



UNIVERSITY INTERSCHOLASTIC LEAGUE  
*Making a World of Difference*

# CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS

 @UILCIANDE

**2015 • SAMPLE**



FEMA NEWS PHOTO BY MAX WHITTAKER

State park rangers burned weeds on the exposed lake bed of the Rye Patch Reservoir in Nevada, which was at 3.5 percent capacity amid a drought.

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# CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS

## SAMPLE • 2015

- 1. Texas Gov. Greg Abbott declared Feb. 2 to be Chris Kyle Day. “We honor our military heroes,” he said. Who was Kyle?**
  - a. the subject of the blockbuster movie *The Boy Next Door*
  - b. the most lethal fighter pilot in U.S. history
  - c. a U.S. Navy SEAL marksman killed at a Texas gun range in 2013
  - d. the inventor of the fighter drone which Abbott said helped to keep the peace in the world today
- 2. A proposal for an amendment to a law in Oklahoma could make it illegal to hide your identity in public. The fine for your fashion crime? \$500. Originally drafted to help combat crimes from the Ku-Klux-Klan, what would the law ban?**
  - a. hate crimes
  - b. hoods
  - c. face masks
  - d. gloves that block fingerprints
- 3. Texas Muslims rallying at the Capitol were greeted by insults from a small group of protesters. About two dozen self-identified Christians protested nearby, shouting, “We don’t want you here!” Further, Molly White (R-Belton) left instructions for her staff to ask Muslims who visited her office to do what?**
  - a. renounce Islamic terrorists and pledge allegiance to the U.S.
  - b. sign a guest book with a depiction of the prophet Muhammad
  - c. wear a Israeli flag lapel pin
  - d. recite the Pledge of Allegiance before the rally on the steps
- 4. The FBI and Apple Computer were investigating a possible hack into the popular iCloud online data backup service in September after what happened?**
  - a. Credit card numbers were stolen.
  - b. Plans for the iWatch were released ahead of the official release date.
  - c. Nude photos of celebrities were leaked.
  - d. Passwords to the iCloud were downloaded and posted online.
- 5. Fighter jets escorted a Delta Air Lines flight and a Southwest Airlines flight to Atlanta’s airport in January after what?**
  - a. terrorists made it through TSA screening
  - b. hijackers threatened the flight crew
  - c. the owners of a drone that landed on the White House lawn had ties to the flights
  - d. anonymous bomb threats made via Twitter
- 6. Why did U.S. President Barack Obama say he refused to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in March even after House Speaker John Boehner invited Netanyahu to deliver a speech in front of Congress that month?**
  - a. Obama said it was his policy not to meet with leaders two weeks before their election.
  - b. Obama doesn’t like Netanyahu, he told CNN, setting Twitter a buzz.
  - c. At a hastily called press conference, Obama said he was frustrated with Boehner and this would teach Boehner a lesson.
  - d. Israel is not an ally of the U.S. and Obama said he saw no need to meet with Netanyahu.

7. **ZMapp is an experimental drug that may help to provide a vaccine for what disease?**
  - a. Ebola hemorrhagic fever
  - b. Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis also known as Lou Gehrig's disease
  - c. H1N1 also known as the Swine Flu or Influenza A
  - d. Ischaemic heart disease, the leading cause of death in the world
  
8. **Ferguson, the town in which protests and demonstrations occurred after a white police officer killed an unarmed African American male, is a suburb of which city?**
  - a. Kansas City, Missouri
  - b. Chicago, Illinois
  - c. St. Louis, Missouri
  - d. Indianapolis, Indiana
  
9. **Apparently there were "cuddling sessions" at the G20 Leaders' Summit. Both U.S. President Barack Obama and Russian President Vladimir Putin cozied up with what?**
  - a. each other
  - b. koalas
  - c. fans on Twitter
  - d. baby kangaroos
  
10. **Some of pop music's biggest stars came together for "Band Aid" and a rendition of "Do they know it's Christmas." They raised money for what cause?**
  - a. to fight hunger
  - b. the Ebola crisis
  - c. to benefit farmers
  - d. the homeless
  
11. **Of the 15 hotels under construction or currently completed in the Dallas area, one-third will be what brand, a \$9.7 billion brand that manages 4,150 hotels worldwide and that was founded in Cisco, Texas in 1919?**
  - a. Bradford Homesuites
  - b. Wyndham Hotel
  - c. Live Oak Lodging
  - d. Hilton
  
12. **The U.S. safety regulator has told Japanese supplier Takata Corp., scolded for an "unwillingness to move forward" and five manufacturers to expand nationwide a regional recall of what?**
  - a. child seats that weren't secure
  - b. defective parking brake
  - c. potentially lethal air bags
  - d. electrical short in heated mirrors
  
13. **After less than two years at the helm of the Pentagon, U.S. President Barack Obama's defense secretary resigned as part of a "mutual decision" between the two. Which of the following individuals did NOT serve as a defense secretary in the Obama administration?**
  - a. Donald Rumsfeld
  - b. Chuck Hagel
  - c. Robert Gates
  - d. Leon Panetta

14. **Texas is one of only seven states that require what as part of the voting process?**
- affidavit of identity
  - proof of residence, such as bank statement
  - voter registration card
  - government-issued photo identification ID
15. **Who coasted into office as Texas land commissioner, taking the helm of an office that will require him to extract money from the industries — oil and gas — that have fueled his family’s wealth and political fortunes.**
- George P. Bush, manager of an energy and technology-focused investment firm
  - John Cook, former mayor of El Paso
  - Democrat Gary Mauro, an attorney in Austin
  - Jerry Patterson, incumbent commissioner who sought reelection
16. **Which of the following is NOT true about Ebola?**
- As a virus, like the common cold, it is easily spread through the air and direct contact.
  - Signs and symptoms don’t appear until 2-21 days after exposure, including fever and vomiting.
  - The death rate is approximately 70 percent, making it one of the deadliest diseases known.
  - It is also called hemorrhagic fever because it can cause bleeding of the eyes, ears, nose, mouth and rectum.
17. **Barbecue lovers are facing sticker shock from a brisket shortage. In Texas, they cooked up four tons of the smoky specialty for Gov. Greg Abbott’s inauguration party. Business is good, but the restaurant is facing a new challenge: a dramatic spike in the cost of beef. Brisket prices have increased 60 percent in the last year, from \$2.21 per pound to \$3.52. Why?**
- increasing demand for brisket in China
  - the drought
  - news that it is the most healthy form of meat, better than chicken
  - mad cow disease resulting in a shortage of cows
18. **The average life expectancy in the United States was 78.8 in the fall of 2014. Why was this significant?**
- It dropped for the first time in recorded history.
  - It reached a record high.
  - It was twice that of less-developed nations.
  - The average for men, 81.2, was higher than for women, 76.4, for the first time.
19. **The first images showing an asteroid whizzing past Earth revealed the mountain-sized mass brought with it a surprise moon. Why was Asteroid 2004 BL86 significant?**
- It was the first asteroid discovered to have a moon.
  - It will collide with earth on its next orbit in 200 years.
  - It is a piece of the material that made the earth 5 billion years ago.
  - It came within 745,000 miles of the earth and could be seen with binoculars.

- 20. When the Supreme Court term began Oct. 6, it marked the justices fifth term together and the 10th year with whom serving as chief justice?**
- Sandra Day O'Connor
  - Samuel Alito
  - John Roberts
  - Earl Warren
- 21. The Whole Woman's Clinic in Fort Worth is back in business courtesy of which ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court.**
- The court ruled that abortion is unconstitutional but clinics with dual missions can open.
  - The court ruled that the Centers for Disease Control didn't have jurisdiction to close the clinic due to Ebola fears.
  - The court overturned a portion of a law that closed all but eight of the abortion facilities in Texas.
  - The court ruled that House Bill 2 was unconstitutional and sent the case back to a lower court.
- 22. What made Joe Straus' election to Texas speaker of the house for his fourth term different from most elections to that office in the last four decades?**
- He became the longest serving speaker in that time.
  - He had an opponent.
  - He became the first Republican speaker in that time.
  - He became the first speaker from San Antonio.
- 23. The transport of what crop was endangered when the Ivory Coast shut down its borders with Liberia and Guinea due to the Ebola outbreak?**
- cocaine
  - chocolate
  - coffee
  - corn
- 24. While Enterovirus and Ebola were both viruses making headlines, health officials say that as fall approached, officials said another virus should be taken seriously. Doctors said many more patients die from this virus every year.**
- chickenpox
  - Hepatitis A
  - smallpox
  - flu
- 25. After months of debate, Austin city council members voted to legalize companies such as Uber and Lyft in Austin. What do these companies do?**
- clean houses after Ebola exposure
  - offer ride-sharing, competing with taxicabs
  - design apps to help customers get a taxicab when traveling
  - find hotel rooms available that night at highly discounted prices
- 26. At the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, with its 2016 Mirai sedan, Toyota announced it is betting on new fuel technology based on what?**
- helium
  - garbage
  - hydrogen
  - ethanol

- 27. In an election that had not been contested since 1975, San Antonio Republican Joe Straus was re-elected to his fourth term to what office?**
- speaker of the house
  - governor
  - lieutenant governor
  - president pro tempore
- 28. “This week’s events are a grim reminder that Canada is not immune to the types of terrorist attacks we have seen elsewhere in the world,” Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper said in mid-October. To what events was he referring?**
- a mass shooting at the University of Ottawa
  - Two ISIL recruits left Canada and participated in overseas attack.
  - a shooting by a single man in the Canadian capital of Ottawa
  - Two soldiers were hit by a car driven by a man who had recently converted to Islam in the Ontario capital Toronto.
- 29. For the first time in nearly 100 years, Girl Scouts of the USA will allow its young go-getters to push their wares more than door to door or on individual stands. How do they plan to increase the \$800 million in sales?**
- through Amazon.com
  - by partnering with the Boy Scouts for sales at their events
  - selling in HEB, based in San Antonio
  - online
- 30. In what officials called an excessive act of barbarism and a “terrorist operation,” a shooting at satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo in Paris left at least 11 people dead and wounded 10 more in early January. According to reports, why did the attack occur?**
- Terrorists wanted publication of their manifesto.
  - Burglars were going after money held in the building.
  - Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of ISIS, declared war on a media.
  - The magazine published cartoons of Muhammad.
- 30. Due to problems with shipping supplies due to labor disputes in America in the fall, McDonald’s, the biggest burger chain in the world, announced it will ration what?**
- toys for kids’ meals
  - french fries
  - hamburgers made from American beef
  - MacRib
- 32. Every last Marine has left Camp Leatherneck in Helmand Province, headquarters of the U.S. Marine presence in what country for the past six years?**
- Syria
  - Afghanistan
  - Iran
  - South Korea
- 33. Irving school officials tried to get ahead of a possible disaster, shooting a “Drop, Cover, Hold On!” video with elementary school student. They were trying to educate students about how to react during what?**
- an earthquake
  - a tornado
  - a terrorist attack
  - high winds in a hurricane

- 34. After she was diagnosed with brain cancer, Brittany Maynard, 29, became known for what?**
- raising millions of dollars for brain cancer research through social media
  - advocating for the right to die in California, taking her fight to the state legislature
  - becoming the first person to take an experimental drug for brain cancer and living in remission for one year
  - ending her life after taking a lethal medication as part of die with dignity program in Oregon
- 35. More than three-fourths of the votes cast were in favor of the City of Berkeley's Measure D, a measure that will help combat the nation's obesity epidemic. What did voters approve?**
- a 1-cent-an-ounce tax on soft drinks
  - outlawing sugary drinks of larger than 16 ounces
  - a ban on soft drink machines in the schools
  - requiring individuals purchasing large soft drinks to be 18 or older
- 36. According to a study from the AAA and University of Utah, in many cars what can cause greater levels of cognitive distraction unintentionally?**
- making a hands-free call
  - picking up your phone
  - brushing your hair
  - applying makeup
- 37. A sudden spasm of violence jolted Canada's capital in 2014, triggering a lockdown and hours of confusion in Ottawa. What happened?**
- A terrorist attack blew up Parliament building in the nation's capital.
  - A soldier was killed in a hit-and-run by a group of ISIL recruits.
  - A gunman killed an honor guard soldier then opened fire inside Parliament building.
  - A group of ISIL terrorists hijacked a plane en route to the Canadian capital of Ottawa.
- 38. "This ain't Iraq. This is the United States," Demetric Whitlock yelled to a line of police officers on South Florissant Road, in front of the Ferguson (Missouri) Police Department. Protesters hurled bottles, batteries and rocks at police after what happened?**
- A grand jury decided not to indict a police officer.
  - The governor issued a pardon of a police officer involved in a shooting.
  - The legislature passed a law supporting race as a criteria for admission to state colleges.
  - A jury found a police officer not guilty of manslaughter after a shooting.
- 39. Three billion miles away from Earth, NASA officials woke up the New Horizons spacecraft in preparation for studying what?**
- Jupiter and its newly discovered rings
  - a comet, on which it landed
  - a nearby planet deemed to be habitable
  - Pluto and its many moons
- 40. Which of the following was specifically a result of the expiration of the Wright Amendment?**
- American Airlines will be able to land planes at Love Field.
  - Southwest Airlines will be able to fly to destinations such as Jamaica and the Bahamas.
  - Flights from Love Field can go to states other than states that touch Texas.
  - Southwest Airlines will now fly in to ATL, Atlanta's airport.



**ESSAY PROMPT**

**An article on making small talk in the Huffington Post discussed how and why people resort to talking about the weather. Lindsay Holmes wrote that research has some possible insight: “We’re directly affected by our environment. Studies have shown that our moods and overall well-being are influenced by the weather. So when the rising temperature or the bitter cold is the first thing on your mind, it might be hard to discuss anything else.” Certainly, the weather has been front and center in the news during the last six months. So, discuss the weather and the implications of some of the recent newsworthy weather events.**

*NOTE: Essay length is not a major grading factor as long as the essay is substantial and doesn't ramble. Cover as many corners of the issue as practical, including historical, political, economic, current events and cultural, when relevant. Avoid including your personal opinions are discouraged, as more than enough information on the subject has been published. A focused, concise and specific essay beats a vague and rambling essay.*



# CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS

## CONTESTANT ANSWER SHEET

**DO NOT** write your name or school on this paper. Write the **LETTER** indicating your response to each question in the space below. Write clearly in **CAPITAL** letters. Write your response to the essay on the scratch paper provided. You have 60 minutes. Each objective question is worth 1 point. The essay is worth as much as 10 points.

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### FOR JUDGE'S USE

**Points from OBJECTIVE questions (each correct answer counts 1 point)** \_\_\_\_\_

**If in the top eight places, add the points from the ESSAY question** \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL POINTS** \_\_\_\_\_

*Reminder:* Team score is based on the cumulative score of the multiple choice portion of the contest only. Do not count the essay scores toward the team championship.

# ANSWER KEY

## ESSAY PROMPT

An article on making small talk in the Huffington Post discussed how and why people resort to talking about the weather. Lindsay Holmes wrote that research has some possible insight: “We’re directly affected by our environment. Studies have shown that our moods and overall well-being are influenced by the weather. So when the rising temperature or the bitter cold is the first thing on your mind, it might be hard to discuss anything else.” Certainly, the weather has been front and center in the news during the last six months. So, discuss the weather and the implications of some of the recent newsworthy weather events.

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

## POSSIBLE DISCUSSION POINTS MAY INCLUDE, BUT NOT LIMITED TO...

- *Blizzard* — The not-so-great blizzard of 2015 did wallop the Northeast: Long Island and Massachusetts got hammered with more than two feet of snow. Schools all across the Northeast were closed. Nearly 7,000 flights were canceled in anticipation of a storm likely costing the regional economy more than \$45 million. Amtrak canceled service to the Northeast. New York City officials closed the subway forcing millions of people to stay home.
- *Drought* — The majority of Texas was experiencing a drought that started in October 2010. With California facing one of the most severe droughts on record, Gov. Jerry Brown declared a drought State of Emergency in January. Nine states from Oregon to Texas had areas in the most severe level of drought — exceptional. Texas Climatologist John-Nielsen Gammon has warned that Texas could be in the midst of a drought worse than the drought of record in the 1950s. 2011 was the driest year ever for Texas, with an average of only 14.8 inches of rain. As of January, 2015, 59 percent of Texas was still in a drought, while 11 percent was in the worst two stages of drought, either extreme or exceptional drought. The state’s reservoirs were 65 percent full. If El Niño predictions for 2015 prove correct, rainfall in Texas could be substantial. However, the projections have been lacking for the last two years.
- *Climate change* — 2014 will likely be the hottest on record for the planet, with global temperatures 1.03 degrees Fahrenheit higher than the 1961-to-1990 average, according to a report from the World Meteorological Organization. This would make 2014 the 38th consecutive year with an anomalously high annual global temperature. The estimate comes from the WMO’s annual compendium on the “Status of the Global Climate.” This year’s report was released in December during the U.N. climate talks in Lima, Peru, where diplomats are negotiating a new global climate deal to be signed in Paris next year. Driving the temperature rise in 2014 were the oceans — the Pacific, the polar and subtropical north Atlantic, parts of the south Atlantic, and the Indian Ocean all experienced the warmest temperatures ever recorded. Global sea surface temperatures were 0.45 degree Celsius above the 1961-90 normal.
- *Impact* — Lettuce might cost a little more at the beginning of 2015 due to a shortage on California and Arizona farms that’s being blamed on the weather. The cold snap occurred just after Christmas in central and southern California, as well as parts of Arizona, where much of the country’s lettuce crop is grown, according to *The Grower*.
- *Impact* — The Agriculture Department increased estimates for the growth in retail prices for meats, many of which are sitting at record highs because of drought and diseases. The department now expects meat prices to rise 6.5 percent in 2014, up from 5.5 percent forecast a month earlier, and well ahead of the 20-year average increase of 2.9 percent. The average price for a pound of ground beef climbed to another record high—\$4.201 per pound—in the United States in November.