

## Twentieth Century Conflict – Lesson 3

### Was the Treaty of Versailles fair?

#### Subject Knowledge Notes

The Treaty of Versailles was the most important of the peace treaties that brought World War I to an end. The Treaty ended the state of war between Germany and the Allied Powers. It was signed on 28 June 1919 in Versailles, exactly five years after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, which had directly led to the war. The other Central Powers on the German side signed separate treaties.[6] Although the armistice, signed on 11 November 1918, ended the actual fighting, it took six months of Allied negotiations at the Paris Peace Conference to conclude the peace treaty. The treaty was registered by the Secretariat of the League of Nations on 21 October 1919.

Of the many provisions in the treaty, one of the most important and controversial required "Germany [to] accept the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage" during the war (the other members of the Central Powers signed treaties containing similar articles). This article, Article 231, later became known as the War Guilt clause. The treaty required Germany to disarm, make ample territorial concessions, and pay reparations to certain countries that had formed the Entente powers. In 1921 the total cost of these reparations was assessed at 132 billion marks (then \$31.4 billion or £6.6 billion, roughly equivalent to US\$442 billion or UK£284 billion in 2019). At the time economists, notably John Maynard Keynes (a British delegate to the Paris Peace Conference), predicted that the treaty was too harsh—a "Carthaginian peace"—and said the reparations figure was excessive and counter-productive, views that, since then, have been the subject of ongoing debate by historians and economists from several countries. On the other hand, prominent figures on the Allied side such as French Marshal Ferdinand Foch criticized the treaty for treating Germany too leniently.

The result of these competing and sometimes conflicting goals among the victors was a compromise that left no one content: Germany was neither pacified nor conciliated, nor was it permanently weakened. The problems that arose from the treaty would lead to the Locarno Treaties, which improved relations between Germany and the other European powers, and the re-negotiation of the reparation system resulting in the Dawes Plan, the Young Plan, and the indefinite postponement of reparations at the Lausanne Conference of 1932.

Although it is often referred to as the "Versailles Conference", only the actual signing of the treaty took place at the historic palace. Most of the negotiations were in Paris, with the "Big Four" meetings taking place generally at the Quai d'Orsay.

Taken from Wikipedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty\\_of\\_Versailles](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Versailles)

#### Further Reading

<https://www.historyextra.com/period/first-world-war/did-versailles-peace-treaty-trigger-ww2-another-second-world-war/>

<https://www.britannica.com/event/Treaty-of-Versailles-1919>

<https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-i/treaty-of-versailles-1>

#### Videos

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ro\\_GTBsQKG4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ro_GTBsQKG4)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ynkpS0rdZnw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vrYhLNQMRro>

## Lesson Three: Was the Treaty of Versailles fair?











5 minutes

- Display and read the lesson question (slide 3).
- Display the retrieval quiz (slide 4) and ask pupils to complete in silence.
- Display the answers (slide 5) for pupils to self-/peer mark.

## Twentieth Century Conflict – Lesson 3

### Was the Treaty of Versailles fair?

 5 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Read the <b>Devastation of War</b>.</li><li>• Draw attention to the table which shows the huge number of people killed during the war (slide 6)</li></ul>
 5 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The guilt clause in Treaty was one of the most controversial elements, and arguably planted much of the ill feeling from some Germans towards the victors.</li><li>• Ask pupils to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of ascribing guilt, as well as their knowledge from the causes of the war to question whether Germany was solely responsible.</li></ul>
 5 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue reading about the <b>Paris Peace Conference</b>.</li><li>• Display the Big Three (sometimes the Big Four, including Vittorio Orlando of Italy) on slide 7. Ensure pupils can name each of these leaders and which countries they were in charge of.</li><li>• Pupils should know that they all had different aims.</li></ul>
 5 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pupils should answer question 2.</li><li>• Ask pupils to try and consider arguments both for and against including the defeated nations.</li><li>• You may wish to jot a model answer for pupils to read and improve their own answer.</li></ul>
 10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Read <b>The Treaty of Versailles</b>.</li><li>• Ask pupils to study the map which shows the geographical changes in Europe (slide 9), the end of empire and the beginning of nations.</li><li>• Ask pupils to discuss how the changes would have affected German leadership, the normal people living there.</li><li>• Ask pupils to think back to the unification of Germany from lesson 1 and consider this in their discussions</li></ul>
 10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Read <b>Military Restrictions</b>.</li><li>• Display an image of the Rhineland (slide 10)</li><li>• Ask pupils why France were keen to have this zone demilitarised.</li><li>• Continue reading about <b>War Guilt</b> and note the huge reparations (Germany only finished paying them in 2010!)</li></ul>
 10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Read <b>Germany's Objections</b></li><li>• Note that it was called the Diktat of Versailles, and discuss the root of diktat and dictator.</li><li>• This will become important as pupils consider Hitler's rise to power.</li><li>• Reflect on the overall impact of the Treaty of Versailles. Give pupils the opportunity to think about the objective of the Treaty – was it likely to be successful?</li><li>• This can lead to a partner discussion about whether the Treaty of Versailles would be likely to create a 'lasting peace in Europe', as it intended.</li></ul>
 5 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ask pupils to complete their learning review on page 3.</li><li>• They should write the most important thing they learnt regarding the key question of the lesson.</li><li>• You could share these as a class.</li></ul>