

Suggested Internet Resources

Periodically, Internet Resources are updated on our web site at www.LibraryVideo.com

- www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/ww38.htm
Mount Holyoke College provides the full text of a speech President Wilson gave to Congress regarding the League of Nations.
- www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi/1918/14points.html
Brigham Young University offers the full text of President Wilson's 1918 "Fourteen Points" speech to Congress.
- historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5723/
The Center for History and New Media at George Mason University provides the audio and text of a 1912 speech President Wilson gave "On Labor."

Suggested Print Resources

- Di Nunzio, Mario R. *Woodrow Wilson: Essential Writings and Speeches of the Scholar-President*. New York University Press, New York, NY; 2006.
- MacMillan, Margaret. *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World*. Random House, New York, NY; 2002.
- Pestritto, Ronald J. *Woodrow Wilson: The Essential Political Writings*. Lexington Books, Lanham, MD; 2005.

TEACHER'S GUIDE

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GREATEST SPEECHES
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Historical Overview

President Woodrow Wilson's policy of keeping the United States out of the disastrous Great War in Europe was wildly popular with the American people and led to his reelection in 1916. Withering German U-boat attacks on United States shipping revealed that America's neutrality was not absolute, and after the Zimmerman telegraph, the president used his oratorical skills to convince America that the time had come to enter the conflict. President Wilson's confident manner and passion for the art and science of public speaking were skills he would use in 1917 to prepare young men for the draft and persuade a vast majority of Congress to vote for an unprecedented mobilization effort.

Time Line

- 1856** — Woodrow Wilson is born in Staunton, Virginia.
- 1912** — Woodrow Wilson is elected president of the United States.
- 1914** — Archduke Franz Ferdinand is assassinated; World War I begins.
- 1915** — British passenger liner Lusitania is sunk.
- 1916** — Woodrow Wilson is reelected president of the United States.
- 1917** — President Wilson asks Congress for a declaration of war against Germany.
- 1918** — World War I ends.
- 1919** — President Wilson presents his Fourteen Points proposal at the Paris Peace Conference.
- 1919** — Woodrow Wilson wins the Nobel Peace Prize.
- 1924** — Woodrow Wilson dies at age 67.

Vocabulary

Allied Powers — The group of nations, led at the outset by Great Britain, France and Russia, that were allied to fight against the Central Powers during World War I.

isolationist — An advocate of a policy of non-intervention or neutrality that the United States had taken to stay out of world conflicts prior to World War I.

Civil War — A major war in the United States between 1861 and 1865 in which northern states battled southern states that were attempting to leave the Union.

Lusitania — A British ocean liner carrying American civilians, foreign troops and munitions that was torpedoed and sunk by a German submarine in 1915.

U-boat — The German submarine used to attack American and Allied ships in World War I. An abbreviation for “undersea boat.”

Zimmerman Note — A telegram sent by Germany that instructed the German ambassador in Mexico to propose an alliance with Mexico against the United States during World War I. The intercepted message convinced many previously isolationist Americans to join the Allied side.

Bull Moose Party — The political party founded by Theodore Roosevelt to enable him to run as a third party candidate in the election of 1912. Also known as the Progressive Party.

Fourteen Points — President Woodrow Wilson's proposals for an eventual and lasting peace after World War I, which became the basis of the 1919 Treaty of Versailles.

(Continued)

The League of Nations — An organization of countries created to settle international disputes, based on President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points.

Treaty of Versailles — The 1919 peace treaty signed by the Allied Powers and Germany after World War I. The treaty contained a “war guilt” clause, forcing Germany to pay the victors billions of dollars in war reparations.

Nobel Peace Prize — An international award presented annually to the person who does the most to preserve world peace.

World War II — The second major war of the 20th century that involved the Allied Powers led by England, France, the Soviet Union and the United States who fought the Axis Powers, which included Germany, Japan and Italy.

United Nations — An organization founded in 1945 that works to ensure world peace.

Discussion Questions

1. Why did America's Founding Fathers advocate an isolationist path?
2. What was President Wilson's campaign slogan in his reelection campaign?
3. How did President Wilson respond to German U-boat attacks prior to 1917?
4. What was the Bull Moose Party?
5. What tradition did Woodrow Wilson reinstate as president?
6. How did America mobilize and prepare its forces for the war effort?
7. What was the main goal of President Wilson's Fourteen Points?

Discussion Questions & Activities

- Read with your class President Wilson's final address given on his nationwide tour to promote the League of Nations. What “false impressions” about the League of Nations and the Versailles Treaty did he attempt to clarify? Ask students to explain and evaluate his argument for U.S. membership in the League. As an extension, students may research and role-play debate in the U.S. Senate regarding the treaty's ratification. The full text of Wilson's address may be found at this web site:
www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/wilsonleagueofnations.htm
- President Wilson was an ally of the Progressive Movement, which was formed in response to major social problems left in the wake of the nation's unbridled industrial expansion and the abuses of corporate monopolies. Read President Wilson's 1913 inaugural speech and analyze his tone, use of language and administration goals. The full text of Wilson's speech may be found at the following web site:
www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/president/inaug/wilson1.htm
- President Wilson went into seclusion for a week in preparation for asking Congress and the American people to make the ultimate sacrifice in World War I. Ask students to read Wilson's War Message and summarize his reasons for leading “this great peaceful people into war, the most terrible and disastrous of all wars.” The full text of his speech may be found at the following web site:
usa.usembassy.de/etexts/speeches/rhetoric/wwwar.htm