



University Interscholastic League

Making a World of Difference

CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS

 @UILCIANDE

2024 • DISTRICT

Feb. 14, 2024



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UNIVERSITY INTERSCHOLASTIC LEAGUE

CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS

DISTRICT • 2024

- 1. First it was the Macintosh. Then the iPod. Then the iPhone. Then the iPad. In January, Apple released what the company hopes will be the next in a line of revolutions. What?**
 - a. a spatial computer, \$3,500 goggles called the Vision Pro
 - b. a self-driving automobile with no driver override called the iCar
 - c. a robot governed by artificial intelligence that can do most household chores called iRobot
 - d. a chip surgically implanted in a living person's brain called iNeuralink
- 2. The American Museum of Natural History closed two major halls in a response to new federal regulations. Sean Decatur, the museum's president, wrote in a letter to the museum's staff, "Actions that may feel sudden to some may seem long overdue to others." What did the new policy pertain to?**
 - a. stuffing animals, particularly endangered species, for display
 - b. mining precious minerals in foreign countries without due payment
 - c. obtaining consent from Indigenous people before displaying cultural items
 - d. researching religious beliefs of proto-humans
- 3. Six voters in Colorado filed a lawsuit based on the 14th Amendment seeking to keep Donald Trump from appearing on the ballot. Which of the following is NOT in the 14th Amendment?**
 - a. All persons born or naturalized in the United States are citizens of the United States.
 - b. Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude shall exist within the United States.
 - c. No State shall deprive any person of life, liberty or property without due process of law.
 - d. No person shall hold any office who shall have engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the U.S.
- 4. Who won Nevada's Republican presidential primary?**
 - a. Donald Trump
 - b. Nikki Haley
 - c. Mike Pence
 - d. "none of these candidates"
- 5. U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris broke the record in December, a record set by John Calhoun nearly 200 years ago. What record?**
 - a. the fewest public appearances in her first three years in office
 - b. the most time spent abroad of any Executive office official since the Civil War
 - c. the most tiebreaking votes, 32
 - d. the most time in court of any person holding public office
- 6. A jury awarded \$83.3 million to E. Jean Carroll in a stinging and expensive rebuke to former President Donald Trump. Protesting vigorously, Trump said he would appeal. What were the charges related to?**
 - a. continuing social media attacks, defamation
 - b. hoarding classified documents after he left office
 - c. trying to overturn the 2020 election, insurrection
 - d. overvaluing his properties, tax evasion

7. **Following intense advocacy from New York Gov. Kathy Hochul and Mayor Eric Adams, about 472,000 people who arrived in this country before July 31 will be allowed to live and to work legally in the United States for 18 months. From what country did they arrive?**
 - a. Venezuela
 - b. Argentina
 - c. Guatemala
 - d. Brazil

8. **California Gov. Gavin Newsom signed what into law regarding the banning of books?**
 - a. The law requires school boards to ban books, instructional materials and curricula categorized as inclusive or diverse.
 - b. The law directs the state education agency to assign all books in any public school library a rating. Any books that receive a 10 would be banned.
 - c. The law directs librarians to require parental approval for students to get books on the state's list.
 - d. The law bars school boards from banning books, instructional materials or curricula categorized as inclusive or diverse.

9. **The Dow rose 1.4%, closing at 37,090.24 and surpassing a 2-year-old record. This new record followed the Federal Reserve's final policy decision of the year. What decision?**
 - a. to raise interest rates to 5.75%, the highest since 1981
 - b. to lower fixed-rate mortgages on average to 2.87%
 - c. to keep the inflation rate at 3.1%
 - d. to keep key interest rates unchanged and signal three rate cuts next year

10. **In a move the Department of Justice said would harm consumers, a federal judge in January blocked a \$3.8 billion acquisition of what company by what other company?**
 - a. Disney was acquiring Comcast.
 - b. Exxon was acquiring Chevron.
 - c. JetBlue Airways was acquiring Spirit Airlines.
 - d. AT&T was acquiring Verizon.

11. **The FAA said it would require inspections of most Boeing 737 Max 9 airplanes and grounded hundreds of the planes in January. Why?**
 - a. The company, Boeing, admitted to shortcuts in the production process.
 - b. The NTSB discovered paper-thin gaps in the plane's body.
 - c. Problems with the plane's flight control software and other components caused two planes to crash.
 - d. A panel called a door plug blew out at 16,000 feet on a flight from Portland, Oregon.

12. **The International Olympic Committee announced that five new sports will be added to the schedule for the Summer Games in Los Angeles in 2028. Which one of these is NOT one of the games added?**
 - a. cricket
 - b. lacrosse
 - c. flag football
 - d. pickleball

13. **The House Homeland Security Committee approved two articles of impeachment against Alejandro N. Mayorkas over what?**
 - a. providing weapons to Ukraine without congressional approval
 - b. using drones to kill civilians in Israel
 - c. the government's response to the fires in Hawaii
 - d. his handling of the southwestern border

14. Largely due to the weather, worldwide production is forecast to be down 5% this year. So, researchers at the University of Maryland developed the MD-TAP1 (yellow) and MD-TAP2 (red) to join the Sunrise Magic, the Crimson Gold and the Autumn Glory. What did they develop?
- new roses
 - new carrots
 - new apples
 - new grapes
15. Marking it as one of the world's largest displacements and humanitarian crises, the United Nations migration agency said a record 6.9 million people have been displaced by conflict. Where?
- Gaza
 - Congo
 - Latin America and the Caribbean
 - Guatemala
16. After Texas officials sued the Biden administration last fall, what order did a federal judge give to Border Patrol agents in Eagle Pass?
- Texas agents have to remove any man-made barriers on the border including concertina wire.
 - Federal agents have to assist any person who requests it complete the asylum process within three weeks of arrival in the U.S.
 - Federal agents, not those from Texas, have to install floating barriers in the Rio Grande River.
 - Texas must allow federal border agents access to the state's border with Mexico.
17. Nearly 300 square miles of royal blue waters on the western side of the island nation of Dominica that serve as key nursing and feeding grounds will be designated as a reserve for what?
- coral that grows on the sea floor in the region
 - plankton, a diverse collection of organisms that covers nearly the entire area
 - the sperm whale, one of the Earth's largest animals
 - guaiaacwood, a species of tree in the caltrop family
18. In a decision that contradicts decades of precedent and could further erode protections under the landmark 1965 law, a divided federal appeals court ruled that who should NOT have the ability to sue under a key section of the federal Voting Rights Act?
- the U.S. attorney general
 - any state's attorney general or state legislature
 - the Supreme Court or Congress
 - private individuals and groups such as the NAACP
19. Texas SB17 went into effect Jan. 1, requiring the state's institutions of higher education to do what?
- to end so-called diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives
 - to use vouchers so students could attend the college or university of their choice
 - to stop teaching the 1619 Project
 - to stop teaching critical race theory
20. At Paris Fashion Week shows, attendees traded tips on how to avoid catching them: store your luggage in the bathtub; if you take public transportation, don't sit down on the fabric seats; buy a \$220 heater. What were people trying to avoid?
- COVID-19 germs
 - bedbugs
 - head lice
 - spider beetles

21. **Mark Cuban bought the Texas team in 2000 for \$285 million. Last fall he sold his stake in the business for around \$3.5 billion. Cuban said he would remain in control of what team's operations?**
- Dallas Stars
 - Dallas Cowboys
 - Dallas Mavericks
 - FC Dallas
22. **The company said accounts — who knows how many — that have been dormant for at least two years would start disappearing last Dec. 1. Accounts with what company?**
- Google
 - MySpace
 - Meta
 - McAfee
23. **The vote was 311-114 to expel Republican Rep. George Santos of New York from the U.S. House of Representatives. Why?**
- He exploited his public position for his own profit.
 - He sided with former U.S. President Donald Trump during the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection.
 - He was convicted of crimes in federal court.
 - He attempted to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election.
24. **Taylor Swift became a billionaire this year, achieving a bigger profile than ever with the release of her rerecorded album "1989," her Eras tour and its related concert film. What other recognition did she get?**
- She's the youngest person to be *Time* magazine's Person of the Year.
 - She became the first entertainer to be *Time* magazine's Person of the Year.
 - She's the first musician to be on the cover of *Sports Illustrated* – with her boyfriend Travis Kelce.
 - She became the richest woman in the world.
25. **The fourth special legislative session ended when the Texas House adjourned but failed to pass what item that topped the governor's agenda?**
- a ban on employer COVID-19 vaccination mandates
 - school vouchers
 - approval of \$1.5 billion to construct a border barrier between Texas and Mexico
 - the "AM Radio for Every Vehicle Act" that would keep AM radio in every car
26. **A white northern star represents the state's motto: L'étoile du Nord. The three colors on the right signify white for snow, green for nature and blue for water. Flag submission number F1953 was the finalist for what state's new flag?**
- Utah
 - Minnesota
 - Massachusetts
 - Maryland
27. **Claudine Gay, Harvard's first Black president and the second woman to lead the university, ended a turbulent tenure that began last July. She will have the shortest stint in office of any Harvard president since its founding in 1636. Why did she step down?**
- She became engulfed in crisis over accusations of plagiarism.
 - Gay said calling for the genocide of Jews always constitutes harassment.
 - She backed her peers at the University of Pennsylvania and MIT who also resigned.
 - She advocated for the use of race-conscious admissions.

28. Republican presidential candidate Nikki Haley was asked at a New Hampshire town hall about the reason for the Civil War. She initially said it involved “the freedoms of what people could and couldn’t do.” What did she NOT initially explicitly say caused the war — the first shots of which were fired in her home state of South Carolina?
- states’ rights
 - slavery
 - territorial expansion
 - the election of a Republican, Abraham Lincoln, as president
29. Opening a new front in the legal battle over the works used to train artificial intelligence engines, *The New York Times* sued OpenAI and Microsoft for what?
- copyright infringement
 - plagiarism
 - libel
 - violation of Freedom of Information laws
30. Taking the throne in 1972 after the death of her father, King Frederik IX, 83-year-old Queen Margrethe II was the world’s only reigning queen and the longest-serving current monarch in Europe until she stepped down Jan. 14. What country did she serve?
- England
 - Spain
 - Netherlands
 - Denmark
31. Given that it was 95 years ago when it was created, what became true about Steamboat Willie in January of 2024?
- The copyright on Mickey Mouse was automatically extended 95 years.
 - The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that copyrights are permanent and Mickey Mouse was still owned by Disney forever.
 - Anyone could use any version of Mickey Mouse created since 1928 for any purpose.
 - The copyright expired and that version of Mickey Mouse is now in the public domain.
32. Some new personal computers that run Microsoft’s Windows 11 operating system will have a special “Copilot key” that does what?
- launches the software giant’s AI chatbot
 - opens Microsoft Explorer, the internet browser
 - displays the Start menu/screen
 - modifies the alphanumeric keyboard to show letters in Spanish (or another language as set by the user)
33. Prior to last December, when 13-year old Willis Gibson of Oklahoma beat the game, only artificial intelligence had beat what game?
- the 1980 arcade version of Pac-Man
 - the arcade video game Super Mario released in 1983
 - the original 1989 Nintendo version of Tetris
 - Goose Goose Duck

34. **The 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals blocked the Texas Education Agency from enforcing a state law requiring booksellers to do what?**
- avoid selling books to people under the age of 16
 - require written, parental permission for minors to buy books
 - rate the explicitness and relevance of sexual references in materials they sell to schools
 - put religious books in a separate section that minors can't enter
35. **Because it disproportionately affects people of color and people experiencing poverty, Illinois, as part of the Pretrial Fairness Act, abolished what as a condition of pretrial release?**
- cash money bonds
 - having a place to live
 - wearing tracking devices
 - employment
36. **While Turkey's parliament voted to allow Sweden to join NATO, what other country has not approved Sweden's accession, depriving the alliance of the unanimity required to add a new member?**
- Russia
 - Ukraine
 - Hungary
 - Italy
37. **After he told the judge, "You could give me 100 years," that judge sentenced Proud Boys member Marc Bru, 44, to six years in prison. What did Bru, who showed no signs of remorse, do?**
- He made numerous social media posts regarding Donald Trump and Nancy Pelosi.
 - He stormed the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.
 - He broke into Nancy Pelosi's home and assaulted Paul Pelosi.
 - He made a slew of false claims and asked the Georgia secretary of state to "find 11,780" votes.
38. **Tally was swept across the Atlantic to the coast of Wales but was nursed back to health and flown back to Texas. What kind of animal is Tally?**
- a brown pelican
 - a Kemp's ridley sea turtle
 - a black grouper
 - a Red Porgy
39. **The Pentagon said Kata'ib Hezbollah, or Brigades of the Party of God, was probably responsible for the attack on a remote U.S. military base in Jordan in which three American soldiers were killed. The militia is affiliated with what country?**
- Syria
 - North Korea
 - Iraq
 - Oman
40. **In October, the UAW said another 5,000 workers would be on strike. That time, the UAW union struck a plant in Texas that builds sport utility vehicles. It was a factory for what company?**
- Mercedes-Benz
 - General Motors
 - Volkswagen
 - Ford

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

On May 14, 1948, the State of Israel was created, sparking the first Arab-Israeli War. The war ended in 1949 with Israel's victory. On Oct. 7, 2023, the Palestinian Sunni Islamist group Hamas (a U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organization) led surprise attacks against Israel from the Gaza Strip by land, sea and air. The assault came on a Jewish holiday, 50 years after the Egypt-Syria surprise attack that sparked the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

The scope and lethal nature of last year's attacks against Israel had no precedent in the 16 years Hamas has controlled Gaza, and the nature of the violence stunned Israelis.

Discuss the political and economic issues of the Israel-Hamas War on the United States since Oct. 7, 2023.

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ANSWER KEY

ESSAY PROMPT

On May 14, 1948, the State of Israel was created, sparking the first Arab-Israeli War. The war ended in 1949 with Israel's victory. On Oct. 7, 2023, the Palestinian Sunni Islamist group Hamas (a U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organization) led surprise attacks against Israel from the Gaza Strip by land, sea and air. The assault came on a Jewish holiday, 50 years after the Egypt-Syria surprise attack that sparked the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

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POTENTIAL DISCUSSION POINTS PREPARED Feb. 14, 2024 might include, but should not be limited to...

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

- *U.S. support* — The U.S. was the first country to recognize the provisional government of the state of Israel upon its founding in 1948, and it has for many decades been a strong and steady supporter of the Jewish state. The two countries do not have a mutual defense pact, as the United States has with allies such as Japan and fellow members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. However, Israel is among a short list of “major non-NATO allies” and has privileged access to the most advanced U.S. military platforms and technologies.
- *Economic* — Israel has been the largest cumulative recipient of U.S. foreign aid since its founding, receiving about \$300 billion (adjusted for inflation) in total economic and military assistance. That aid has come under heightened scrutiny amid Israel's war to eliminate Hamas. On Feb. 4, Senators released the full details of their highly anticipated bipartisan proposal to jointly fund Ukraine, Israel and the U.S. southern border. President Joe Biden initially proposed the aid package in October. Former President Donald Trump pushed Republicans not to support the legislation so Biden's inability to deal with security on the southern border could remain a campaign issue. In response, House Republicans proposed their own Israel-only funding package.
- *Economic / Political* — The U.S. House of Representatives rejected a Republican-led bill on Feb. 6 that would have provided \$17.6 billion to Israel, as Democrats said they wanted a vote instead on a broader measure that would also provide assistance to Ukraine, international humanitarian funding and new money for border security. The vote was 250 to 180 and largely along party lines, although 14 Republicans opposed the bill and 46 Democrats supported it.
- *Economic* — An assessment by the U.N. Development Program estimated that in just three months, the Israel-Gaza war has cost Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon \$10.3 billion, or 2.3% of their combined gross domestic product. An additional 230,000 people in these countries are also expected to fall into poverty. For these three struggling economies, the drop in tourism is particularly alarming. Dollar revenues from Egypt's Suez Canal are down 40% from the beginning of the year compared to 2023, canal authority head Osama Rabie said, after attacks on ships by Yemen's Houthis caused major shippers to divert away from the route. This will inevitably led to higher prices on good around the world and delays in receiving those goods.
- *Political* — Americans have generally positive views of Israel and its people. But their views of Israel's government and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu are more mixed, according to Pew Research Center surveys last fall. Majorities of Americans ages 65 and older (69%) and ages 50 to 64 (60%) had a favorable opinion of Israel, compared with 49% of those ages 30 to 49 and 41% of those under 30.
- *Political* — December 2023, as the U.S. Congress debated legislation that included \$14 billion in emergency funding for Israel, Biden warned that Israel's “indiscriminate bombing” of Gaza risked costing Israel its international support. Meanwhile, some Democrat lawmakers sought to condition U.S. aid on commitments from Israel to limit civilian casualties. The same day, the UN General Assembly voted overwhelmingly for a cease-fire in Gaza, with only 10 of 190 countries, including the United States, voting against the measure.
- *Political* — Fears of a larger conflict in the region continued to grow when three U.S. service members were killed and at least 34 others wounded in a drone attack in northeast Jordan near the Syrian border. “I don't think we need a wider war in the Middle East,” Biden said, Yet, on Feb. 2, the U.S. responded. Biden put out a statement shortly after the strikes were confirmed, warning, “If you harm an American, we will respond.” U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said, “at President Biden's direction, U.S. military forces today conducted strikes on seven facilities, which included more than 85 targets in Iraq and Syria, that Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and affiliated militias use to attack U.S. forces.”