

Class Set!

Document B: Woodrow Wilson Speech #2 (Modified)

Property can be paid for; the lives of peaceful and innocent people cannot be. The present German submarine warfare against commerce is a warfare against mankind.

The German policy has swept every restriction aside. Ships of every kind, whatever their flag, their character, their cargo, their destination, their errand, have been ruthlessly sent to the bottom of the ocean without warning. American ships have been sunk, American lives taken.

I advise that the Congress declare the recent actions of the Imperial German Government to be, in fact, nothing less than war against the Government and people of the United States.

Neutrality is no longer feasible or desirable where the peace of the world is involved.

The world must be made safe for democracy. We have no selfish ends to serve. We desire no conquest, no dominion. We seek not material compensation for the sacrifices we shall freely make. We are but one of the champions of the rights of mankind.

It is a fearful, but right thing to lead this great peaceful people to war. We shall fight for the things which we have always carried nearest our hearts – for democracy, for the right of [people] to have a voice in their own government, for the rights and liberties of small nations.

Source: President Woodrow Wilson, in a speech before Congress, April 2, 1917.

Vocabulary

commerce: trade

feasible: possible

dominion: control or domination

material compensation: money

Class Set!

Document A: Woodrow Wilson Speech #1 (Modified)

The people of the United States are drawn from many nations, and chiefly from the nations now at war. It is natural and inevitable that some will wish one nation, others another, to succeed in the momentous struggle.

Such divisions among us would be fatal to our peace of mind and might seriously stand in the way of our duty as the one great nation at peace, the one nation ready to play a part of mediator and counselor of peace.

The United States must be neutral in fact, as well as in name, during these days that are to try men's souls. We must be impartial in thought, as well as action.

Source: President Woodrow Wilson, in a speech before Congress, August 19, 1914.

Vocabulary

mediator: someone who helps two groups reach an agreement

impartial: taking no sides

Guiding Questions

Name _____

President Wilson's Speeches

1. Read the first speech. Does Wilson think the United States should enter WWI? Why or why not?

2. Read the second speech. Does Wilson think the United States should enter WWI? Why or why not?

3. Contextualization: Use the 1917 speech to "imagine the setting." (a) What does Wilson accuse Germany of doing? (b) Do you think this is a good reason to go to war? (c) What additional information would you need to have before making a decision?

4. Close reading: Re-read the last two paragraphs of the 1917 speech. Why do you think Wilson added these paragraphs? How do you think these words made Americans feel?