

Woodrow Wilson

1919

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



Woodrow Wilson was both a United States President and a world leader. World War I began during his time in office. He believed that the United States needed a **foreign policy** of cooperation with other countries through a friendship of nations. Wilson called this group of countries the **League of Nations**. For the rest of his life Wilson worked to create the League of Nations. He worked hard on this project traveling and giving speeches. He received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1919 for his work to bring peace to all nations but he died without seeing the League of Nations happen.

Wilson was born in 1856. When he was young Wilson moved with his family to many parts of the South, including Virginia, Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. He considered himself a Southerner throughout his life.

Wilson earned a law degree but practiced for less than a year. He earned a history degree at Hopkins University. He married Ellen Louise Axson and had three daughters.

In 1885 Wilson taught at Bryn Mawr College. There he was known for his writing. Due to his writing he was invited to teach at Princeton.

In 1912, the Democratic Party supported Wilson for president of the United States. He won the presidency by defeating Taft, the Republican candidate.

- **Wilson was president of the United States.**
- Wilson was against war and wanted the US to remain neutral during WWI.
- He is the only president buried in Washington, D.C.
- Wilson believed all nations should cooperate to prevent war.
- Wilson did not live to see the League of Nations accepted in his own country.

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

In 1916 he was reelected with the slogan "he kept us out of war," His attempts to prevent the United States from going to war with Germany failed. He wanted the United States to be neutral and not fight in WWI. After several American passenger ships had been sunk by the Germans he signed a **declaration of war** against Germany on April 6, 1917.

Wilson wrote a list of ideas to help encourage a peaceful settlement to World War I. He shared his ideas in a speech known as the **Fourteen Points**.

The speech explained Wilson's belief of **self-determination**. This meant that each nation should have the power to **self govern** and not be ruled by other nations. In the speech he also encouraged the settlement of land ownership arguments between nations. The Germans accepted Wilson's terms for peace on November 11, 1918.

Wilson immediately traveled to Paris to help **mediate** for 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.

The United States Senate would not approve United States membership in the League of Nations. The Senate believed it would make the United States seem less powerful to other nations in case of another war. Wilson would not give up on his League of Nations and the ideal of international cooperation. He was unable to win over the Senate on the League of Nations and it was never accepted by the United States.

Wilson was awarded the 1919 Nobel Peace Prize, but his plan for the United States to join League of Nations was voted down by the Senate in 1920. He left the White House in March of 1921 and died in Washington, DC, on February 3, 1924. He is remembered for his efforts to create the League of Nations and his ideals to bring peace to the world.

Classroom Activities

Woodrow Wilson

Introduction/Warm-Up:

Think of a conflict in your life, community, or world (example: a fight between your friends, a community issue that has two sides.

What is it?

If you were 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.

Look up the United Nations. What is the United Nations? How might it help when countries disagree?

React to your favorite of the following Woodrow Wilson quotes:

“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.

Discussion Questions:

1. Wilson wanted to stay neutral in what war? (Level 1)
2. What was one of the reasons the United States entered that war? (Level 2)
3. How did Wilson hope to prevent future wars among countries? (Level 2)
4. Why did the United States Senate refuse to become part of the League of Nations? (Level 3)
5. If the League of Nations had been accepted how might it have affected World War II? Vietnam? The Iraq War? (Level 3)

Vocabulary Terms:

1. **Visionary**
2. **League of Nations**
3. **Foreign Policy**
4. **Self-determination**
5. **Fourteen Points**
6. **neutral**
7. **declaration of war**
8. **mediate**
9. **self govern**

Activity:

List as many ways as you can how friendship might help friends (and countries) solve conflicts before they become problems.

Technology Option:

Create a document with two columns. List on one side the 14 points. On the other side write why/why not each would work to help countries avoid war.

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>