

**World War I****BIOGRAPHY READING****Woodrow Wilson****WHY AM I IMPORTANT?**

As you read the profile below, think about how Woodrow Wilson demonstrated his sense of responsibility through his reforms and his actions during and after World War I.

As a boy growing up in the South, Woodrow Wilson had a hard time learning to read. Despite these problems, Wilson became an excellent scholar and writer. He attended what is now Princeton University. After a brief law career, he earned a doctoral degree in history and government.

From 1885 through 1910, Wilson led an academic life. He taught at several colleges before Princeton offered him a job. Wilson was very popular among the students and professors. In 1902 he was unanimously selected as the university's new president. Wilson then suggested reforms so Princeton could provide a better education and be more democratic.

These efforts made Wilson a public figure, and in 1910 he ran for governor. As the leader of New Jersey, he introduced many progressive reforms. Soon, he had gained a reputation around the country. The Democrats chose him to run for president, and he took office in 1912 with a huge majority.

One of Wilson's first acts as president was to address Congress in person. This had not happened since the time of John Adams. This historic event signaled important changes ahead. Urged on by Wilson, Congress passed laws affecting tariffs, business, banks, taxes, education, labor, and more.

However, World War I began to take up more of the president's energies. While steering the country on a neutral course, Wilson offered to mediate at a peace conference between the Allies and Central Powers. Then German U-boats began sinking American ships. Wilson felt he had little choice but to ask Congress to declare war. In April 1917 the United States entered World War I.

Wilson proved a strong wartime leader. He quickly mobilized some 5 million soldiers. He called upon American industry to provide war supplies. Further, he convinced the Allies to operate in Europe under a unified command.

Even before the war ended, Wilson was making plans for the postwar world. In 1918 he presented his Fourteen Points, which was his plan to bring peace and democracy to nations of the world. At the conference to write the peace treaty, he urged acceptance of the Fourteen Points as the only way to make World War I "the war to end all wars." Wilson spent seven months at the conference. In the end, the Allies only accepted some of the Fourteen Points, including the creation of a League of Nations.

Chapter 22: Biography Reading continued

Back home, many congressmembers feared that joining the League of Nations would draw the country into wars. They opposed the peace treaty. To win public support, Wilson went on a national speaking tour in 1919. He became so ill that he was rushed back to Washington where he suffered a stroke that left him partially paralyzed. The following year Wilson won the Nobel Peace Prize for his role in creating the League of Nations. The United States, however, never became a member.

UNDERSTANDING WHAT YOU READ After you have finished reading the selection, answer the following questions in the space provided.

1. How did Wilson's years as president of Princeton aid him in his future role in politics?

2. What reforms did Wilson initiate while president?

3. How did Wilson's viewpoint toward World War I change over time?

4. Why did Wilson want the members of the peace conference to accept all his Fourteen Points?
