

“Current Events” with Frank Damon



Doelger Senior Center has been most fortunate to have Frank Damon leading both our Current Events and History discussion groups for the last 5 years. During this current time of physical distancing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Frank is sharing his current events discussion topics online. He will begin offering discussion groups using ZOOM in the very near future. Stay tuned for updates!

Frank received his BA degree from the University of San Francisco (USF) with a dual major in Political Science and American History. He also earned his MA in Political Science and teaching credentials at USF. Over the course of his career, Frank taught in the San Mateo Union High School District and at Marin Catholic High School, Terra Nova High School, Golden Gate University, College of San Mateo, Skyline College and Canada College.

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Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in these articles and discussion topics are those of the authors and group participants and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any agency of the City of Daly City.

Woman in the News

She was born 46 years ago in Madison, Wisconsin, and grew up in Mississippi and Georgia.

Today, she is the founder of Fair Fight Action, an organization battling voter suppression in Georgia and other states. She was an Atlanta city attorney in 2006 when she won a seat in the Georgia House of Representatives. She served as the minority leader for ten years before running for governor in 2018 as the Democratic nominee. She eventually lost a close race to Brian Kemp; but she felt that she would have won if many Georgians hadn't been cheated of their right to vote. Fair Fight Action helped register 800,000 voters in the last two years. Because of these voters, Georgia's 2020 electoral votes are expected to flip to the Democratic Party. She is now trying to get Georgians to vote for the Democratic candidates in the state's two Senate run-off elections in January. These elections will determine political control of the U.S. Senate.

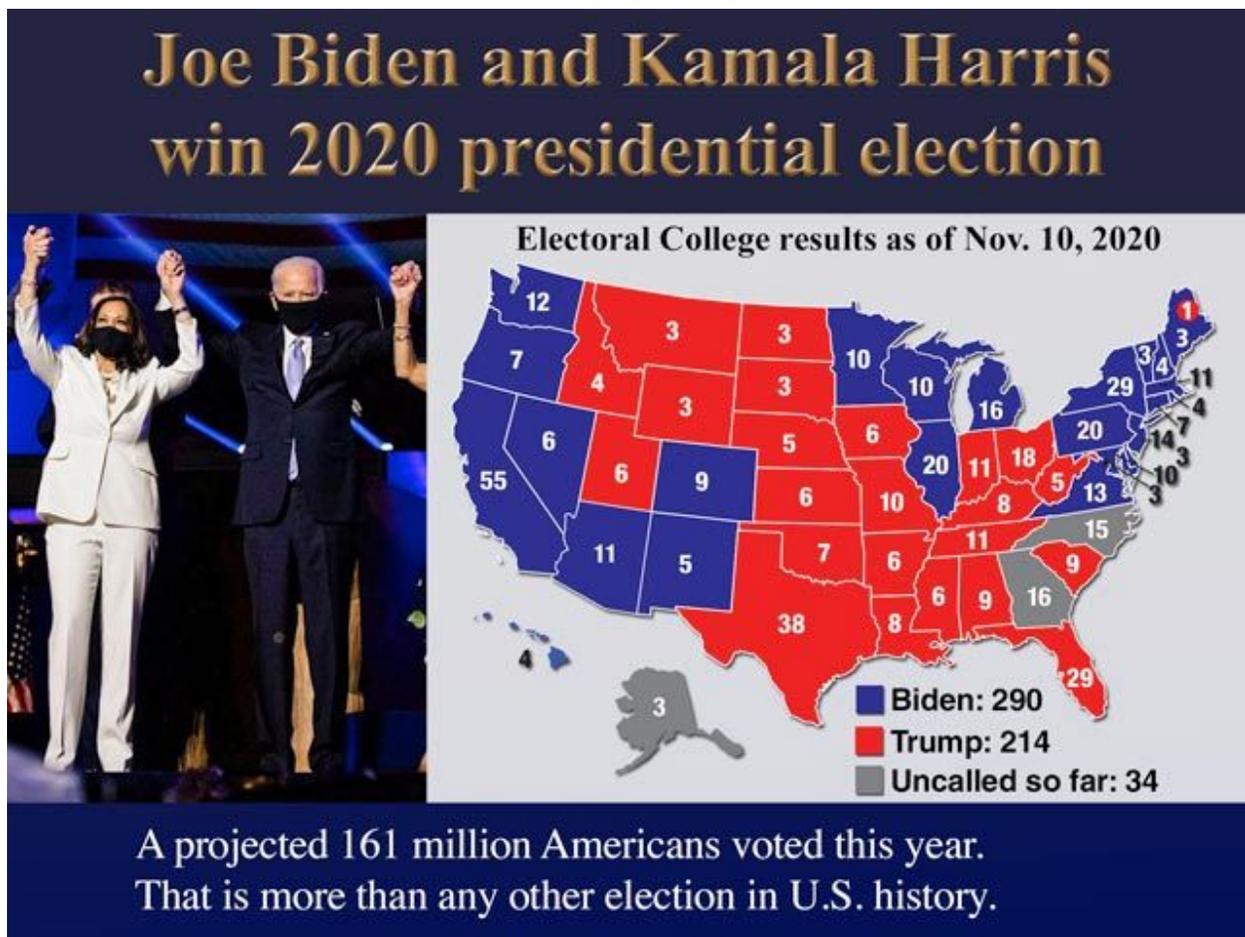


Who is this woman? (Stacey Abrams.)

Joe Biden Wins 2020 Presidential Election

On November 3rd, millions of Americans went to the polls to vote in the 2020 election. About 100 million more people had already voted by mail — the largest number in history. Overall, about 161 million Americans voted, setting a new record for total votes in a presidential election. Commentators called some states early. Others took longer, due to razor-thin voting margins and/or huge numbers of mail-in and provisional ballots. Why hadn't states counted these ballots before Election Day? (Some of them were forced to wait due to state law.)

Over the next four days, some swing states were called for either the Republican or Democratic Party. The Democratic ticket, Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, won some of these states, such as Wisconsin and Michigan. But Biden and Harris could not get over the 270-vote threshold until Nov. 7th. What state finally put them over the top? (Pennsylvania, which has 20 electoral votes.) Biden's win means the country will have the first female, first Black, and first Asian American vice president in its history, Kamala Harris. As of November 11, Pres. Trump had not conceded the race. He complained about stolen votes and said he would be filing lawsuits in all close states. Some other Republican Party officials have backed these claims. As of last week, however, no one had presented evidence of any voter fraud. Do you think these lawsuits have a chance? If not, why is his campaign filing them?

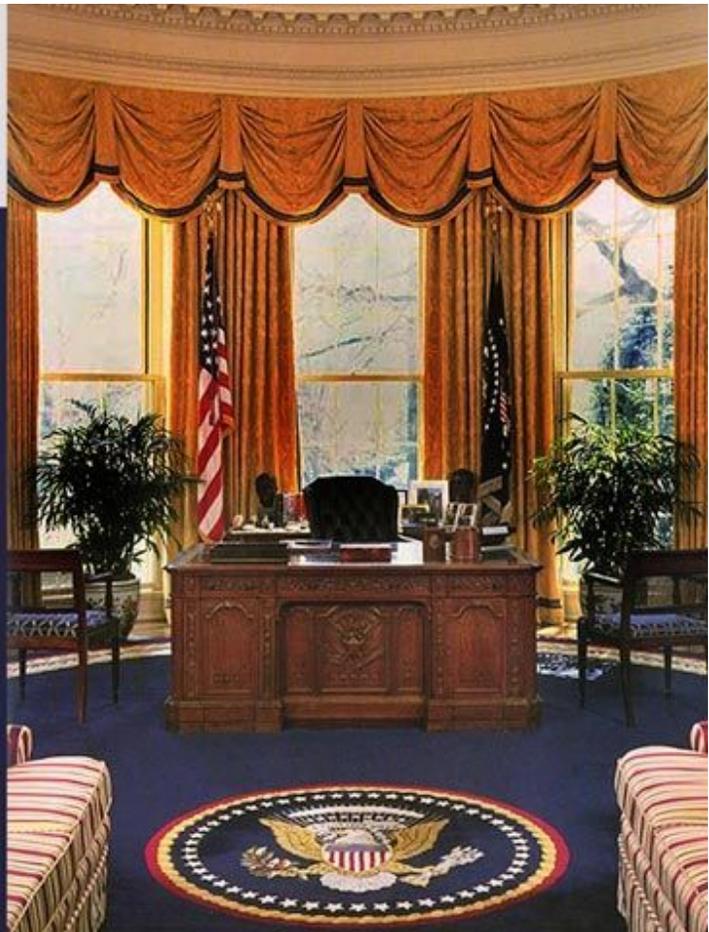


At one minute after noon on January 20th, 2021, it will be Joe Biden's turn to fulfill the president's duties as laid out in our Constitution. As the head of the executive branch, the president's main official role is to enforce national laws created by Congress. This is part of the system of checks and balances among the three branches of government, which are supposed to keep the president from becoming all-powerful. Has the system of "checks and balances" worked well, in your opinion?

George Washington probably didn't envision a presidential jet when he was sworn in as the nation's first president on April 30, 1789. But many things about the role of president have remained unchanged. Here, you see some of the duties of the president. President Biden will serve as the nation's commander-in chief. This means he is the ultimate leader of the national military force. The president can veto bills passed by Congress if he does not agree with them. Is this power absolute? (No; a veto can be overridden with a two-thirds vote in each chamber of Congress.) The president appoints people to thousands of federal positions, from heads of government agencies and White House staff to Cabinet members, federal judges, and Supreme Court justices — as long as each one is approved by the Senate. The president also has the power to declare a national emergency. In doing this, a president can unlock more than 100 special provisions not available at other times.

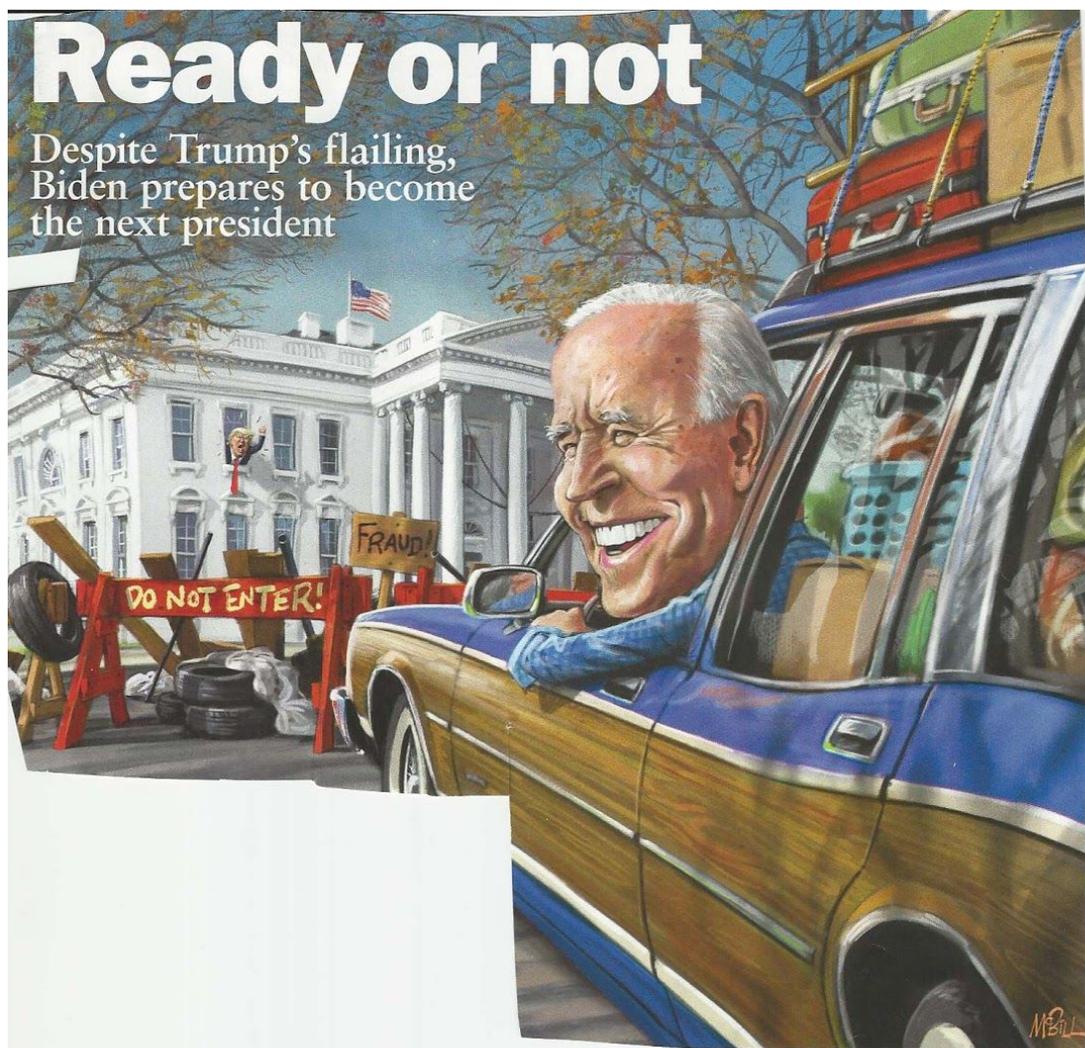
Presidential powers

- Serves as commander-in-chief of armed forces
- Can veto bills from Congress
- Appoints the Cabinet, federal judges, and Supreme Court justices
- Emergency powers in times of crisis



At age 78, Joe Biden will be the oldest person to ever be inaugurated as president. He will also bring a lot of experience. What positions has he held? He served in the U.S. Senate for 36 years, as well as spending eight years as the vice president under Barack Obama. What do you think he wants to convey to the American people in his quote here? Soon after learning he won the election, Joe Biden announced what he plans to do on his first day in office. Directly after his inauguration on January 21, 2021, Biden said he will issue several executive orders to eliminate Trump-era policies. First of all, he will reinstate the U.S. in the Paris Agreement. What is this agreement? (An international pact to reduce global emissions in order to stop climate change.) He also plans to have the U.S. rejoin the World Health Organization, or WHO. Why did President Trump take the U.S. out of this organization? Pres. Trump complained that WHO moved too slowly to control COVID19 due to political pressure from China.

Biden will also reinstate a high profile Obama-era policy dealing with immigration called the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, also known as DACA. This would allow DREAMers, or people who were children when their families illegally came to the U.S., a clear path to citizenship. And Biden is also expected to end Pres. Trump's travel restrictions on certain countries. These restrictions target 13 countries around the world, most of which have majority-Muslim populations.



Fighting a False Claim

The president and his allies have baselessly claimed that rampant voter fraud stole victory from him. State officials say there were no irregularities that affected the outcome.

KANSAS
TRUMP +15



'Kansas did not experience any widespread, systematic issues with voter fraud, intimidation, irregularities or voting problems.'

The office of Secretary of State Scott Schwab, a Republican

MICHIGAN
BIDEN +3



'We have not seen any evidence of fraud or foul play in the actual administration of the election. What we have seen is that it was smooth, transparent, secure and accurate.'

The office of Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson, a Democrat

MINNESOTA
BIDEN +7



'I don't know of a single case where someone argued that a vote counted when it shouldn't have or didn't count when it should. There was no fraud.'

Secretary of State Steve Simon, a Democrat

OHIO
TRUMP +8



'There's a great human capacity for inventing things that aren't true about elections. The conspiracy theories and rumors and all those things run rampant.'

Secretary of State Frank LaRose, a Republican

PENNSYLVANIA
BIDEN +0.67



'Many of the claims against the commonwealth have already been dismissed, and repeating these false attacks is reckless. No active lawsuit even alleges, and no evidence presented so far has shown, widespread problems.'

The office of Attorney General Josh Shapiro, a Democrat

WASHINGTON
BIDEN +20



'It's just throwing grass at the fence at this point. See what sticks.'

The office of Secretary of State Kim Wyman, a Republican

Results as of Tuesday at 6:40 p.m. Eastern.

THE NEW YORK TIMES



RUTH FREMSON/THE NEW YORK TIMES

President-elect Joseph R. Biden Jr. and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris discussed the coronavirus and the economy on Monday.

Transition Delay Could Cost Lives, Biden Warns

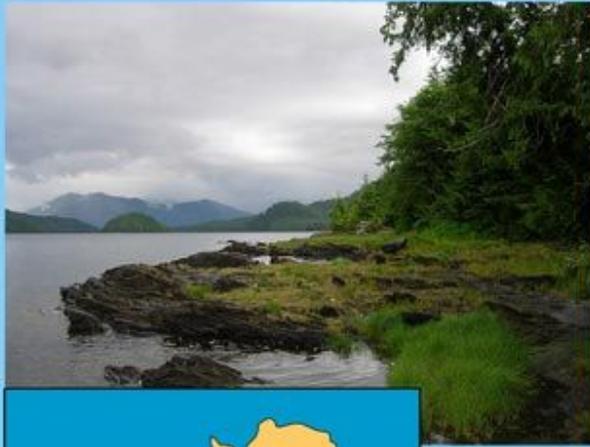
Trump Administration Strips Protections from America's Largest National Forest

Alaska is home to the largest national forest in the U.S. What is a national forest? (Forest lands that are owned, managed, and protected by the federal government.) The Tongass National Forest, in Southeast Alaska, covers over 16.7 million acres. Much of the Tongass is old-growth forest. What does this mean? (Forests that have remained relatively undisturbed over long periods of time.)

Trees in old growth forests store huge amounts of carbon in their trunks. As a result, they are critically important in the fight against climate change. The Tongass is said to store more carbon per square acre than the Amazon. In fact, experts say these forests are one of the planet's best protections against warming temperatures.

The Tongass is also home to many endangered animals and plants. In 2001, many parts of the Tongass Forest were designated as "roadless areas." This kept large areas of the Tongass safe from construction and logging. But in October, 2020, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, or USDA, announced plans to remove protections of these roadless areas. Why do you think they did this? (Some reports say it is being done at the request of the timber industry.) Environmental and indigenous groups have strongly criticized this move. They say new construction and logging in the forests will harm natural ecosystems and accelerate climate change. There is currently pending legislation in Congress to permanently protect "roadless" areas.

Trump administration strips protections from America's largest national forest



"While tropical rainforests are the lungs of the planet, the Tongass is the lungs of North America."

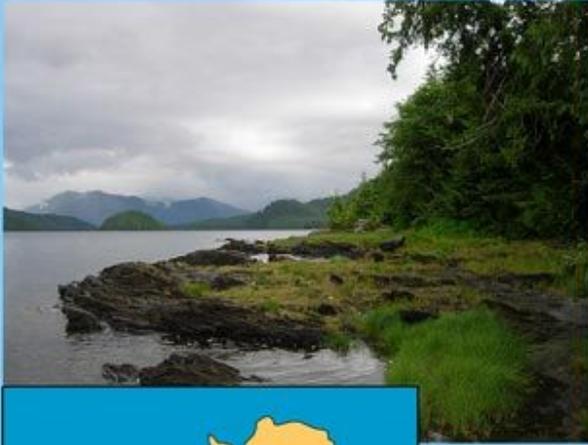
*– Dominick DellaSala
Chief scientist, Wild Heritage Project*

Like the Tongass National Forest, national parks are considered public land. That means that they are areas that are owned by the government, tax-payer funded, and open to the public. Public Lands make up about 28 percent of all land in the U.S., which amounts to nearly 640 million acres. As you see on the map here, the majority of public lands exist in the western United States.

Public lands are important because they allow us to visit, and protect, some of our country's most impressive natural landscapes. But public lands aren't just important for people, they're also vital in our efforts to maintain wildlife and natural ecosystems. Government agencies manage more than 556 national wildlife refuges in the U.S., helping to conserve endangered plant and animal populations. Without these refuges, many species would face the possibility of extinction.

Unfortunately, public lands have come under threat. In the last several years, the Trump administration has taken action to transfer control of some public lands to individual states. This would allow states to sell access to those lands to oil and gas companies. Conservationists and environmental experts warn that doing so could severely damage some of our most important natural ecosystems. Do you think efforts should be made to better protect public lands?

Trump administration strips protections from America's largest national forest



"While tropical rainforests are the lungs of the planet, the Tongass is the lungs of North America."

*– Dominick DellaSala
Chief scientist, Wild Heritage Project*

New exhibition highlights artist Frida Kahlo

The Denver Art Museum is currently hosting an exhibition called “Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, and Mexican Modernism.” This show features over 20 paintings by famous artist Frida Kahlo — FREE-dah KAHlow —as well as more than 100 works by other Mexican artists. The exhibition represents art from the decades following the end of the Mexican Revolution in 1920. Are you familiar with Frida Kahlo and her work? Frida Kahlo was born in Coyoacán — coy-yo-ah-CAHN — Mexico in 1907.

Her Mexican heritage had a big influence on her work, as did the pain and suffering she experienced throughout most of her life. She contracted polio as a child, causing one of her legs to become stunted. At age 18, she was in a terrible bus accident that left her with a broken spine, pelvis, collarbone, and ribs. Her already weakened right leg was fractured in 11 places. To distract herself during her long recovery, she taught herself to paint. But she never fully recovered from the injuries, and despite more than 30 subsequent surgeries she lived most of her life in crippling pain, often in a wheelchair. How do you think painting helped her physically and emotionally?

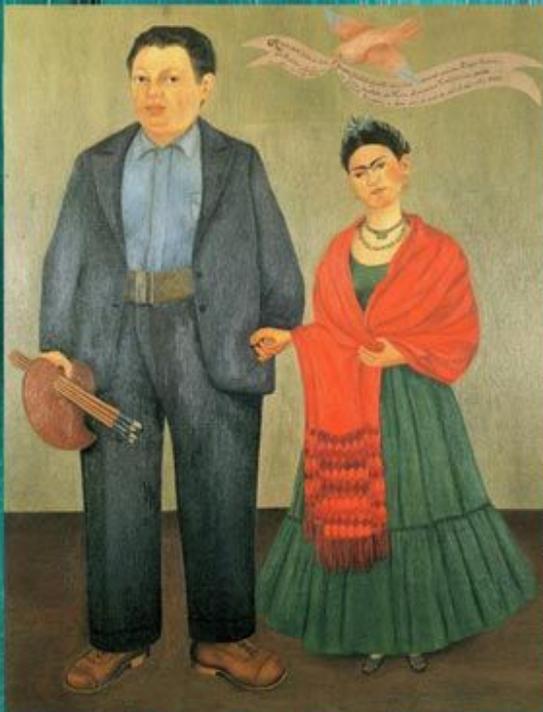
The majority of Kahlo’s paintings were of herself. Since she spent much of her time alone and bedridden, she said she painted the subject she knew best. But her self portraits weren’t just about her. As you can see in the painting on the left, Kahlo used her paintings to convey important social and political messages.



Frida had a tumultuous relationship with the prominent Mexican painter Diego Rivera. They divorced once and remarried, but both marriages were marked by infidelity and frequent arguments. On the left is Frida's wedding portrait of the pair. Rivera was a big man — over six feet tall and weighing 300 pounds — and she was barely five feet tall and 100 pounds. Still, Kahlo exaggerated the difference between them. Why do you think she did so? One idea is that Rivera painted big murals, while Kahlo's paintings were much smaller. The painting may also express her feelings that her husband overshadowed her as an artist.

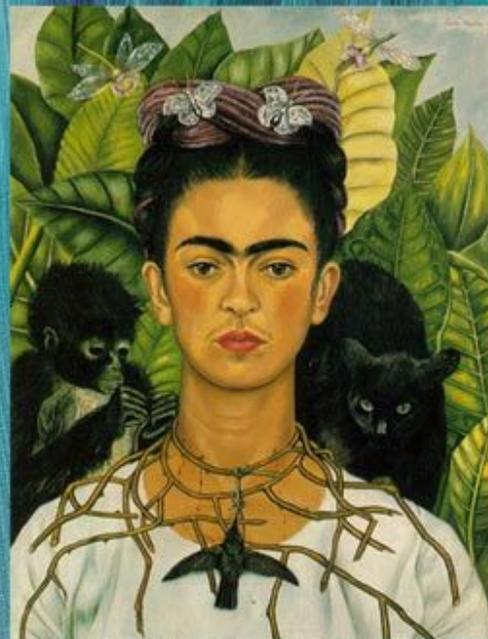
She died in 1954 at age 47, but in the decades after her death, her art has grown in popularity and now overshadows that of her husband. The painting on the right typifies Kahlo's many self-portraits; her face is expressionless, leaving the rest of the painting to convey her emotions. Here, she is surrounded by symbols that represent things in her personal life. Her paintings have often been described as surrealist. What is surrealism? (A type of art in which the artist creates a "super real," or dream, world.) But Kahlo insisted that she was not a surrealist painter.

The art of Frida Kahlo



Frida and Diego Rivera, 1931

“I never painted dreams. I painted my own reality.”



Self-Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird, 1940

Country of the Week: Pakistan

Pakistan is in South Asia bordering Iran and Afghanistan to the west and China and India to the east. It is the fifth most populous country in the world, with a population of more than 212 million. The southern half of the country is arid and hot, but the top half is part of the world's largest mountain range. What is this range? (The Himalayas.)

K2, the second tallest mountain in the world, is located on Pakistan's border with China. K2 has an altitude of more than 28,000 feet, and is considered the most difficult mountain in the world to climb. Only 367 people have reached the summit, and 86 people have died attempting to climb it. What do you think motivates people to climb K2?

The capital city of Pakistan is Islamabad, but the largest city is Karachi. Karachi is the seventh largest city in the world, home to around 15 million people. About 3 million immigrants live in Karachi, mostly from nearby nations such as Afghanistan and Bangladesh. These immigrants come to Karachi to escape violence and poverty in their home countries and find work. As a result, Karachi is a fast-growing and diverse city. Pakistan's economy is mostly based on textile and food exports, with large financial and mineral export sectors. Its economy has struggled in recent years, due to political turmoil and U.S. sanctions. Despite these problems, Pakistan is a powerful country with nuclear capability. Imran Khan has been the prime minister of Pakistan since 2018. Before his political career, Khan was a cricket player who helped Pakistan win the 1992 Cricket World Cup.



Beginning in 1757, Pakistan—along with India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar—was ruled by the British. This large colony was eventually named the British Raj, and it lasted until 1947, when these countries gained independence from Great Britain. Many independence leaders wanted Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh to remain as one country, but some Pakistani leaders, including Muhammad Ali Jinnah, were worried that the area's large Hindu population would overpower its Muslim minority. To solve this, these countries were broken up during the 1947 Partition of India. What is a partition? (The intentional breakup of a country into smaller countries.) India was designated as a Hindu country, while Pakistan and Bangladesh (then called East Pakistan) were created for Muslim inhabitants of the region.

Jinnah was named the first Prime Minister of Pakistan and is still considered the founder of the country. Because of Pakistan's majority-Muslim population, the country is home to many mosques, including the Faisal Mosque. The Faisal Mosque was completed in 1986, and it is the fifth largest mosque in the world. Malala Yousafzai is a Pakistani human rights activist who was shot by Taliban gunmen for her advocacy for women's education. Yousafzai survived this attack and continued her fight. In 2014, she won the Nobel Peace Prize for her work to bring education to women and girls all over the world.



This Week in History

At the height of the civil war President Lincoln delivered perhaps the most famous presidential speech in our country's history. What is that speech called? The answer is the "Gettysburg Address". Gettysburg was the site of a single deadliest battle of the civil war; it was located in Pennsylvania. This battle lasted from July 1st to July 3rd, 1863 nearly 8,000 soldiers died at Gettysburg and more than 46,000 were injured. The Union army won this battle and it is usually thought of as a turning point of the war. But in 1863 no one on either side knew how long the war would go on, or how many more lives would be lost before it would be over. Lincoln was glad that his side had won this battle, but he was far from feeling good about the war itself. When did the civil war finally end? It went on for nearly two more years ending on May 13th, 1865. After the battle was over, the people of Gettysburg children chose to turn this location into Soldiers' National Cemetery.

President Lincoln was invited to deliver some remarks at the dedication of this cemetery. But Lincoln was not even considered the main speaker. Edward Everett, a politician and educator from Massachusetts, delivered the opening speech, which lasted two hours. Lincoln followed Everett, and began with a sentence that has become famous. "Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." A "score" is 20 of something, so he meant 87 years.

Lincoln's speech only lasted for nine more sentences, but all of them are memorable. He pointed out that he could not make the cemetery a holy place, because the many men who died there had already done that. He said, "The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here." Lincoln told the crowd that these soldiers did not die in vain, because those who still lived would use their example to fight for what he called a "new birth of freedom." He finished by saying the "government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from this earth."

Lincoln was one of America's great speakers, and there are many other examples of his powerful writing style. But this speech has remained powerful because it reminds people of America's most important values and the people who died fighting for them

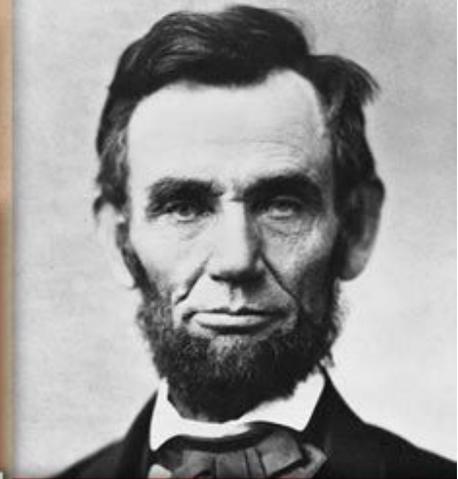
THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

November 19, 1863:

The Gettysburg Address

brought forth, upon this continent, a new nation, conceived

"Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."



Abraham Lincoln

Battle of Gettysburg: July 1-3, 1863



Remember When...

Let's remember the show "Jeopardy!" and its beloved host, Alex Trebek.

Fans of "Jeopardy!" were saddened to learn that the show's beloved host, Alex Trebek, died of pancreatic cancer on November 8, 2020. Trebek had hosted the hit game show since 1984. But this was actually the second version of "Jeopardy!" Those of us who are a bit older know that this program actually began two decades earlier. Some have called "Jeopardy!" the best game show of all time.

This week, let's remember the show's interesting history. A young game show host named Merv Griffin and his wife came up with the idea for "Jeopardy!" during an airplane flight. Griffin pitched the concept to NBC executives, and they loved the idea of a show where the host had the answers but the contestants had to guess the questions. When the show debuted in 1964, it was called "What's Your Question?" but the name was soon changed to "Jeopardy!" Art Fleming was chosen as the show's first host. He was an actor who had never hosted a game show before, and he was always announced as "the star of 'Jeopardy!'" Did you watch this first version of "Jeopardy!"?

"Jeopardy!" has three contestants and three rounds. In the first two rounds, players can choose answers in six categories. Each answer has a certain amount of money attached to it. If a player gets the question right, they get that amount, and get to choose the next answer. And if they get it wrong they lose that amount. In Final Jeopardy, contestants bet some or all of their money on their ability to guess the correct question to one answer. They then hear the answer and have 30 seconds to write the question. The song that plays during this time period was written by Merv Griffin himself.

Fleming hosted the show for 11 years until it ran out of steam in 1975. He also hosted an attempted comeback in 1978. In 1984, "Jeopardy!" was rebooted with a new look, with answers popping up on video screens. It also sported a new host: Alex Trebek. Trebek, a native of Ontario, Canada, had hosted other game shows before being hired for "Jeopardy!" But the new show allowed him to display both his intelligence and his empathy for the contestants. Trebek reviewed every question in every show, rewriting them if necessary to make them easier to understand. He insisted on being called the "host" of the show, rather than the "star." This new version of "Jeopardy!" did incredibly well in syndication, especially when paired with another wildly popular game show invented by Merv Griffin. What show is this? ("Wheel of Fortune.")

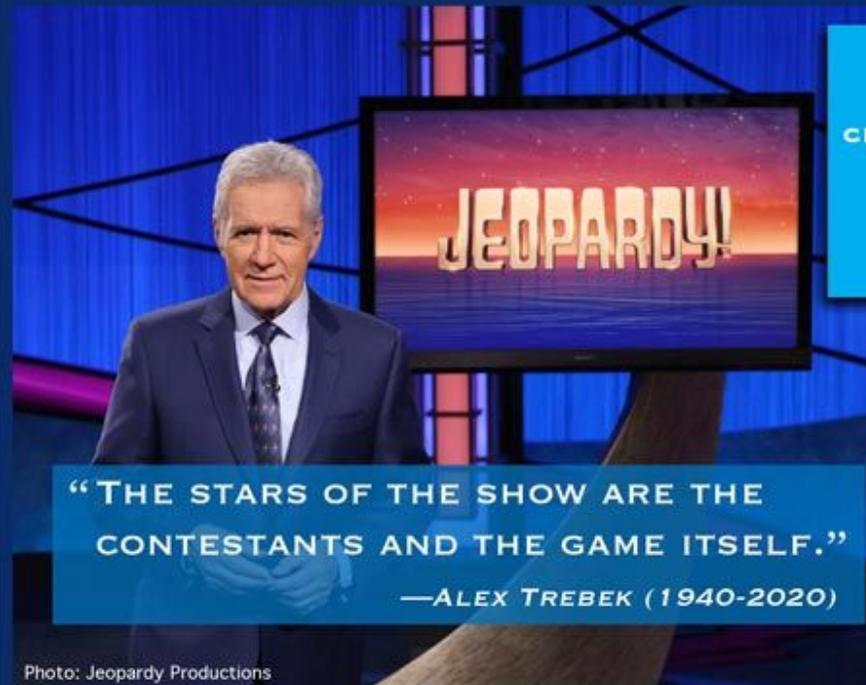
Trebek was held in high esteem for his on-air skills, garnering seven Emmy Awards for Outstanding Game Show Host as well as a lifetime achievement award, and a Peabody Award for broadcasting in 2012. But he was prouder of his philanthropic efforts; Trebek contributed \$10 million to the University of Ontario, helped to fund homeless shelters, entertained overseas troops, and gave his time to educational efforts.

"Jeopardy!" became even more popular in 2004, when a contestant named Ken Jennings won 74 consecutive games, winning \$2.5 million during the streak. Earlier this year, Jennings faced off against two other mega-champions, garnering huge ratings for this "Greatest of All Time" challenge. By then, however, Alex Trebek had already announced his diagnosis of Stage 4

pancreatic cancer. Although he was undergoing treatment, he continued to tape new episodes of the show until October 29th. Ten days later, Alex Trebek passed away at the age of 80, after spending a pleasant last day with his wife, Jean. His last 35 “Jeopardy!” episodes will be shown throughout the rest of the year, with the last one airing on Christmas Day.

Remember When...

ALEX TREBEK AND “JEOPARDY!”



“THE STARS OF THE SHOW ARE THE CONTESTANTS AND THE GAME ITSELF.”

—ALEX TREBEK (1940-2020)

Photo: Jeopardy Productions

ANSWER: SHE
COULDN'T “BEAR”
CERTAIN BOWLS, BEDS,
& CHAIRS.
QUESTION: WHO IS
_____?



Art Fleming hosted the show from 1964 to 1975.