

**ACTIVITY**

**The Politics of Peace**

The Treaty of Versailles (1919) was the principal treaty that ended World War I. It was unsuccessful, however, at bringing about a sustained peace. The League of Nations, the international body created by the treaty in an effort to ensure world peace in the future, was unable to prevent the tensions and belligerent acts that eventually led to World War II. In part, the supposed failure of the Treaty of Versailles has come to rest on the U.S. Senate's rejection of the treaty and refusal to join the League of Nations. Party politics and personal rancor between Sen. Henry Cabot Lodge and President Woodrow Wilson are seen by many historians as having played a key role in determining the fate of the treaty and the league.

Form a small group with two or three other students. For a quick look at personal and party politics, read two "Historical Minutes" accounts about Wilson and Lodge and about the rejection of the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations: http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/minute/A\_Bitter\_Rejection.htm
http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/minute/Woodrow\_Wilson\_Addresses\_the\_Senate.htm

Next, read the key speeches that argue the two sides of issue by finding the documents under the Primary Sources tab of this Era:

* Woodrow Wilson: League of Nations speech (1919)
* Henry Cabot Lodge: Opposition to the Treaty of Versailles speech (1919)

With your group, respond to the following:

1. What are Wilson's reasons for joining the League of Nations?

2. What are Lodge's reasons for opposing the League of Nations?

3. Which man makes the stronger case? (Cite specifics to support your claim.)

4. Imagine yourselves as citizens in 1919: a returning soldier, a mother who lost her son, a senator (Republican or Democrat), a farmer, a recent immigrant living in a large city, etc. Which position regarding the treaty and the League of Nations do you favor? Why? Be prepared to share your opinions with other groups in class.