

American Government & Politics: A Christian Worldview.
Short Films on Woodrow Wilson (30–35 Minutes)

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS

Goal

These four fascinating short films discuss Woodrow Wilson’s political career, Darwinist philosophy, and role in embroiling the U.S in World War I.

Instructions

1. Play the short film “Woodrow Wilson: The Founder of Big Government” (5:42) here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=htzqr_sul7k, ask students for their thoughts, and (suggested) ask these questions:
 - How did Wilson see the concept of gov’t, as opposed to many early Americans?
He challenged the entire idea of individual rights; saw himself as leader of a government that needed to guide individuals (progressivism).
 - Explain how being a Darwinist influences a teacher and a government official.
They can easily view themselves as part of the “fittest” class and qualified to direct the “evolution” of others that are “lower” than they are. (This is still often true with government school-teachers—many see themselves as above children’s parents and deserving of the part of raising children, even in ways that contradict parents’ values.)
 - How did Wilson “sneak” into the presidency?
Teddy Roosevelt split the Republican vote, and Wilson won the presidency with only 42 percent of the popular vote (lowest since Lincoln’s 39.7 percent in 1860).
 - What major changes did Wilson oversee in American government?
He made the income tax the major source of government revenue, put banking system under federal control (the Fed), regulated private business, promoted government as the people’s “savior,” not its rights protector.
2. Play the short film “Woodrow Wilson: World War I and the League of Nations” (5:43) here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0v9gGJNxCX8>, ask students for their thoughts, and (suggested) ask these questions:
 - How did Wilson see society and government?
As director of individuals (an evolutionist philosophy).
 - Explain the “Zimmermann telegram.”
A supposed message from Germany to Mexico that they would help Mexico regain its territory (the southwest part of the U.S.) in exchange for war assistance.
 - What did Wilson do during WWI?
Nationalized industries, rationed goods, fixed prices, raised the top income tax to 77 percent, forbade criticism of the war and the draft, prohibited German composers’ music and teaching of German in schools (all totally unconstitutional).
 - What do you think about Washington and John Quincy Adams’s advice on foreign entanglements after seeing this film? Do you see a link between war and big government?
AWV, but students should see that there is definitely a link between those who favor big government and support of wars/foreign entanglements. (Government officials who think that government is the answer to poverty, jobs, medical care, education, etc. also believe that the solution to troubles around the world is...more government—with themselves in charge, of course!)
3. Play the short film “Woodrow Wilson: Forgotten History” (6:26) here: https://youtu.be/kfVa1yl_0uE, ask students for their thoughts, and (suggested) ask these questions:
 - What reasons do many historians give for Wilson’s decision to go to war?

The sinking of the Lusitania, the Zimmermann telegram, etc. These are unconvincing, since the sinking occurred two years before America's entrance, and it was not simply an unarmed, innocent passenger ship (it contained thousands of tons of ammunition meant for Britain, in violation of international law). The Zimmermann telegram was considered by many, including Wilson, to be amusing at best (Mexico wasn't even close to being a match for the U.S. military), and a hoax, more likely (an attempt by the British to embroil the U.S. into the war).

- What did Wilson's wealthy industrialist contacts have to do with the U.S.'s entrance into WWI?

Wilson ran on a platform of keeping the U.S. out of the war, but the same men who financed his rise to the presidency also had financial interests in protecting that only the U.S.'s entrance into the war would provide.

4. Play the short film "1915 – Woodrow Wilson Runs for Second Term and His Death" (3:02) here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JYeaY17VZVE>, ask students for their thoughts.