

The Treaty of Versailles

The First World War officially ended on 11th November 1918. On this day the Germans surrendered, and signed an ARMISTICE with the Allies (represented by Britain, France and USA). An armistice is an agreement to stop fighting and wait for a PEACE TREATY (a legal agreement to end a war) to be drawn up

1. Name the Allied countries known as 'The Big Three' that fought against Germany during the First World War?

When the Germans signed the armistice, they believed that the peace treaty which would follow would be based on Woodrow Wilson's 14 Points. Wilson was the President of the USA, and his 14 Points were designed to treat Germany in a fair and democratic way. However, the other two Allied leaders, George Clemenceau of France, and David Lloyd George of Britain, had other ideas.

Clemenceau wanted Germany punished severely for her crimes, and made so weak that she could never make war again. Lloyd George was fearful however that a harsh treaty could lead to another war in future. The British public disagreed. They felt the same as Clemenceau, that Germany should be punished harshly for the damage that she had caused during war. In the end Lloyd George had to bow to public opinion and agreed with many of the demands of France (although in some cases, such as reparations, in a watered down form). Wilson's 14 Points were not put into practice, and Germany was forced to agree to the terms of a treaty, the Treaty of Versailles, drawn up by the Allies.

2. Explain the idea behind Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points.
3. Why might it have been a good idea to treat Germany more leniently when drawing up the peace treaty? Would you have wanted to treat them leniently though?

Woodrow Wilson's

14 Points

The Fourteen Points was a speech delivered by United States President Woodrow Wilson to Congress during WWI on January 8, 1918. The address was intended to assure the U.S. that the Great War was being fought for a just cause and for postwar peace in Europe. Citizens in Europe generally welcomed Wilson's ideas, but Allied leaders were skeptical of the possibility of the ideas happening.

The speech was delivered over ten months before the armistice with the German Empire ended the Great War, but the Fourteen Points became the basis for the terms of the German surrender, as negotiated at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. The Treaty of Versailles, however, had little to do with the Fourteen Points and so was never ratified by the U.S. Senate.

The Fourteen Points speech was the only explicit (open) statement of war goals by any of the nations fighting in World War I: some countries involved gave general indications of their goals; still others secretly wanted to gain foreign territory and so refused to state their goals openly. Many secret deals were made between nations that made accepting Wilson's points impossible.



Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points simplified from his original speech:

1. All treaties between countries must be made public with no secret agreements for all nations to observe.
2. Freedom of navigation upon the seas, outside territorial waters, during both peace and war, except as those seas may be closed in whole or in part by international action for the enforcement of international agreements.
3. The removal of economic barriers between countries making trade unfair among all the nations consenting to the peace and associating themselves for the maintenance of peace.
4. The reduction of arms worldwide to the lowest point consistent with maintaining domestic (home) safety.
5. An open-minded adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon the principle that in determining all such questions of rule the interests of the populations involved must have equal say with the claims of the government who is involved.
6. The evacuation of Central Power armed forces of all Russian territory.
7. The evacuation of Central Power armed forces from Belgium.
8. All French territory should be freed and the invaded portions restored to France, including lands lost by France (Alsace-Lorraine territory) during the Franco-Prussian War in 1871 (Germany was formally known as Prussia).
9. A readjustment of the borders of Italy should be effected along clearly recognizable lines of Italian nationality.
10. The peoples of Austria-Hungary should be given the freest opportunity to autonomous (self-chosen) government.
11. Romania, Serbia, and Montenegro should be evacuated by all Central Power armed forces; occupied territories restored; Serbia given free and permanent access to the sea.
12. The peoples of the Ottoman Empire should be given a voice in determining their own self-government.
13. An independent Polish nation should be created which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations, including free access to the sea.
14. A League of Nations formed so that representatives of all participating nations can peacefully settle disputes without resorting to armed conflict, and that the League of Nations will help protect the freedom of participating nations who are threatened by others.

On 28th June 1919, German government officials were forced to sign the Treaty of Versailles. If they refused then Germany would face invasion. It was signed in the Palace of Versailles, near Paris. The German government did not want to sign the treaty because it was so harsh. They hated the fact that they had had no say in the Treaty negotiations, so they called it the **DIKTAT**, the '*dictated peace*'.

When the German public got to hear about the treaty they simply could not believe that their government had signed it. The public didn't understand, or could not believe, that the new government had no say during the negotiations. They felt the government had let them down badly, so many Germans referred to it as '**THE STAB IN THE BACK**'. The government had ended the war and given in to ally demands without a fight - surely the German Army could have fought on and eventually won the war! It was felt that the treaty dishonoured the soldiers and that the government had betrayed the people of Germany. In truth, many Germans never forgave the government for signing the treaty, and often referred to Weimar politicians as '**THE NOVEMBER CRIMINALS**'.

4. Explain why the German government felt that they had to sign the Treaty of Versailles. How did the German public react to this?

5. Do you feel that the German public were justified in calling the members of the government 'criminals' who had 'stabbed' Germany in the back?

The Treaty of Versailles

Why did the Germans hate the Treaty of Versailles so much?

This is important to understand, because the way that the Germans reacted to the signing of the Treaty was a major factor in Hitler's rise to power.

In order to understand why the Germans hated the Treaty so much, we need to take a closer look at what some of the clauses within the treaty said.

1. **Germany had to accept total responsibility for starting the war.** This was called the 'War Guilt Clause', or Article 231.
2. **Germany had to pay £6,600 million to the Allies** to cover the damage it had caused during the war. This was a form of compensation known as reparations.
3. **Germany had to hand over 70,000 square kilometres of land to the Allies.** The allies shared this land out amongst countries within Europe. For example, Alsace-Lorraine was returned to France (the Germans had taken it off France in 1871), West Prussia and Posen were given to Poland, and Eupen and Malmedy were given to Belgium. This was supposed to make Germany weaker, and make other European countries stronger. This would help to prevent Germany invading its neighbours within Europe in future years.
4. **Germany had to hand over all its colonies to the Allies**
Colonies are areas of land that are governed by a Parent State although they are outside of that state – they are abroad. Germany's colonial Empire amounted to about one million square miles. One of the largest areas to be taken from Germany was in Africa. The Union of South Africa administered German South-West Africa. Britain, France and Belgium divided up the rest of the African land governed by Germany.
5. **The German armed forces were to be reduced greatly.** The Reichwehr (Army) were only allowed 100,000 men, and were not allowed to use conscription (forcing ordinary men to join the army for a period of time). The Navy was limited to 15,000 sailors.
6. **The German navy had to be reduced greatly.** They were only allowed to keep 6 battle ships. They were only allowed 15,000 men.
7. **The use and production of weaponry was limited.**

The Germans were not allowed an airforce or any submarines. The Navy was only allowed six battleships and the buying of any further war materials was banned.

8. **The Rhineland had to be occupied by Allied troops.**

This area bordered France and was meant to give the French greater security. The occupation was to last for fifteen years and no German troops were to be allowed into the area.

6. What impact would this type of treaty have on Germany?
Complete the table to show how you think the treaty would have affected Germany.

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Point from the Treaty	Damage Germany economically	Damage Germany militarily	Damage Germany's pride