President Woodrow Wilson

The Twenty Eighth President of the United States of America
1913–1921
President Woodrow Wilson

Twenty Eighth President of the United States of America (1913–1921)

Run Time: 4 Minutes  Video🔗
Wilson was a Progressive Democrat who believed in the power of the federal government to regulate the economy, expose corruption and eliminate unethical business practices while improving the overall condition of society.

During his time in office however the U.S. federal government and military were segregated, mirroring the racial and ethnic divisions that were ripe within the country at the time.

President Wilson practiced cautious neutrality toward both sides involved in the war during his first term in office. While he and his opponent went to great lengths not to talk about the war during his re-election campaign, the slogan “He Kept Us Out of War,” was utilized by his supporters. Ultimately, escalating German aggression made it impossible for the United States to stay out of the First World War which came to dominate President Wilson’s second term.
Wilson’s First Term (1913–1917)

Progressive Ideals

- Wilson pursued a progressive agenda during his first term in office by maneuvering several major pieces of legislation through Congress aimed at:
  - Lowering tariffs (the Underwood Act; attached to the measure was a graduated federal income tax)
  - Creating the Federal Reserve System (the Federal Reserve Act provided the nation with the more elastic money supply it badly needed)
  - Championing antitrust legislation (the Clayton Antitrust Act)
  - Establishing the Federal Trade Commission to prohibit monopolistic and unfair business practices
  - Improving protections for railroad workers by restricting the workday to eight hours, creating a fund for federal employees injured while on the job, and the prohibition of child labor (Keating-Owen Child Labor Act, Adamson Act, Workingmen's Compensation Act)

- These policies reflected Wilson’s faith in the Progressive movement, which sought to harness the power of the federal government to regulate the economy, expose corruption, and improve society by ameliorating the negative effects of industrialization.
EMPLOYER SAVES AT SOCIETY'S EXPENSE

INDUSTRY PAYS
children lower wages than adults and the individual employer profits by the employment of children

AND CHILDREN PAY
with Stunted Lives Ignorance Disease Tendency to Criminality

AND SOCIETY PAYS
by being compelled to provide for Child Labor Adults:
Almshouses Hospitals Police Courts Public and Private Help Jails

IN ORDER THAT A CHILD LABOR EMPLOYER MAY MAKE A FEW CENTS MORE PROFITS

WILLIAM RANDALL

PRESIDENT'S SIGNATURE ENACTS CURRENCY LAW

Wilson Declares It the First of Series of Constructive Acts to Aid Business.

Makes Speech to Group of Democratic Leaders.
Conference Report Adopted in Senate by Vote of 43 to 25.
Banks All Over the Country Hasten to Enter Federal Reserve System.
Gov-Elect Walsh Calls Passage of Bill A Fine Christmas Present.

WILSON SEES DAWN OF NEW ERA IN BUSINESS

Home Views of Currency Act

WASHINGTON, Dec. 23.--President Wilson signed the Currency Bill this morning in the Oval Office. After doing a few minutes of light work, the President was called into the Cabinet room and then into Congress room where a few members of the pen, by

Federal Reserve
President Woodrow Wilson and his Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan

Illustration shows President Wilson and William Jennings Bryan standing on a rock formation with a statue of a man labeled "Practical Politics", with the U.S. Capitol in the background; Wilson, as Moses, strikes the rocks with his staff labeled "Campaign Pledges" causing waters labeled "Currency Reform" and "Tariff Reform" to flow and nourish hordes of businessmen and laborers.
Wilson’s First Term (1913–1917)

Regressive Policies

- In 1912 Wilson promised fairness and justice for African Americans if elected, after election however the Wilson administration pursued regressive policies, working with Southern Democrats to segregate the federal government as well as supporting legislation to prohibit interracial marriages.

- After years of African American advances in the federal civil service, this represented a huge step backward for civil rights.

- The Ku Klux Klan experienced a major revival at the time with President Wilson aligning himself symbolically by ordering a private screening of D. W. Griffith’s notoriously racist film Birth of a Nation. The film portrayed African Americans as savage criminals and the KKK as heroic enforcers of a just and humane racial order.

- The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and numerous religious groups, both black and white, stepped forward to condemn Wilson’s segregationist racial agenda.

- The African American community supported U.S. entry into World War I, however as it drew near fears of a segregated Army emerged and internal racial tension mounted, especially in the south.
Jim Crow and the Wilson Administration

Run Time: 56 Minutes

Video
Wilson’s Second Term (1917–1921)

Re-Election and Entry into World War I

- Amid the war in Europe and the Mexican Revolution, Wilson narrowly won re-election in 1916 by virtue of the progressive legislation championed at the time and the slogan "he kept us out of war."

- After the election Wilson concluded that the United States could not remain neutral in the World War due to escalating German hostility. On April 2, 1917, he asked Congress for a declaration of war on Germany joining the Allies.

- American military effort eventually tipped the balance in favor of the Allies and Wilson went before Congress in January 1918, to enunciate American war aims outlined in his Fourteen Points Plan.

- After the Germans signed the Armistice in November 1918, Wilson went to Paris to try to build an enduring peace. He later presented to the Senate the Versailles Treaty, containing the Covenant of the League of Nations, and asked, “Dare we reject it and break the heart of the world?”
Wilsonianism
The Groundwork for a More Peaceful World
Run Time: 2 Minutes Video🔗
Wilson’s Second Term (1917–1921)

Wilson’s Ideological Perspectives on Foreign Policy

- The term “Wilsonianism” refers to the foreign policy ideology of President Woodrow Wilson and the tenets of his Fourteen Points that he believed would help create world peace after World War I.

- The four major points of “Wilsonianism” include:
  - Spreading Democracy Abroad
  - Open Markets/Free Trade
  - International Peacekeeping Organizations
  - Emerging global role of the United States in foreign policy
Wilson’s America
Entry and Outcomes of America’s Involvement in the Great War
Run Time: 1 Minute
Extension Activity: The Military Lens
Examining the U.S. Army During Wilson’s Presidency
A Segregated Military

- In 1917, Congress declared war on Germany and while the African American community supported the war many had serious reservations.

- African American soldiers suffered discrimination in a Jim Crow army. They were segregated into separate units and often subjected to disproportionate punishment for minor offenses.
Separate and Unequal

- African American soldiers were rarely given training comparable to white soldiers, with only a few African American officers granted commissions.

- On their return from war, many African American soldiers hoped that their patriotic service would earn them recognition, acceptance and equality in American society, however, such hopes were not immediately realized.

- The 369th (formerly known as the 15th Regiment New York Guard) was an all-black regiment among the first sent to fight with the French on behalf of the United States.

- French soldiers were warned not to fraternize with African Americans, but many ignored the request and formed interracial friendships.

- The men of the 369th earned an unprecedented number of French military honors including 171 of France’s highest military medal the “Croix de Guerre.”
The 369th Regiment

Two American Negroes Win Croix de Guerre.

These colored fighters routed a German raiding party numerically stronger. The two men, Henry Johnson, left, and Needham Roberts, right, are members of the 369th Regt. Inf., the old 15th, New York N.G. Each has been decorated with the French Croix de Guerre.
Valor Despite Adversity

- Participation in the war was problematic for African Americans.

- While President Wilson put America on a crusade to make the world safe for democracy abroad, the country neglected the fight for equality at home.

- While the U.S. Army drafted both black and white men, they served in segregated units and although the Army eventually trained a small number of African American officers, it never put them in command of white troops.

- 380,000 African Americans served in the Army during WWI. Approximately 200,000 of these men were sent to Europe where more than half were assigned to labor battalions where they built roads, bridges and trenches or as stevedores who labored as dockworkers loading and unloading cargo from ships and supplies for the war effort.

- Roughly 42,000 African American soldiers saw combat.
Engineer Corps, Road Building

Silent footage of WWI soldiers from 1918–1919

Run time: 18 Minutes  Video
The “Harlem Hellfighters”
Men of Bronze
1977 Documentary: WWI “Harlem Hellfighters”
Part 1 Run Time: 29 Minutes  Video
Men of Bronze

1977 Documentary: WWI “Harlem Hellfighters”

Part 2 Run Time: 31 Minutes
Text Resources


Image Resources


Video Resources


