Summary of Wilson’s “Fourteen Points” Speech

In 1917 President Wilson urged Congress to declare war against Imperial Germany to help make the world safe for democracy. As the war drew to a close, and German defeat seemed imminent, Wilson argued that more than military victory was necessary to secure peace and democracy in the future. In his “Fourteen Points” Message to Congress, President Wilson laid out his vision for a league of democratic nations that would prevent future aggression by autocratic governments and assist other societies still struggling on the path to civilization and freedom. Despite the U.S. Senate’s rejection of the League of Nations, Wilson’s forward-looking foreign policy vision provided a rationale for future American involvement in world affairs.

Questions for consideration: Why did the United States enter the War, according to Wilson, and what is the goal for which the nation continues to fight? How would Wilson’s post-war vision affect how nations around the world deal with each other? What is the principle that unites all fourteen points in Wilson’s message, and why should Americans be devoted to that principle?