

# Protecting that Ball of Liberty: Comparing Jeffersonian and Wilsonian Views Of Democracy In the World

**Title:** Protecting that Ball of Liberty: Comparing Jeffersonian and Wilsonian Views Of Democracy In the World

**Descriptive Subtitle:** A brief comparison between Jefferson and Wilson's background, foreign policy, and views on democracy in the World.

**Grade level:** high (9-12)

**Author Information:**

**Name:** Amy Kerr

**Email:** akerr@cornellsd.org

**School:** Cornell High School

**School Address (opt):** 1099 Maple St. Ext

**City:** Coraopolis

**State:** PA

**Duration:** 30-60 min

**Overview:** Students will compare the foreign policy of both Thomas Jefferson and Woodrow Wilson by completing a comparison chart. The chart requires students to recall background context, find examples of whether each president is isolationist or interventionist, and read a primary source for each. When they are finished, students will answer short-answer questions as well. This activity will be completed after students learn about Woodrow Wilson, making it a good time to refresh students' minds about the founding era. The historical theme is America in the World, and the historical thinking skills include comparison and understanding continuity and change over time.

**Prior knowledge:**

To complete the chart students will need to be familiar with:

1. Concepts of:
  1. Jeffersonian Democracy (Leadership by the best; Mostly isolationist foreign policy; Expansion domestically)
  2. Wilsonian Democracy (Interventionist; Advocates spread of democracy/capitalism)
2. Background/Context of the time:

1. Thomas Jefferson- Author of the Declaration of Independence; Minister to France; 1st Secretary of State; 2nd Vice President; Supported French Revolution; Third President of the US; Made Louisiana Purchase; Lewis and Clark Expedition
2. Woodrow Wilson- President of Princeton; 28th President; WWI (involved in 2nd term); Women's Rights + Labor movements;
3. Foreign Policy– Interventionist or Isolationist? This is an opinion in which students will have to support their point of view with specific actions/words from each President. Some things that kids would want to consider:
  1. Thomas Jefferson- Relationship with France; Positions during the French Revolution; Relations with Barbary pirates; Embargo of 1897
  2. Woodrow Wilson- Invasion of Mexico; Stabilizing relations in Central/South America; "He Kept us out of War"; "He Kept us out of Peace"; Involvement in WWII; action vs. reaction; Declaration of War against Germany; Paris Peace Conference; League of Nations

### Standards:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1](#) Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

PA 8.3.A Identify and analyze the political and cultural contributions of individuals and groups to United States history.

PA 8.3.C Evaluate how continuity and change has influenced United States history

### Objectives:

- *Students will understand that Thomas Jefferson saw American ideals as a "ball of liberty" inevitably rolling around the globe, and Woodrow Wilson, in the wake of World War 1, saw American ideals (now firmly planted around the globe) as something we are responsible to protect.*
- *Students will be able to recall background information about Jefferson and Wilson, contextualize the time period for both Presidents, analyze primary source documents, consider the continuity and change over time of the view of our form of government (and America's role in preserving it), and compare and contrast Jeffersonian and Wilsonian views on democracy.*
- *Students will know the difference between Jeffersonian and Wilsonian views on democracy and the historical background and context for each President.*

**Steps:** This lesson is designed to take approximately 60 minutes. The handout can be completed in one class period, or continued for homework if not finished. A discussion/review of the chart might extend to a second class period. T= Teacher, S= Student

1. Introduction (5 minutes) This portion can be done together, or as students are walking in. The question can be on the board, on a handout, or posted to an LMS like Google Classroom, or on a site like Socrative.

T- Question: What is America's role in the world today?

S- Answer the question or engage in discussion about the question

T- Engage in discussion with students. Students might offer that America takes on a protective or policing role in the world. Possible follow up questions include: Where does this role originate? Why do we feel like that? What are we protecting?

2. Chart (20 minutes) This portion can be done together or alone depending on the age group, background knowledge, and ability level of students. An honors or AP class might complete the handout on their own, but a regular class or younger students might need more help. Additionally, students who are having trouble recalling information about Thomas Jefferson might need to brainstorm together or in small groups, or need time for research. Another option would be to have students work in pairs, or to assign one column/President to one half of the class, and the other to the other half. This would require time for pair-sharing upon completion.

T- Pass out handout (or direct students to a posted handout/link) + go over instructions

T- Instruct students on how you want them to complete the chart (see above options). If students are working by themselves or in small groups, circulate to help students. If students are working as a class, facilitate the discussion/brainstorm or designate students to engage in that role. Remind students to find paragraphs 15&20 on the Wilson document.

S- Complete the three rows of the chart. For row one, provide background information and context. For row two, designate each President as either isolationist or interventionist and provide "proof." For row three, click on each of the links and analyze the source. Students should focus on what the source says about our form of government (indicated for students in chart).

3. Short Answer Questions (15-20 minutes) If students are more self-sufficient, teachers can instruct students to move on to this portion of the handout on their own. If students are working together, or if the teacher feels the need to have a checkpoint, or reiterate instructions, they can do that as well. Go over the requirements for good answers (see Assessments section, or provide different criteria).
4. Review (15 minutes)- Students and teachers review the chart and short answer questions together.

**Materials:** list any primary sources, images, handouts, videos, websites, technology needs, etc. for your lesson (include any attachments needed with final lesson plan)

Student Handout (attached and linked):

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pib73vkwMjP\\_lmXuThiuT5rGJecgUzJdE2tyqYkhpIE/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pib73vkwMjP_lmXuThiuT5rGJecgUzJdE2tyqYkhpIE/edit?usp=sharing)

Primary Sources:

Thomas Jefferson letter to Tench Coxe, June 1, 1775: <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/jefferson/181.html>

Woodrow Wilson Joint Address to Congress leading to War 1917 (paragraphs 15&20):

<https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=61&page=transcript>

**Assessment(s):**

- *Participation in discussion*
- *Completion of chart*
- *Completion of short answer questions*

#### **Assessment Criteria (rubric, checklist, etc.):**

- *All students participate in discussion (a written/typed answer is suggested)*
- *All students complete the chart (teachers decide how much of the chart should be completed by each student; the chart should be reviewed for accuracy)*
- *All students answer their short answer question and support their answer with specific information from the chart (3 points each, can be modified by individual teachers)*
  - *Answers are in complete sentences*
  - *Answers use specific information from the chart*
  - *Answers respond to all parts of the question accurately*

**Accommodations:** Suggestions for modifying this lesson for a variety of groups are included throughout the “Steps” portion.

#### **Bibliography:**

Jefferson, Thomas. “Letter to Tench Coxe 1 June 1795.” 1795. Lib of Cong. Washington D.C. Lib. of Cong. Web. 14 July 2016. <<https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/jefferson/181.html>>

President Wilson’s Declaration of War Message to Congress, April 2, 1917; Records of the United States Senate; Record Group 46; National Archives. Web. 14 July 2016. <<https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=61>>

#### **Directions:**

1. Consider the focus question and what you already know
2. Using prior knowledge, notes, your text, and online research fill in the chart below, comparing Thomas Jefferson in the first column and Woodrow Wilson in the second
  1. Bullet-points are acceptable for the chart
  2. Hyper-link information outside of your notes/text to the site used
  3. Follow all directions/answer all questions for each column
3. Complete the writing prompt

	Thomas Jefferson	Woodrow Wilson
Background/Context: Who were they/When were they/What is happening in the world?	●	●

Foreign Policy:  
Interventionist or  
Isolationist? How do  
you know (give 2-3  
examples of specific  
ideas/actions/laws for  
each)

Primary Source  
Analysis 1: What does  
the author have to say  
about our government  
(direct quotes)?



<https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/jefferson/181.html> <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=61&page=transcript>  
Search for “democracy” and read the paragraphs containing the  
word (15 & 20)



Answer each of the questions below in approximately a paragraph each.

1. Considering American government, explain the quotes about “a ball of liberty” and “the world made safe for democracy.” What do they mean?

2. What do these two quotes tell you about what Jefferson and Wilson each believed about our government? To what extent are they similar?

3. What is the relationship between these two quotes?