

## Document Based Essay – World War I

### **Instructions:**

Read each document and answer the question(s) that follow. When you are through, use quotes/information from the documents, as well as your answers to provide evidence for your essay.

### **Background:**

Initially, President Woodrow Wilson did not want to get involved in WWI. Then certain events happened that changed his mind and the U. S. sent troops overseas. After the war, Wilson attempted to establish lasting world peace, but his ideas did not always meet the world favorably.

### **Task:**

Using the documents and your knowledge of social studies, write a well-developed essay describing the journey Woodrow Wilson took from the beginning of WWI, during WWI, and after WWI. Make sure your essay explains

- Explain two 2 reasons why Wilson did not want to get involved in the war
- Explain why President Wilson changed his mind and decided to ask Congress to send U.S. troops into WWI
- Describe/Explain how and why Wilson's 14 Points plan (1918) and the Treaty of Versailles (1919) created controversy in the United States after the war.

### **Be sure to:**

- Address all aspects of the task
- Fully support the theme of the essay with relevant facts and examples (*You should quote or reference at least 5 of the documents*)
- Write a well developed essay that consistently demonstrates a logical and clear plan of organization
- Introduce the theme by establishing a framework that is beyond a simple restatement of the task
- Include outside information
- Conclude your essay by restating your argument and a strong summation of the theme

## Document 1:

19 August 1914

### President Wilson's Declaration of Neutrality

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Woodrow Wilson, Message to Congress, 63<sup>rd</sup> Congr., 2d Sess., Senate Doc. No 566 (Washington 1914), pp.3-4

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The effect of the war upon the United States will depend upon what American citizens say and do. Every man who really loves America will act and speak in the true spirit of neutrality, which is the spirit of impartiality and fairness to all concerned. The spirit of the nation in this critical matter will be determined largely by what individuals and society and those gathered in public meetings do and say, upon what newspapers and magazines contain, upon what ministers utter in their pulpits, and men proclaim as their opinions upon the street.

1. According to Wilson, why should the US remain neutral?
2. How does Wilson believe the United States can accomplish its goal of neutrality?

## Document 2

### The Zimmerman Note

Berlin, January 19, 1917

On the first of February, we intend to begin submarine warfare unrestricted. In spite of this it is our intention to keep neutral the United States of America.

If this attempt is not successful, we propose an alliance on the following basis with Mexico: That we shall make war together and together make peace. We shall give general financial support, and it is understood that Mexico is to reconquer the lost territory in New Mexico, Texas, and Arizona. The details are left for your settlement.

3. What did Zimmerman propose if the United States did not remain neutral during WWI?
4. Why did the Germans feel the United States might choose to enter the war on the side of the Triple Entente and not the Central Powers?

Document 3



5. What is this cartoon about?

6. List 2 things that make this evident

- a.
- b.

Document 4a

Allied & Neutral Ships Lost During World War I					
	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918
To Submarines	3	396	964	2,439	1,035
To Surface Craft	55	23	32	64	3
To Mines	42	97	161	170	27
To Aircraft	---	---	---		1

SOURCE: Table from *The World War I Source Book* by Philip J. Haythornthwaite.

Document 4b



7. Look at the chart (Documents 4a) above, why was there such a sharp increase in Allied and Neutral Ships lost between 1916 and 1917?
8. By analyzing Document 4a and 4b above, what conclusions can you make about why the United States of America entered WWI?

**Document 5**

**Speech Before Congress, April 2, 1917** (Woodrow Wilson)

....It is a war against all nations. American ships have been sunk, American lives taken, in ways which it has stirred us very deeply to learn of, but the ships and people of other neutral and friendly nations have been sunk and overwhelmed in the waters in the same way there has been no discrimination. The challenge is to all mankind. Each nation must decide for itself how it will meet it. The choice we make for ourselves must be made with a moderation of counsel and a temperateness [moderation] of judgment befitting our character and our motives as a nation. We must put excited feeling away. Our motive will not be revenge or the victorious assertion of the physical might of the nation, but only the vindication of right, of human right, of which we are only a single champion....

9. What reason does Wilson give for believing the US should take action against Germany?

**Document 6:**

**Fourteen Points Speech** (Woodrow Wilson, 1918)

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 it will not be done to us. The program of the world's peace, therefore, is our program; and that program, the only possible program, as we see it, is this:

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.

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

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.

10. What was the purpose behind Wilson's "Fourteen Points Speech?" What did he hope to achieve?

11. How do the Fourteen Points attempt to protect the self-determination of nations? (Hint use a specific example from the text)

### Document 7

“The League of Nations is the World’s best hope for lasting peace....it will respect and preserve us against external aggression and preserve the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all members of the League in order to prevent devastating warfare.”

- Woodrow Wilson

12. What was the League of Nations?

13. Why did Wilson feel strongly about U.S. participation in the League?

### Document 8a

“I object in the strongest possible way to having the United States agree, directly or indirectly, to be controlled by a league [of nations] which may at any time...., be drawn in to deal with internal conflicts in other countries... We should never allow the United States to be involved in any internal conflict in another country.”

-Senator Henry Cabot Lodge

### Document 8b

There is another and even more commanding reason why I shall record my vote against this treaty. It imperils what I conceive to be the underlying, the very first principles of this Republic. It is in conflict with the right of our people to govern themselves free from all restraint, legal or moral, of foreign powers...I will not, I cannot, give up my belief that America must, not alone for the happiness of her own people but for the moral guidance and greater contentment of the world be permitted to live her own life...all schemes...which would embarrass or entangle and impede or shackle our sovereign will, which would compromise our freedom of action, I unhesitatingly put behind me.

Sir, we are told that this treaty means peace. Even so, I would not pay the price. Would you purchase peace at the cost of our independence? Mr. President [...]Europe is still Europe, with all her racial antipathies and imperialistic appetites, with the same standard of government...”

-Senator William Borah Nov. 10, 1919

14. How did Senators Lodge and Borah feel about the League of Nations?