A Peace Divided

Comparing arguments over the Treaty of Versailles

SS24.US2.2d "Compare the reasons given by opposing sides in the debate over whether the United States should ratify the Treaty of Versailles (1919)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline Wilson's reason for joining the League, circle Lodge's reason for adding reservations, and write a 1 beside the irreconcilables' reason for rejecting membership so you can compare their arguments.

The Treaty on the Senate Floor

1. A senator opening the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 faced a question about the next war. The treaty set peace terms for Germany after World War I and proposed a League of Nations to settle disputes among countries. President Woodrow Wilson urged the United States to ratify it. He argued that a League where countries talked and acted together could stop small disputes from becoming wars. To Wilson, joining was not a surrender of American power. It was a way to make peace more durable after the enormous losses of World War I.

2. The League's most disputed clause was Article X, which asked members to protect one another's territory and political independence against outside attack. Senator Henry Cabot Lodge and other reservationists favored joining only if the United States added conditions, called reservations, to its agreement. Lodge argued that Congress, not an international body, must decide whether American troops would fight. He feared that a promise to defend League members could pull the country into distant conflicts. These senators were not simply choosing war over peace. They believed limits on League obligations could protect both American self-government and a lasting peace.

3. Other opponents, known as irreconcilables, would not join the League even with Lodge's reservations. They argued that membership itself risked entangling the United States in overseas conflicts and weakening its freedom to act alone. Wilson refused to accept Lodge's key reservations because he thought they would weaken America's promise to the League. Both Wilson and Lodge claimed to protect future peace, but they located the greater danger in different places: Wilson feared a world without effective cooperation, while Lodge feared obligations that could outrun Congress's control. In 1919 and 1920, the Senate failed to approve the treaty.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Wilson's reason for joining the League differ from Lodge's concern about Article X?

2. Why would Lodge's reservations not satisfy the irreconcilables?

3. What goal did Wilson and Lodge share, and where did each see the greater danger to that goal?

4. Why did Wilson oppose Lodge's reservations even though Lodge said they could protect peace?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are a senator deciding whether to join the League as Wilson proposed, join with Lodge's reservations, or reject membership. In five to seven sentences, compare two positions, use a new, invented international crisis to defend your choice, and acknowledge one risk of it.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 11 · SS24.US2.2d

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline Wilson's reason for joining the League, circle Lodge's reason for adding reservations, and write a 1 beside the irreconcilables' reason for rejecting membership so you can compare their arguments. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Wilson's reason for joining the League differ from Lodge's concern about Article X?	**Wilson believed cooperation through the League could prevent wars. Lodge feared Article X could commit the United States to defend other countries without Congress deciding whether to send troops.**
2	Why would Lodge's reservations not satisfy the irreconcilables?	**Lodge was willing to join if reservations limited U.S. obligations. The irreconcilables thought membership itself threatened U.S. freedom to act alone.**
3	What goal did Wilson and Lodge share, and where did each see the greater danger to that goal?	**Both wanted lasting peace. Wilson saw the greater danger in a lack of effective international cooperation, while Lodge saw it in commitments that could exceed Congress's control.**
4	Why did Wilson oppose Lodge's reservations even though Lodge said they could protect peace?	**Wilson thought the reservations would weaken the U.S. promise to the League. Lodge thought they would protect congressional authority while allowing cooperation.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would join the League only with Lodge's reservations, even though Wilson wanted the United States to join without them. Wilson believed a strong League could keep disagreements from becoming wars, and I share that goal. Imagine two League members disputing control of an island after a storm changes its coastline. I would support talks through the League but would not promise troops before Congress debates the risks. Lodge's approach leaves room for cooperation while protecting Congress's authority over American forces. The risk is that reservations might weaken the League's ability to act quickly, but public consent matters before a war begins.

Accept any defensible choice that accurately compares two positions, applies their reasoning to an invented crisis, and identifies a plausible risk. Students need not agree with the sample's position.