

Module 8: World War I and the Interwar Period
Topic 2 Content: The End of WWI and the Treaty of Versailles

The End of WWI and the Treaty of Versailles



Select the arrow in the upper right corner to begin.

Narration Script

N/A

Armistice

The End of WWI and the Treaty of Versailles

LEXINGTON + SARATOGA + YORKTOWN
BARBARY WARS + LAKE ERIE + NEW ORLEANS
MONTEREY + VERA CRUZ + BULL RUN + SHILOH
ANTIDETAM + CHANCELLORSVILLE + GETTYSBURG
INDIAN WARS + SANTIAGO + MANILA
BELLEAU WOOD + MEUSE-ARGONNE + MIDWAY
GUADALCANAL + ANZIO + BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC
NORMANDY + ARDENNES-ALSACE + IWO JIMA
BERLIN AIR LIFT + PUSAN + INCHEON + SEOUL
GULF OF TONKIN + ROLLING THUNDER + DAK TO
KHE SANH + TET OFFENSIVE + COLD WAR
GRENADA + PANAMA + GULF WAR I + BOSNIA
SOMALIA + KOSOVO + TORA BORA + KANDAHAR
FALLUJAH + SADR CITY + BASRA

HONORING ALL WHO SERVED
Veterans Day
November 11, 2010

Leaders just after signing
armistice agreement

Narration Script

After four years of the bloodiest war that the world had ever seen, World War I came to an end. On November 11, 1918, Kaiser Wilhelm II gave up his throne and the new German republic agreed to an armistice, or cease-fire. Today, in the U.S., we celebrate Armistice Day as Veterans Day, a national holiday to remember all soldiers who lost their lives during wartime.

Although the fighting was over, the toll on Europe was extremely high. Millions of soldiers and civilians had been killed, countries owed massive war debts, the countryside and buildings had been destroyed, and there was social unrest across the region. Despite the fact that the war was fought around the world, the winners did not gain much new territory. Germany actually occupied parts of France when the war ended.

The war did end many long-lasting empires, including the Russian Imperial Empire, the German Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the Ottoman Empire, which had been in existence since 1299. How would Europe recover and move forward? Could the Allied Powers create a lasting peace that so Europe could rebuild itself, or would they punish the losers?

The Big Four Meet

The End of WWI and the Treaty of Versailles

Big Four meet at Palace of Versailles



Woodrow Wilson - U.S.
David Lloyd George - Britain
Georges Clemenceau - France
Vittorio Orlando - Italy

The image is a composite. The top portion shows a wide-angle view of the Palace of Versailles, a grand chateau with many windows and a central courtyard with a fountain. The bottom right portion is a black and white photograph of four men in suits, identified as the Big Four, standing together and talking. The text 'Big Four meet at Palace of Versailles' is overlaid on the top part of the image. Below the main image, the names of the four leaders and their countries are listed.


Narration Script

In January of 1919, the victorious leaders met just outside of Paris at the Palace of Versailles. There, they discussed the treaty that would set the terms for the losers in the war.

Deemed by some as “The War to End All Wars,” people hoped that World War I would result in a long lasting peace in Europe. The peace conference was dominated by “The Big Four” which included President Woodrow Wilson from the United States, Prime Minister David Lloyd George from Britain, Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau from France, and Prime Minister Vittorio Orlando from Italy. Each leader brought to the table different ideas for peace, as well as their own intentions and grievances.

President Woodrow Wilson

The End of WWI and the Treaty of Versailles



- ▷ Woodrow Wilson - U.S. President 1913-1921
- ▷ Entered war to make world “safe for democracy”
- ▷ Spent six months in Paris at peace conference
- ▷ Yes, this is an actual bill from 1934

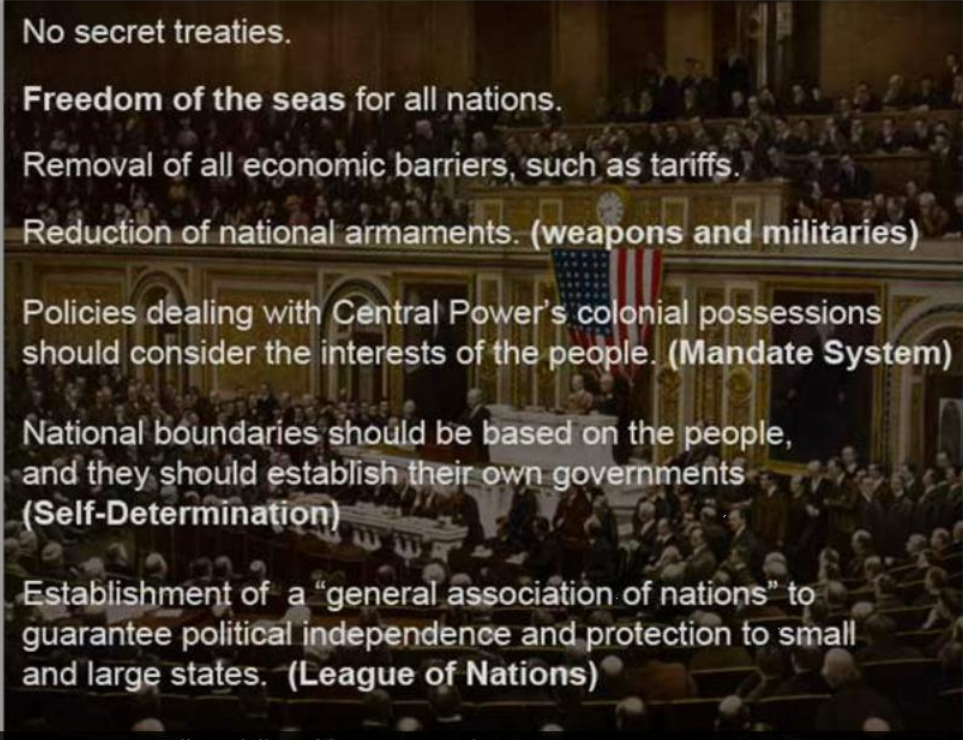
Narration Script

President Woodrow Wilson was already in office when the war broke out in Europe. He led the country into war just after the start of his second term. His goal in joining against the Central Powers was to “make the world safe for democracy.”

After the end of the war, he spent six months at the conference in Versailles to promote his vision for achieving long-lasting peace in Europe. This was the first time an American president traveled abroad and negotiated a treaty with foreign nations. President Wilson laid out his plan for peace, known as the Fourteen Points, in January of 1918, which was ten months before the end of the war.

President Wilson's Fourteen Points

The End of WWI and the Treaty of Versailles



No secret treaties.

Freedom of the seas for all nations.

Removal of all economic barriers, such as tariffs.

Reduction of national armaments. **(weapons and militaries)**

Policies dealing with Central Power's colonial possessions should consider the interests of the people. **(Mandate System)**

National boundaries should be based on the people, and they should establish their own governments **(Self-Determination)**

Establishment of a "general association of nations" to guarantee political independence and protection to small and large states. **(League of Nations)**

Wilson delivers his Fourteen Points to Congress - January 8, 1918

Narration Script

The first points of President Wilson's Fourteen Points laid out simple guidelines for peace, including guidelines against secret treaties, the idea that countries should have smaller militaries and navies, and there that should be freedom of the seas for all nations. He felt that no country should create barriers for trade.

President Wilson's plan addressed the colonial possessions held by the European powers. He believed in self-determination, which is the belief that people should have their own governments and be responsible for making their own decisions. The plan's final point was to establish the League of Nations as an international organization. The League's goal would be to resolve international conflicts peacefully.

The Balkans After World War I



Narration Script

There were several stumbling blocks that kept the peace process from going as smoothly as President Wilson had hoped. Many ethnic groups formerly controlled by Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire wanted to rule themselves, and many of these groups claimed the same land. This map shows the general location of many of these groups, some of whom still contest their national borders.

Another problem was that not one of the defeated nations was invited to the peace settlement. Germany was suspicious of a treaty that was created without their input behind closed doors. Even some of the Allied Powers were excluded from the peace process. For example, Russia wasn't invited to take part in the treaty creation, even though they fought on the winning side during the war and had more casualties than any other nation.

Finally, despite Wilson's worries, France, Great Britain, and Italy wanted to punish Germany since Germany had been one of the first countries to go to war. The victors wanted to reduce Germany's military strength so that Germany wouldn't threaten the Allies in the future. In June 1919, eight months after Armistice Day, the Allied Powers finally revealed the terms of peace in the Treaty of Versailles.

Reparations After World War I

The End of WWI and the Treaty of Versailles



Terms of the Treaty of Versailles

- Dealt harshly with Germany.
- Germany had to admit guilt of starting the war and must alone pay reparations.
- Placed many restrictions on the German government and military restrictions
- Territorial Changes
- Provided for the formation of the League of Nations

Germany delivers war reparations 1920
Source: German Federal Archives

Narration Script

The Treaty of Versailles did not build a lasting peace; instead, it primarily punished Germany for its role in the war. The Allies forced Germany to admit guilt for starting the war, to pay reparations, and it limited Germany's military power.

The Allies put a clause in the treaty assigning Germany the sole responsibility of starting the war. As a result, Germany had to pay reparations, or war damages, totaling over 30 billion dollars. This amount is equivalent to over 400 billion dollars in today's money.

In order to make sure Germany wouldn't rebuild its military, Germany was not allowed to manufacture war materials such as tanks, planes, or submarines. France wanted to protect its borders from attack, so the treaty created a buffer zone in the Rhineland, located between the two countries. Although this territory remained part of Germany, it could not have any military bases and soldiers could not be stationed there.

While many of President Wilson's Fourteen Points were not included in the treaty, the treaty did establish the League of Nations, an organization designed to resolve international conflicts. Although the League of Nations was President Wilson's idea, the United States refused to join the organization and ended up rejecting the Treaty of Versailles. This was mainly because many Americans did not want to enter into any international agreements and wanted to limit involvement in global affairs, a policy known as isolationism.

National Borders: Before and After World War I

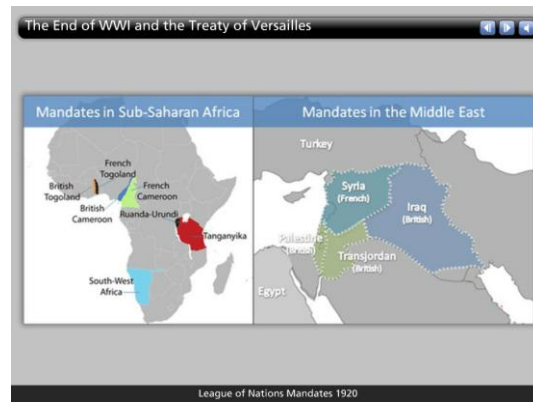


Narration Script

The image shown here depicts the borders of Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia, and the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the war in 1914. Now, use your cursor to roll over the map and look at how the borders of these countries changed as a result of the Treaty of Versailles. Notice how some countries lost a significant amount of territory, and how that created new countries.

France wanted to regain Alsace [al SASS] and Lorraine, territory along their border with Germany that France lost during the earlier Franco-Prussian war. This land was transferred back to France, and Germans who had settled there were forced to leave. By the end of the peace conference, Germany ended up losing 13 percent of its land. Russia also lost territory, as the Allies feared its new communist government. Both Germany and Russia had to give up land so that the new country of Poland could be created as an independent nation. The Austria-Hungarian Empire was broken into the separate countries of Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. The Ottoman Empire was replaced by the new independent country of Turkey. Its lands in the Middle East were also divided up and distributed among the Allies to be run as mandates.

African Mandates



Narration Script

As a result of the war, the Big Four took away Germany's colonies, and broke up the Ottoman Empire. The Allies gave these lands to Britain, France, and Japan. These lands were distributed with the intent that the major powers would rule these territories until they could govern themselves, at which time they would be granted independence. Unfortunately, because of the benefits provided by these mandates to their administrators, areas in Africa and Asia did not receive their independence until later.

In the Middle East, the French were given the territories of Syria and Lebanon to administer. Britain controlled Palestine, Transjordan, and Iraq. Many of the people that lived in these places did not agree with the mandate system. They wanted to rule themselves, and nationalist movements began to spread in the mandates.

As time went on, France and Britain did not want to fight a prolonged war with these nationalist groups. Britain gave Iraq limited independence in 1922 and Transjordan independence in 1923. France finally gave independence to Syria and Lebanon in 1936.

Palestine was one area not granted independence. This mandate contained the ancient holy city of Jerusalem, which was a site of conflict between Muslim Arabs and Jews who had immigrated to the area from Europe. The Jews hoped to establish a homeland in Palestine, a movement referred to as Zionism.

Britain tried to ease tensions by reducing the number of Jewish people immigrating to Palestine. This had little effect. The conflict between Muslims and Jews over Palestine continued. The division of the Ottoman Empire through the mandate system planted the seeds for future conflicts in the Middle East.

Germany lost all of its colonies in Africa, which were divided up between the British and the French. Over time, some of these territories were incorporated into existing colonies, and some became separate colonies. Shown here are the colonial names for these mandates. The modern names may differ somewhat.

Some of Europe's colonies in Asia and Africa sent troops to fight in the war. Many of these soldiers believed that by fighting alongside the mother country's army they would prove themselves worthy of independence. This was not the case. Although the European powers used their colonial subjects as weapons in the war, they did not grant any of them independence on account of their service. As a result, nationalistic movements continued to grow in a number of the colonies around the globe, although almost none of them would result in independence until the end of World War II.

The League of Nations



Narration Script

The Treaty of Versailles did very little to keep the peace in Europe. The harsh treatment of Germany made the German people angry. As Germany struggled to pay war reparations, its economy collapsed leaving the door open to radical nationalists, such as Adolph Hitler who exploited this anger to become the leader of the country.

Many people looked to the League of Nations to keep the peace, and more than 40 countries from around the globe joined as member nations. The league pledged to impose economic sanctions and even use military invention if a country became aggressive toward another nation. The original plan for the league was to have large nations make up its executive council and be responsible for enforcing its decisions. Japan, Britain, France, the United States, and Italy would make up the executive council. Germany and Russia were not invited to join at first, but were admitted later on.

The League of Nations encountered a major hurdle when the United States did not join. Although the League of Nations was President Wilson's idea, and he had been one of the strongest supporters of its creation, the U.S. Senate did not share his vision. They refused to join it, fearing that the U.S. would have to provide troops to battle for issues that did not involve America. After the World War I, the U.S. reverted to a policy of isolationism and most of the people felt it was important to remain impartial in international affairs.

As the 1920s and 1930s progressed, The League of Nations showed that it was powerless. When Japan expanded into new territories in Asia, the League condemned Japan's actions. Japan swiftly left the League, and no countries were willing to supply troops to stop Japanese aggression. Without force to back up its condemnations, the League was irrelevant. The failure of the Treaty of Versailles combined with a worldwide economic depression created conditions for another world war.