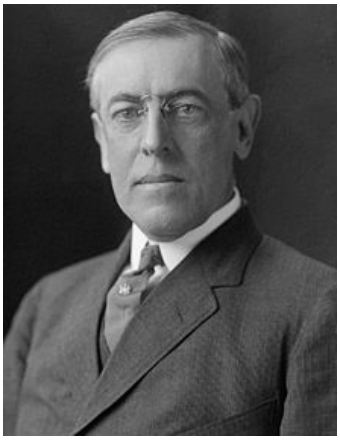

President	Thomas Woodrow Wilson
Chronological Order	28
Life Span	1856-1924
Home State	New Jersey
Elected	1912, 1916
Political Party	Democratic
Vice President	Thomas R. Marshall
First Lady	Ellen Axson Wilson, Edith Boling Galt Wilson
Children	3 daughters (with first wife)
Physical Attributes	5' 11" tall, slim, glasses, brown hair, blue-gray eyes, rich baritone voice
Undergraduate Education	College of New Jersey (Political Science and History). He also earned a Ph.D. in political science from Johns Hopkins University.
Military Service	None
Profession	College Professor (Political Science), College President
Political Offices	Governor
Nickname	The Schoolmaster
Family Lineage	Scots-Irish, Scottish
Religious Affiliation	Presbyterian

Biographical Notes

1. Woodrow Wilson had a Ph.D. in political science and was an expert on how constitutional governments function. During his highly successful first term, he used this expertise to pass five significant pieces of domestic legislation, including the Federal Reserve Act, which revamped the nation's banking system. The Federal Reserve System is still in use today.

Wilson's second term was dominated by foreign policy concerns, mainly World War I and the Treaty of Versailles. He kept the U.S. out of the war as long as he could, and when the country entered it, he was an effective wartime president. Near the end of the war, Wilson produced his Fourteen Point Plan for peace, which was supposed to serve as the basis for the settlement of the conflict. However, at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, Great Britain and France insisted that Germany pay a huge reparations bill (part to Great Britain and part to France) and that France receive the coal-rich Saar region of Germany. These requirements, which were not part of Wilson's plan, embittered Germany and contributed to the rise of Adolph Hitler's Nazi Party.

When Wilson brought the Treaty of Versailles home for ratification by the Senate, Republicans, led by Henry Cabot Lodge, objected to several parts of it, especially the United States' role in the proposed League of Nations. They suggested that certain "reservations" be attached to America's acceptance of the treaty. Wilson fought the reservations, then went on a cross-country speaking tour to win over the American public. The strain caused him to have a severe stroke that paralyzed the left side of his body. The Senate did not ratify the treaty. Wilson was disabled for the last seventeen months of his presidency.

2. Wilson was an idealist, a great orator, and a successful author. He believed that world peace was achievable and that he had a plan to help achieve it. Wilson also thought that America should play an active role in international politics.

He had a prickly personality. As president of Princeton, Wilson proposed a new plan to house undergraduates. When Jack Hibben, his best friend on the faculty, opposed it, Wilson terminated the friendship immediately and completely. When Colonel Edward M. House, his best friend as president, compromised too much at the Paris Peace Conference, Wilson eventually isolated him and no longer sought his counsel. Once Wilson made up his mind about something, he could be stubborn and uncompromising.

3. Wilson's parents were not from the South, but Woodrow was. He was born in Staunton, Virginia, in 1856, and the family moved to Augusta, Georgia, soon after. They moved to Columbia, South Carolina when Woodrow was thirteen. As a result of growing up in the South, he carried with him the rest of his life a strong sense of how devastating the Civil War had been for southerners. When he was at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, he refused to visit the devastated areas of France for fear of the memories that might be stirred up:

> As a boy, I saw the country through which Sherman marched to the sea. The pathway lay right through my people's properties. I know what happened, and I know the bitterness and hatreds which were engendered. I don't want to get mad over here because I think there ought to be one person at that peace table who isn't mad. I'm afraid if I visited the devastated areas, I would get mad.

At his core, Wilson was a Southern gentleman, always trying to do the "honorable" thing. His first wife was from Rome, Georgia, and his second was from Wytheville, Virginia. His southern roots, coupled with spending most of his adult life in New Jersey, made him a national candidate for president in 1912.

4. Wilson was very religious. His father, uncle, father-in-law, and maternal grandfather (his namesake Thomas Woodrow) were all Presbyterian ministers. He graduated from the College of New Jersey (later renamed Princeton University), founded in 1746 by Presbyterians. From its founding until 1910, the only president of the college who was not an ordained Presbyterian minister was Woodrow Wilson himself. Wilson was very devoted: he knelt twice each day in prayer, said grace at meals, and read a chapter of the Bible each night.

Christian doctrine played an essential role in shaping his personal views and political philosophy. He grew up believing the United States had a divine mandate to improve the world and that individual and national success came from obedience to God's word.

5. As a student at Princeton, he helped organize the Liberal Debating Club, competed in public speaking contests, and was the editor of the student newspaper both his junior and senior years. These activities sparked his interest in politics. His lifelong goal was to become a U.S. senator, and upon graduation, he decided to attend law school at the University of Virginia as a step along this path.

6. Wilson found law school dull and quit after three semesters. He returned home, studied law on his own, and was admitted to the Georgia bar. Wilson opened a law office in Atlanta with a former University of Virginia classmate but hated the day-to-day procedural aspects of the job and abandoned the practice. In 1883, he began graduate studies in history and political science at Johns Hopkins University, where he studied governments past and present. His Ph.D. dissertation, a description of how Congress works, was published as a book, *Congressional Government*, in 1885. The book was a critical success and launched his academic career.

Wilson taught at Bryn Mahr, a newly established women's college near Philadelphia, for three years. He then taught at Wesleyan University, an elite men's college in Connecticut, for two years. By 1890, he was back at Princeton as a professor.

7. At Princeton, he became a rising academic star and public thinker. His second book, *The State*, compared the American system of government to its classical predecessors and European contemporaries. It became a classroom standard and was translated into several languages. He quickly gained the reputation as the best lecturer on campus and frequently accepted requests to contribute to popular journals and lecture around the country on topics of historical and current interest. He became the president of Princeton in 1902.

8. While at Princeton, Wilson had three health scares, each brought on by overwork. In May 1896, without warning, Wilson experienced severe pain and numbness in his right hand, leaving him barely able to use it. The doctors could not discover the cause. Wilson took a two-month vacation to England, during which he slowly regained the use of his hand. With the benefit of the knowledge of the strokes he suffered later, some historians have speculated that the pain and weakness in Wilson's right hand in 1896 stemmed from a minor stroke caused by an occlusion in his right carotid artery. This blood vessel begins below the neck and carries blood to the motor and sensory areas of the brain. The transient nature of the semi paralysis was consistent with such a stroke. He was only thirty-nine years old at the time.

In 1906, a blood vessel burst in his left eye, causing him to lose vision in it suddenly. The cause was arteriosclerosis – hardening of the arteries. He gradually regained partial sight in the eye but could never read with it again. In 1907, he had another attack of pain and numbness in his right hand, similar to what had occurred in 1896.

9. By January 1910, Wilson had drawn the attention of conservative New Jersey Democratic Party boss James ("Jim") Smith Jr. as a potential candidate in the upcoming gubernatorial election. The Democrats had lost the last five gubernatorial elections, and Smith and the other conservative New Jersey Democratic bosses decided to support Wilson, even though he was somewhat progressive. They believed that Wilson's academic reputation made him the ideal spokesman against trusts and corruption. They also thought that his inexperience in politics would make him easy to control. Wilson agreed to accept the nomination if "it came to me unsought, unanimously, and without pledges to anybody about anything."

Jim Smith organized the other party bosses at the state party convention, and Wilson won the nomination. During the general election, which he won handily, Wilson pledged not to be run by the Democratic bosses. Before the general election, Smith claimed to have no interest in the open U.S. Senate seat, but he changed his mind and asked Wilson for his support after the election. Wilson refused Smith's request – even though he had gotten Wilson nominated – because another Senate candidate had won the nonbinding Democratic primary. This incident proved Wilson's progressive bona fides. Wilson was a progressive governor. He secured a direct primary law, a tax equalization law, the regulation of public utilities, a corrupt practices act, and an employers' liability act.

After William Jennings Bryan's defeat in 1908, some Democratic strategists were looking for a new kind of candidate for president – relatively young, with a national reputation, and with a southern connection. Wilson fit the bill, and he undertook a cross-country speaking tour in 1911 that had nothing to do with New Jersey and everything to do with getting him in front of national voters. In the South, he was a Georgian; in the North, the Midwest, and West, he was a New Jersey man. Everywhere he was a stirring speaker, a teacher giving his well-crafted lectures to the people.

10. At the 1912 Democratic National Convention, the two leading candidates for president were Wilson and James Beauchamp ("Champ") Clark, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives. Wilson, a progressive, and Clark, who was not, became locked in a very close battle. Clark received 440.5 votes on the first ballot, Wilson 324, Governor Judson Harmon of Ohio 148, Representative Oscar Underwood, 117.5, and various others received a few votes. During the subsequent eight ballots, Wilson remained a distant second.

Tammany Hall operatives convinced New York's delegation to switch to Clark on the tenth ballot. This allowed him to achieve a simple majority of votes, but he was short of the two-thirds required for nomination. But instead of propelling Clark's bandwagon towards victory, the endorsement led William Jennings Bryan to turn against the Speaker of the House. A three-time Democratic presidential candidate and still the leader of the party's liberals, Bryan delivered a speech denouncing Clark as the candidate of Wall Street and the corrupt Tammany Hall machine. He then threw his support to Wilson.

Additionally, Indiana Democratic Boss Thomas Taggart wanted Governor Thomas Marshall out of the Hoosier state. On the twenty-eighth ballot, he made a deal with a member of Wilson's campaign staff: Indiana would switch to Wilson if he promised to choose Marshall as his running mate (which he did). Wilson gradually gained in strength while Clark's support dwindled. Then, on the forty-third ballot, Illinois Democratic Boss Roger Charles Sullivan switched his large delegation from Clark to Wilson, which gave Wilson a sizable lead. He received the nomination on the 46th ballot.

In hindsight, the Democrats chose precisely the right candidate for the upcoming general election campaign against Republican William H. Taft and Theodore Roosevelt of the Progressive Party. With progressive ideas on the rise, they would probably have lost to Roosevelt if they had chosen Clark. By choosing Wilson, the Democrats gave the public the option of voting for a progressive with a well-established national party behind him, not a newly-formed party like the Progressives.

11. In the election of 1912, Wilson (435 electoral votes) won an electoral college landslide over Roosevelt (88 electoral votes) and Taft (8 electoral votes). However, in the popular vote, he received a plurality (41%), not a majority, with TR receiving 27%, Taft 23%, and Socialist Eugene Debs 6%. In the popular vote, he fell 100,000 short of William Jennings Bryan's 1908 total and won majorities only in the Democratic Solid South. Hence, in the presidential race, all Wilson and the Democrats did was maintain their grip on their previous minority share of the electorate. If the GOP had nominated Roosevelt, he would have won. The Democrats won the House 291 to 134 and the Senate 51 to 44.

12. When Wilson addressed an issue or a problem, he preferred to think things through on his own before discussing them with others, e.g., the members of his cabinet. On political and foreign policy issues, he liked to consult with Colonel Edward M. House, a Democratic political operative from Texas who had helped elect four governors and helped elect Wilson in 1912. On domestic issues, he liked to consult with Louis Brandeis, a brilliant progressive lawyer from Boston. Both House and Brandeis were unofficial advisors; they did not initially hold official positions in the administration. Wilson nominated Brandeis for the U.S. Supreme Court in 1916 and appointed House as one of the five American commissioners to the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. (N.B. "Colonel" House never served in the military. The rank was an honorary title granted by Texas Governor James S. Hogg.)

Since he had been in politics only two years and had not cooperated with party bosses as governor of New Jersey, Wilson had few friends or associates with the qualifications to be a member of his cabinet. Consequently, he relied heavily on advice from Colonel House and members of his campaign staff. Wilson selected men who were all Democrats and Anglo-Saxon Protestants. Five were from the South, three from the Mid-Atlantic states, one from the Midwest, and one from the West.

Wilson met with his cabinet twice a week to discuss issues, but he had the final word on important decisions. Wilson gave his cabinet members wide latitude about implementing his decisions and running their departments. He did not meddle with the operations of the individual departments like some activist presidents were wont to do, e.g., Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Lyndon Johnson.

13. Wilson passed five significant progressive domestic legislative measures during his first term: the Underwood-Simmons Tariff Act (1913), the Federal Reserve Act (1913), the Federal Trade Commission Act (1914), the Clayton Antitrust Act (1914), and the Adamson Act (1916). As an expert on how governments function, these measures were the kinds of things he wanted to accomplish as president. Unfortunately, foreign affairs, which was not his specialty, dominated his second term.

14. The Underwood-Simmons Tariff Act was the first genuine tariff reduction since the Civil War. The Act reduced tariff rates on over 900 items, many of them essential. For example, the new rate was zero on raw wool and nearly zero on sugar. The overall tariff rate was reduced from 41 percent to 27 percent. The 16th Amendment to the Constitution – ratified in 1913 – made federal income tax legal. The proceeds from this tax replaced the revenue lost due to lower tariff rates.

15. When Wilson took office, the nation's banking system had glaring weaknesses. The most serious was the inelasticity of the money supply, which was evident during the Panic of 1907. In particular, the amount of money in circulation was heavily concentrated on Wall Street, and could not be speedily expanded in times of financial stress into areas that needed it.

Wilson's Federal Reserve banking system addressed this problem. At its head stood the Federal Reserve Board, appointed by the president. This board, not the Wall Street financiers, made decisions about how cash and credit would flow. Also, to achieve a compromise between centralization and decentralization, the country was divided into twelve districts, each with a centralized bank owned by its member banks. A network of interconnecting pipelines radiated outward from each of the twelve Federal Reserve Banks, and these speeded the flow of currency and credit to the areas in the most severe financial distress. The Federal Reserve system helped the country get through the various financial crises that arose during World War I.

16. The Federal Trade Commission Act empowered the president, through a bipartisan commission of five men, to focus on certain industries engaged in interstate commerce, such as meat packers and harvester manufacturers. The commission was designed to stop monopolies from forming by careful investigation, followed by "cease and desist" orders where these proved warranted. The commission rooted out harmful practices, such as price discrimination, false advertising, and the use of bribery and threats. The Wilson administration also helped pass the Clayton Antitrust Act, which specified prohibited conduct, a three-level enforcement scheme, exemptions, and remedial measures for antitrust prosecutions.

17. During Wilson's first term, his wife Ellen developed Bright's disease, a fatal kidney ailment. When she died in August 1914, Wilson was devastated – she was the love of his life and his closest confidante. He had very few other close personal friends.

Wilson was depressed for months until he met his future wife, Edith Boling Galt. Edith was a beautiful widow, originally from Virginia, who was sixteen years his junior. She was strong-minded, financially independent, and the first woman in Washington to own and drive a car. Mrs. Galt and Wilson became a

couple and married in December 1915. He discussed his work with her much more than presidents usually do, and she did not hesitate to give her opinions on policies or people. For example, she strongly disliked Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan and was wary of Colonel House's influence on the president.

18. The Panama Canal Tolls Act of 1912, passed in the last days of the Taft administration, caused problems for Wilson. The measure specified that American ships traveling from the East Coast to the West Coast (and vice versa) for domestic trade would not have to pay a toll for traversing the Panama Canal. However, the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty with Great Britain in 1901 had granted us a free hand to build and fortify the canal – provided that we would open it to *all* nations at the same tolls-paying terms. We interpreted this pact to mean all *other* nations; the British interpreted it to mean *all* nations, including the United States. Downing Street, therefore, lodged vehement protests with Washington.

As a result, Wilson was caught up between international morality and political expediency. The exemption of American ships was popular here at home. But when Wilson read the treaty carefully, he became convinced that we were breaking our promise to Britain, no matter what our government's hairsplitting lawyers argued. As a Southern gentleman, he believed that a nation of honor – like a man of honor – should keep its word.

Appearing before a joint session of Congress, he made a moving appeal to repeal the exemption. The House and Senate grudgingly granted his request in the spring of 1914 after a stormy debate. This agreement resolved the last serious dispute with London before World War I. The lack of friction between the two countries made it easier for the American public to adopt a pro-British attitude about the war.

19. In August of 1914, World War I began with the Allied Powers (Great Britain, France, Italy, and Russia) pitted against the Axis Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire). Wilson declared neutrality and urged Americans to be neutral in thought as well as action. Most Americans favored the Allies but did not want to get into the war at this time.

American public opinion began to change when a German submarine sunk the *Lusitania*, the world's fastest and grandest ocean liner, in May 1915, killing 1,198 people, including 128 Americans. The war was no longer a tragedy viewed from afar, happening to somebody else. And this was not some small incident the United States could overlook, as they had done with other incidents in the past.

Wilson replied with a strongly worded warning to the Germans, and their response was haughty and evasive. Wilson wrote a second letter, and the German response was again unacceptable. Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan thought that Wilson's responses were too belligerent and resigned his post. Other sinkings of ocean liners followed. However, by the spring of 1916, the Germans had agreed to stop targeting such ships – for now.

When the war in Europe dragged on, Wilson sponsored the National Defense Act of 1916, in case the U.S. had to enter the war. It established a reserve army, doubled the number of regular forces, and gave the executive branch sweeping control over the economy in a wartime emergency.

20. In January 1916, Wilson nominated Boston attorney Louis Brandeis to be a member of the U.S. Supreme Court. Brandeis was a progressive who fought railroad monopolies and defended workplace and labor laws. He often worked such cases pro bono and earned the nickname the "People's Lawyer." His nomination was bitterly contested partly because he was so progressive and partly because he was Jewish.

Wilson fought hard to support the nomination, and Brandeis was confirmed in an (almost) party-line vote. Brandeis became one of the most influential justices in the history of the Supreme Court. He served for twenty-three years and is best known for his opinions defending the freedom of speech and the right to privacy.

21. Wilson had run for president in 1912 on the proposal of shortening the standard ten-hour workday to eight hours. At the start of 1916, railroad workers agitated for this concession and threatened a strike, which would affect all Americans. Henry Ford threatened retaliation for such a strike – he would close all his plants and throw 49,000 people out of work.

Wilson came out in favor of an eight-hour workday for workers on interstate railroads and convinced them to drop their other demands. He gave up his summer vacation so that he could put this legislation – which became the Adamson Act of 1916 – on a legislative fast track. After addressing Congress as a whole, he spent the next several days and nights stoking congressional support for it. The bill's passage averted the strike and marked a watershed moment in labor relations in America.

The Adamson Act had two effects on the upcoming 1916 presidential election. Its passage helped Wilson with labor unions and Republican progressives (the 1912 supporters of Roosevelt). Its passage hurt him by

motivating wealthy businessmen to donate generously to the GOP.

22. Wilson took office during the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920). In 1911, liberals overthrew the military dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz, but shortly before Wilson took office, conservatives retook power through a coup led by Victoriano Huerta. Wilson rejected the legitimacy of Huerta's "government of butchers" and demanded Mexico hold democratic elections. In 1914, after Huerta arrested U.S. Navy personnel who had accidentally landed in a restricted zone near the northern port town of Tampico, Wilson dispatched the Navy to occupy the Mexican city of Veracruz. A strong backlash against the American intervention among Mexicans of all political affiliations convinced Wilson to abandon his plans to expand the U.S. military intervention. But the intervention nonetheless helped convince Huerta to flee from the country. A group led by Venustiano Carranza established control over a significant portion of Mexico, and Wilson recognized Carranza's government in October 1915.

Carranza faced various opponents within Mexico, including Pancho Villa, whom Wilson had earlier described as "a sort of Robin Hood." In early 1916, Villa raided the village of Columbus, NM, killing or wounding dozens of Americans and causing an enormous nationwide demand for his punishment. Wilson ordered General John J. Pershing and 4,000 troops across the border to capture Villa. By April, Pershing's forces had broken up and dispersed Villa's bands, but Villa remained on the loose, and Pershing continued his pursuit deep into Mexico. Carranza then pivoted against the Americans and accused them of a punitive invasion, leading to several incidents that nearly led to war. Tensions subsided after Mexico agreed to release several American prisoners, and bilateral negotiations began under the auspices of the Mexican-American Joint High Commission. Eager to withdraw from Mexico due to tensions in Europe, Wilson ordered Pershing to withdraw, and the last American soldiers left in February 1917.

23. The 1916 presidential election was one of the closest in American history. The Republicans unified behind Charles Evans Hughes, a former governor of New York and Supreme Court justice; even Teddy Roosevelt supported him. Wilson ran on the slogan, "He kept us out of war." On election day, Hughes swept New England (except for New Hampshire) and won New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Delaware, and seven Midwestern states; Wilson went to bed that night ready to accept defeat. But the president swept South, did reasonably well in the Midwest, and won all the states in the West (except for Oregon). The whole election hinged on California (13 electoral votes): whoever won it would become president. The final result was in doubt for three days because one county in the Sierra Nevada Mountains was snowed in. Eventually, Wilson won California by 3,806 votes out of approximately one million cast, which gave him a 277 to 254 victory in the electoral college. Wilson was the first Democrat since Andrew Jackson to win a second consecutive term.

Sometimes, a single event can significantly affect a national election, e.g., Mitt Romney's "47 percent" comment in 2012. In 1916 the "forgotten handshake" was such an event. While campaigning in California, Hughes checked into the Virginia Hotel in Long Beach, where California Governor Hiram Johnson, a Republican running for the Senate, was staying. Johnson, who was very popular in his home state, expected to receive at least a message, if not a courtesy call from his party's leader, but no message or call came. After that, Johnson campaigned just for himself, not the Republican ticket as a whole.

24. Wilson did everything he could to avoid war by responding to German submarine attacks with diplomacy. But on January 31, 1917, Germany announced a new policy, an offensive of unrestricted submarine warfare whereby all ships, belligerent or neutral, in the war zone surrounding Great Britain, France, and Italy, or in the eastern Mediterranean Sea, would be sunk. A specified route would be provided to permit a limited number of well-marked American ships to enter this zone. Despite this caveat, Wilson told an aide, "This means war, the break we have tried so hard to prevent now seems inevitable."

In addition to the German submarine attacks, the Zimmermann Note helped convince the American public to support a declaration of war. The note was a secret diplomatic telegram sent by the German Foreign Office to Mexican authorities in January 1917. The telegram, which was intercepted by the British, proposed a military alliance between Germany and Mexico if the United States entered the war against Germany. Mexico would receive Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona as payment for their participation in the alliance. The revelation of the contents on March 1, 1917, enraged Americans, especially after German Foreign Secretary Arthur Zimmermann publicly admitted that the telegram was genuine.

In April, Wilson addressed a joint session of Congress to ask for a declaration of war on Germany. He gave a masterful speech in which he explained that the purpose of going to war was not to revenge German submarine attacks. It was something much bigger: "The world must be made safe for democracy." The

Senate voted 82 to 6 in favor of war; the House 373 to 50.

25. Even though Wilson had no military training, he proved to be a highly effective commander in chief; he was decisive and willing to delegate. His overall plan had two fundamental components: (a) the army would be raised with a national draft, and (b) the United States would not send those fighting men abroad as "replacement" troops for the Allies. Instead, they would fight as United States soldiers under the American flag and the command of American officers.

The draft system used was both fair and functional. Local draft boards decided not only who would serve, but how they would serve. For example, a local board might determine that a man volunteering to fight in France could contribute more by remaining in his wheat field or coal mine. Unlike the Civil War draft, no one was allowed to purchase or otherwise furnish a substitute for himself. By June 1918, there were 1.5 million American soldiers in Europe.

Once war was declared, the federal government mobilized the economy behind the war effort. For the first time in history, it nationalized the rail, telegraph, and telephone systems; built merchant ships; took over coal distribution; and purchased and sold agricultural staples. New agencies apportioned raw materials, directed production, set prices, conducted foreign trade, loaned money to businesses, and arbitrated labor disputes.

26. On January 4, 1918, Colonel House brought Wilson a revised and expanded memorandum from the Inquiry, a group of experts gathering information and providing analyses about matters pertaining to a possible peace settlement for the war. Wilson and House spent the evening discussing general terms and looking over maps and data.

The next day, the two men started work at 10:30 a.m. “and finished remaking the map of the world, as we would have it” by midnight. They worked from the Inquiry memorandum, on which Wilson made revisions in his handwriting in the margins. Using his typewriter, the president produced a series of fourteen statements, most of them a single phrase or sentence, adapted from the memorandum. When they finished, Wilson asked House to number them in the order he thought they should go. The colonel started with the general terms and ended with the territorial ones. Wilson agreed with the order, “with the exception of the peace association which he thought should come last in order to round out the message properly.” This numbered sequence became Wilson’s famous Fourteen Points.

The first five were brief and general:

I. Open covenants of peace, openly arrived at …
II. Absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas …
III. The removal, as far as possible, of all economic barriers … among all nations consenting to the peace …
IV. Adequate guarantees … that national armaments will be reduced to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety.
V. A free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims … [in which] the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight.

Points VI through XIII dealt with territorial issues. Point XIV called for the creation of the League of Nations: “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 nations alike.”

Wilson did not consult with his European counterparts before giving his speech announcing his Fourteen Point plan for peace. Upon hearing about the Fourteen Points, French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau sarcastically proclaimed, “The good Lord had only ten!”

27. In October of 1918, the German government sued for an armistice (i.e., a cease-fire) based on Wilson's Fourteen Point Plan. Great Britain and France were initially hesitant to grant this because they wanted much harsher terms. Colonel House met with Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau of France, Prime Minister David Lloyd George of Great Britain, Prime Minister Vittorio Orlando of Italy, and other Allied representatives. They signed the Pre-Armistice Agreement, in which they formally accepted the Fourteen Points as the basis for making peace. But it was clear that the Allies thought some of the points were open to interpretation, and further negotiations would ensue.

Wilson won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1920 for his work in ending World War I and creating the League of Nations.

28. Wilson made a serious political error when he addressed the American electorate before the 1918 midterm elections and tried, in a heavy-handed way, to convince them to vote Democratic:

> My fellow countrymen, the Congressional elections are at hand. … If you approve of my leadership and wish me to continue to be your unembarrassed spokesman in affairs at home and abroad, I earnestly beg that you express yourself unmistakably to that effect by returning a Democratic majority to both the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Then he charged the Republicans with deliberately obstructing the administration's war efforts. And he then detailed the likely consequences of the voters' failure to heed his advice:

> My power to administer the great trust assigned to me by the Constitution would be seriously impaired should your judgment be adverse. … The return of a Republican majority to either House of Congress would, moreover, certainly be interpreted on the other side of the water as a repudiation of my leadership.

Voters did not appreciate this transparent attempt at coercion. The Republicans retained control of the House, 240 to 192, and gained control of the Senate, 49 to 47.

The Democratic loss of control of the Senate had severe consequences. It meant that Republican Senator Henry Cabot Lodge – Wilson's nemesis – would be Senate Majority Leader and Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. As majority leader, he packed the Foreign Relations Committee with opponents of Wilson's Treaty of Versailles. As committee chair, he controlled the timing of the Senate's consideration of the treaty.

29. As Wilson prepared for the peace conference, one of his most important decisions was the composition of the four-man team of peace commissioners accompanying him to Paris. In hindsight, since the Senate must ratify any treaty, it is obvious that he should have chosen at least one senator – either a Democrat or a Republican – so that that person could champion the treaty in the Senate. In addition, since the Republicans controlled the Senate and a two-thirds vote was required to ratify the treaty, Wilson should have chosen a prominent Republican to be on the team. But he did not do either of these things because he wanted total control of the delegation – he wanted men who would help him win favor for his Fourteen Point Plan, not someone he might have to bargain with. Wilson was idealistic and overconfident – he thought that if he brought back a good treaty, the Senate would have to ratify it. A shrewd politician like Lincoln, FDR, or Lyndon Johnson would have known better.

Wilson brought four men that he knew would follow his lead: Colonel Edward House, his personal envoy to the Allied governments throughout the war; Secretary of State Robert Lansing, dutiful and unimaginative; General Tasker Bliss, Army Chief of Staff; and Henry White, a former ambassador to France and Italy during the Roosevelt administration. Republicans dismissed White as a RINO (Republican In Name Only) and argued that, in practice, they had no representation on Wilson's team.

Even Wilson's allies questioned his strategy. Franklin D. Roosevelt wrote his wife, Eleanor:

> This business of the President and the Secretary of State negotiating and signing a treaty and then handing it cold to the Senate is all wrong. … If I were doing it, I'd take the Senate, and maybe the House, into my confidence as far as I could. I'd get them committed to a principle and then work out the details in negotiations. In that way, the thing could be secured.

Wilson's exclusion of members of Congress placed him at odds with previous American practice. After the War of 1812, President Madison sent a five-man delegation that included the Speaker of the House (Henry Clay) and two former senators (John Quincy Adams and James Bayard) to negotiate the Treaty of Ghent. After the Spanish-American War, President McKinley sent a five-man delegation to negotiate the Treaty of Paris, and three of the five were senators (two Republicans and one Democrat). The Senate ratified both treaties.

30. The peace conference convened in January 1919, and the Allies demanded changes to the Fourteen Point Plan. In particular, Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau of France and Prime Minister David Lloyd George of Great Britain drove a hard bargain with Wilson: in return for their support for the League of Nations, they demanded that Germany pay a huge reparations bill (part to Great Britain and part to France) and that France

receive the coal-rich Saar region of Germany. These two actions infuriated the German people and were contributing factors in the rise of Adolf Hitler and his National Socialist (Nazi) Party. The final agreement, the Treaty of Versailles, was signed in June of 1919.

The Treaty of Versailles created a host of problems with the way it allocated the territories of the defeated Ottoman and Austria-Hungary Empires, problems that persist today. For example, the treaty took three provinces of the Ottoman Empire (Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra) that had three completely different populations (Kurds, Sunni Arabs, and Shiite Arabs) and formed a brand-new country: Iraq. These three groups do not coexist well, leading to the problems we see in Iraq today. In the Balkans, the treaty took three regions of the Austria-Hungary Empire (Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia) where three different religions are practiced (Orthodox, Catholic, and Islam), and two different alphabets are used (Latin and Slavic) and formed a new country: Yugoslavia (literally, “land of the southern Slavs"). In the late twentieth century, Yugoslavia broke up, and wars between ethnic groups took place.

Wilson was the head of the committee that drafted the Covenant of the League of Nations. The linchpin of the Covenant was Article Ten, which proposed a guarantee of collective security - an attack against one league member would be judged an attack against all and treated accordingly.

31. Every treaty that the U.S. enters into must be ratified by the Senate by at least a two-thirds majority. This created two problems for Wilson. First, some senators opposed Article Ten of the Covenant of the League of Nations because they felt that it amounted to a blank check on American blood and treasure, payable whenever some foreign country got into a war. Second, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and Wilson’s nemesis, controlled the treaty's progress through the Senate.

Henry Cabot Lodge's animus towards Wilson was not just ideological but also personal. He told Theodore Roosevelt: "I never expected to hate anyone in politics with the hatred I feel toward Wilson." His main reason for hating Wilson was jealousy. Lodge had a Ph.D. in political science from Harvard, was a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and had been in elective office for almost forty years. He considered Wilson a pedagogue – not a scholar like he was – and a political novice. And yet it was now Wilson – not Lodge – who was being hailed internationally as a scholar-statesman.

Before the Treaty of Versailles was completed, Lodge and Republican Party Chairman Will Hays held a clandestine meeting with a handful of Republican legislators to discuss how to dismantle whatever agreement Wilson brought home from Paris. According to one source, "Hays, Lodge, and others made up their minds before they knew anything about the treaty or the League of Nations that they were going to wreck it whether their consciences demanded it or not." When the treaty arrived in the Senate, Lodge did everything in his power to stall it and defeat it.

32. Embittered by Republican opposition, Wilson launched an arduous speaking tour (ten thousand miles and twenty-nine cities) to rally the nation to his cause. The effort exhausted his already tired body, and he suffered a stroke at Pueblo, Colorado in October 1919. After returning to the White House, he suffered a second, much more severe stroke that paralyzed his left arm, left leg, and, to some extent, the left side of his face. His doctor and his wife Edith decided to conceal his condition – indefinitely – because they feared that if Wilson were forced to resign, he would lose the will to live. Consequently, Wilson remained secluded in his bedroom and the work that would ordinarily cross his desk was brought to Edith; she decided which items Wilson would handle.

This set up one of the most controversial episodes in presidential history, whereby Wilson – disabled and completely out of touch with the outside world, except for messages passed back and forth by his wife – refused to consider any compromises to the Treaty of Versailles.

In particular, Senate Republicans wanted to attach the so-called "Lodge reservations" to the treaty. Unlike amendments, reservations do not change the text of a treaty; they clarify how the nation in question will interpret the agreement. It is a well-established diplomatic practice for countries to add such qualifications, and if Wilson had agreed to the reservations, the treaty would have been ratified by the Senate. Secretary of State Lansing and other Democratic leaders urged the president to accept the reservations, but Wilson refused to do so because he felt he had made certain agreements with European leaders that he should not go back on. He, therefore, told his supporters in the Senate to vote against the treaty with the Lodge reservations. Consequently, the Senate rejected the treaty, and America never joined the League of Nations.

Two points are relevant here. First, Wilson’s wife, doctor, and private secretary went to great lengths to hide his disabilities from the outside world. Even today, no one knows exactly how disabled he was during the treaty debate. Second, after these two strokes, Wilson was never really the same man. If he had remained healthy, perhaps he would have been willing and able to work out a compromise with the Senate.

It's ironic that a man who began his career writing a book about how Congress works ultimately failed because he could not work with Congress.

33. Wilson was president for seventeen months (October 1919 to March 1921) while severely disabled. Initially, he was completely bedridden and could do nothing. Eventually, he was able to make some decisions, but he was never able to carry anything close to a normal workload. As a result, things went undone (e.g., vacant domestic posts and ambassadorships went unfulfilled), or were done poorly (his choices for open Cabinet positions were notably weak). He did not hold Cabinet meetings and departments ran without much presidential guidance. No legislative proposals emanated from the White House. He should have resigned in favor of the vice president.

The Twenty-fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was adopted in 1967 to deal with an incapacitated president. It states that if the vice president and a majority of the cabinet members agree that the president is unable to perform his duties, then the vice president becomes the acting president.

34. After the presidency, Wilson bought a house in Washington D.C. and lived there until his death in 1924. The "Woodrow Wilson House" is now a National Historic Site open to the public.

35. Wilson was often labeled a "progressive," but on matters of race, he was not. Five of his cabinet members were from the South. Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels (NC) was an ardent white supremacist who helped incite the Wilmington Race Riot of 1898. Attorney General James Clark McReynolds (TN) was a racist and anti-Semite, who Wilson later nominated for the U.S. Supreme Court. McReynolds served on the Supreme Court for twenty-four years and is best known for his opposition to Franklin D. Roosevelt's domestic policies.

Wilson allowed Treasury Secretary William Gibbs McAdoo (TN) and Postmaster General Albert S. Burleson (TX) to completely segregate their departments (separate work, lunch, and bathroom facilities). When a committee of prominent African Americans came to the White House to protest, Wilson first tried to convince them that the segregation was a good thing, saying that the arrangements "would prevent any kind of friction between the white employees and the Negro employees." When the committee leader strongly disagreed, Wilson lost his temper and threw the group out of his office.

36. At the beginning of 1915, the NAACP was protesting against and trying to prevent showings of D.W. Griffith's newly released film, *The Birth of a Nation*. Though a pathbreaking masterpiece of cinematography, the movie presents a blatantly racist picture of the post-Civil War South and glorifies the Ku Klux Klan of that era. The film took its story from *The Clansman*, a novel by Thomas Dixon, a fellow graduate student in history and political science with Wilson at Johns Hopkins in the 1880s. To gain publicity and counter the NAACP protests, Dixon contacted Wilson and asked the president to show the film at the White House.

Wilson agreed to do so, even though he knew Dixon was a white supremacist. Dixon and a projection crew gave the president, his family, cabinet officers, and their wives a showing of *The Birth of a Nation* in the East Room of the White House. What Wilson said or did not say afterward has been described differently by different people. But he did not denounce the film. Dixon and Griffiths soon touted the event and insinuated that the film had the presidential seal of approval. The film went on to be a tremendous commercial success. It also served as the inspiration for the rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan, which took place only a few months after its release. This new second version of the Klan was not limited to the South and added Catholics and Jews to its enemies list. Wilson's involvement with *The Birth of a Nation* made him an anathema to African Americans even more than his administration's workplace segregation policies.

In 2020, Princeton University concluded that "Wilson's racist views and policies make him an inappropriate namesake" for their Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs and changed the name to the Princeton School of Public and International Affairs. The university also removed his name from a residential college on campus. Princeton University President Christopher Eisgruber stated that "Wilson's racism was significant and consequential even by the standards of his own time."

37. When Wilson came into office, he did not favor a constitutional amendment to give women the right to vote because he felt that the states should handle this question. His daughter Jessie disagreed and adamantly supported women's suffrage.

In 1917, Carrie Chapman Catt and Helen Gardener of the National American Women's Suffrage Association convinced Wilson to support a constitutional amendment to give women the right to vote. He then asked the House Rules Committee to create a special committee on women's suffrage, which they did. In January 1918,

the House passed a bill supporting a constitutional amendment, but the Senate refused to follow suit. In September 1918, Wilson gave an extraordinary speech in the Senate asking it to pass such a bill, but the senators still refused. Wilson continued to pressure senators until the Senate finally passed the bill in May 1919. The Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which gives women the right to vote, was ratified by the states in August 1920. American women, starting with Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, deserve the lion's share of credit for this final, long-overdue achievement, but among men, Woodrow Wilson deserves more credit than anyone else.

38. Wilson's parents, Joseph and Jessie, met and married in Ohio. They moved to Staunton, VA in 1854, then to Augusta, Georgia, and Columbia, South Carolina. Joseph and Jessie eventually strongly identified with the South. In Augusta, Joseph's church provided slaves to serve him and his family. Joseph had no problems with slavery; he defended it from his pulpit.

Joseph and Jessie supported the Confederacy during the Civil War. The Medical College of Georgia was located in Augusta, just one block from Joseph's church, and the town became an important medical center during the war. After the bloody Battle of Chickamauga in 1863, Joseph removed the pews from his church and converted it into an auxiliary hospital. In addition, a stockade to keep Union prisoners was built in the churchyard. Joseph left town for several months to serve as a chaplain to Confederate troops in North Carolina.

See the next page for a list of references.

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