

The Peace Settlement

World War I ended on 11 November 1918 when Germany signed the 'Armistice'. The Versailles conference was opened in January 1919 and the Germans were forced to sign the Treaty on 28 June 1919. THE 'BIG THREE' negotiators at Versailles were Georges Clemenceau (President of France), Woodrow Wilson (President of America) and David Lloyd George (Prime Minister of Britain).

- Clemenceau wanted revenge and punishment – to 'make Germany pay' until Germany was too weak to attack France again.
- Woodrow Wilson had said what he wanted in his 14 Points – a world 'safe for democracy' based on self-determination and a League of Nations.
- Lloyd George SAID he wanted to make Germany pay, but he really wanted to protect the British Empire and trade by a lasting peace which would not ruin Germany

The Treaty of Versailles

The only answer here is that you have to learn the terms off by heart:

1. By clause 231 of the Treaty, Germany had to accept blame 'for all the loss and damage' of the war.
2. The Germans were allowed no submarines or aeroplanes, only 6 battleships, their army was reduced to 100,000 men and the Rhineland was de-militarised.
3. Germany had to pay £6,600 million reparations.
4. Germany lost Alsace-Lorraine (to France), the Saar coalfield (to France for 15 years) and West Prussia and Upper Silesia (to Poland). Danzig became a 'free city' and all the German colonies became 'mandates' of the League of Nations.
5. The Treaty of Versailles set up the League of Nations.
6. Germany was forbidden to unite (Anschluss) with Austria.

Although it is not directly in the syllabus, you need to know that the principles of the Treaty of Versailles were applied to the peace treaties for the whole of Europe after the War – Saint Germain (with Austria, 1919), Neuilly (with Bulgaria, 1919), Trianon (with Hungary, 1920) and Sèvres (with Turkey, 1920).

Nine new nation-states were set up (Poland, Finland, Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), and the Treaty of Sevres dismantled the Turkish Empire.

Reactions to the Treaty

MUCH more important were the reactions of the different parties to the treaty:

The Germans were furious. They had not been consulted during the making of the Treaty, the Treaty bore no relation to Wilson's 14 Points (which they thought was going to be the basis of the treaty – e.g. Austria did not get self-determination), and they believed that the Treaty was simply an attempt to destroy Germany. Count Brockdorff-Rantzau said of the war-guilt clause: 'Such a confession in my mouth would be a lie'. The *Deutsche Zeitung* attacked 'the disgraceful treaty'. In March 1920 there was a rebellion in Germany – called the Kapp Putsch – against the Treaty.

But even the people who made the Treaty were dissatisfied with it.

- Clemenceau LIKED Clause 231, disarmament, Reparations and Alsace-Lorraine BUT he wanted Germany split up.
- Wilson GOT League of Nations and self-determination for the countries of eastern Europe BUT he could not get disarmament or freedom for the colonies AND the American Senate refused to sign Treaty or join League of Nations.
- Lloyd George LIKED reducing German navy and getting British mandates BUT he thought the Treaty was too harsh and would cause another war in 25 years time.

Some historians have suggested that – because of this – the Treaty of Versailles CAUSED the Second World War. Firstly, it infuriated the Germans, who were just waiting for an opportunity to get revenge, but secondly it demoralised the allies, who therefore could not bring themselves to make Germany obey the Treaty when Hitler started breaking it in the 1930s (thus the Treaty directly caused appeasement).

Reparations

Particularly, the Allies failed to enforce the treaty provisions relating to REPARATIONS:

- In March 1921, French, British and Belgian troops invaded the Ruhr to force Germany to agree to reparations.
- In January 1923, French and Belgian troops invaded the Ruhr to force Germany to pay reparations (this was a disaster, and caused hyperinflation in Germany).
- In April 1924, the Dawes Plan gave Germany longer to pay reparations, and granted huge loans to get the German economy going. (In June 1929, the Young Plan reduced reparations.)
- On 8 September 1926, Germany was admitted to the League of Nations.