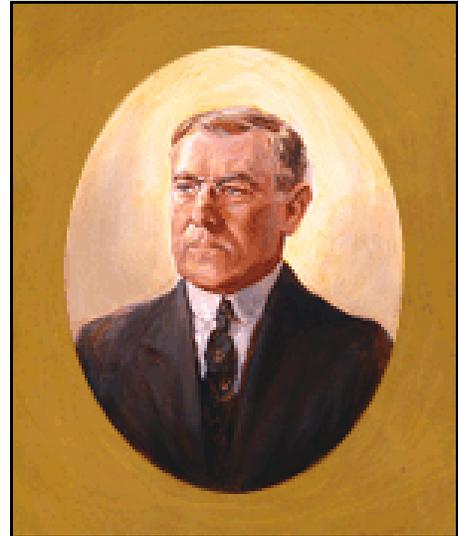


Woodrow Wilson

1919

“in recognition of his Fourteen Points peace program and his work in achieving inclusion of the Covenant of the League of Nations in the 1919 Treaty of Versailles”

For a man that had held just one other political office before becoming president, Woodrow Wilson was a politically adept leader, speaker, and visionary. Upon election, Wilson had big plans set domestically for the United States, but the outbreak and development of World War I (the Great War) during his time in office altered the course of his presidency and his politics. Believing firmly that the United States needed a foreign policy of international cooperation through an association of nations led Wilson to formulate a plan for the League of Nations. Wilson campaigned for his idea of the League like he pushed for all his ideas – firmly and relentlessly. His tirelessness ultimately led to ill health, as well as the nomination for the Peace Prize in 1919.



In 1856, Wilson was born Thomas Woodrow to well-educated parents of Scottish descent. During his boyhood Wilson moved with his family to many parts of the South, including Virginia, Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina and very much considered himself a Southerner throughout his life.

Wilson earned a law degree but practiced for less than a year before becoming restless and enrolled at Johns Hopkins University to study history. After earning his Ph.D., he and his long-time fiancé, Ellen Louise Axson, were married. They had a happy marriage and eventually had three daughters.

In 1885 Wilson also accepted a position with the newly opened Bryn Mawr College, a school for women near Philadelphia. Wilson was not particularly patient with women as intellectual associates and did not enjoy his teaching duties. He was, however, able to pursue his writing. Later, Princeton University offered him a professorship, which he accepted right away.

Wilson's progressive leadership style at Princeton University caught the attention of Democratic Party members who thought Wilson would make a good candidate. In 1912, Wilson won the presidency because the vote for the Republican candidate, Taft, was split by Roosevelt and the Progressives.

As president, Wilson protected American interests in revolutionary Mexico and fought for American rights on the high seas. He oversaw the creation of the Federal Reserve system, cut the tariff, and developed a reputation as a reformer. His sharp warnings to Germany led to the resignation of his secretary of state, William Jennings Bryan, a pacifist.

In 1916 he was reelected by a slim margin with the slogan, "He kept us out of war," although his attempts to mediate in the war failed. At the outbreak of war, he encouraged the United States to be politically neutral; however, after several American ships had been sunk by the Germans, he secured a declaration of war against Germany on April 6, 1917.

Wilson wrote up a general outline to help encourage a peaceful settlement to World War I (The Great War) in a speech known as Fourteen Points. The speech explained Wilson's belief in a doctrine of self-determination -- that each nation should have full powers to govern itself and not be ruled or influenced by other nations. In the speech he also encouraged the settlement of territorial disputes between nations. The Germans accepted Wilson's terms for peace on November 11, 1918.

He immediately traveled to Paris to help mediate and negotiate lasting peace. He campaigned for the League of Nations, an international organization that Wilson believed would help nations cooperate with each other and eliminate the need for future wars.

In the United States, however, Wilson found that the Senate would not approve U.S. membership to the League because it would make the U.S. subordinate to the votes of other nations in case of war. Wilson would not give up on his League of Nations and the ideal of international cooperation. He ultimately suffered a major stroke during his campaign to get public support for the idea, and was unable to win over the Senate on the League of Nations.

Wilson was awarded the 1919 Nobel Peace Prize, but the treaty embodying the League of Nations was ultimately rejected by the Senate in 1920. He left the White House in March of 1921 and died in Washington, DC, on February 3, 1924.

1856- 1924

- Wilson is the only president to earn a doctorate in a non-law field
- During Wilson's term the 17th, 18th, and 19th Amendments were established
- He is the only president buried in Washington, D.C.
- Wilson served as Governor of New Jersey
- He was a professor at the all-woman Bryn Mawr College, in Pennsylvania

"We are citizens of the world. The tragedy is that we do not know this."

Suggested Classroom Activities**Introduction/Warm-Up:**

Think of a conflict that is presently unfolding either in your life, community, or world (example: a fight between your friends, the Middle East conflict) What is it? If you were designated as the official leader to help resolve this conflict in a peaceful way, how would you resolve it? Write a Peace Treaty that might help both sides work out their differences of opinion.

What do you think the United Nations is? Why do you think it exists? Have you heard anything in the news lately about the UN?

Is it more important for an individual country to look out for its own interests or for a group of countries to work together and compromise? Give reasons for your answer.

React to your favorite of the following Woodrow Wilson quotes:

“There must be, not a balance of power, but a community of power; not organized rivalries, but an organized peace.”

“We are citizens of the world. The tragedy is that we do not know this.”

“Friendship is the only cement that will ever hold the world together.”

“If you will think about what you ought to do for other people, your character will take care of itself. Character is a by-product, and any man who devotes himself to its cultivation in his own case will become a selfish pig.”

Discussion Questions:

1. What experience or education prepared Wilson to become president? (Level 1)
2. Why do you think the League of Nations was so important to Wilson? (Level 2)
3. Why did the United States remain neutral in the beginning of the Great War? (Level 2)
4. What do you think Wilson’s views on slavery and the Civil War might have been? (Level 3)
5. Why did the League of Nations fail? (Level 3)

Vocabulary:

1. Adept

2. League of Nations
3. Fourteen Points
4. Self-determination

Activities:

Primary Source Document Activity: Wilson's 14 Points Speech

Student read in groups to analyze and construct meaning from Wilson's famous speech, utilizing the SOAPStone method of document analysis (see attached worksheet)

Technology Option:

As a computer lab activity, students research the powers of the League of Nations, its weaknesses, and reasons for its disbandment

Resources:

Woodrow Wilson: A Portrait

An excellent and thorough PBS website that accompanies a Wilson documentary. Can be used successfully for research without the film.

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/wilson/index.html>

PRESIDENT WOODROW WILSON'S FOURTEEN POINTS

Introduction: What follows is the complete text of a 1918 speech by Woodrow Wilson. It outlines what has now become famously known as the Fourteen Points. Wilson firmly believed that these points would put those involved in World War I on the road to lasting peace.

As you read, you may notice language that you do not understand and you may feel confused. Be sure to circle any words or concepts that you may need to look up or figure out with your group. Remember, it is a primary source document and even historians have to do a lot of work to figure them out.

8 January, 1918

It will be our wish and purpose that the processes of peace, when they are begun, shall be absolutely open and that they shall involve and permit henceforth no secret understandings of any kind. The day of conquest and aggrandizement is gone by; so is also the day of secret covenants entered into in the interest of particular governments and likely at some unlooked-for moment to upset the peace of the world. It is this happy fact, now clear to the view of every public man whose thoughts do not still linger in an age that is dead and gone, which makes it possible for every nation whose purposes are consistent with justice and the peace of the world to avow now or at any other time the objects it has in view.

We entered this war because violations of right had occurred which touched us to the quick and made the life of our own people impossible unless they were corrected and the world secure once for all against their recurrence. What we demand in this war, therefore, is nothing peculiar to ourselves. It is that the world be made fit and safe to live in; and particularly that it be made safe for every peace-loving nation which, like our own, wishes to live its own life, determine its own institutions, be assured of justice and fair dealing by the other peoples of the world as against force and selfish aggression. All the peoples of the world are in effect partners in this interest, and for our own part we see very clearly that unless justice be done to others not be done to us. The programme of the world's peace, therefore, is our programme; and that programme, the only possible programme, as we see it, is this:

- I. Open covenants of peace, openly arrived at, after which there shall be no private international understandings of any kind but diplomacy shall proceed always frankly and in the public view.
- II. Absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas, outside territorial waters, alike in peace and in war, except as the seas may be closed in whole or in part by international action for the enforcement of international covenants.

III. The removal, so far as possible, of all economic barriers and the establishment of an equality of trade conditions among all the nations consenting to the peace and associating themselves for its maintenance.

IV. Adequate guarantees given and taken that national armaments will be reduced to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety.

V. A free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon a strict observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of sovereignty the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the government whose title is to be determined.

VI. The evacuation of all Russian territory and such a settlement of all questions affecting Russia as will secure the best and freest cooperation of the other nations of the world in obtaining for her an unhampered and unembarrassed opportunity for the independent determination of her own political development and national policy and assure her of a sincere welcome into the society of free nations under institutions of her own choosing; and, more than a welcome, assistance also of every kind that she may need and may herself desire. The treatment accorded Russia by her sister nations in the months to come will be the acid test of their good will, of their comprehension of her needs as distinguished from their own interests, and of their intelligent and unselfish sympathy.

VII. Belgium, the whole world will agree, must be evacuated and restored, without any attempt to limit the sovereignty which she enjoys in common with all other free nations. No other single act will serve as this will serve to restore confidence among the nations in the laws which they have themselves set and determined for the government of their relations with one another. Without this healing act the whole structure and validity of international law is forever impaired.

VIII. All French territory should be freed and the invaded portions restored, and the wrong done to France by Prussia in 1871 in the matter of Alsace-Lorraine, which has unsettled the peace of the world for nearly fifty years, should be righted, in order that peace may once more be made secure in the interest of all.

IX. A readjustment of the frontiers of Italy should be effected along clearly recognizable lines of nationality.

X. The peoples of Austria-Hungary, whose place among the nations we wish to see safeguarded and assured, should be accorded the freest opportunity to autonomous development.

XI. Rumania, Serbia, and Montenegro should be evacuated; occupied territories restored; Serbia accorded free and secure access to the sea; and the relations of the several Balkan states to one another determined by friendly counsel along historically established lines of allegiance and nationality; and international guarantees of the political and economic independence and territorial integrity of the several Balkan states should be entered into.

XII. The Turkish portion of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development, and the Dardanelles should be permanently opened as a free passage to the ships and commerce of all nations under international guarantees.

XIII. An independent Polish state should be erected which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations, which should be assured a free and secure access to the sea, and whose political and economic independence and territorial integrity should be guaranteed by international covenant.

XIV. A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike.

In regard to these essential rectifications of wrong and assertions of right we feel ourselves to be intimate partners of all the governments and peoples associated together against the Imperialists. We cannot be separated in interest or divided in purpose. We stand together until the end.

For such arrangements and covenants we are willing to fight and to continue to fight until they are achieved; but only because we wish the right to prevail and desire a just and stable peace such as can be secured only by removing the chief provocations to war, which this programme does remove. We have no jealousy of German greatness, and there is nothing in this programme that impairs it. We grudge her no achievement or distinction of learning or of pacific enterprise such as have made her record very bright and very enviable. We do not wish to injure her or to block in any way her legitimate influence or power. We do not wish to fight her either with arms or with hostile arrangements of trade if she is willing to associate herself with us and the other peace-loving nations of the world in covenants of justice and law and fair dealing. We wish her only to accept a place of equality among the peoples of the world, -- the new world in which we now live, -- instead of a place of mastery.

(Source: The Essential Documents of American History was compiled by Norman P. Desmarais and James H. McGovern of Providence College)

SOAPStone: Primary Source Document Analysis

Anyone can understand difficult primary source documents by figuring out a few key details:

Speaker and subject:

Objective:

Audience:

Points:

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Setting (historical)

Tone:

Your reactions, questions, and comments about the document: