents ci-dessus les termes anglais correspondants aux termes français répertoriés ci-après :

■ Document 1 (les verbes conjugués dans les textes sont ici à l'infinitif)

Des lois

Des projets de loi

Fusils d'assaut

Contrôles des antécédents

Achats

Enlisé

Montrer du doigt

Posséder

Une arme

Tueries

D'actualité

Espoir

Durcir

Scandaleux

Le manque de consensus

De plus en plus

Armes de poing

Chargeurs

Interdire

Énorme

Échappatoires

■ Document 2

Proposition

Ventes d'armes

Aborder (un problème)

Agir

Tueries (deuxième terme)

Dans les jours à venir

Poids

Opposition radicale

Avertir

Faible

Choisir de, opter pour

L'humeur

Lutte

Saisie

Reconnaître

Argumenter

Victimes

S'attaquer à

■ **Document 3**

Rouspéter après

Critiquer

Un coupable

Taux d'audience

Actualiser

Surprenant

Destinés à

Pré-ados

Mettre en avant

Évident

Changement

Croyance

Dicton

Le mal

ÉTAPE 3 LES MOTS CLÉS EN CONTEXTE

Complétez le résumé du **document 1** avec les dix mots clés suivants :

POWERFUL – LAWS – CONSENSUS – REVOLTING – BACKGROUND – SHOOTINGS –
CONTROL – RESTRICTIONS – BILLS – LOOPHOLES

The story of gun is a very old one in the USA. After every
..... crime gun-control supporters have always attempted
to pass to create a new system of
checks for gun purchases. On the contrary, the NRA, whose 4.3 million members
make it a lobby in Washington, has always refused any
..... on gun sales. As a consequence, and despite many bloody
mass, the lack of among the American
public to pass major gun legislation has entailed a lasting stalemate. Moreover,
..... to escape new can be easily found,
which is dangerous for democracy.

.../10

ÉTAPE 4 LA VERSION

Après avoir consulté, si nécessaire, le corrigé de l'étape 3, **traduisez maintenant le résumé en français** :



Aides supplémentaires

To attempt = to try

A stalemate = an impasse

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ÉTAPE 5 ALLER À L'ESSENTIEL !

Classez les informations suivantes issues des différents **documents** par ordre d'importance, en **argument majeur** de la question ou en **détail périphérique**.

President Obama announced the biggest changes in firearms laws since 1968 – four children wrote to him – In a poignant part of his speech – Obama has opted to confront the NRA head-on – Significant changes will require legislation – All gun sales or transfers will go through background checks – he has a painting by Grace – “It’s about banning your guns”, the NRA warned – describing her favourite colour and ambitions – almost certain opposition from Republicans who control the House.

Argument majeur	Détail périphérique
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ÉTAPE 6 FOR VS AGAINST

Classez les arguments suivants « **pour** » ou « **contre** » une législation plus sévère concernant le port d'armes aux États-Unis.

- Never again! Enough is enough!
- A gun in a house is more likely to cause trouble than protect the owner.
- The Second Amendment protects an individual's right to own a gun.
- The exception (school killings) does not prove the rule.
- Laws are more effective than guns.
- Innocent lives are lost to huge profits made by arms merchants.
- Fighting violence on television would be more effective than gun control.
- Schools should be protected by armed guards.
- Since Newtown, hundreds of Americans have been shot to death.

