



# Modern Family



High School Specialized Committee

# Background Guide

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Virginia Invitational

V I M  N C

Model United Nations Conference

13<sup>th</sup> Session

March 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>, 2026

# VIMUNC XIII



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Esteemed Delegates and Sponsors,

Welcome to the thirteenth annual Virginia Invitational Model United Nations Conference. As the MUN year winds down, we hope to provide the best experience yet, with paramount service and attention to detail that creates the greatest conference. From Modern Family and mythological conflict to broad UN organizations and regional bodies, this year's VIMUNC features committees that truly serve every interest. With experienced chairs, czars, and staff, we will ensure that every delegate truly has a positive experience, and we simply hope that you enjoy your time with us.

This year's 22 committees and over 1100 delegates make VIMUNC XIII the largest edition of our conference ever, and we look forward to expanding our outreach across Virginia to continue to provide a wonderful experience for all delegates. With a large MUN team that has years of experience and accolades, we hope that every ounce of effort we put into this year's conference is met with every single minute of the committee being filled with substantive and invigorating debate to create learning experiences that last for years to come.

It has been the absolute dream of my time in high school to lead my club to this very day, and so much hard work has been put into every single crisis update, background guide, and dossier. We sincerely hope that the work and care placed in every single aspect of this conference are displayed in its highest quality. If at any time you feel something about the conference is unsatisfactory, please don't hesitate to talk to your chairs, a staffer, or a member of the Secretariat. So, whether it be solving catastrophes at the 2026 World Cup, making your presence known in one of our 4 JCCs, or experiencing the intricacies of one of VIMUNC's 2 ad-hoc committees, I know deep in my heart that we're ready for VIMUNC XIII. Now, the question becomes: are you?

Sincerely,

Josselyn Gould | Secretary-General, VIMUNC XIII

# Modern Family

Topic A: *Stella Gets Kidnapped*

Topic B: *The Family Is Trapped Together During a Citywide Power Outage*

## Committee Background

This committee is set in the world of Modern Family and follows the Pritchett-Dunphy-Tucker family through the challenges they face together. Jay Pritchett is at the center of it all, a businessman who built his success through experience and smart financial decisions, and whose approach to leadership reflects both of those things. His marriage to Gloria Delgado-Pritchett changed the emotional texture of his household in ways he probably did not anticipate. Gloria loves loudly and protects fiercely, and nowhere is that more obvious than in how she raised her son Manny. Manny grew up with that kind of unconditional support behind him, and Jay came to occupy a real paternal role in his life over time, even if he arrived there slowly. Together, Jay and Gloria are also raising their younger son Joe, and their different instincts about parenting come up more often than either of them would probably prefer.

Claire Dunphy got her father's need for control and his preference for having a plan. Her husband Phil approaches things differently. He is warm, optimistic, and brings an energy to both parenting and his real estate career that balances Claire out, even when it frustrates her. Their kids pull in different directions. Haley is tuned into social dynamics and how things look. Alex is focused on academics and tends to approach problems analytically. Luke acts first and thinks about it later. Mitchell, Jay's son, is a lawyer, and that shows in how he handles things. He is cautious and methodical and tends to focus on what could go wrong. Cameron, his husband,

leads with emotion, while Mitchell holds back. Cameron cares about how things are perceived and puts real weight on doing things with intention. Their daughter Lily has picked up more from both of them than either probably realizes.

Day to day, these three households run separately. They each have their own structure and their own way of making decisions. What keeps them tied together across that distance is harder to define than a shared address. It is history and loyalty and a genuine investment in each other that show up most clearly when something goes wrong. In those moments, every personality difference that usually stays quietly in the background becomes impossible to ignore, and the same qualities that create conflict are often the ones that end up carrying the family through.

Delegates need to understand not just who these characters are but what they value and how they think, because those things will shape every decision made in committee.

# Topic A: Stella Gets Kidnapped

## *Background Information*

Stella is more than just a dog in the Pritchett household. She is, in many ways, Jay's softest point. Jay has never been overly sentimental in how he expresses affection, but his bond with Stella is visible in the quiet routines they share. Morning walks, familiar commands, and the unspoken comfort of her presence have become constants in his life. Stella offers Jay something uncomplicated. She does not challenge him, question him, or push back against his authority. She simply stays. That loyalty matters more to him than he would readily admit.

For Gloria, Stella represents something more layered. When she first entered Jay's life, Stella was already there. The dog symbolized Jay's established world, one Gloria had to fit into rather than shape herself. Over time, Gloria developed her own affection for Stella, even if it sometimes competed with her desire to be Jay's primary emotional focus. Watching Jay's tenderness toward Stella has occasionally softened Gloria and occasionally frustrated her. Still, Stella is part of the family, and Gloria would defend her fiercely.

The rest of the family has their own relationships with Stella. Claire sees the dog as part of her father's vulnerability. Phil treats Stella like an enthusiastic teammate. Mitchell views her practically but understands the emotional role she plays in Jay's life. Cameron is openly affectionate toward her. The grandchildren see her as a comforting constant at family gatherings. Stella's presence threads through birthdays, holidays, and ordinary visits. She may not speak, but she anchors rooms simply by being in them.

Unlike a human family member, Stella cannot advocate for herself. She cannot explain what happened or defend herself. Her disappearance creates a different kind of fear — one rooted in helplessness. Taking Stella would not just hurt Jay emotionally; it would send a message. It suggests that someone understands exactly where Jay is most vulnerable. In a family with financial resources and public visibility, targeting the dog feels deliberate. It feels personal.

## *Current Situation*

Stella has been missing for several hours. She was last seen in the backyard, where the gate now appears slightly ajar. There are no obvious signs of forced entry, but her absence does not feel accidental. Shortly after she was discovered missing, Jay received a message. It was short and direct, referencing Stella by name and implying that she is being held. No ransom demand has been specified. No timeline has been given. The message is controlled and calculated, leaving the family uncertain about the motive.

Jay is outwardly furious but internally shaken. His frustration manifests as anger — at the situation, at the possibility of weakness, at the idea that someone believes they can manipulate him. Gloria is alarmed not just for Stella but for what this represents. If someone can access their home closely enough to take the dog, what else are they capable of? Claire is already thinking about security failures and potential business enemies. Phil wants to mobilize quickly and search the surrounding area. Mitchell is concerned about how to preserve evidence. Cameron worries about how quickly the situation could spread socially if neighbors notice or if word leaks online.

The emotional weight is uneven but intense. Stella may be “just a dog” to outsiders, but to this family, she represents loyalty, comfort, and Jay’s emotional core. There has been no further contact. No proof of Stella’s condition. No explanation of motive. The uncertainty is building tension rapidly.

## *Possible Solutions*

The first decision is whether to involve law enforcement immediately. Reporting Stella’s kidnapping brings formal investigative resources, neighborhood canvassing, and potential tracking measures. However, involving the police also escalates the situation and removes a degree of control from Jay. If the person responsible is monitoring the family’s response, outside involvement could provoke retaliation.

Alternatively, the family could attempt to manage the situation privately at first. Jay’s financial resources allow for private investigators, security consultants, and discreet surveillance. They could review security

footage, question neighbors quietly, and attempt to trace the message before making the situation public. This approach preserves privacy but risks losing valuable time.

Communication strategy is another key issue. Should Jay respond to the message to prompt further information, or remain silent and wait? A response could open negotiation, but also signal desperation. Waiting could demonstrate strength, but might delay necessary contact. If a ransom is demanded, the family must decide whether paying ensures Stella's safe return or encourages further targeting.

The family must also address internal coordination. Emotions are high, particularly for Jay. Establishing a structured approach — assigning roles such as communication lead, security review, neighborhood outreach, and legal oversight — may prevent reactive decisions. Transparency within the family will be critical to prevent resentment or impulsive actions that could jeopardize Stella's safety.

Ultimately, this crisis tests not just how much they value Stella, but how they function when Jay — typically the stable center — is emotionally compromised. Their response will reveal whether they can balance urgency with strategy, and whether loyalty to one of their own, even one with four legs, is enough to keep them unified under pressure.

## *Questions to Consider*

- How should the family determine whether Stella's kidnapping is financially motivated, personally motivated, or meant as a warning?
- To what extent should Jay's emotional attachment to Stella influence the family's decision-making process?
- Should law enforcement be contacted immediately, or does keeping the situation private offer strategic advantages?
- If a ransom demand is made, is paying it the safest course of action, or could it encourage further exploitation?
- How can the family balance urgency with caution when every hour without Stella increases emotional pressure?

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# Topic B: The Family Is Trapped Together During a Citywide Power Outage

## *Background Information*

A massive power outage hits Los Angeles during an extreme heat wave. Temperatures were already climbing before the electricity failed, and without air conditioning, the heat inside homes quickly becomes oppressive. Traffic lights stop functioning. Cell service becomes inconsistent. Grocery stores close. Gas stations cannot pump fuel. The city feels stalled.

The family happens to be gathered in one house when the outage begins. At first, it feels inconvenient but manageable. They assume power will return quickly. But as the hours pass and the temperature rises, optimism fades. Refrigerated food begins to spoil. Ice melts. Water pressure becomes unreliable. Phone batteries drain with no clear way to recharge them. Access to news becomes limited.

These three households are accustomed to autonomy. Claire runs her home with structure and planning. Phil brings flexibility within routine. Mitchell and Cameron operate with their own balance of caution and theatricality. Jay and Gloria manage their household with a different rhythm. Normally, disagreements can end with physical separation. In this scenario, retreat is not possible. Physical discomfort amplifies emotional friction. Minor irritations grow. Leadership styles clash. Parenting approaches collide. Heat affects patience. Hunger affects judgment. Uncertainty affects morale.

## *Current Situation*

The temperature inside the house has risen to a point where concentration is difficult. Windows are open, but the outside air offers little relief. The refrigerator is warming rapidly, forcing decisions about what food to consume first. Water supplies are limited. Phone batteries are critically low, making communication with the outside world sporadic.

There is no clear timeline for the restoration of power. News updates are inconsistent. Some reports suggest widespread outages across the city. Others indicate that infrastructure damage may prolong the blackout. Without reliable information, planning becomes difficult.

Tensions are rising. Jay favors decisive authority and quick calls. Claire prefers structured planning and group input. Mitchell wants to analyze risks thoroughly. Cameron prioritizes emotional stability and morale. Phil attempts to lighten the mood, but may underestimate logistical urgency. Meanwhile, the children are reacting in their own ways, adding another layer of complexity to an already strained environment. The question of whether to remain in the house or attempt to leave is no longer theoretical. Conditions are deteriorating.

## *Possible Solutions*

One option is to remain in the house and focus on rationing resources. This would involve creating a structured distribution plan for food and water, designating charging priorities for remaining devices, and minimizing unnecessary movement to conserve energy. Assigning specific roles – such as supply management, morale support, and outside monitoring – could create stability.

Another option is to leave in search of better conditions. This would require evaluating transportation availability, fuel levels, and potential destinations such as a hotel, community center, or friend's home with backup power. However, traveling without clear information could expose the family to traffic congestion, fuel shortages, or unsafe conditions.

Leadership structure must also be addressed. The family may need to formally designate one decision-maker or create a small leadership group to streamline choices. Establishing transparent communication and clear expectations could reduce internal conflict.

In addition, focusing on morale may be just as important as logistics. Structured activities, shared responsibilities, and intentional communication could prevent frustration from escalating into conflict. By leaning into their strengths – problem-solving, adaptability, humor, and loyalty – the family can transform a tense survival scenario into a test of collective resilience rather than division.

## *Questions to Consider*

- Who should take leadership in a situation where several strong authority figures are present?
- How should limited resources be distributed in a way that is both fair and effective?
- Is it safer to remain in the house or to attempt to leave and search for better conditions?
- How can personal conflicts be prevented from undermining group survival?
- What does this crisis reveal about the strengths and weaknesses of the family as a whole?

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