I. Lesson Summary

Lesson Summary
Using the information gathered in the DBQ, review the documents of Woodrow Wilson and his quest for peace.

Objective
Students will compare and contrast two documents written by President Woodrow Wilson after World War I (when Wilson was campaigning for the League of Nations) and five years after the end of the war. From notes using these two documents, the start of the DBQ will be seen in understanding the intent of Wilson and the path he made for the future of the United Nations.

Sunshine State Standard Benchmarks
SS.A.1.3.2.; SS.A.1.3.3.; SS.A.2.3.2; SS.A.5.3.1; SS.A.5.3.2.; LA.A.2.3.3.; LA.A.2.3.8; LA.B.2.3.1; LA.B.2.3.3.

U.S. History Event/Time Period
World War I and the postwar effort for worldwide peace

Level
This lesson is intended for use in the high school classroom.

Materials Needed
- The DBQ format and the documents printed for the readings, student paper and pen.
- Holt, Rinehart & Winston's Call to Freedom, Chapter 22.5; p.692
- Historical Document: The Fourteen Points (primary source to use for whole DBQ)
Others: Teacher directed texts and web sites available according to teacher preference.

Lesson Time
This lesson can be implemented in one-to-two 45-minute class periods.
II. Lesson Procedures

Lesson Procedures
1. Discuss World War I and how Wilson promised not to be drawn into the war (Election of 1916, for example), but found himself and the U.S. being pulled into it;
2. Discuss President Wilson’s zeal in promoting a post-WWI League of Nations (for instance, Wilson’s post-Versailles railroad tour of America, in which he traveled relentlessly throughout the country promoting his plan);
3. Share how Republican senator Henry Cabot Lodge (document in the DBQ which will be used in another lesson) worked against Wilson in Congress, and how he eventually persuaded Congress to not accept Wilson’s plan for post-war peace;
4. Share how congressional opposition to his plan and his own failing health eventually led to the defeat of Wilson’s post-WWI plan for peace;
5. Have students read the two documents and understand how President Wilson viewed his own failure, never being able to see his vision pave the way for the United Nations almost thirty years later.
III. Activities

Woodrow Wilson and His Quest for Peace

It is November 10, 1923, marking the eve of the fifth anniversary of the Armistice which ended World War I. President Woodrow Wilson is very ill after suffering a stroke and he is at his home in Washington, D.C., giving a commemorative address by radio.

Consider an earlier speech first given in 1919 while he was still president. Then read the one four years later as stated above:

The following is an excerpt from a speech he made on September 25, 1919, in Colorado while on a speaking tour. This is taken from The Papers of Woodrow Wilson (Arthur S. Link, ed. Vol.63, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990, pp.500-503).

"Mr. Chairman and fellow citizens: It is with great pleasure that I find myself in Pueblo, and I feel it a compliment that I should be permitted to be the first speaker in this beautiful hall. One of the advantages of this hall, as I look about is that you are not too far away from me, because there is nothing so reassuring to men who are trying to express the public sentiment as getting in real personal contact with their fellow citizens.…

The chief pleasure of my trip has been that it has nothing to do with my personal fortunes, that it has nothing to do with my personal reputation, that it has nothing to do with anything to do with anything except the great principles uttered by Americans of all sorts and of all parties which we are now trying to realize at this crisis in the affairs of the world.

But there have been unpleasant impressions as well as pleasant impressions, my fellow citizens, as I have crossed the continent. I have perceived more and more that men have been busy creating an absolutely false impression of what the treaty of peace and the Covenant of the League of Nations contain and mean.…

Don’t think of this treaty so much as merely a settlement with Germany. It is that. It is a very severe settlement with Germany, but there is not anything in it that she did not earn {applause}.…

But the treaty is so much more than that. It is not merely a settlement with Germany; it is a readjustment of those great injustices which underlay the whole structure of European and Asiatic societies. Of course this is only the first of several treaties. They are constructed under the same plan…

But at the front of this great treaty is put the Covenant of the League of Nations. It will be at the front of the Austrian treaty and the Hungarian treaty and the Bulgarian treaty and the treaty with Turkey. Every one of them will contain the Covenant of the League of Nations, because you cannot work any of them without the Covenant of the League of Nations. Unless you get united, concerted purpose and power of the great governments of the world behind this settlement, it will all down like a house of cards.

There is only one power behind the liberation of mankind, and that is the power of mankind. It is the power of the united moral forces of the world. And in the covenant of the League of Nations the moral forces of the world are mobilized.….But all the nations that have power that can be mobilized are going to be members of the League, including the United States. And what do they unite for? They enter into solemn promise to one another that they will never use their power against one another for aggression; that they will never impair the territorial integrity of a neighbor; that they will never interfere with the political independence of a neighbor; that they will abide by the principle that great populations are entitled to determine their own destiny; and that they will not interfere with that destiny; and that no matter what differences arise amongst them, they will never resort to war without first having done one or other
of two things—either submitting the matter of controversy to arbitration, in which case they agree to abide by the result without question, or having submitted it to the consideration of the Council of the League of Nations, laying before the Council all the facts, agreeing that the Council can publish the documents and facts to the whole world.

In other words, they consent, no matter what happens, to submit every matter of difference between them to the judgment of mankind. And, just so certainly as they do that, my fellow citizens, war will be in the far background, war will be pushed out of the foreground of terror in which it has kept the world generations after generation, and men will know that there will be a calm time of deliberate counsel.

I believe that we will see the truth, eye to eye and face to face. There is one thing that the American people always rise to and extend their hand to, and that is the truth of justice and of liberty and peace. We have accepted the truth and we are going to be led by it, and it is going to lead us, and through us the world, out into pastures of quietness and peace such as the world has never dreamed of before.”

Later:


“The anniversary of Armistice Day should stir us to great exaltation of spirit because of the proud recollection that it was our day, a day above those early days of that never-to-be forgotten November which lifted the world to the high levels of vision and achievement upon which the great war for democracy and right was fought and won: although the stimulating memories of that happy time of triumph are forever marred and embittered for us by the shameful fact that when the victory was won, be it remembered—chiefly by the indomitable spirit and ungrudging sacrifices of our incomparable soldiers—we turned our backs on upon our associates and refused to bear any responsible part in the administration of peace, or the firm and permanent establishment of the results of the war—won at so terrible a cost of life and treasure—and withdrew into a sullen and selfish isolation which is deeply ignoble because manifestly cowardly and dishonorable.

This must always be a source of deep mortification to us and we shall inevitably be forced by the moral obligations of freedom and honor to retrieve that fatal error and assume once more the role of courage, self-respect and helpfulness which every true American must wish to regard as our natural part in the affairs of the world.

That we should have thus done a great wrong to civilization at one of the most critical turning points in the history of the world is the more to be deplored because every anxious year that has followed has made the exceeding need for such services as we might have rendered more and more evident and more and more pressing, as demoralizing circumstances which we might have controlled have gone from bad to worse.

And now, as if to furnish as sort of sinister climax, France and Italy between them have made waste paper of the Treaty of Versailles and the whole field of international relationship is in perilous confusion.

The affairs of the world can be set straight only by the firmest and most determined exhibition of the will to lead and make the right prevail. Happily, the present situation in the world of affairs affords us the opportunity to retrieve the past and to render mankind the inestimable service of proving that there is at least one great and powerful nation which can turn away from programs of self-interest and devote itself to practicing and establishing the highest ideals of disinterested service and the consistent maintenance of exalted standards of conscience and of right.

Thus, and only thus, can we return to the true traditions of America.
Epilogue

The next day, November 11, a throng of over 20,000 well-wishers spontaneously crowded outside the house on S. Street to pay homage to Wilson, the war president, architect of the Treaty of Versailles, Nobel Peace Prize laureate, and now embittered idealist.

Wilson came down from the house to its front steps to address the group. He gave a few words of thanks and gratitude and finally left his admirers with these words: “I am not one of those that have the least anxiety about the triumph of the principles I have stood for. I have seen fools resist Providence before, and I have seen their destruction, as will come upon these again, utter destruction and contempt. That we shall prevail is as sure as God reigns.” Three months later he died at his quiet brick house just three miles from his former office as executive-in-chief. Wilson’s ideals and leadership in crafting the League of Nations have left a rich legacy for the future of peace in our world.
IV. Assessment

Assessment Evaluation:

The document the students write will be the assessment that shows how much they understand what they have read. It will be used in the overall DBQ assignment when other documents and primary sources follow to be part of the total picture in the writing project.

To Student:

After reading the two speeches separated by four years, you realize a lot had happened between the campaign for a League of Nations and the November 11th Armistice commemoration of World War I held in 1923.

Task:

Compare and Contrast the positives and negatives of these two speeches. Show this in a Venn diagram or a two-column T-chart, listing the points for each.

Conclusion:

From the compare and contrast essay, write about Wilson’s wish for the creation of a League of Nations and the disappointment he felt in the United States’ refusal to become a part of this post-WWI body. Be sure to allude to the future path he made for what we see in today’s United Nations and our definite involvement.