

Part A: Essay (Historical Personality - Woodrow Wilson)

“It is the way an individual faces challenges that shapes them and their achievements.”

To what extent is this statement accurate in relation to the personality you have studied and their role in history?

Woodrow Wilson faced various challenges during his time as the 28th President of the United States of America. These challenges included legislating acts to hinder numerous social issues that plagued American society. The question of America's intervention within WWI due to increasing German hostility. As well as promoting the Fourteen Points to America and international nations in an effort to restore stability to a turbulent post-WWI world. These challenges were met with actions from Wilson that were inspired by his moral, ethical and idealistic character. As a result, the idealism that embodied his presidential achievements effectively shaped Wilson as a notable and altruistic leader within history.

Woodrow Wilson's idealistic determination significantly enabled him to enact progressive social reform legislation which answered the societal issues that afflicted many Americans during his terms in office. As a result, it ensured that Wilson was a notable and altruistic leader within history. In 1913 when Wilson arrived in office, the nation's economy was booming due the achievements of many industrialists and financiers. However, the American lower class did not share in prosperity. Large businesses created monopolies over various products, preventing the individual enterprise to thrive. The failure of individual enterprises resulted in individuals turning to their young children to bring in income. These young children often worked long hours in difficult conditions. Along with this inequality, many politicians were corrupt and bankers were unwilling to lend money to small enterprises due to receiving financial gains from large businesses. As a result of the negative social issues, Wilson introduced the New Freedom platform an ambitious and thoroughly progressive plan founded by Wilson's own ethical belief in the equality of all in society. For example, Wilson's ethical beliefs can be seen in his 1913 inaugural address. In reference to society Wilson said, “evil has come with good, with riches has come inexcusable waste”. This extract highlights Wilson's strong belief that Americans should have the freedom to manage their affairs as they as they wished, as long as this freedom was extended to all and not to a privileged few. The New Freedom platform called for tariff reduction and reform of the banking and monetary system with laws to weaken abusive corporations and restore economic competition. **Infoplease (2012), Jones (2005), Vick (1985)**

The New Freedom platform also established the Federal Reserve Act of 1913, which created the system that still provides the framework for regulating the nation's banks, credit, and money supply in the USA today. Effectively producing economic and financial security to all future American citizens. Other Wilson-backed legislation put new controls on large businesses and supported unions to ensure fair treatment of working Americans. Women were enfranchised under the 19th amendment in 1920, and the child labour act of 1916 barred goods made from child labour. With a Presbyterian's incorruptible conscience, Wilson pursued his New Freedom agenda with zeal, determination and idealism, galvanising the nation in support of his ethical policies. Future governments would use Wilson's reforms in their approach to social welfare and business competition fairness, such as the Social Security Act of 1965 which aimed to raise the living standards of Americans at that time. Thus, Wilson's strong moral opposition towards the unequal situation that characterised America's society during the 1910's, cemented his legacy as a firm believer and leader in social equality within history. **Infoplease (2012), Jones (2005), Vick (1985), Freidel, Sidey (2006)**

Moreover, Wilson idealistic and moral brevity could be observed in his willingness to change government tradition characterised America's involvement in WWI. It solidified him as a notable leader within history, because his altruism inspired his declaration of war against Germany in 1917. Prior to America's involvement in the war, the nation existed as an isolationist country with previous presidents urging Americans to steer clear of foreign conflicts. For example Theodore Roosevelt advocated for silence by "speaking softly and carrying a big stick". WWI caused division among Americans. Some Americans favoured to isolationism from the war, whereas others clamoured for interventionism in war. Although Woodrow Wilson was not a natural interventionist, and he believed that the essence of politics drew from morality. This idealistic political philosophy was derived from his Presbyterian upbringing, stating "When you have read the Bible, you will know it is the word of God, because you will have found it the key to your own duty". The catalyst for President Wilson to lead a firm moral opposition was in receiving the Zimmerman Telegram, which involved Germany promising to assist Mexico in reclaiming lost land from America in the Mexican-American War if they joined the Central Powers. This was coupled with the sinking of the Lusitania which killed more than 120 Americans and the unrestricted German warfare in the Atlantic. Wilson's unyielding stance convinced Congress to declare war on April 7, 1917. Germany's immoral actions became progressively apparent, as civilian casualties and the targeting of neutral vessels by u-boats continued. In order to combat the growing abuse of liberty and freedom, the idealistic President put aside his neutral foreign policy and justified war for the greater good of mankind and the preservation of democracy. **Infoplease (2012), Jones (2005), Widmer (2014), Freidel, Sidey (2006)**

Accredited historian David Kennedy commented that "Wilson was a man of peace, a man of high principles, and a rather shrewd and calculating politician". This quote highlights, Wilson's high principles of idealism and unrelentingness, which personified the change in foreign policy and eventually America's involvement in WWI. As a result of his war message to Congress, Wilson managed to unite both conservatives and progressives in the pursuit of world peace with America's war involvement. Furthermore, the evangelical Wilson emphasised that his international crusade would have the United States fighting "for the rights of nations great and small and the privilege of men everywhere to choose their way of life and of obedience" in his address to Congress. This morality driven interventionist approach would later cement Wilson as the inspiration for future US government administrations to advocate an involved role in various future world conflicts such as WWII under the FDR government and the Vietnam War under various governments of the 1960's. **Infoplease (2012), Jones (2005), Kennedy (2005), Widmer (2014), Freidel, Sidey (2006)**

Additionally, Woodrow Wilson's moral driven idealism was abundantly demonstrated in his approach towards the challenge of the post-WWI world in his promotion of the Fourteen Points for international peace. His thirst for peace counteracted other victorious nations thirst for financial and territorial reparations of other Allies, and as a result cemented his legacy as a passionate liberal compelled for the betterment of mankind. When the 1918 Armistice was called many of the countries who had involved themselves in the war had suffered brutal consequences, as many men had died and European cities were reduced rubble. The 'Fourteen Points' outlined by Wilson were the basis for peace negotiations during the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. This statement of principles called for a new set of international rules based on the principles such as the right of self-government, freedom of seas, free trade, negotiated disarmament and an end to secret diplomacy. The points were all for purpose of preserving fairness amongst force and selfish aggression. President Wilson took the conference as an opportunity to create a new world order with US democratic ideals as its foundation in order to restore peace. **Infoplease (2012), Jones (2005), Vick (1985), Freidel, Sidey (2006)**

Wilson also proposed his ideas for a 'League of Nations', in which world countries would confer with one another, and mediate any issues as a preventative measure, to avert any future world conflicts similar to WWI. However, the other Allied nations refused to sign off on some of the Fourteen Points and demanded that Germany pay reparations. In addition, the Senate refused to ratify the treaty for provisions for a League. This would cause Wilson to vehemently embark on a campaign trail preaching directly to American citizens to draw support for his cause across the nation. This action alone,

despite immense adversity highlights the extreme commitment Wilson had for peace and world prosperity. For example, this determined nature was indicated when he suffered a debilitating stroke in 1919 which left the consummate and idealistic President invalid. This was due to the stress of his campaign and the disregarding of his own health, as his physician Dr. Grayson stated in 1919 that “Wilson had not yet recovered from the Paris Peace Conference, and that as a man of 60, he could not ignore his health”. Thus it can be shown that Wilson faced the dilemma of post-war negotiations with a humanitarian nature in the pursuit of world peace. He fought wholeheartedly to conduct said negotiations within just and fair atmosphere of reconciliation, despite deteriorating health. Almost two decades later would Wilson's idea for the cooperation and mediation of various world nations reach fruition through the United Nations at the end of WWII. As a result of his ‘fourteen point’ crusade, history would look upon Wilson's character as one who consistently strove for peace and democracy. **Hoover (1934), Infoplease (2012), Jones (2005), Vick (1985), Freidel, Sidey (2006)**

Woodrow Wilson faced many challenges during his two terms as President of the US. Though he tremendously fronted all of these issues with an idealistic nature of integrity and nobility, which validated his important place in history. He altruistically legislated various acts to combat Americans society's poor social situation and unfair trading practices. Moreover, Wilson was responsible for reforming the American political structure in an effort to combat the immoral actions of Germany during WWI. Finally Wilson promoted world stability and security through his ‘fourteen points’, despite heated negotiations during the Paris Peace Conference through determination and rectitude. Woodrow Wilson was a significant figure of the 20th century that was not only progressive in legislation as a politician but also idealistic as a leader in the face of difficulty, which through his actions laid the foundations for future leaders to adopt his very same principles.

Part A: Annotated Reference List

Source 1

Jones, C. (2005) *Teach Yourself: Twentieth Century USA*. Hodder Education, London

According to the blurb of the book, Carole Bryan Jones is an experienced history teacher and head of faculty at the University of Glamorgan with a specialist knowledge of twentieth century history. She has also authored many accredited educational historical books abouts periods and events during the 20th Century. The book aims to inform readers about the United States during the twentieth century, including Woodrow Wilson and his actions as President of the US. These detail from Wilson's various social reforms, to his moral stance against Germany, and even to his Fourteen Points promotion. The text is reliable because it is written from a neutral and objective point of view and has no bias present.

Furthermore, the information present does correlate other information in other sources. Although the book is a secondary source produced long after its source material, it does however contain various primary sources in the form of extracts from Wilson's speeches and others. For example when highlighting the various amendments Wilson made in office to combat social issues, the book details opinions of various labourers about their lifestyle to make apparent the context for these amendments and provides their points of view. To complement the information it provides, the author has indexed a mixture of various other secondary and primary sources for further reading and research to a reader studying topic of twentieth century. These include other biographies of figures including Wilson and websites dedicated to him. Therefore the text is an extremely useful source to an historian studying Woodrow Wilson because it is a factual overview of his time as President, featuring various challenges he faced and it is free from bias, designed to inform the reader through both its secondary nature and the compilation of other primary and secondary sources.

Source 2

Lillian Goldman Law Library (2008) *President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points* [Internet] Yale Law School, New Haven Connecticut. Available from: http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/wilson14.asp [accessed 21st April].

Yale Law School is a world renowned and accredited university. The library has a compiled archive of various primary sources, therefore making the website in which the library created as a reliable source. The website they created contains Woodrow Wilson's speech about his Fourteen Points, aiming to detail readers Wilson's entire speech. The Fourteen Points was a plan given to ensure peace at the Treaty of Versailles, which reflected Wilson's idealism. It is reliable because although the website itself is secondary, the information it contains was written first hand by Wilson and stated by him, thus making it a primary source as well as a purely factual source. The speech correctly correlates with other copies of Wilson's Fourteen Point address thus highlighting its accuracy. The text is also useful because it does present an insight into Wilson's morality driven purpose for creating the points, and it is relevant in researching the reasons behind Willson's actions. This identified purpose can also allow a historian to link Wilson's morals as reasoning behind his other actions. All in all, the website is a useful source to historians studying Woodrow Wilson, because it not only is it produced by an extremely accredited education institution, but it recalls his speech in its entirety and accurately as it was written by Wilson himself and It also makes apparent the purpose of his speech through Wilson himself which further informs the reader about way he approached issues during the post-war period.

Source 3

Freidel, F. Sidey, H. (2006) Woodrow Wilson [Internet]. Washington DC. Available from: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/1600/presidents/woodrowwilson> [accessed 21st April, 2016]

This source was created by Frank Freidel and Hugh Sidey who are accredited historians and scholars that specialise in presidential biographies. Thus making it a reliable source. The text is a brief biographical summary of Wilson's life, and the purpose of this source is to inform and educate readers about the different events that composed his life. For example the source briefly summarises areas of study from which include his early presbyterian upbringing which influenced his choices as president, to his legislation of social reform. This complements the sources usefulness, as it can form the foundation for a study about Wilson. The source's perspective has no bias present and is written with an objective standpoint. The text is useful because the information is provided has a simple, concise and easy to read layout for a reader to better understand the topic of Woodrow Wilson and his life events. The biography is a secondary source because it has been produced by historians many years after Woodrow Wilson's lifetime. Furthermore, the source is reliable because the information present accurately correlates to other sources and their information about Wilson's life.

Part A: Reference List

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7. **Widmer (2014)** Long Echoes of War and Speech [Internet]. New York Times, New York. Available from: http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/14/opinion/woodrow-wilson-world-war-1-and-american-idealism.html?_r=0 [accessed 21st April, 2016]

Additional Bibliography

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3. Duffy, M. (2009) *Who's Who - Woodrow Wilson* [Internet]. Place of publication: FirstWorldWar.com. Available from: <http://www.firstworldwar.com/bio/wilson.htm> [accessed 21st April, 2016]
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6. Infoplease (2012) Woodrow Wilson [Internet]. Columbia University, New York. Available from: <http://www.infoplease.com/encyclopedia/people/wilson-woodrow-presidency.html> [accessed 21st April, 2016]
7. Jones, C. (2005) Teach Yourself: Twentieth Century USA. Hodder Education, London
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9. Lillian Goldman Law Library (2008) *President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points* [Internet] Yale Law School, New Haven Connecticut. Available from: http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/wilson14.asp [accessed 21st April].
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11. Widmer, T. (2014) Long Echoes of War and Speech [Internet]. New York Times, New York. Available from: http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/14/opinion/woodrow-wilson-world-war-1-and-american-i-dealism.html?_r=0 [accessed 21st April, 2016]

