



UNIVERSITY INTERSCHOLASTIC LEAGUE

Current Issues & Events Study Packet 2020

This Current Issues & Events packet contains tests and keys from **only** 2020 Invitational A, B, District and Region. State is not available.

This item is intended for High School grade levels.



UNIVERSITY INTERSCHOLASTIC LEAGUE
Making a World of Difference

CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS

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2020 • INVITATIONAL A



U.S. Congressman Adam Schiff speaks with attendees at the 2019 California Democratic Party State Convention at the George R. Moscone Convention Center in San Francisco.



U.S. President Donald Trump speaks with supporters at a Make America Great Again campaign rally at International Air Response Hangar at Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport in Mesa, Arizona. Photos by Gage Skidmore.

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UNIVERSITY INTERSCHOLASTIC LEAGUE

CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS

INVITATIONAL A • 2020

- 1. “The attack is like Sept. 11th for Saudi Arabia; it is a game changer,” said a Saudi security analyst who declined to be named in a Sept. 17 story distributed by Reuters. Cruise missiles and drones originating in what country crippled an oil facility in Saudi Arabia?**
 - a. Iraq
 - b. Iran
 - c. Yemen
 - d. Afghanistan
- 2. What resulted in the “the biggest peacetime repatriation in UK history,” stranded 150,000 travelers and forced charter planes from as far afield as Malaysia to assist with a massive airlift?**
 - a. Hurricane Dorian
 - b. a volcano erupting in Iceland preventing travel to northern Europe
 - c. collapse of travel operator Thomas Cook
 - d. a typhoon and tsunami in Sri Lanka
- 3. Indianapolis Colts quarterback Andrew Luck announced he would retire at age 29. Then he was booed off the field. Why did he retire?**
 - a. Money. The Colts only paid him \$9.125 million in base salary.
 - b. A cycle of injuries, pain and rehab. “It’s taken my joy of the game away.”
 - c. His contract was up and he “wanted to move on to other things.”
 - d. He looked at former players like Earl Campbell and said, “I don’t want to be like him in five years,” referring to how Campbell can barely walk and has slurred speech.
- 4. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service plans to allow a Michigan trophy hunter — Chris D. Peyerck — to import the body of what critically endangered animal he paid \$400,000 to kill in Namibia last year?**
 - a. Sumatran tiger
 - b. Panthera
 - c. Black rhino
 - d. Asian elephant
- 5. Who has NOT served as U.S. President Donald Trump’s national security adviser?**
 - a. John Bolton
 - b. Rex Tillerson
 - c. H.R. McMaster
 - d. Michael Flynn
- 6. In September, the U.S. pulled out of peace talks that might have led to withdrawal of troops in what country where America’s longest war is being fought?**
 - a. North Korea
 - b. Iraq
 - c. Mexico
 - d. Afghanistan

7. **While LeBron James filed to trademark a phrase he has so-often uttered on Instagram, he found out the phrase already had a federal trademark from a Wyoming company. What phrase?**
 - a. “Let’s get ready to rumble.”
 - b. “Team first.”
 - c. “Dream as if you’ll live forever.”
 - d. “Taco Tuesday”

8. **By allowing oil and gas operators to police themselves when it comes to preventing a powerful greenhouse gas from leaking out of new wells, pipelines and other infrastructure, the Environmental Protection Agency said it plans to loosen federal rules on what gas?**
 - a. carbon monoxide
 - b. carbon dioxide
 - c. sulphur dioxide
 - d. methane

9. **Excessive monsoon rainfall damaged production of which crop in India, usually one of the top producers of it?**
 - a. barley
 - b. onions
 - c. millets (Bajra and Jowar)
 - d. muskmelon

10. **Rep. Elijah Cummings (D-Maryland) was ...**
 - a. the first African American to lie in state at the U.S. Capitol
 - b. the longest-serving member of Congress
 - c. the person who delivered the famous “I Have a Dream” speech
 - d. the first African American elected from a state south of the Mason-Dixon line

11. **Although not official until right after the 2020 election, the Trump administration formally notified the United Nations on Nov. 4 that it would withdraw from what agreement that nearly 200 other nations have signed in an effort to deal with climate change?**
 - a. Paris Agreement
 - b. North Atlantic Treaty Organization
 - c. North American Free Trade Agreement
 - d. Trans-Pacific Partnership

12. **Police used tear gas and water cannons to disperse protesters in Hong Kong late last September as China’s Communist Party recognized what?**
 - a. the takeover of Hong Kong
 - b. the resignation of Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam
 - c. 70 years of rule
 - d. the anniversary of the Tianamen Square protests

13. **The decision by Twitter executives clashed with the decision by Facebook executives. “This decision was based on principle, not money,” CEO Jack Dorsey said, noting that Twitter made \$3 million in 2018 from what?**
 - a. political ads
 - b. paid advertising
 - c. accounts promoted by businesses
 - d. trends, paid to be promoted by businesses

- 14. With a significant upswing in violence against Latinos outpacing a drop in assaults targeting Muslims and Arab-Americans, the FBI reported that what type of crime hit a 16-year high in 2018?**
- hate crimes of all kinds
 - aggravated assaults against people of different races
 - personal attacks motivated by bias or prejudice
 - bias-driven property crimes
- 15. Actress Felicity Huffman was sentenced to two weeks in jail, fined \$30,000 and required to do community service for her role in what?**
- a prostitution ring also involving NFL player Antonio Brown
 - human trafficking
 - illegally doing business in the Ukraine
 - the college admissions scandal
- 16. A pastor at a Catholic school in Nashville, Tennessee, decided that what books could no longer be checked out from the school library because the books risk “conjuring evil spirits”?**
- The Magick of Solomon, a history of magic
 - Fantastic Beasts, a one-time, slim novel
 - The Rise of Skywalker, the Star Wars series
 - Harry Potter books, the series
- 17. The city’s board of supervisors unanimously approved a measure declaring that the National Rifle Association is a domestic terrorist organization. Then the NRA sued the city claiming it was violating the NRA’s free speech rights. What city?**
- Gilroy, California
 - San Francisco, California
 - Little Rock, Arkansas
 - Milwaukee, Minnesota
- 18. Brazil and Israel backed the United States when the United Nations voted for a resolution condemning the U.S. embargo on what country?**
- Argentina
 - Cuba
 - Turkey
 - Syria
- 19. After being confirmed by the Senate, who replaced Alex Acosta as secretary of labor?**
- Patrick Pizella
 - Ed Hugler
 - Eugene Scalia
 - Tom Perez
- 20. Don Blankenship will be attempting to be the first person ever to become an occupant of the White House after having been in the “big house,” according to his website. Blankenship was convicted of a misdemeanor in relation to being CEO and president of a company in what industry?**
- Dole (bananas)
 - McDonald’s (fast food)
 - Massey Energy (coal)
 - Bear Stearns (Wall Street trading)

- 21. Google developed a new 54-qubit processor named “Sycamore” to perform benchmark testing. The machine performed a target computation in 200 seconds. Google scientists determined it would take the world’s fastest supercomputer 10,000 years to produce a similar output. This was part of an announcement of a discovery of something physicists have been working toward for 30 years. What?**
- Quantum supremacy
 - Artificial intelligence
 - The HAL 9000
 - Bio-neural computing
- 22. In spite of tough gun laws, Los Angeles authorities said a teen who killed two students and himself at Saugus High School in Santa Clarita, California, was armed with what type of weapon?**
- a “ghost gun,” assembled from parts and with no serial number
 - a Colt ArmaLite AR-15, lightweight and made almost entirely of plastic
 - a .38 revolver owned by his father
 - a shotgun he also used for hunting
- 23. Flooding caused by the highest tide in 50 years and the second highest on record swamped which historic city in November?**
- Miami, Florida
 - Guangzho, China
 - Rotterdam, the Netherlands
 - Venice, Italy
- 24. A 50-year low, the September unemployment rate fell to what?**
- 2.9%
 - 3.5%
 - 136,000
 - 0.2%
- 25. Amid controversy, a suspension of U.S. ads and an increasing number of deaths somehow linked to his e-cigarette company’s product, the CEO resigned. Who?**
- K.C. Crothwaite, Altria
 - Ricardo Oberlander, R.J. Reynolds
 - Peter Zach, Smok
 - Ken Burns, Juul
- 26. College sports became a \$14 billion industry last year. Under a California measure signed in September, thousands of student-athletes will be allowed to do what?**
- promote products and companies
 - work part-time jobs
 - get paid for each game played
 - leave the NCAA and form their own league
- 27. Oklahoma sued three manufacturers related to the opioid crisis. Two of them settled with the state. In August, a judge ordered one to pay the state \$572 million. Which one?**
- Purdue Pharmaceuticals
 - Johnson & Johnson
 - Teva Pharmaceuticals
 - Pfizer Healthcare

- 28. There was a plane crash in West Texas; a crop-duster stalled out after dumping about 350 gallons of pink water. There was the grandmother who died after being hit by debris from a pipe bomb. There was the gunshot that lit a target on fire giving off blue smoke and starting the Sawmill Fire in Arizona. All of these started innocently enough as what?**
- protests against the political establishment
 - Alzheimer's awareness events
 - cancer awareness events including prostate cancer and breast cancer
 - gender-reveal parties
- 29. The *New York Times* ran a story, "How FedEx Cut Its Tax Bill to \$0," in November detailing how the delivery company used the 2017 corporate tax cut to eliminate its federal taxes. In response, what action did the CEO of FedEx, Fred Smith, suggest?**
- a repeal of the legislation
 - disclosure of the tax filings of top U.S. officials including Donald Trump
 - a public debate with the publisher of the *Times*
 - retraction of the article after pointing out inaccuracies and distortions
- 30. Security was tightened across the university campus in mid-November after a white supremacist manifesto was posted on a campus forum and reportedly "air dropped" to cellphones of some students at the school library. Where?**
- Syracuse
 - Cornell
 - Adelphi
 - West Point
- 31. Walmart requested shoppers no longer openly carry guns in Walmart stores. What other action did Walmart take after last fall's shootings in Odessa, Texas, and Dayton, Ohio?**
- Walmart will stop selling military-style assault rifles.
 - Walmart will stop selling bump stocks.
 - Walmart will start offering training for people with legally owned handguns.
 - Walmart will stop selling ammunition used in handguns and military-style rifles.
- 32. The Congressional Budget Office said the federal budget deficit could reach what level next fiscal year?**
- \$96.0 billion
 - \$1 trillion
 - 26.9% of GDP, a record high
 - \$6,560 per person in the U.S.
- 33. After more than two months of protests, Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam withdrew a plan for extradition of criminals to mainland China. However, protestors had five demands. Which of the following was NOT one of the other demands?**
- Lam should step down.
 - Hong Kong's "puppet" government should be merged with the mainland government.
 - Officials will organize an independent inquiry into police brutality.
 - Protesters should get amnesty.

- 34. Although Visa, Mastercard and eBay pulled out, what company still said it planned to create a cryptocurrency, Libra, with more than 20 founding members?**
- Facebook
 - Bank of America
 - PayPal
 - Amazon
- 35. According to a paper published by the National Bureau of Economic Research, air pollution in the U.S. made what trend, and at what cost, in the last two years?**
- It increased for the first time since 2009 and was associated with about 9,700 premature deaths in 2018.
 - It continued a downward trend that began in 2009 declining about 5.5% per year, costing power companies billions in actual income.
 - It increased at a record rate, 24.2% per year, costing the U.S. about \$180 billion.
 - It increased, and the increase was directly attributable to changes in enforcement of the Clean Air Act.
- 36. “We spoke with pride about El Paso and communities of immigrants. We elevated the plight and the promise of refugees and asylum seekers,” he said. Ending a campaign that just could not garner the spotlight, a campaign that was under extreme financial strain, what candidate withdrew in a post on Medium Nov. 1?**
- John Delaney
 - Michael Bloomberg
 - Beto O’Rourke
 - Julian Castro
- 37. Some 800,000 people were without power in Northern California when Pacific Gas and Electric turned the power off in October. Why?**
- to prevent blackouts from overuse
 - to reduce greenhouse emissions in an effort to combat climate change
 - to prevent starting wildfires
 - to voice concern over changes in White House policy
- 38. McDonald’s fired CEO Steve Esterbrook, giving him a separation package that includes \$675,000, health coverage for 18 months and stock options worth about \$23.5 million. Why was he fired?**
- He was being charged — but had not been convicted — with insider trading.
 - He had a consensual relationship with an employee.
 - He had attempted to influence government officials.
 - After three deaths, he admitted he knew about tainted hamburger meat but did nothing.
- 39. “The Amazon rain forest in vast parts of South America is literally on fire,” said Forbes science contributor Marshall Sheperd in August. Why do these fires matter?**
- The rain forests produce carbon dioxide so burning them will lead to less global warming.
 - The fires make it difficult to clear the land for industrial or agricultural use.
 - The fires and subsequent deforestation make it easy for native species to thrive. The fires are part of the cycle of the rain forests.
 - The forests, “the lungs of the planet,” produce 20% of the oxygen in our planet’s atmosphere.

40. What is the Flores agreement?

- a. an executive order that says immigrant children will not be separated from their family by U.S. officials
- b. a part of the U.S. Code that says gun violence victims are entitled to “just compensation”
- c. an agreement that restricts U.S. immigration officials from holding migrant children in detention for more than 20 days
- d. an often-overlooked piece of legislation passed in 1955 that says the families of Cold War spies will be compensated for the loss of life of a family member

ESSAY PROMPT

NOTE: Contestants who do not write an essay will be disqualified. Essay length is not a major grading factor as long as the essay is substantial and demonstrates a sincere effort to discuss the assigned topic. Cover as many corners of the issue as practical, including historical, political, economic, social and cultural, when relevant. Avoid including your personal opinions, as more than enough information on the subject has been published. A focused, concise and specific essay beats a vague and rambling essay.

In early September, a whistleblower complaint said that in a series of events culminating in a July 25 call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, U.S. President Donald Trump used “the power of his office to solicit interference from a foreign country in the 2020 U.S. election.”

So began the fourth presidential impeachment inquiry in the history of the United States.

Pick four individuals, besides Trump, integral to the impeachment process and on multiple sides of the process. Describe who they are and what role they are playing. Finally, describe what is left in the impeachment process.

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ANSWER KEY

ESSAY PROMPT

In early September, a whistleblower complaint said that in a series of events culminating in a July 25 call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, U.S. President Donald Trump used “the power of his office to solicit interference from a foreign country in the 2020 U.S. election.”

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- | | |
|-------|-------|
| 1. B | 21. A |
| 2. C | 22. A |
| 3. B | 23. D |
| 4. C | 24. B |
| 5. B | 25. D |
| 6. D | 26. A |
| 7. D | 27. B |
| 8. D | 28. D |
| 9. B | 29. C |
| 10. A | 30. A |
| 11. A | 31. D |
| 12. C | 32. B |
| 13. A | 33. B |
| 14. C | 34. A |
| 15. D | 35. A |
| 16. D | 36. C |
| 17. B | 37. C |
| 18. B | 38. B |
| 19. C | 39. D |
| 20. C | 40. C |

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION POINTS might include, but should not be limited to...

Note. This exam was submitted in early December. A lot could have changed between now and Feb. 1. Judge the essay on the best information available. As such, a timeline as of now is difficult to pin down. However, the process will include:

- The House, like a grand jury, collects evidence, hears testimony, and drafts articles of impeachment — or charges — against the president. The House Intelligence Committee had public hearings. Based on information obtained by the Intelligence Committee, the Judiciary Committee may draw up Articles of Impeachment. If passed by a majority of the House, the Senate will act as the jury in a trial against the president with the chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court presiding. Conviction in the Senate requires a two-thirds vote of those present.

Selected officials:

- *The anonymous whistleblower.*
- *Hunter Biden*, Joe Biden’s eldest son, who served on the board of the Ukrainian energy company Burisma Holdings from 2014 to 2019.
- *John Bolton*, former national security adviser, pushed back on the idea of conditioning assistance to Ukraine for investigations. He refused to testify until a subpoena was approved by the courts.
- *Rudy Giuliani*, Trump’s personal attorney, served as an unofficial envoy to Ukraine and roped various diplomats into his efforts to demand that Ukraine investigate the Bidens and the 2016 election.
- *Former NSC senior director for Eurasian and Russian affairs Fiona Hill* testified about the efforts to pressure Ukraine into announcing investigations into the Bidens.
- *Mick Mulvaney*, acting chief of staff, undermined Trump’s impeachment defense by confirming that administrators withheld the aid to the Ukraine in exchange for an investigation into the Democratic National Committee server.
- *Secretary of State Mike Pompeo* was also on the July 25 call with Ukraine. Pompeo is also accused of misrepresenting his involvement in the matter and obstructing congressional investigations.
- *Rep. Adam Schiff*, the House Intelligence Committee chair, took charge of the impeachment inquiry, subpoenaing witnesses, and holding hearings.
- *Bill Taylor*, the acting ambassador to Ukraine, a Vietnam veteran and career diplomat, gave explosive and damning testimony to Congress that it was his “clear understanding” that “security assistance money would not come until” Zelensky “committed to pursue the investigation.”
- *Army Lt. Col. Alexander Vindman*, an expert on Eastern European affairs on the National Security Council, listened to the July 25 call and raised concerns about it.
- *Kurt Volker*, the former U.S. special representative for Ukraine, testified about the extent of Giuliani’s involvement in the Trump-Ukraine saga.
- *Marie Yovanovitch*, a former U.S. ambassador to Ukraine and a career diplomat, testified that Trump and Giuliani pushed her out of her position for standing in the way of their efforts to compel Ukraine to investigate the Bidens.
- *Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky*, a former comedian and first-time president, was elected in April on a platform of cleaning up corruption in Ukraine.



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2020 • INVITATIONAL B



President Donald J. Trump participates in a trade agreement signing ceremony with Japan Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Sept. 25, 2019, at the InterContinental New York Barclay in New York City. Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead | **Trump shakes hands with Italian President Sergio Mattarella, Oct. 16, 2019.** Official White House Photo by Tia Dufour | **Trump shakes hands with Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani, Nov. 28, 2019, during their meeting at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan.** Official White House Photograph by Shealah Craighead | **Trump participates in a bilateral meeting with the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany Angela Merkel during the North Atlantic Treaty Organization 70th anniversary meeting, Dec. 4, 2019, in London.** Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead

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UNIVERSITY INTERSCHOLASTIC LEAGUE

CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS

INVITATIONAL B • 2020

- 1. A gunman killed two people in a church in White Settlement, Texas, before being shot and killed by whom?**
 - a. local police, the first police shooting in city's history
 - b. a church security team member who said he killed an "evil," not a person
 - c. a teenager who got his gun license only the day before
 - d. the pastor, who said he had talked with the shooter only moments before
- 2. In September, after 45 years of producing electricity, Exelon Corp. shut down what plant, the 1979 site of the United States' worst commercial nuclear power accident?**
 - a. Chernobyl
 - b. Windscale
 - c. Three Mile Island
 - d. Fukushima
- 3. The prime minister of Denmark said the territory was "not for sale." Yet everyone still mocked the left-field idea from U.S. President Donald Trump to buy what territory?**
 - a. Iceland
 - b. Greenland
 - c. Finland
 - d. Faroe Islands
- 4. The New York Police Department fired officer Daniel Pantaleo five years after he did what?**
 - a. used an illegal chokehold that caused the death of Eric Garner
 - b. worked in a drug ring run by FBI agents
 - c. shot and killed stranded motorist, Corey Jones
 - d. fatally shot Michael Brown Jr., 18, after an argument
- 5. Classifying it as a potential security risk due to its Chinese origin, the Army banned soldiers from using what social networking app on government-owned phones?**
 - a. Snapchat
 - b. WeChat
 - c. Weibo
 - d. TikTok
- 6. After the Amazon, the world's second-largest tropical rainforest is also burning. Where?**
 - a. Brazil
 - b. Bolivia
 - c. Democratic Republic of Congo
 - d. Burma

7. **As part of a federal spending package approved in late December, the Food and Drug Administration officially changed the federal minimum age from 18 to 21 to purchase what?**
- marijuana
 - tobacco
 - over-the-counter allergy medications
 - alcohol
8. **A former cheerleader settled a pay dispute with the Dallas Cowboys, an example of gender pay equity. The mascot makes up to \$60,000/year. Some players make as much as \$17.5 million. Which of the following is true about cheerleader pay?**
- The pay of each cheerleader will be equal to or greater than the lowest paid football player.
 - The cheerleaders will be paid minimum wage for each hour worked.
 - The salaries of the women will be based on the median salary of all of the men who work for the organization.
 - Game day pay will double, from \$200 to \$400.
9. **Greta Thunberg told the United Nations, “This is all wrong. I shouldn’t be up here. I should be back in school on the other side of the ocean, yet you all come to us young people for hope. How dare you.” Her primary message was about what?**
- gun control
 - vaping and cigarette use
 - climate change
 - opioid abuse
10. **Gunmen, believed to be members of organized crime, ambushed several vehicles on a desolate road, killing three women and six children from a prominent Mormon family Nov. 4. Where?**
- near Salt Lake City, Utah
 - northern Mexico
 - a remote area of Idaho
 - Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil
11. **The breeder of what popular crossbreed of dog bred to solve an allergy problem said he regrets creating the breed, which he now calls a “Frankenstein monster”?**
- Cockapoo
 - Maltipoo
 - Puggle
 - Labradoodle
12. **Reflecting how many people use the nonbinary pronoun, Merriam-Webster announced last fall that what pronoun can be used as a singular, third-person pronoun?**
- they
 - ze
 - s/he
 - we
13. **Which maker of clothes for teenage girls filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection?**
- H&M
 - Structure
 - Forever 21
 - Talbots

- 14. Jimmy Carter turned 95 last fall, the first U.S. president to reach that milestone. Even though he has trouble walking after hip replacement surgery, he said he still intends to do what?**
- to build houses for Habitat for Humanity
 - to farm peanuts to be distributed to developing nations
 - to fight for the release of American hostages abroad
 - to run for public office
- 15. Amber Guyger, a former Dallas police officer, was convicted in October and sentenced to 10 years in prison. For what?**
- punching a prisoner, leaving him with a broken nose and eye socket
 - forcefully handcuffing a suspect, throwing him to the ground and holding him so he couldn't breathe until he died
 - shooting an unarmed teenager in a car during a routine traffic stop
 - shooting and killing a neighbor in his own apartment
- 16. More than 25,000 teachers went on strike last fall forcing the cancellation of classes for more than 361,000 students in the country's third-largest school district. Where?**
- Denver, Colorado
 - Richmond, Virginia
 - Chicago, Illinois
 - Phoenix, Arizona
- 17. Two American astronauts — Christina Koch and Jessica Meir — ventured out of the International Space Station and became the first to do what?**
- to replace a power controller outside the ship
 - to participate in an all-female spacewalk
 - to take pictures of a passing comet from Earth's orbit
 - to post on social media from space
- 18. Catholic bishops approved a proposal allowing some men in the Amazon region where there is a shortage of priests to be ordained as priests. What was unique about these men?**
- They were openly gay.
 - They were married.
 - They were not Catholic.
 - They were charged — although not convicted — of being pedophiles in other countries.
- 19. Game show host Alex Trebek was diagnosed with stage 4 pancreatic cancer, but he promised fans he'd continue hosting what show as long as his skills have not diminished?**
- The Price is Right
 - Wheel of Fortune
 - Truth or Consequences
 - Jeopardy!
- 20. In late September, U.S. President Donald Trump, born in Queens, New York, and first lady Melania Trump, born in Slovenia, filed a "declaration of domicile," changing their official residence to where?**
- 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. — "And I intend to continue it permanently as such."
 - 1100 S. Ocean Blvd., the Mar-a-Lago resort in Palm Beach, Florida
 - 721 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York
 - Bedminster, New Jersey

- 21. The longest-running children’s TV show celebrated its 50th anniversary this year. What show?**
- Sesame Street
 - Meet the Press
 - The Simpsons
 - Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood
- 22. Fires in Australia decimated the habitat of what threatened, but not functionally extinct, animal?**
- Tasmanian devil
 - Black-flanked rock-wallaby
 - Koala
 - Black-footed tree rat
- 23. While known for his gaffes, Joe Biden acknowledged that “words matter” and launched a new campaign slogan in Iowa to highlight his truthfulness and frankness. What?**
- No Malarkey
 - Restore American Now
 - Make American Sane Again
 - Forward Together
- 24. The impeachment inquiry started with fact gathering in the House Intelligence Committee. Then it moved to the House Judiciary Committee chaired by whom?**
- Doug Collins, R-Georgia
 - Sheila Lee, D-Texas
 - Adam Schiff, D-California
 - Jerry Nadler, D-New York
- 25. Following 77 days of formal inquiry, House Democrats unveiled two articles of impeachment against U.S. President Donald Trump. What were the two charges?**
- coordination of Russian interferences in the 2016 election and illegally ordering an investigation into former Vice President Joe Biden
 - betraying the trust of the country and benefiting monetarily from contracts with other countries
 - abuse of power in the Ukraine affair and obstruction of Congress
 - blocking the Mueller investigation and perjury
- 26. Boeing and NASA launched the Starliner into space in December. Ultimately, what is the goal of Starliner?**
- to launch mannequins named Rosie into space
 - to replace the supersonic Concorde
 - to transport people to the International Space Station and private space stations
 - to launch people to settlements on the moon and Mars
- 27. Right before the end of the year, the NASDAQ finished above what for the first time ever?**
- \$61.83 per barrel
 - 3,000 points
 - 29,000 points
 - 9,000 points

- 28. Dennis Mullenberg resigned as the head of what company but could receive \$30 million in benefits despite criticism of the company's role in the crashes of two 737 Max airliners?**
- Airbus
 - American Airlines
 - Boeing
 - McDonnell Douglas
- 29. In the first of what could be thousands of trials, a judge held Johnson & Johnson responsible and ordered it to pay \$572 million. Why?**
- It distributed baby care products tainted with lead.
 - It was a part of the opioid drug crisis in Oklahoma.
 - It labeled Aveeno, Neutrogena, Johnson's, Clean & Clear, and Dabao skin-care products as "all natural." They weren't.
 - It distributed Band-Aid, Bengay and Neosporin wound-care products that weren't certified by the FDA for medical use.
- 30. President Joko Widodo proposed building a new capital for his country on the island of Borneo. The current capital is on an island that is sinking, and the city's air quality ranks among the world's worst. What country?**
- Indonesia
 - Kuwait
 - India
 - Bangladesh
- 31. A U.S. wholesale chain opened its first location in mainland China this past fall and was so inundated with eager shoppers that the store closed early owing to "security concerns." What chain?**
- Costco
 - Sam's/Walmart
 - Amazon
 - Target
- 32. While visiting Angola on the outskirts of the war-ravaged city of Huambo, Prince Harry retraced his mother's — Princess Diana's — footsteps trying to increase awareness of what?**
- climate change
 - Brexit
 - homelessness
 - landmines
- 33. When Joseph Maguire testified for Congress about the whistleblower complaint, in what position was he serving?**
- the president's private attorney
 - inspector general
 - acting director of national intelligence
 - attorney general
- 34. Part of the stratosphere made news this past fall thanks to warming temperatures. Indeed, what part shrank to the smallest size on record?**
- the ozone hole
 - the aurora borealis
 - red sprites
 - St. Elmo's Fire

- 35. Turning to treaties signed in the 18th and 19th centuries, which tribe nominated Kimberly Teehee as the first delegate to Congress representing a sovereign Native American government?**
- Wichita
 - Cherokee
 - Comanche
 - Sioux
- 36. In a closely watched case dealing with affirmative action, a federal judge last October rejected the claim that Harvard intentionally discriminated against what group?**
- Hispanics
 - Caucasians
 - African Americans
 - Asian Americans
- 37. What company became the first national fast food chain in the U.S. to launch a plant-based menu entrée, the Impossible burger, on the kids' menu?**
- McDonald's
 - Burger King
 - Chick-fil-A
 - In-N-Out Burger
- 38. Inching the company closer to a core change in the way users engage with the photo-sharing service, Instagram continued a test in countries like Canada and Australia to do what?**
- add vertical photos
 - remove the ability to share images
 - add the ability to post from Instagram.com directly
 - remove "like" counts
- 39. Had it accepted \$60 million from the Title X program, what group would have been banned from offering referrals to doctors who can perform abortions?**
- Blue Cross and Blue Shield
 - United Health Group
 - Planned Parenthood
 - Eli Lilly
- 40. The Federal Reserve lowered its benchmark interest rate by a quarter percentage point for the third time in three months, lowering borrowing costs on credit cards and mortgages. What was the new rate?**
- 1.5% to 1.75%
 - 3.4% to 3.7%
 - 6.74% to 7.74%
 - 17.5% to 19%

ESSAY PROMPT

NOTE: *Contestants who do not write an essay will be disqualified.* Essay length is not a major grading factor as long as the essay is substantial and demonstrates a sincere effort to discuss the assigned topic. Cover as many corners of the issue as practical, including historical, political, economic, social and cultural, when relevant. Avoid including your personal opinions, as more than enough information on the subject has been published. A focused, concise and specific essay beats a vague and rambling essay.

Some reports say there is a building “crisis” in foreign affairs. Some say there has been a “surprising degree of stability.” Still, there is continued anxiety about President Donald Trump and what his administration might do.

Pick three countries in the news recently for strained or strengthening relations with the U.S. and discuss what actions or inactions have weakened or strengthened the relations.

DO NOT DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST!

ANSWER KEY

ESSAY PROMPT

Some reports say there is a building “crisis” in foreign affairs. Some say there has been a “surprising degree of stability.” Still, there is continued anxiety about President Donald Trump and what his administration might do.

Pick three countries in the news recently for strained or strengthening relations with the U.S. and discuss what actions or inactions have weakened or strengthened the relations.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION POINTS

might include, but should not be limited to...

- | | |
|-------|-------|
| 1. B | 21. A |
| 2. C | 22. C |
| 3. B | 23. A |
| 4. A | 24. D |
| 5. D | 25. C |
| 6. C | 26. C |
| 7. B | 27. D |
| 8. D | 28. C |
| 9. C | 29. B |
| 10. B | 30. A |
| 11. D | 31. A |
| 12. A | 32. D |
| 13. C | 33. C |
| 14. A | 34. A |
| 15. D | 35. B |
| 16. C | 36. D |
| 17. B | 37. B |
| 18. B | 38. D |
| 19. D | 39. C |
| 20. B | 40. A |

- *Iran:* Qasem Soleimani, commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Force, was one of the most influential and popular figures in the Islamic Republic and a particular nemesis of the U.S. He was killed in by a U.S. drone attack in January. U.S. officials said Soleimani was a terrorist and that assassinating him was a defensive action that stopped an imminent attack. In May 2018, Trump left the Iran nuclear agreement and adopted a “maximum pressure” policy of economic sanctions on Iran. Last summer Iran shot down a U.S. drone. In September, Iranian missiles struck the Abqaiq facility in Saudi Arabia—one of the most important pieces of oil infrastructure in the world. This tit for tat may escalate into war. Trump has been adamant about his lack of interest in starting a new war in the Middle East.
- *Mexico and Canada:* The United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement is an updated version of the nearly 25-year-old North American Free Trade Agreement. It includes major changes on cars and new policies on labor and environmental standards, intellectual property protections, and some digital trade provisions. On Dec. 19, the USMCA passed the House with a vote of 385 to 41. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) said lawmakers will consider it after Trump’s impeachment trial. Canada has yet to ratify the deal. The agreement put new rules on tariffs on automobiles, made it easier for Mexican workers to unionize, gave U.S. farmers access to the Canadian dairy market, etc.
- *Cuba:* Travel to Cuba for tourist activities remains prohibited, and U.S. federal regulations restrict travel to Cuba to licensed travelers engaged in certain specified activities rolling back Obama-era rules. Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla told the Associated Press that while the U.S. administration has cut off most communication with Cuba and is trying to pressure the communist government by restricting the flow of oil, progress made under former U.S. President Barack Obama has not been undone.
- *North Korea:* A generally good relationship between Trump and Kim has not translated into improved government-to-government relations or progress on denuclearization. Pyongyang likely wants sanctions relief and a security guarantee from Washington.
- *Turkey:* US-Turkey ties, strained over the Turkish attacks on America’s Kurdish allies in the fight against the Islamic State group, have been going downhill for months over Turkey’s growing relationship with Russia. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s agreed to buy the Russian-made S-400 air defense system. While relations could get worse, experts say Ankara and the West need each other too much to fully split.
- *Germany:* U.S.-German relations have been tense since Ambassador Richard Grenell took office in May last year. On his first day as ambassador in Berlin, he took to Twitter and called on German companies to “immediately” withdraw from Iran, against which the U.S. had just announced new sanctions. Germany, France and Britain have tried to keep the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran viable after the Trump administration’s unilateral withdrawal from it. Later, he said he felt insulted when Germany’s economy minister drew a comparison between the U.S. and China. Trump praised German Chancellor Angela Merkel, calling her “a brilliant woman.”
- *United Kingdom:* Trump is so fond of British Prime Minister Boris Johnson that he gave him his private cell phone number. The British prime minister hopes he can now push through his Brexit deal with the European Union and pave the way for a trade deal with the U.S. Johnson supports the Iran nuclear deal and the Paris climate agreement; Trump withdrew from the first and has taken steps to leave the second. Johnson does not support U.S. strikes on Iran.
- *Syria:* The United States cannot avoid or ignore the conflict in Syria, according to a report issued by the U.S. Institute of Peace last fall. The report makes clear that the U.S. has interests at stake in Syria and some leverage to compel other parties to do what it wants. “America should not stand idly by.” But it seems that is exactly what the U.S. is doing.
- And speaking of foreign affairs, next year’s G-7 summit will be held at Camp David in Maryland, Trump announced. Trump’s initial plan was to host the gathering of world leaders at his own Miami golf resort.



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CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS

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2020 • DISTRICT



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UNIVERSITY INTERSCHOLASTIC LEAGUE

CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS

DISTRICT • 2020

- 1. Archaeologists announced in February that this 7,000-year-old object built by Neolithic farmers in what is now the Czech Republic may be the oldest wooden structure in the world. What?**
 - a. a bridge
 - b. a spear
 - c. a well
 - d. a canoe
- 2. When Taylor Swift released her album “Lover” last August, she also announced that she would be recording albums one through five again. Why?**
 - a. “to double my revenue, to be frank”
 - b. to take money away from her ex-husband Scooter Braun who also owns the rights to music by Justin Bieber and Ariana Grande
 - c. to gain artistic and financial control of her work and not have it owned by a company such as Ithaca Holdings
 - d. to allow her to form her own company — Big Machine
- 3. The United Kingdom officially separated from the European Union on Jan. 31. What’s next?**
 - a. An 11-month transition period begins.
 - b. Travel and trade between England and the rest of Europe come to a stop.
 - c. Citizens of England get to elect a new prime minister.
 - d. England gets its currency, the pound, the oldest currency in the world, back.
- 4. Winning the national championship for the first time in 50 years, the Kansas City Chiefs beat San Francisco 31-20 in the Super Bowl. The team was founded in 1960 as the Dallas Texans. In 1963, the team moved to Kansas City. Now, the Chiefs play in Arrowhead Stadium in what state?**
 - a. Kansas
 - b. Nebraska
 - c. Missouri
 - d. Texas
- 5. U.S. President Donald Trump tweeted what experts said was almost certainly an image from a classified satellite or drone, showing the aftermath of an accident at a space facility. Where?**
 - a. North Korea
 - b. Iran
 - c. Afghanistan
 - d. Russia
- 6. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo cursed and ranted at reporter Mary Louise Kelly and then denied which media outlet a seat accompanying him on his trip to Europe?**
 - a. *The Washington Post*
 - b. *The New York Times*
 - c. CNN
 - d. National Public Radio

7. **“Unborn children have never had a stronger defender in the White House,” U.S. President Donald Trump told the crowd of religious-school groups and anti-abortion activists who packed the National Mall in Washington, D.C., to hear him speak as the first sitting president to address what group in person?**
 - a. the Women’s March
 - b. the National Rifle Association’s annual meeting
 - c. the March for Life
 - d. the American Farm Bureau Federation’s 101st Annual Convention

8. **Thousands of demonstrators set fires and chanted calls for their country’s president to resign as the opposition to Jovenel Moïse increased. Where?**
 - a. Egypt
 - b. Hong Kong
 - c. Venezuela
 - d. Haiti

9. **What officially began in Toksook Bay, an Alaskan village on the edge of the frozen Bering Sea, where workers hoped to show they can overcome language barriers, isolation and government distrust?**
 - a. Donald Trump’s reelection campaign
 - b. Sarah Palin’s campaign
 - c. a cross-country march to draw attention to women’s rights
 - d. the 2020 census

10. **Who did NOT testify in the U.S. House Judiciary Committee hearings on impeachment?**
 - a. Kurt Volker
 - b. George Kent
 - c. Marie Yovanovitch
 - d. John Bolton

11. **The national debt increased by \$3 trillion during Donald Trump’s administration to reach 98% of GDP by 2030. What does this mean?**
 - a. Each American will have to pay 98% more in taxes to reduce the debt.
 - b. China owes America \$3 trillion.
 - c. The income from products and services traded with foreign countries is 98% of governmental expenses.
 - d. The national debt will be almost as big as the entire U.S. economy.

12. **Ukraine’s borders touch which country?**
 - a. Russia
 - b. Syria
 - c. Germany
 - d. Lithuania

13. **What Major League Baseball team fired two managers after a cheating scandal?**
 - a. New York Mets
 - b. St. Louis Cardinals
 - c. Texas Rangers
 - d. Houston Astros

- 14. The National Archives apologized. What did staff there do as part of an exhibit that examined the struggle of women to gain the right to vote?**
- removed all references to rallies about abortion
 - altered a photo from the 2017 Women’s March that blurred references critical of Trump
 - failed to mention female Democrats who had run for national office even after mentioning Republicans
 - removed references to women who led the charge to repeal Prohibition
- 15. Although he paid \$10 million for a Super Bowl ad, he did not compete in the Iowa caucuses or the Democratic debates. Who?**
- Cory Booker
 - Andrew Yang
 - Bernie Sanders
 - Michael Bloomberg
- 16. Democrat Julian Castro, the only Latino candidate in the 2020 presidential race, dropped out in January. “It simply isn’t our time.” Castro was mayor of what city?**
- El Paso, Texas
 - Miami, Florida
 - San Antonio, Texas
 - South Bend, Indiana
- 17. After the American killing of General Suleimani, Iraqi leaders voted to expel American forces from their country, and Iran all but abandoned a 2015 agreement intended to do what?**
- promote Christianity throughout the Middle East
 - make Iraq into a democratic society with free elections
 - allow refugees to take asylum in Syria
 - prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons
- 18. As people continued to wonder how Facebook will control the spread of misinformation ahead of this fall’s election, a Facebook official said in January the company would remove what from its platform?**
- deepfakes, video manipulations
 - likes and statistics on likes
 - any posts from politicians or political action committees
 - any post crowd-tagged as “fake news”
- 19. The power was out on the entire island of Puerto Rico, and the popular tourist landmark Punta Ventana was destroyed. What caused the damage?**
- Hurricane Maria
 - a series of earthquakes up to 6.4 in magnitude
 - Hurricane Dorian
 - a series of fires started by lightning
- 20. Federal officials announced in December that they would forbid the sale of most flavored e-cigarette cartridges but would exempt which flavor, a flavor not popular with teens?**
- Mint
 - Mango
 - Menthol
 - Cucumber

- 21. Almost 3,300 people have become sick and 2,200 have died in the Republic of Congo as part of the second-largest outbreak on record of what?**
- ebola
 - coronavirus, COVID-19
 - Lassa fever
 - rabies
- 22. The Dow Jones Industrial Average briefly reached a record high in mid-January. What?**
- 128,437
 - 29,374
 - 9,001
 - 3,329.62
- 23. In Australia: roughly 15 million acres affected, at least 18 people dead, more than 1,000 homes destroyed, and nearly 500,000 animals killed. What was the cause?**
- tsunami
 - fires
 - typhoon
 - floods
- 24. There are three insulin manufacturers: Eli Lilly, Novo Nordisk and Sanofi. They make the drug, set the price and work with health insurers to manage drug benefits. But, again, they have come under scrutiny. Why?**
- increasing prices of the life-saving drug
 - giving the drug in place of flu shots
 - failing to test diabetics for tuberculosis before they received the medication
 - refusing to work with makers of health apps to test for low blood sugar
- 25. Lt. Col. Alexander Vindman told impeachment investigators he tried to make changes to the transcript of a call between U.S. President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. What made Vindman a credible and unique source?**
- He was the first witness who was on the July 25 call between Trump and Zelensky.
 - He was the CIA's official in charge of Ukraine policy.
 - He spoke both Ukrainian and Russian.
 - He was a "Never Trumper."
- 26. U.S. Supreme Court justices declined to hear a case with relatives of Sandy Hook victims suing which gun company, a company that made the Bushmaster AR-15 rifle used in the school shooting?**
- Glock
 - Remington
 - Smith and Wesson
 - Colt
- 27. Residents of Montgomery, Alabama, known as the birthplace of the civil rights movement where more than half the population is black and where Rosa Parks started the bus boycott, did what last November?**
- desegregated the schools
 - removed the Confederate battle flag from the statehouse
 - elected their first African American mayor
 - banned any local music groups from performing Civil War music including "Dixie," the "Yellow Rose of Texas" and the "Battle Hymn of the Republic"

- 28. “No wall that keeps people out and restricts freedom is so high or so wide that it can’t be broken down,” German Chancellor Angela Merkel said on Nov. 9. What was she celebrating?**
- the building of Trump’s wall between the U.S. and Mexico
 - the breaking of a metaphorical wall between Russian communism and Western democracy
 - the building of a wall between Ireland and Scotland as part of Brexit
 - the fall of the Berlin Wall
- 29. After he placed fifth in the New Hampshire primary and earned zero delegates, his path to the candidacy was in question?**
- Joe Biden
 - Pete Buttigieg
 - Bernie Sanders
 - Tom Steyer
- 30. While the Star Wars movie “Rise of Skywalker” was breaking office records last fall, a Star Wars live-action drama series got noticed — “The Mandalorian.” It was released Nov. 12 where?**
- “in theaters everywhere”
 - on Disney Plus, another in a long line of internet-based video channels
 - on ABC network television, a network owned by Disney
 - Netflix, also owned by Disney
- 31. U.S. Delta Force operators reportedly killed Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in late October. Which of the following is NOT true about al-Baghdadi?**
- His death means the end of ISIS. Members of the military formerly loyal to ISIS will return to being a part of armies in Iraq and Syria.
 - He was “out to kill many, many more Westerners,” as he did journalist James Foley.
 - He formed the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (also known as ISIS).
 - He and his organization were responsible for more than 300 public executions and beheadings including American journalist Steven Sotloff.
- 32. Katerina Sakellaropoulou was elected by an overwhelming majority (261-33) to become the first female president of which country?**
- Slovakia
 - Thailand
 - Greece
 - Germany
- 33. The Texas House Republican caucus strongly condemned Speaker Dennis Bonnen. Why?**
- for spending \$4 million on television advertising blasting Republicans, including Gov. Greg Abbott
 - for not resigning as caucus members demanded
 - for using offensive language against other lawmakers
 - for allowing foreign governments to contribute to his campaign
- 34. Who delivered the democratic response to the State of the Union on Feb. 4, 2020?**
- Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer
 - House Speaker Nancy Pelosi
 - Stacey Abrams, former Georgia state representative
 - Pete Buttigieg, former mayor of South Bend Indiana

- 35. An announcement by the International Astronomical Union’s Minor Planet Center pushed Saturn ahead of Jupiter in what regard?**
- the number of rings around the planet, Saturn with 152 distinct rings and Jupiter with 148 distinct but less visible rings
 - the overall volume of the planet, Saturn 764 times the volume of earth and Jupiter 761 times the volume of earth
 - the length of the planet’s orbit, Saturn with an orbit of 29 earth years and Jupiter with an orbit of 24 earth years
 - the number of moons orbiting the planet, Saturn with 82 and Jupiter with 79
- 36. Texas Gov. Greg Abbott in October threatened to send state troopers to Austin to “unleash the full authority of every state agency.” Why?**
- to comply with federal government mandates in deporting immigrants
 - to clean up tent camps for the homeless
 - to stop vaping by underage students
 - to stop drug trafficking, especially marijuana coming in from Mexico
- 37. Who initially claimed responsibility for the drone and missile attack on an oil facility in Saudi Arabia although U.S. officials said they had evidence the attack was from another country?**
- Taliban rebels in Afghanistan
 - Al-Qaida insurgents in Iraq
 - Houthi rebels in Yemen
 - the Syrian opposition group
- 38. Which area did the National Weather Service NOT say was in the path of Hurricane Dorian according to its original forecast?**
- Florida
 - Alabama
 - the Bahamas
 - Georgia
- 39. Policy officials in the United States, the Netherlands, Britain, German and France have issued warnings about Chinese agents who, they said, hoped to develop relationships with former government employees to recruit them as spies. They used what online tool?**
- Monster
 - LinkedIn
 - Craigslist
 - TikTok
- 40. “Parasite” won an Oscar at the Academy Awards for best original screenplay, best international film, best director and best picture. It was produced in what country, becoming the first film from that country to win such honors?**
- South Korea
 - Vietnam
 - India (Bollywood)
 - North Korea

ESSAY PROMPT

NOTE: *Contestants who do not write an essay will be disqualified.* Essay length is not a major grading factor as long as the essay is substantial and demonstrates a sincere effort to discuss the assigned topic. Cover as many corners of the issue as practical, including historical, political, economic, social and cultural, when relevant. Avoid including your personal opinions, as more than enough information on the subject has been published. A focused, concise and specific essay beats a vague and rambling essay.

As we move from one year to the next, scientists are always releasing summary data for the previous year and examining trends. At the end of 2019 and at the beginning of 2020, new evidence came to light regarding climate change. Some people and groups stood steadfast against even the very idea of climate change while others pushed harder for something to be done about it.

Discuss (1) one or two things we have learned about climate change this academic year, (2) a governmental action that might affect climate change for better or worse, and (3) a person or group that has been in the news regarding climate change.

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ANSWER KEY

ESSAY PROMPT

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- | | |
|-------|-------|
| 1. C | 21. A |
| 2. C | 22. B |
| 3. A | 23. B |
| 4. C | 24. A |
| 5. B | 25. A |
| 6. D | 26. B |
| 7. C | 27. C |
| 8. D | 28. D |
| 9. D | 29. A |
| 10. D | 30. B |
| 11. D | 31. A |
| 12. A | 32. C |
| 13. D | 33. C |
| 14. B | 34. A |
| 15. D | 35. D |
| 16. C | 36. B |
| 17. D | 37. C |
| 18. A | 38. B |
| 19. B | 39. B |
| 20. C | 40. A |

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION POINTS

might include, but should not be limited to...

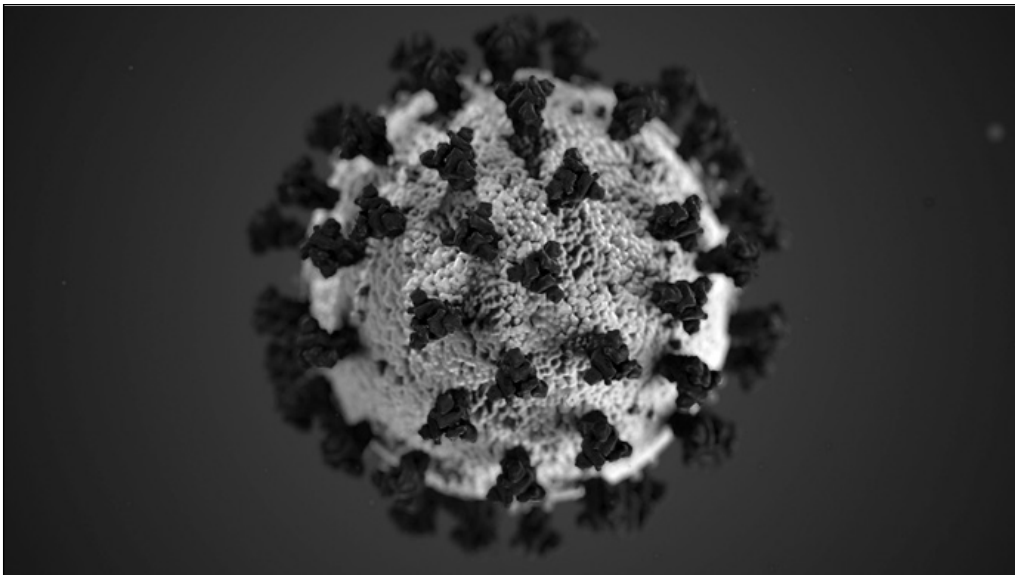
- *Fact:* According to independent analyses by NASA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Earth's global surface temperatures in 2019 were the second warmest since modern record-keeping began in 1880.
- *Fact:* Globally, 2019 temperatures were second only to those of 2016 and continued the planet's warming trend. The past five years have been the warmest of the last 140 years.
- *Fact:* Almost 400 all-time high temperatures were set in the northern hemisphere during the summer of 2019.
- *Fact:* If we add up all the promises to cut emissions made by countries that are party to the Paris Agreement, the world would still warm by more than 3°C by the end of this century according to Climate Action Tracker.
- *Fact:* The countries emitting the most greenhouse gases by quite a long way are China and the U.S. Together they account for more than 40% of the global total, according to 2017 data from the European Commission's Joint Research Centre and PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency.
- *Fact:* The extent of Arctic sea ice has dropped in recent years. It reached its lowest point on record in 2012.
- *Fact:* For an individual, the single biggest way to reduce the environmental impact on the planet is to modify the diet to include less meat according to according to a major report by the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.
- *Action:* This fall, the U.S. is scheduled to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, which committed the U.S. and 187 other countries to limit the rise of global temperatures.
- *Action:* The Trump administration is replacing President Barack Obama's Clean Power Plan, which would have limited carbon emissions from coal and gas-fired power plants, with the Affordable Clean Energy rule, which has weaker regulations.
- *Action:* The Trump administration has attempted to freeze the fuel efficiency standards imposed on new vehicles and to prevent California from setting its own emissions rules.
- *People:* U.S. President **Donald Trump**'s position on climate change was in the spotlight again, after he criticized "prophets of doom" at January's World Economic Forum in Davos. At the event, which had sustainability as its main theme, and activist **Greta Thunberg** as its star guest, Trump dismissed "alarmists" who wanted to "control every aspect of our lives" while also expressing the U.S.'s support for an initiative to plant 1 trillion trees, something he also mentioned in the State of the Union. He has called climate change "mythical," "nonexistent" or "an expensive hoax" — but also subsequently described it as a "serious subject" that is "very important to me."
- The central aim of the **United Nations' Paris Agreement** is to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5°C. Additionally, the agreement aims to strengthen the ability of countries to deal with the impacts of climate change.
- Most large **oil companies** no longer deny the connection between burning fossil fuels and climate change. In fact, they are scrambling to position themselves to be seen as part of the solution to what is increasingly seen by worried citizens as a major threat. Yet about a third more oil is being burned than in the late 1990s. Alternative energy ventures are viewed as a less profitable business than oil and gas.
- **MORE INFORMATION** — "What does Trump actually believe on climate change?", by Helier Cheung, BBC, Jan. 23, 2020. — <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-51213003>



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CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS

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2020 • REGION



Courtesy CDC / Alissa Eckert, MS; Dan Higgins, MAM

This illustration, created at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, reveals ultrastructural morphology exhibited by coronaviruses. Note the spikes that adorn the outer surface of the virus, which impart the look of a corona surrounding the virion, when viewed electron microscopically. The illness caused by this virus has been named coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

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UNIVERSITY INTERSCHOLASTIC LEAGUE

CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS

REGION • 2020

- 1. The ban is an ambitious one, stopping the flow into landfills, rivers and oceans. New Yorkers use 23 billion of them a year, and New York is the third state to ban them. What?**
 - a. plastic straws
 - b. plastic cups
 - c. single-use plastic bags
 - d. use of tobacco products in public places
- 2. New York Rep. Chris Collins was the first congressman to endorse U.S. President Donald Trump's campaign for the presidency. Yet last fall he resigned from Congress and pled guilty to what?**
 - a. insider trading of stock in a bio pharmaceutical company
 - b. working with a foreign government to influence the outcome of an election
 - c. bribery as part of the college admissions scandal
 - d. fraud of two conservative mega-downers
- 3. What company is testing a new feature similar to Stories on Snapchat and Instagram, Fleets, posts that disappear?**
 - a. Facebook
 - b. TikTok
 - c. WhatsApp
 - d. Twitter
- 4. Which of the following people has NOT served as Trump's chief of staff?**
 - a. Mick Mulvaney
 - b. Rahm Emanuel
 - c. John Kelly
 - d. Mark Meadows
- 5. What news did the ozone hole make this past fall, thanks to unusually warm temperatures high above the Antarctic?**
 - a. It grew to the largest size on record.
 - b. It increased in depth to reach through the stratosphere into the exosphere.
 - c. It shrank to the smallest size on record.
 - d. It changed color and became visible to the naked eye.
- 6. On Super Tuesday, Joe Biden, who pundits called the "Comeback Kid," scored a dramatic upset victory in what state?**
 - a. Vermont
 - b. Texas
 - c. Alabama
 - d. Tennessee

7. **A state court in North Carolina ruled that North Carolina cannot use existing maps for congressional regions in next year's elections. Why?**
- They were a product of invalid partisan gerrymandering.
 - The Election Commission did not meet the deadline.
 - They would result in advantage for the Democrats, the liberals and minorities.
 - They were drawn by an independent commission, something that is a violation of the state's constitution that gives that power to the governor.
8. **In a speech with very few nods to common-ground issues, both sides of the chamber stood for prolonged applause when Trump, in his State of the Union address, mentioned what?**
- socialism taking over health care
 - HR3, the Elijah Cummings Lower Drug Costs Now Act
 - reelection — “Four more years.”
 - infrastructure
9. **The NCAA's top policy-making group voted unanimously “to permit students participating in athletics the opportunity to benefit from the use of their name, image and likeness in a manner consistent with the collegiate model,” the association said in news release. Changes in NCAA rules had to occur within set guidelines that include all of the following EXCEPT:**
- Rules are transparent, focused and enforceable, designed to facilitate fair and balanced competition.
 - Student-athletes are students first and not employees of the university.
 - All such paid opportunities, whether from a local car dealership or a six-figure endorsement from a university booster, would be considered equal.
 - Compensation for performance or participation is not allowed.
10. **It is the world's leading infectious cause of death with 10 million new cases each year. The BCG jab, the current vaccine, is not effective for this highly contagious disease. However, this past fall, a team of researchers revealed a new vaccine after trials in South Africa, Kenya and Zambia for what disease?**
- Ebola
 - Escherichia coli*
 - Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*
 - Tuberculosis
11. **The principal deputy director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention called the finding a “breakthrough.” What toxin did federal officials announce in November that they found in the lungs of patients hospitalized with vaping-related illnesses?**
- vitamin E acetate
 - Tetrahydrocannabinol
 - mint flavoring
 - propylene glycol
12. **Picked by her Social Democratic Party, Sonna Marin, 34, became the world's youngest prime minister. Of what country is she prime minister?**
- New Zealand
 - Ukraine
 - El Salvador
 - Finland

- 13. The former U.S. ambassador to Ukraine told the House impeachment inquiry that she felt threatened by Trump and “shocked, appalled, devastated” that he vilified her in a call with another foreign leader. She said she wondered why it was necessary for Trump to do what?**
- “dismiss me since he had no authority to do so”
 - “smear my reputation”
 - “lie to Congress and the American public”
 - “call for an investigation of Joe Biden”
- 14. Why did Defense Secretary Mark Esper fire Secretary of the Navy Richard Spencer?**
- Spencer negotiated a private deal with officials in the Ukraine for a military presence in that country.
 - Spencer mishandled the case of a Navy SEAL, Edward Gallagher, who was accused of war crimes.
 - Spencer allowed a Navy SEAL to keep his Trident pin after being convicted of posing with the corpse of an Islamic State extremist.
 - Spencer failed to prosecute Clint Lorance who denied murdering two Afghan civilians.
- 15. Suffolk County (New York) police removed weapons from the home of a student who, records show, “intended to bring a gun to school and shoot everyone.” This case was brought under what new law?**
- the Second Amendment
 - Red Flag Law
 - the Never Again Law
 - the Sandy Hook Law
- 16. U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the world’s efforts have been “utterly inadequate” so far with dramatic consequences for humans. Efforts to do what?**
- to stop climate change
 - to get along peacefully
 - to open borders and to stop immigration clashes
 - to curb human overpopulation
- 17. What Fort Worth-based retailer announced in January that it would close up to 450 locations, nearly half of its 942 stores?**
- Pier 1
 - Forever 21
 - J.C. Penney
 - GameStop
- 18. After the killing of Gen. Qasem Soleimani in Iraq, Iran’s Parliament unanimously approved a bill designating the entire U.S. military and Pentagon as what?**
- terrorist organizations
 - guerrilla warriors
 - “allies of the entire Middle East”
 - “friends of Iraq”
- 19. More than 4,000 pounds of sweet potatoes and carrots were dropped from helicopters in Australia. Why?**
- to provide seeds to restart those crops after the fires
 - to provide mulch on land in severe drought
 - to feed wallabies affected by fires
 - to get rid of a surplus crop brought in from India

- 20. Dozens of cute and quirky robots were unveiled at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. One of the highlights was RollBot, a robot designed to do what?**
- It will replace conventional tires with puncture-proof versions.
 - It's designed to cover the palm of your hand and measure blood oxygen level, blood sugar level and temperature.
 - It's a portable computer designed to roll up like a towel for easy, safe storage.
 - It will bring a fresh roll of toilet paper to your side.
- 21. In a remarkable comeback election, Tsai Ing-wen won reelection after a campaign in which she vowed to preserve her island country's sovereignty amid pressure from Beijing. What country?**
- Hong Kong
 - Taiwan
 - Indonesia
 - Tonga
- 22. Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee celebrated Robert E. Lee Day (Jan. 19) and Andrew Jackson Day (March 15). This year, he said he wanted to honor Nathan Bedford Forrest, a leader with which group?**
- al-Qaida
 - Last Chance Patriots
 - Ku Klux Klan
 - The Alternative Right
- 23. As suspected, 2019 was a hot year. It was the ___ hottest on record with only 2016 being hotter, by less than one-tenth of a degree Fahrenheit.**
- first
 - second
 - third
 - fourth
- 24. Who presided over the impeachment trial in the Senate?**
- House Speaker Nancy Pelosi
 - Vice President Mike Pence
 - Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell
 - Chief Justice John Roberts
- 25. Following the break up of an alliance between the OPEC cartel and Russia, what country, the world's top exporter of oil, launched a price war, resulting in a drop in the price of oil by some 20%?**
- Iraq
 - Canada
 - Saudi Arabia
 - United Arab Emirates
- 26. Largely due to increased legal costs associated with sexual abuse cases, what 110-year-old organization filed for bankruptcy protection in February?**
- Frontier Girls
 - Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth
 - Boy Scouts of America
 - Girl Scouts of the U.S.A.

- 27. To end the 11-day strike of teachers, Chicago city officials agreed to all of the following EXCEPT:**
- pay raises amounting to 16% over five years
 - year-round school
 - smaller class sizes
 - more nurses and social workers
- 28. The Library of Congress abandoned plans last year to showcase a mural-size photograph of demonstrators at the 2017 Women’s March in Washington because of concerns it would be perceived as critical of President Trump. However, a similar image was digitally altered and placed on display where?**
- the Women’s Museum
 - the National Archives
 - the March for Life on Capitol Hill
 - the lobby of the Washington Post
- 29. What unique weather event fueled the fires in California last fall, pushing electric companies to cut off power to millions of residents?**
- intense winds, Diablo, Santa Ana and El Norte winds, blowing hot, dry air off the mountains
 - record high temperatures statewide, almost 10°F higher than average
 - drought conditions, the worst in a century, coupled with dry rivers and lakes caused by overuse of water for farming
 - a shift in the Earth’s magnetic pole that moved electrical charges in the atmosphere farther south
- 30. The reporting of Iowa Democratic caucus results was delayed. Why?**
- a challenge by Pete Buttigieg who said his name was left off the ballot
 - a tornado outbreak that paralyzed the area
 - record high voter turnout, almost 98% of registered voters
 - problems with software use to report the data
- 31. What continent recorded an all-time record high temperature of 65°F in February?**
- Antarctica
 - Arctic
 - Asia (Siberia, specifically)
 - Australia
- 32. President Rodrigo Duterte said, “America is very rude.” Officials in his country later said they are ending a 22-year-old agreement governing U.S. military operations in his country. Where?**
- South Korea
 - The Philippines
 - Guam
 - Malaysia
- 33. A Texas law, HB496, that took effect Jan. 1 requires all public schools to have the first line of defense in saving lives in easily accessible areas. What?**
- guns in every classroom
 - closed-circuit television cameras
 - a hotline phone that direct dials 911
 - bleeding control kits

- 34. American troops may begin withdrawing from Afghanistan after a deal with the Taliban. However, what group was NOT included in the negotiations resulting in some difficulty releasing 5,000 prisoners, something written into the original deal?**
- al-Qaida
 - Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
 - the government of Afghanistan
 - Islamic State
- 35. Although the results were contested and the election was repeatedly delayed, Ashraf Ghani was reelected to another five-year term as president of what country?**
- Syria
 - Afghanistan
 - Iran
 - Pakistan
- 36. Since at least 1900, members of Congress have tried to pass a law making this a crime. This fall, the House finally passed just such a measure. The Senate passed a version of the bill last year. Trump is expected to sign it into law. What will the legislation outlaw?**
- drinking alcohol, the Return to Prohibition Act
 - abortion, the Human Life Protection Act
 - lynching, the Emmett Till Antilynching Act
 - animal cruelty, the Preventing Animal Cruelty and Torture Act
- 37. In Israel's third election in less than a year, which party won a majority of seats in Parliament?**
- the left-wing Meretz party, social democracy
 - the right-wing Yisrael Beiteinu party
 - Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party
 - none; the election resulted in another deadlock
- 38. It's vegan and gluten-free. It has no preservatives, artificial flavors, sweeteners or colors. And there are versions for adults and children. What?**
- a new burger meat available at Burger King
 - Coke's new energy drink, Coke Zero Sugar
 - Colgate's "Zero" toothpaste and mouthwash
 - a new Wrigley's gum
- 39. Prince Harry and Duchess Meghan officially stepped back as working senior royals on April 1. Where were the couple and their baby son, Archie, moving?**
- British Columbia, Canada
 - Rendezvous Bay, Anguilla
 - British Virgin Islands
 - Cayman Islands
- 40. A Louisiana case is the first major abortion case to go before the Supreme Court since Brett Kavanaugh was appointed to the bench. What would it require?**
- doctors performing the procedure to get admitting privileges at a nearby hospital
 - proof that the fetus is not alive, effectively banning all abortions
 - consent of the parents of the person getting the abortion if that person is 21 years old or younger.
 - consent of two physicians that the procedure is required to save the life of the mother

ESSAY PROMPT

NOTE: *Contestants who do not write an essay will be disqualified.* Essay length is not a major grading factor as long as the essay is substantial and demonstrates a sincere effort to discuss the assigned topic. Cover as many corners of the issue as practical, including historical, political, economic, social and cultural, when relevant. Avoid including your personal opinions, as more than enough information on the subject has been published. A focused, concise and specific essay beats a vague and rambling essay.

COVID-19

The Centers for Disease Control is responding to an outbreak of respiratory disease caused by a novel (new) coronavirus that was first detected in China and which has now been detected in almost 90 locations internationally, including in the United States. The virus has been named “SARS-CoV-2” and the disease it causes has been named “coronavirus disease 2019” (abbreviated “COVID-19”).

Discuss COVID-19 from five perspectives: scientific, political, social, cultural and economic.

DO NOT DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST!

ANSWER KEY

ESSAY PROMPT

The Centers for Disease Control is responding to an outbreak of respiratory disease caused by a novel (new) coronavirus that was first detected in China and which has now been detected in almost 90 locations internationally, including in the United States. The virus has been named “SARS-CoV-2” and the disease it causes has been named “coronavirus disease 2019” (abbreviated “COVID-19”).

Discuss COVID-19 from five perspectives: scientific, political, social, cultural and economic.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION POINTS PREPARED MARCH 13, 2020
might include, but should not be limited to...

- | | |
|-------|-------|
| 1. C | 21. B |
| 2. A | 22. C |
| 3. D | 23. B |
| 4. B | 24. D |
| 5. C | 25. C |
| 6. B | 26. C |
| 7. A | 27. B |
| 8. D | 28. B |
| 9. C | 29. A |
| 10. D | 30. D |
| 11. A | 31. A |
| 12. D | 32. B |
| 13. B | 33. D |
| 14. B | 34. C |
| 15. B | 35. B |
| 16. A | 36. C |
| 17. A | 37. D |
| 18. A | 38. C |
| 19. C | 39. A |
| 20. D | 40. A |

- *Scientific:* Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common in people and many different species of animals. Early on, many of the patients at the epicenter of the outbreak in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China had some link to a large seafood and live animal market, suggesting animal-to-person spread.
- *Scientific:* The outbreak was similar to a Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak in 2003. By interrupting all human-to-human transmission, SARS was effectively eradicated.
- *Scientific:* Within the first few months worldwide, the coronavirus didn't even approach the number of cases or deaths from another respiratory virus — the flu. CDC estimates that so far this season there have been at least 34 million flu illnesses, 350,000 hospitalizations and 20,000 deaths from flu.
- *Political:* U.S. President Donald Trump appointed Vice President Mike Pence to lead the response to COVID-19. This immediate brought renewed scrutiny to the former governor's handling of an HIV outbreak in southern Indiana when he was governor.
- *Social:* Many large gatherings were almost immediately canceled including the South by Southwest festival in Austin, Texas, an annual conglomeration of parallel film, interactive media, and music festivals and conferences. The festival regularly brings some 80,000 visitors to the city along with an estimated local economic impact of \$355.9 million in 2019.
- *Social:* One fear is that other large social gatherings would be canceled. Numerous conventions were almost immediately canceled and the impact on social gatherings such as political rallies was not immediately clear. “I'm not concerned at all,” Trump told reporters March 7 at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida, insisting he was not planning to scale back his campaign rallies because of the coronavirus, and that he was not worried about the virus having reached Washington, D.C. (The District's first confirmed COVID-19 case was announced earlier in the day.)
- *Cultural:* The novel coronavirus has affected cultural institutions the world over, with movie theaters and film shoots closing down in China and the shuttering of La Scala in Milan. The Louvre Museum in Paris briefly closed. Italy closed its museums. In New York City, Broadway closed. The NCAA tournament was canceled, and the NBA suspended games for at least a month.
- *Cultural:* The University of Georgia is suspending all spring of 2020 study abroad programs in South Korea. Citing the “rapid increase in the number of confirmed cases in Northern Italy,” Villanova University said it would be bringing home its students who are abroad there. Colorado University Boulder said it was suspending all study abroad programs in both China and South Korea for the current and summer semesters. Elon University and Syracuse University announced that they were suspending their programs in Florence, Italy. Most universities and many public schools moved to online classes for the remainder of the semester.
- *Economic:* “The outbreak has the potential to cause severe economic and market dislocation. But the scale of the impact will ultimately be determined by how the virus spreads and evolves, which is almost impossible to predict, as well as how governments respond,” said Neil Shearing, group chief economist at Capital Economics in a CNN analysis by Charles Riley and Julia Horowitz. Some economists said it already cost the economy \$1 trillion.
- *Economic:* In response to the spread of the virus in the United States, the Dow Jones Industrial Average plummeted from 28,868 on Jan. 2 to 21,200 by March 12 having lost a quarter of its value. “The fundamentals of the U.S. economy remain strong. However, the coronavirus poses evolving risks to economic activity,” Federal Reserve Chair Jerome H. Powell said in a Feb. 28 statement.