

Historical Background - Woodrow Wilson and the 14 Points

In a speech given to Congress on January 8th, 1918, Wilson outlined 14 points that he hoped would be used as part of peace negotiations to end WWI. At the time, the first World War was still far from over, however, the 14 points gave people hope that the war might actually end. With the 14 points speech, Wilson saw himself as a president of the world. He felt like he was almost called upon to bring peace. The Germans saw the 14 points as a hope for a less punishing peace agreement.

With 2 million U.S. soldiers in France by October 1918, and more on the way every month, the Germans began to recognize that they had to surrender. In their request for peace, they referenced Wilson's 14 points. They felt like Wilson might make peace more manageable and reasonable. The Germans agreed to a truce on November 11th, 1918. As word spread, men literally leapt from the trenches to greet each other in *No Man's Land*. On the homefront, Americans were equally joyful, and they celebrated in the streets across the country.



A celebration outside Buckingham Palace, London.

1. Why do you think the other European leaders didn't support a peace that was fair to Germany?

Wilson's arrival in Paris for treaty negotiations was met with a gigantic crowd of people who lined the streets to greet him. His presence meant peace and hope.

When the leaders of the Allies and the Central Powers met in Versailles to negotiate a treaty, Wilson was dismayed to find that the leaders of England, France, and Italy were more concerned with punishing Germany for the war. They were not focused on creating a lasting peace. In particular, England and France had both suffered devastating losses in the war, and now they wanted revenge.

The U.S. Senate was also quite critical. Congress was held by a Republican majority. The Senate majority leader, Henry Cabot Lodge, preferred isolation over intervention. He did not want the U.S. to be involved in European politics. The treaty was stalled in Senate throughout the summer.

Wilson launched a campaign to gain support from the Senate for the treaty and the formation of a League of Nations. He believed that the League would encourage cooperation among the European leaders and discourage the infighting and alliances that had led to the first World War. For three weeks, Wilson traveled throughout the US, trying to encourage support. Wilson became exhausted through the process, and pushed himself through migraines and blinding pain. Eventually, he was convinced to return to the White House. Three days later, he suffered a severe stroke.

While Wilson probably should have resigned, however, his cabinet thought that the treaty would fail as a result. Therefore, his wife, Edith Wilson, and a small number of people in the White House managed the presidency with very little input from the president. They kept his condition secret for the next year and a half, while he served the remainder of his term. Wilson's wife basically ran the presidency on his behalf, and is often considered the first female president.

2. What happened to Wilson when he was campaigning for the League of Nations?

3. Do you think it was necessary for the White House to keep Wilson's stroke a secret from the public? Why or why not?

4. Do you think it was a good decision to punish Germany so harshly? Why or why not?

The final version of the treaty required Germany to give up 10 percent of Germany and any territory Germany had taken before the war. The colonies of Germany were divided among those who had won the war. The size of Germany's army and navy was limited, and Germany had to pay significant **reparations**.

Reparations - The payment of money to help those who have been wronged.

Although the treaty did create a League of Nations, the United States did not become members. Wilson did not want approval to pass in the Senate without membership in the League of Nations. Even when Henry Cabot Lodge offered up a modified treaty with very few changes, and even allowed the League of Nations to stay, Wilson still ordered Democrat Senators not to pass it through for his approval.

Without U.S. involvement, the League was much less effective. Historians wonder if U.S. involvement might have prevented WWII.

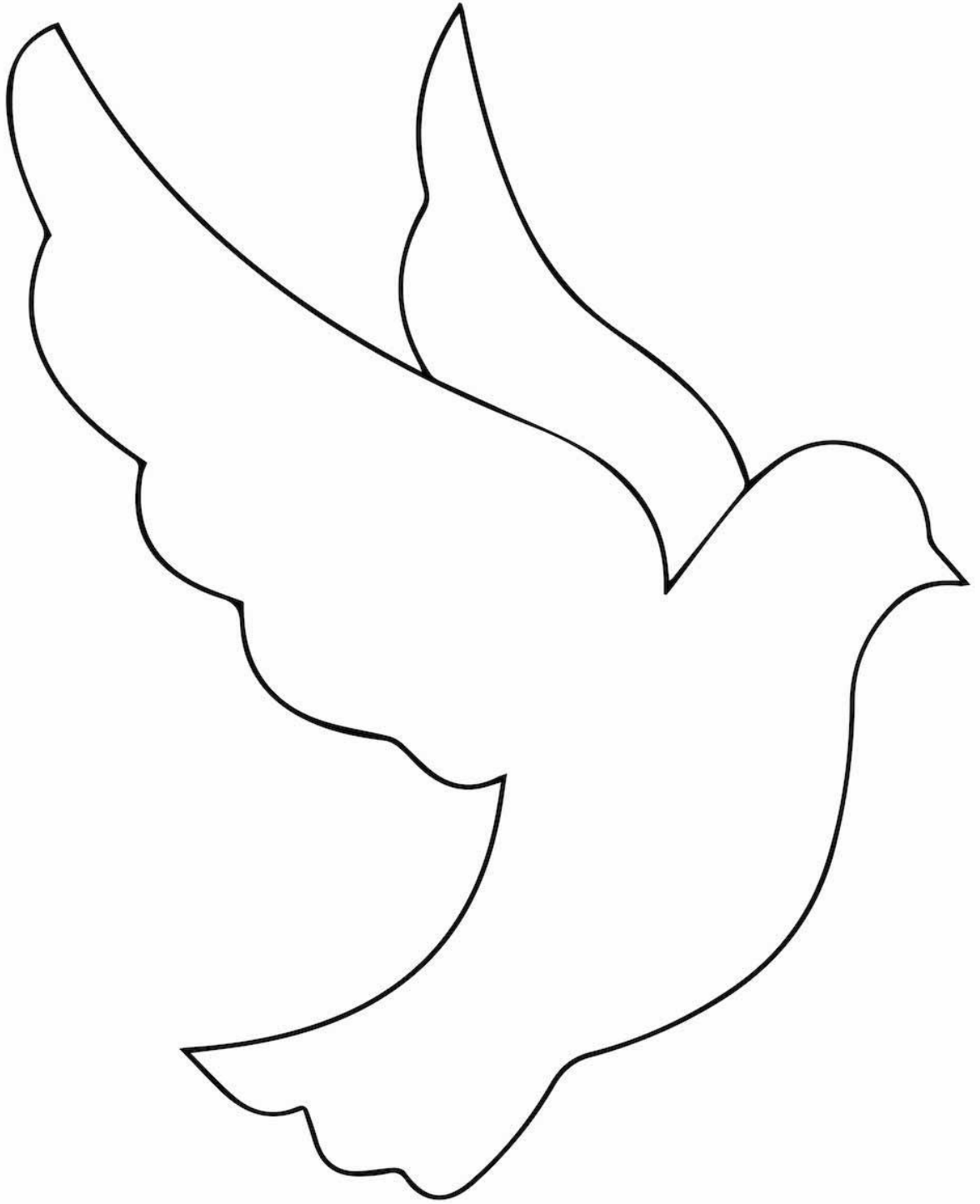
Name _____

Social Studies

Exit Ticket - Woodrow Wilson and the 14 Points

Directions: Use the words generated from the stations activity to create WORD ART representing the ideals of the 14 points.

List of Words:



___ **Complete** - Work provided above demonstrates student's thoughtful assessment of the information.

___ **Incomplete** - Student provided some evidence of thinking, but the information provided was not complete, or answers were incorrect.

Example WORD ART

