



UNIVERSITY INTERSCHOLASTIC LEAGUE
Making a World of Difference

CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS

 @UILCIANDE

2021 • REGION

Prepared March 22, 2021



PEPÉ LE PEW, from the Warner Bros. Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies series of cartoons | **The 1903 CONFEDERATE MONUMENT** at the south entrance to the state Capitol grounds. Photo by Miguel Gutierrez Jr./The Texas Tribune | **MR. POTATO HEAD**, a plastic toy distributed by Hasbro first in 1952

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- 1. For the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for the prevention of COVID-19, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued what on Dec. 11, 2020?**
 - a. approval for vaccine use in all individuals
 - b. emergency use authorization
 - c. statutory mandates
 - d. veto-proof bill
- 2. In an hourlong recording obtained by *The Washington Post*, U.S. President Donald Trump said he wanted Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger to find what?**
 - a. more than 1,000 doses of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine
 - b. an excuse for Republicans to take control of the Senate, “no matter what it takes”
 - c. 11,780 votes, enough to overturn the election
 - d. a way to get WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange released from exile
- 3. After surviving an attack on his life with a nerve agent, Alexei Navalny, founding member of the Anti-Corruption Foundation, was immediately arrested when he returned home to what country?**
 - a. Germany
 - b. North Korea
 - c. Kazakhstan
 - d. Russia
- 4. Adding that widespread rolling blackouts may have saved the state from going completely dark, officials with the company that manages Texas’ power grid said the Texas power grid was just “seconds or minutes” away from a catastrophic and complete failure. What is the name of the management company that oversees most of Texas’ power grid?**
 - a. Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT)
 - b. North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NAERC)
 - c. Western Electricity Coordinating Council (WECC)
 - d. Southwest Power Pool (SPP)
- 5. The Nobel Prize in chemistry was jointly awarded to Emmanuelle Charpentier and Jennifer Doudna. This was the first time that what was true?**
 - a. The prize was given for chemistry related to life, developing a method to mass produce vaccines using mRNA.
 - b. The prize recipients refused to accept the award.
 - c. The prize was given to an all-female team.
 - d. The prize was tied to efforts to combat global climate change.
- 6. Which of the following would NOT be considered a big-ticket item on the Texas Legislature’s agenda?**
 - a. redrawing the state’s political maps
 - b. the two-year budget
 - c. the pandemic
 - d. the Texas-Mexico border wall

- 7. The league, Overtime Elite, backed by a sports media company, would compete directly with the NCAA creating a new league by doing what?**
 - a. offering top high school players \$44,444 a year in scholarships for four years of college
 - b. offering high school basketball players \$100,000 salaries
 - c. offering the top 1% of high school basketball players a guaranteed salary of \$7.7 million if they maintain a 3.0 GPA or better throughout college.
 - d. creating the first co-ed, professional basketball league

- 8. Some 3.8 million fish on the Texas coast died during the February freeze. But fish weren't the only Texas animals affected by the plunge in temperatures. Volunteers brought about 4,700 cold-stunned creatures to the convention center on South Padre Island until they could warm up. What creatures?**
 - a. marine iguanas
 - b. sharks of all varieties
 - c. American crocodiles
 - d. sea turtles

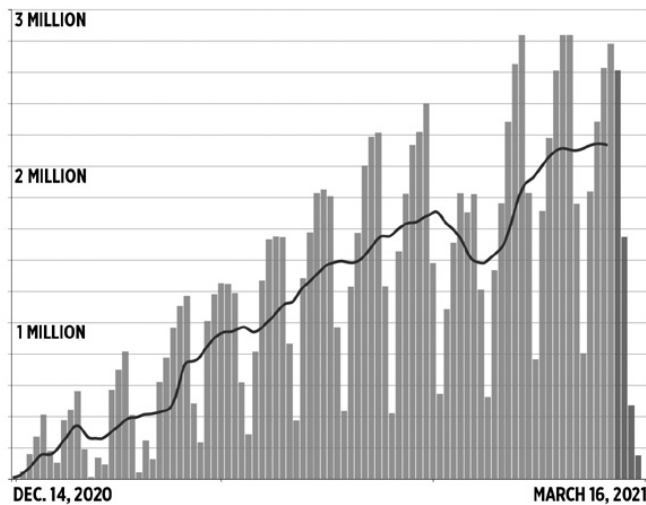
- 9. Although the move didn't fit the state's flag protocol, Florida's governor in February ordered flags in the state flown at half-staff for which conservative lodestar who the governor called "an absolute legend" and "a great person"?**
 - a. Eugene Goodman
 - b. Larry Flynt
 - c. Chuck Corea
 - d. Rush Limbaugh

- 10. The Federal Trade Commission and more than 40 states accused Facebook of buying up its rivals to squash competition. Facebook has control over three of the world's most popular social media and messaging apps. Prosecutors said Facebook should break off what two acquisitions?**
 - a. Twitter and Tumblr
 - b. Pinterest and Snapchat
 - c. Instagram and WhatsApp
 - d. Reddit and GroupMe

- 11. Stein Mart came under fire after the company took \$10 million in the Paycheck Protection Program from the federal government and then did what?**
 - a. gave the CEO a \$10 million bonus
 - b. opened 200 new stores in underserved areas
 - c. gave bonuses to store managers while putting 9,000 workers on furlough
 - d. filed for Ch. 11 bankruptcy protection and closed all 280 stores

- 12. Andrea Sahouri was acquitted of charges made against her during a Black Lives Matter protest in Des Moines. Sahouri was pepper-sprayed and arrested although she said she was just "doing her job" as what?**
 - a. an undercover police officer
 - b. an official representative of the BLM movement that had a permit to protest
 - c. a newspaper reporter
 - d. a member of Antifa

13. NASA is naming landmarks and geological features on Mars identified by the Perseverance rover in what language in an effort to revitalize that language?
- Navajo
 - Python
 - Louisiana Creole
 - Hawaiian
14. In early February, what country became the fifth nation to send a spacecraft, Hope, to Mars?
- China
 - Israel
 - United Arab Emirates
 - India



15. Using data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, what does the chart above represent?
- the number of people in the United States who have died of COVID-19 per day
 - the number of people in the world who have died of COVID-19 per day
 - the number of people in the U.S. hospitalized with COVID-19 per day
 - the number of COVID-19 vaccines administered in the U.S. per day
16. Seeking to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election, 126 congressional Republicans did what?
- filed a brief with the U.S. Supreme Court in support of Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton's lawsuit
 - staged a rally outside the U.S. Capitol, none wearing masks
 - resigned
 - sued their own states to overturn election results despite no evidence of fraud
17. On Dec. 30, 2020, Becky Hammon became the first woman to serve as head coach for an NBA team in a regular season game. What team was she coaching?
- Dallas Mavericks
 - San Antonio Spurs
 - Houston Rockets
 - New Orleans Pelicans

- 18. Bad Bunny’s latest album, “El Último Tour del Mundo” was the first LP album to top the Billboard 200 album chart that was also what?**
- one of the most costly ever produced, costing more than \$13 million to produce
 - recorded all in Spanish
 - recorded by a singer who had the most No. 1 albums in a calendar year
 - produced by the first artist to have two consecutive albums debuting at No. 1, the other being YHLQMDLG
- 19. Virginia lawmakers voted in late February to make Virginia the first state in the South to do what?**
- to legalize heroin, cocaine and other narcotics.
 - to abolish abortion under any circumstances
 - to abolish the death penalty
 - to hold a primary in the 2024 election
- 20. In a contested election, long-standing leader Yoweri Museveni defeated a former pop star, winning a sixth term in what country?**
- Ecuador
 - Uganda
 - Ethiopia
 - Peru
- 21. Marking the first time a the head of the Catholic church has visited the country, Pope Francis spent four days in what country in March?**
- Kenya
 - Iraq
 - Ireland
 - Mauritius
- 22. Officials in what city agreed on March 12 to pay \$27 million to the family of George Floyd, the Black man whose death set off months of protests after a video showed a white police officer kneeling on his neck?**
- Wolfe City, Texas
 - Columbus, Ohio
 - Cocoa, Florida
 - Minneapolis, Minnesota
- 23. Facebook, facing criticism that it hasn’t done enough to curb a fast-growing, fringe conspiracy movement, said it would remove any group, page or Instagram account that openly identified with what group that U.S. President Donald Trump said he knew nothing about?**
- QAnon
 - American Patrol
 - Family Research Council
 - National Socialist Movement
- 24. Two planets were close enough, for the first time in 800 years, to appear as a single bright “Christmas Star” in the sky on Dec. 21, 2020. What two planets?**
- Mars and Venus
 - Uranus and Neptune
 - Jupiter and Saturn
 - Mercury and Pluto

- 25. Constitutional Amendment E will be written into the Utah Constitution, giving state residents a constitutional right to do what?**
- smoke marijuana
 - hunt and fish
 - have an abortion
 - worship on Sunday
- 26. The State Department declared that the Chinese government is committing genocide and crimes against humanity through China's wide-scale repression of what predominantly Muslim ethnic minority in the northwestern region of Xinjiang?**
- Rohingya
 - Uighurs
 - Tibetans
 - Yazidis
- 27. For generations, Iowa and New Hampshire have been the first states to vote in the presidential nomination process. Now, former Senator Harry Reid wants his state at the front. What state?**
- South Carolina
 - Wyoming
 - California
 - Nevada
- 28. Which of the following companies aired its first Super Bowl ad this year??**
- Budweiser
 - DoorDash
 - Coke
 - Pepsi
- 29. For the first time, *Time* magazine named a Kid of the Year — a 15-year-old student in Colorado, Gitanjali Rao. For what is she known?**
- developing an app that uses artificial intelligence to detect cyberbullying
 - challenging world leaders to take action against climate change
 - discovering the protein that led to a vaccine against COVID-19
 - creating a website that traced Eucharistic miracles
- 30. Because he said he had concerns over the *New York Post* article's credibility, a reporter withheld his byline over a story about Hunter Biden. What was the source of the information for the story?**
- interviews with Sarah Huckabee Sanders and Roger Stone, both former Trump advisers
 - interviews with officials in the Ukraine working with Burisma Holdings who confirmed the content of emails obtained by the *Post*
 - information on a hard drive allegedly from Hunter Biden's computer given to the *Post* by Rudolph Giuliani, the president's personal lawyer
 - information obtained in Republican-led Senate committee hearings discussing whether Joe Biden met with officials in the Ukraine

- 31. A group of federal, state and local election officials issued a statement that “there is no evidence” any voting systems were compromised. Shortly after the statement was distributed, the head of the agency that distributed it, Christopher Krebs, was fired. What agency?**
- Department of Defense
 - Department of Energy
 - Department of Homeland Security’s Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency
 - Department of Justice’s election-crimes division
- 32. The Arecibo radio telescope in Puerto Rico collapsed last December. It was featured prominently in all but one of the following movies. Which one?**
- 2010
 - GoldenEye
 - Contact
 - Species
- 33. Apple released new emojis in September. Which of the following is NOT one of the new emojis released?**
- pistol
 - man with bottle feeding baby
 - disguised face
 - smiling face with tear
- 34. In 2005, there were 27 named storms and one unnamed storm. In 2020, there were 30 named storms, a new record. The last named storm, a Category 5 storm, was?**
- Vicky
 - Zeke
 - Iota
 - Lambda
- 35. Senfronia Thompson (D-Houston), the longest-serving woman and Black person in the history of the Texas Legislature, filed in late October to run for what office in the Texas legislature replacing Dennis Bonnen (R-Angleton) but eventually losing to Dade Phelan (R-Beaumont)?**
- speaker of the House
 - governor
 - lieutenant governor
 - president pro tempore
- 36. Which of the following was NOT one of the items Texas Gov. Greg Abbott mentioned as an emergency priority in his State of the State address?**
- expanding broadband access
 - punishing local governments that “defund the police”
 - ensuring election integrity
 - COVID-19 relief — \$1,400 checks to Texas taxpayers
- 37. Just days after the U.S. took the country off the list of state sponsors of terrorism, what country agreed to normalize relations with Israel?**
- Sudan
 - Iraq
 - Afghanistan
 - North Korea

- 38. Of these companies, which uses mRNA, a relatively new technique, to make its COVID-19 vaccine?**
- Pfizer
 - Merck, Sharpe & Dohme
 - Johnson & Johnson
 - AstraZeneca
- 39. The Jan. 20 inauguration got attention for its numerous fashion statements. Among them was Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont, who became an internet meme after being photographed donning a bulky coat and what?**
- bright red ski cap
 - cowl scarf
 - patterned wool mittens
 - seal-skin boots
- 40. Senate Democratic Whip Dick Durbin of Illinois said the filibuster had a “death grip” on the American system of governance and called for its end. What is the filibuster?**
- a requirement that legislation receive two-thirds of the voters to pass
 - a requirement that legislation receive 50% + 1 of the voters to pass
 - an additional provision to legislation having little connection with the subject matter of the legislation
 - prolonged speech that obstructs progress in a legislative assembly

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.**

Topic

Benjamin Wallace-Wells wrote in *The New Yorker*: “When politicians or commentators talk about ‘cancel culture,’ they are typically speaking of a fear that even ordinary people who express ideas that are politically incorrect will be publicly shamed—that social media has enabled a universal speech surveillance, and that people and institutions are now self-policing, out of fear of it.”

And, as Aja Romano wrote on Vox of a resolution passed at the 2020 Republican National Convention: “The resolution described ‘cancel culture’ as having ‘grown into erasing of history, encouraging lawlessness, muting citizens, and violating free exchange of ideas, thoughts, and speech.’ ”

Former United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley described cancel culture as “an important issue. [Trump] knows that political correctness and cancel culture are dangerous and just plain wrong.”

In your own words, what is cancel culture? Give and discuss two examples and the impact cancel culture is having on society.

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ANSWER KEY

ESSAY PROMPT

Benjamin Wallace-Wells wrote in *The New Yorker*: “When politicians or commentators talk about ‘cancel culture,’ they are typically speaking of a fear that even ordinary people who express ideas that are politically incorrect will be publicly shamed—that social media has enabled a universal speech surveillance, and that people and institutions are now self-policing, out of fear of it.”

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

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION POINTS PREPARED March 22, 2021
might include, but should not be limited to...

- *Definition* — Cancel culture is a modern form of ostracism in which someone is thrust out of social or professional circles – whether it be online, on social media, or in person. Those who are subject to this ostracism are said to have been “canceled.” (Wikipedia) Cancel culture — the phenomenon of promoting the “canceling” of people, brands and even shows and movies due to what some consider to be offensive or problematic remarks or ideologies. (Brooke Kato, *New York Post*, March 10, 2021)
- *Hasbro* — Toy company Hasbro announced it was rebranding Mr. Potato Head brand of toys to simply be called “Potato Head” on the packaging. The change was made as a move to become more inclusive and allow kids to create their own potato characters without the need for any gender-specific names.
- *Statues* — More than 90 Confederate monuments were taken down or moved from public spaces in 2020 following the death of George Floyd, according to data from the Southern Poverty Law Center. Texas Rep. Rafael Anchía (D-Dallas) filed a bill that, if passed, would remove Confederate monuments from the State Capitol’s grounds. House Bill 1186 would remove Confederate monuments, memorials and statues from the grounds in Austin, as well as rename the John H. Reagan State Office Building.
- *Disney* — In late February, Disney added warnings to some episodes of *The Muppet Show* that contained “negative depictions” and “mistreatment of people or cultures.” In October 2020, Disney Plus added a new content warning that appears as a slate prior to several older movies on the service that contain racist depictions, including *Dumbo*, *Peter Pan*, *Swiss Family Robinson*, *The Aristocats*, *Fantasia*, *The Jungle Book* and *Lady and the Tramp*. Disney Plus blocked those titles from being accessed in the service’s Kids Profile.
- *Seuss* — The company that preserves the author’s legacy, Dr. Seuss Enterprises, announced that it would stop publishing six of its titles due to racist imagery: *And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street*, *If I Ran the Zoo*, *McElligot’s Pool*, *The Cat’s Quizzer*, *Scrambled Eggs Super!* and *On Beyond Zebra!*.
- As Alexandra D’amour said, “Cancel culture has been incredibly effective at combating sexism, racism, or any other type of abuse or harmful wrongdoing to others. It’s held people accountable for their actions in ways that wasn’t possible in the past.”
- Cancel culture demands social change and addresses the deep inequalities in continuing the oppression of oppressed groups. It allows society to evolve. According to Akin Olla in *The Guardian*, “Companies must adapt with the times to make money on a perpetual track of constant and infinite profit.”
- As Danielle Kurtzleben said on NPR’s “Morning Edition,” “The idea of a ‘cancel culture’ is inherently controversial. What one person might see as being canceled for controversial statements, another might see as being held accountable for offensive or harmful views.”