

Prompt for President Wilson's War Message to Congress, April 2, 1917 –

Describe the origins of World War I. Describe President Wilson's justification for entering World War I in 1917.

https://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Wilson's_War_Message_to_Congress

INTRODUCTION

Context (Set the scene. What is happening in history leading up to the prompt?) **3-5 sentences**

European nations found themselves fighting for power at the start of the 1900s. Imperialistic nations sought more land, control of the seas, and overall military supremacy. With the death of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria by a Serbian assassin, alliances formed and World War I officially began in 1914. Germany quickly emerged as the cruelest of the Central Powers while Great Britain led the Allied campaign.

Partition (Transition from Context to Thesis.) **2-3 sentences**

Watching from across the Atlantic, the United States initially took a position of neutrality. Following a policy of isolationism, the U.S. did not want to engage in Europe's conflict and risk American lives.

Thesis (Answer the prompt by previewing the focus of each body paragraph.) **1-2 sentences**

However, by 1917 President Woodrow Wilson had no choice but to seek a declaration of War against Germany. Unrestricted submarine warfare, the Zimmerman note, and a desire for peace and democracy led the U.S. to enter World War I.

BODY PARAGRAPH 1

Topic Sentence (What is the focus of the paragraph?) **1 sentence**

Early in the war, Germany made the Atlantic Ocean a war zone by declaring unrestricted submarine warfare.

Describe specific historical examples

The British ship *Lusitania* was sunk off the coast of Ireland in 1915 by a German u-boat. The Germans justified their actions stating that the *Lusitania* carried military equipment from the U.S. to Great Britain. However, the *Lusitania* also carried close to two thousand passengers with over half drowning including 128 Americans. President Wilson started his address to Congress condemning Germany for its actions at sea stating that Germany showed "a reckless lack of compassion" attacking innocent men, women, and children. The President stated, "German submarine warfare against commerce is a warfare against mankind."

Re-emphasis of Paragraph Focus (How does the paragraph answer the prompt?) **1-2 sentences**

With both trade and American lives at risk by Germany's presence in the Atlantic Ocean, the U.S. was justified in entering World War I.

BODY PARAGRAPH 2

Topic Sentence (What is the focus of the paragraph?) **1 sentence**

Had the U.S.A not entered World War I, the infamous Zimmerman note in 1917 revealed what some Germans planned for the future.

Describe specific historical examples

An intercepted telegram from Germany to Mexico, the Zimmerman note sought an alliance. Basically, Germany offered Mexico land if they entered the war with the Central Powers against the United States. Although, the U.S. did not fear an immediate attack from Mexico, Wilson asserted that Germany "means to act against our peace and security at its convenience."

Re-emphasis of Paragraph Focus (How does the paragraph answer the prompt?) **1-2 sentences**

With the Zimmerman note as evidence of Germany's future intent, the United States had cause to act.

BODY PARAGRAPH 3

Topic Sentence (What is the focus of the paragraph?) **1 sentence**

President Wilson had his own vision of the future; a world of peace and democracy.

Describe 1-2 specific historical examples

World War I was originally called the Great War and most individuals at the time including President Wilson considered it the "war to end all wars." Wilson stated, "civilization itself seems to be in the balance." He asserted to Congress that the United States must fight "for democracy ... for the rights and liberties of small nations." President Wilson knew the war would eventually end, and the only way the United States could participate in the peace talks was by first participating in the war. President Wilson would ultimately draft the 14 Points including the League of Nations.

Re-emphasis of Paragraph Focus (How does the paragraph answer the prompt?) **1-2 sentences**

President Wilson and the U.S. felt a responsibility to make the world safe for democracy.

CONCLUSION

Restate thesis. (Avoid copying original thesis word-for-word.) **1-2 sentences**

By 1917, the United States and President Wilson felt they had no choice but to enter World War I. Germany attacked U.S. ships and civilians in the Atlantic Ocean and even threatened to seek a land invasion through Mexico.

Possible reference to future events related to prompt. (What will happen next?) **2-3 sentences**

With U.S. assistance, the Allied Powers defeated Germany in 1918. But, the peace would not last. World War I would have a sequel within two decades with the rise of Adolf Hitler.