



UNIVERSITY INTERSCHOLASTIC LEAGUE
Making a World of Difference

CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS

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2022 • DISTRICT

Feb. 18, 2022



State Department photo by Freddie Everett

Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken delivers remarks to the press at the U.S. Department of State in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 26, 2022.

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CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS

DISTRICT • 2022

- 1. The highest annual increase in nearly 40 years, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. inflation climbed how much in January?**
 - a. 2.6%
 - b. 5.6%
 - c. 7.5%
 - d. 14.7%
- 2. The White House estimates that Texas will receive about \$35 billion from the national infrastructure bill passed in November. What is NOT included for Texas in that bill?**
 - a. money to fix crumbling bridges
 - b. money to offer free preschool for all 3- and 4-year-olds
 - c. money to replace lead pipes
 - d. money to expand broadband access
- 3. Representatives from more than 40 countries meeting at COP26, 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference, pledged to phase out the use of what energy source?**
 - a. coal
 - b. all fossil fuels
 - c. nuclear power
 - d. wind energy
- 4. At 36, Lindsey Jacobellis became the oldest female American medalist in Winter Olympics history. In what sport did she receive the first gold medal for the U.S. in the 2022 Winter Olympics?**
 - a. figure skating
 - b. bobsleigh
 - c. snowboarding
 - d. biathlon
- 5. Stephen Sondheim died this past fall just as his first highly successful musical — produced in 1957 — was being remade into a movie for release in December of 2021. What musical?**
 - a. “A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum”
 - b. “West Side Story”
 - c. “A Little Night Music”
 - d. “Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street”
- 6. On Feb. 4, the Republican National Committee passed a resolution. How did that resolution describe the events of Jan. 6, 2021?**
 - a. as violent insurrection
 - b. as legitimate political discourse
 - c. as necessary violence against an illegitimate government
 - d. a coup

7. **The first version of the phone came out in 1999, the last in 2013. Finally, on Jan. 4, 2022, the phone service discontinued offering significant services for its existing devices. What phone service?**
 - a. Palm Pilot
 - b. BlackBerry
 - c. Ubuntu
 - d. Sony Walkman

8. **Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi was killed during the biggest U.S. counterterrorism raid in Syria since the 2019 operation that killed Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Both were leaders of what group?**
 - a. Taliban
 - b. Boko Haram
 - c. the Islamic State (ISIS)
 - d. Hezbollah

9. **Its colors still burgundy and gold, the Washington football team, after retiring its previous nickname in the summer of 2020, is now known as what?**
 - a. Red Wolves
 - b. Admirals
 - c. Red Hogs
 - d. Commanders

10. **Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards signed a posthumous pardon for Homer Plessy during a ceremony in New Orleans. Nearly 125 years ago, Plessy's conviction, when appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, led to what doctrine?**
 - a. "Do no harm."
 - b. "You have the right to remain silent."
 - c. "Innocent until proven guilty."
 - d. "Separate but equal."

11. **A school board in Tennessee voted unanimously to ban "Maus," a Pulitzer Prize-winning graphic novel, from being taught in its classrooms because the book contains material that board members said was inappropriate for students. What is the book about?**
 - a. homosexual relationships
 - b. how mice evade cats
 - c. the Holocaust
 - d. race relations in America in the mid-1900s

12. **The senior member of the Supreme Court's three-member liberal wing and a persistent if often frustrated advocate of consensus as the court moved sharply to the right, will retire at the end of this session. Who?**
 - a. Stephen Breyer
 - b. Amy Coney Barrett
 - c. Brett Kavanaugh
 - d. Neil Gorsuch

13. **Which baseball player made it into the Hall of Fame this year, his first year of eligibility?**
 - a. David Ortiz
 - b. Roger Clemens
 - c. Barry Bonds
 - d. Carlos Beltrán

- 14. Amid questions about whether college admissions tests are fair or even necessary, what change did the College Board announce about the SAT?**
- The SAT will be canceled and replaced by the ACT, which more colleges prefer.
 - The SAT will be increased in length from two hours to four hours and will include more science, technology, engineering and mathematics questions.
 - The SAT will include more questions related to race relations and diversity in America.
 - The SAT will be taken exclusively on computer by 2024.
- 15. Daniel Ortega, the longest-serving leader in the Americas, was reelected as president of what country this past fall?**
- Nicaragua
 - Ecuador
 - Venezuela
 - Honduras
- 16. Tonga, the Pacific nation, consists of about 170 islands, some tiny, stretching out across 288 square miles, an area roughly the size of Texas. It was severely damaged in January by what?**
- a tsunami resulting from an earthquake
 - a tsunami caused by sea level increases due to melting Arctic ice
 - lava from a volcanic eruption that also created a new island for the island nation
 - a tsunami resulting from an underwater volcanic eruption
- 17. After Prince Andrew was sued by a woman accusing him of sexual abuse, the British royalty took what action?**
- He was stripped of his military titles and royal patronages.
 - He was convicted and sentenced to more than a decade in prison.
 - He had to attend all ceremonial events for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in February, events he termed "boring royalty."
 - None; "He's still a member of the family."
- 18. After U.S. Sen. Kyrsten Sinema refused to side with other Democrats in amending the rules to avoid the filibuster, what did her state's Democratic Party do?**
- The party brought forth legislation to force her recall.
 - At a press conference, the entire delegation, both Democrats and Republicans, voiced support for her.
 - The party's executive board formally censured Sinema.
 - Led by Arizona's other senator, Mark Kelly, the state's representatives and all state legislators, including the governor, demanded uniform voting rights nationally.
- 19. At the University of Maryland Medical Center, a 57-year-old man with life-threatening heart disease has received a heart from a genetically modified animal, a groundbreaking procedure that offers hope to hundreds of thousands of patients with failing organs. What kind of animal?**
- chimpanzee
 - frog
 - mouse
 - pig

- 20. A leading restaurant franchise, famous for its chicken and biscuits, is coming to Texas, including approximately 50 new restaurants in the greater Austin, DFW, Houston and San Antonio markets in the coming years. Which one?**
- Culvers
 - Zaxby's
 - El Pollo Loco
 - Bojangles
- 21. A federal lawsuit filed on behalf of some 170,000 students accuses 16 private universities, including Rice University in Houston, of what?**
- conspiring to limit financial aid
 - offering courses that didn't exist
 - admitting unqualified athletes
 - using race as an admission criteria
- 22. Which of the following is true about the omicron variant of COVID-19?**
- Omicron is less contagious than delta.
 - Masks and physical distancing don't work to prevent omicron transmission.
 - Rapid at-home tests are less sensitive for this variant.
 - Vaccines, including boosters, don't offer any protection.
- 23. What company unseated General Motors as the top-selling automaker in the United States last year, becoming the first manufacturer based outside the country to achieve that feat in the industry's nearly 120-year history?**
- Toyota Motor
 - SAIC Motor
 - BMW Group
 - Honda Motor
- 24. Regardless of their insurance status, people will have the cost of what covered according to Biden administration guidelines put in place in January?**
- at-home coronavirus tests
 - pregnancy tests
 - 30 days of family medical leave
 - two years of college education
- 25. Health advisers were insistent that vaccine mandates such as those for smallpox (since 1850), measles, mumps, pertussis and chickenpox, were a critical component to a nationwide plan for COVID-19 in 2022. When a disease becomes ongoing and regularly found among particular people or in a certain area, it's known as what?**
- pandemic
 - endemic
 - epidemic
 - sporadic
- 26. A group of researchers say what planet was unfairly maligned by a decision to relegate it to "dwarf planet" status — and that we should consider our solar system to have more than 150 planets?**
- Europa
 - Pluto
 - Enceladus
 - Ceres

- 27. Years earlier than had been projected, America's gross national debt topped how much for the first time earlier this year?**
- \$30 million
 - \$300 million
 - \$30 trillion
 - \$300 trillion
- 28. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration granted emergency use authorization for Merck's molnupiravir, an investigational oral medication to be used to treat what?**
- active malaria
 - hepatitis A, B or C
 - influenza
 - mild to moderate COVID-19
- 29. A joint effort of NASA, the European Space Agency and the Canadian Space Agency, what lifted off from a spaceport near the equator in Kourou, French Guiana, embarking on a million-mile trip to view the most distant stars and galaxies?**
- the James Webb Telescope
 - the Baltimore Space Telescope
 - the \$10 billion Northrop Grumman Kourou rocket
 - Santa's Sled — a new form of rocket by SpaceX
- 30. Meghan Markle received \$1.7 million and a front-page apology from *The Mail on Sunday* for what?**
- breaching privacy — printing part of a letter to her father
 - copyright violation — publishing family photos, including some of her children, Archie and Lilibet
 - invasion of privacy — publishing photos of her sunbathing in the nude
 - espionage — publishing classified government documents
- 31. In December, Kentucky Gov. Andrew Graham Beshear expected the death toll in his state alone to be at least 80, after what?**
- an early winter storm with freezing temperatures that caused the power grid to fail
 - a massive pile-up on the highway during an ice storm
 - a rare December hurricane moved inland
 - tornadoes that tore through six states
- 32. Microsoft acquired Activision Blizzard, making Microsoft the world's third-largest gaming company. What major franchises will Microsoft now control?**
- Counter-Strike: Global Offensive and Dota 2
 - Call of Duty, Candy Crush and Warcraft
 - Wordle and The Button
 - Tetris and Crystal Crisis
- 33. While it was originally set to expire Jan. 31, 2022, the Biden administration extended a moratorium on what until May 1, 2022, for some 41 million borrowers?**
- farm operating subsidies
 - child tax credits
 - small business loan repayments
 - student loan repayments

- 34. Julian Assange can be extradited to the U.S., according to the high court in the United Kingdom, as it overturned a judgment earlier this year and sparked condemnation from press freedom advocates. With what was Assange being charged?**
- a. violation of the First Amendment
 - b. espionage
 - c. terrorism
 - d. theft of government property and unauthorized possession of top secret documents
- 35. What country became a republic in November, replacing the British monarch as its head of state and severing its last remaining colonial bonds nearly 400 years after the first English ships arrived at the Caribbean island?**
- a. Cayman Islands
 - b. Bermuda
 - c. Barbados
 - d. Pitcairn Islands
- 36. Owner Stanley Kroenke is expected to pay a \$790 million settlement, ending a battle over the relocation of which NFL football team, the 2022 Super Bowl champions?**
- a. Oakland Raiders
 - b. San Diego Chargers
 - c. Nashville Titans
 - d. Los Angeles Rams
- 37. Hundreds of mail-in ballots — including 40% of the mail-in ballots in Harris County alone — have been returned to Texas voters as of early February. Why?**
- a. They were from unregistered voters.
 - b. They were from individuals who didn't meet citizenship requirements.
 - c. They didn't meet the state's new identification requirements.
 - d. They lacked sufficient postage.



- 38. U.S. President Joe Biden in mid-February said Russian troops remain in “threatening position” along the border with Ukraine. However, he said the U.S. and allies would keep pursuing a diplomatic solution. Which country labeled on the map above is Ukraine?**

- 39. Hundreds of QAnon true believers gathered around the “X” that marks the spot where his father was assassinated in anticipation of the return of Camelot — John F. Kennedy, Jr., the son of President John F. Kennedy. Where?**
- Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee
 - Dealey Plaza, Dallas
 - Ambassador Hotel, Los Angeles
 - Ford’s Theatre, Washington, D.C.
- 40. Seeking to address the beleaguered agency’s financial woes and counter pandemic-era issues that became a flashpoint in the 2020 election, the House approved (342 to 92) a significant overhaul of what agency after it incurred a net annual loss for 14 consecutive years?**
- the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
 - the United States Postal Service
 - the Environmental Protection Agency
 - the Social Security Administration

THE ESSAY

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.

PROMPT

In setting foreign policy, the guiding principle is to serve the national interest. Whether it’s political, economic, military or cultural, America’s interest has to be considered when presidents make decisions regarding foreign policy. Ronald Reagan was seen as anti-Communist and his policies reflected that. “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall,” he challenged the general secretary of the Community Party of the Soviet Union in West Berlin in 1987. George H.W. Bush dealt with Iraq. And Dwight Eisenhower effectively ended the Korean War and kept China out of Taiwan. But not all presidents are evaluated so positively when it comes to foreign policy.

If the report card on the Biden administration’s foreign policy were set in stone after his first year (or so), what grade would Biden get?

Pick three issues or events related to foreign policy during Biden’s term in office and support the grade by evaluating those issues or events on political, social, cultural and/or economic grounds.

DO NOT DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST!

ANSWER KEY

ESSAY PROMPT

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POTENTIAL DISCUSSION POINTS PREPARED Feb. 18, 2022 might include, but should not be limited to...

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

- *Grade* — Students should start by giving the Biden administration a grade. That should help them with their thesis/opening.
- *America is back* — Biden' ran on a platform of "America is back," vowing to reset the country's standing in the world and to repair ties with its allies.
- *Russia* — Biden's response to Ukraine has consisted of lots of high-flown rhetoric but little substance. Lots of threats. Little action. "The United States is prepared no matter what happens," he said. Ready with diplomacy. Ready with economic sanctions. "Nations have a right to sovereignty and territorial integrity. They have the freedom to set their own course and choose with whom they will associate." However, he also made it clear that, because Ukraine was not a NATO nation, the U.S. would not be sending troops in. However, the U.S. will provide support.
- *China* — Biden has restored a more traditional approach to U.S. foreign policy in the Far East. Specifically, Biden has shown a greater emphasis for human rights, including his administration's diplomatic boycott of the Beijing Olympics and "rock-solid" support for Taiwan. Joined by Canada, India, Australia, Lithuania, Kosovo, Belgium, Denmark and Estonia, the diplomatic boycott had little impact even after Russian athletes were found with performancing enhancing drugs in their system.
- *Australia* — The surprise joint announcement by U.S. President Joe Biden, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, and Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison of a new military and technology pact among their three countries—AUKUS—dropped like a bombshell in capitals around the world. The genesis of the agreement was Australia's requirement for a submarine that can handle the increasing reach and size of the Chinese Navy through the South China Sea into the waters off Australia. While this was, overall, a big win for Biden, it was a diplomatic slap in the face to France.
- *Middle East* — As Kirsten Fontenrose, former senior director for the Gulf at the White House National Security Council, said, Biden's foreign policy in the Middle East thus far has been sometimes reactive (Afghanistan, Egypt), sometimes contradictory (won't sell arms that might violate human rights, but greenlights human rights violators in Syria and Afghanistan), sometimes short-sighted (Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates), and sometimes not evident (Libya, Lebanon). But Biden never said the Middle East would be his focus.
- *Afghanistan* — In late August, the U.S. extricated its military from a two-decade-long conflict, but the country, and tens of thousands of Afghan allies, were left with the Taliban ostensibly in charge. Biden's administration mismanaged the process set in motion before he took office by abruptly pulling out all U.S. forces and 16,000 contractors at once without a plan to safely evacuate Americans and Afghan allies.