Peace With Strings

Wilson's peace plan and the Senate's debate over America's role abroad

USH.C.3.2.F "Examine Wilson's foreign policy as proposed in his Fourteen Points and reasons for the nation's return to isolationism highlighted by the Senate's rejection of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles and the proposed League of Nations."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two goals in Wilson's Fourteen Points, circle two reasons senators resisted the treaty, and write a 1 beside one treaty term that complicated Wilson's vision for peace.

A Peace Plan Meets the Senate

1 In January 1918, while World War I still raged, President Woodrow Wilson offered the Fourteen Points as a plan for peace. He wanted countries to make agreements openly rather than negotiate secret deals. He also called for freer trade, smaller armies, and more respect for the wishes of peoples under foreign rule. His final point proposed a League of Nations, where countries would work together to protect one another's independence. Wilson hoped that cooperation and a peace based on fair principles would prevent another war. His plan asked the United States to take an active role in world affairs.

2 At the 1919 peace talks in Paris, Wilson had to bargain with Allied leaders who wanted Germany held responsible for the war. The Treaty of Versailles created the League, but it also imposed reparations on Germany and required Germany to accept responsibility for damage caused by the war. Germany lost territory and faced strict limits on its military. These terms reflected demands for punishment and security more than Wilson's hope for a peace that would not breed resentment. Wilson accepted the treaty as a compromise because he believed the League could help countries settle future disputes without war.

3 Back home, the Senate had to approve the treaty by a two-thirds vote. Some senators rejected any League membership, fearing that it would pull the United States into other countries' conflicts. Others, led by Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, wanted reservations, or conditions, before they would approve the treaty. They worried that Article X, which called on members to protect one another's independence and territory, might limit Congress's power to decide when Americans would fight. Wilson opposed Lodge's reservations. The Senate rejected the treaty, and the United States did not join the League. Many Americans still supported international trade, but they resisted binding political commitments.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Wilson expect open agreements and the League of Nations to help prevent another war?

2. Why was the Treaty of Versailles a compromise for Wilson? Use one treaty term and one of his goals in your answer.

3. How did senators who rejected any League membership differ from senators who wanted reservations?

4. How does the debate over Article X help explain the Senate's rejection of the treaty and a move away from Wilson's foreign policy?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 1919 note to a senator recommending one choice: approve the treaty as written, approve it only with a reservation protecting Congress's war powers, or reject it. In 70 to 100 words, weigh one Fourteen Points goal against one concern about the League, then explain how your choice would shape the United States' role abroad.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · USH.C.3.2.F

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two goals in Wilson's Fourteen Points, circle two reasons senators resisted the treaty, and write a 1 beside one treaty term that complicated Wilson's vision for peace. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Wilson expect open agreements and the League of Nations to help prevent another war?	**Open agreements would replace secret deals, while the League would give countries a way to cooperate and settle disputes.**
2	Why was the Treaty of Versailles a compromise for Wilson? Use one treaty term and one of his goals in your answer.	**The treaty created Wilson's League, but its reparations and other harsh terms conflicted with his hope for a peace that would not breed resentment.**
3	How did senators who rejected any League membership differ from senators who wanted reservations?	**The first group opposed joining the League at all. The second would consider approving the treaty if conditions addressed concerns such as Congress's power over war decisions.**
4	How does the debate over Article X help explain the Senate's rejection of the treaty and a move away from Wilson's foreign policy?	**Senators feared that protecting League members might draw the United States into conflicts and limit Congress's choices. Rejecting the treaty kept the nation out of the League and its binding commitments.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Senator, I recommend approving the treaty only with a reservation that makes clear Congress retains its authority to declare war. Wilson's League could give countries a place to settle disputes before another world war begins. Yet Article X's promise to protect members could put pressure on Americans to fight. A reservation would let the United States cooperate with other nations while protecting Congress's role in decisions about war. Rejecting the treaty entirely would keep us out of the League's talks, where members could try to prevent future conflicts.

Accept other evidence-based recommendations that weigh a Fourteen Points goal against a League concern and explain the effect on U.S. involvement abroad. Students should distinguish avoiding binding political commitments from ending all international contact.