

President

Wilsonian Idealism in America

"Tell me what is right and I will fight for it." When Thomas Woodrow Wilson was born on December 28, 1856 in Staunton, Virginia, nobody could have known that he would go on to lead our country through World War I and be one of the greatest American presidents to date. Although he was often forced to deal with strong Republican opposition, not to mention the opposition of other countries, Wilson never let anything stand in his way when he was fighting for what he believed was right. Wilsonian idealism had an incredible effect on America itself and on how people throughout the world perceived our great nation.

"I not only use all the brains that I have, but all that I can borrow." All the brains Wilson had would have been a formidable accumulation. Wilson was educated at what would become Princeton University and became the president of Princeton University years later, after he had achieved his law degree and a doctorate. Before he went into politics, he was an accomplished scholar in his own right. Long after he entered political life, he was known as "the Professor" and "the Schoolmaster in Politics." While he was President at Princeton, he was persuaded to run for the Governorship of New Jersey in 1910. He was successful and became a passionate advocate of reform, distancing himself from the party machinery that had gotten him elected, showing even then his dedication to principles over politics as usual.

"The world must be made safe for democracy." After he defeated former presidents William Howard Taft and Teddy Roosevelt for the American presidency in

1912, Wilson felt the weight of the world on his shoulders. History threw crises at him long and fast. During his first term, Wilson had legislation passed to lower the tariff, establish a graduated income tax, strengthen antitrust legislation, outlaw child labor, and institute fairer working practices for millions of American workers, among many other accomplishments. In his second term, he led America into and out of World War I. He proved to be a fantastic and competent military leader, and his undeniable dedication to his ideals helped keep Americans and people around the world hopeful for a brighter future.

“The ear of the leader must ring with the voices of the people.” When Wilson died quietly of his second stroke in 1924, public outcry was not what it had been for Lincoln or what it would be for Kennedy, but it should have been. Wilson’s last few years in office had been tumultuous and full of conflict. Several of his last wishes for peace in Europe had been defeated by an obstinate Republican Senate, and Wilson had lost some of his credibility in campaigning for them. People had forgotten much of what he had achieved throughout his presidency, forgotten where he came from and what he represented. I have not forgotten: Woodrow Wilson was a wonderful man, and he is my favorite President to this day.