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Cambridge IGCSE® & O Level
Complete
**20th Century
History**

Third Edition

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OXFORD



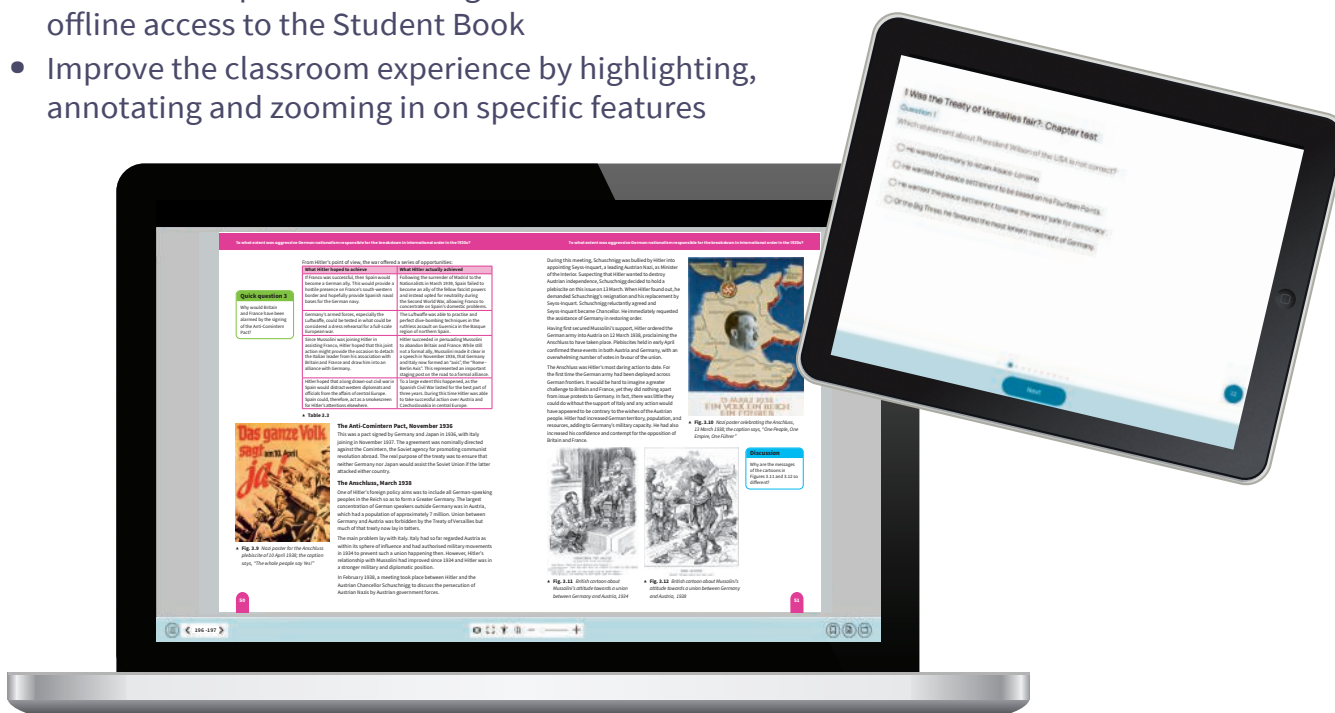
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Introduction

History is an exciting subject, driven by a strong narrative and populated by dynamic characters. Equally important, however, is the process of analysis—looking at how and why this narrative was created. History is constructed from a series of questions which help us to explore how, why, when, and with what results, events in the past took place.

20th Century History for Cambridge IGCSE® and O Level focuses on the major international issues of the twentieth century and provides a detailed study of the regions which dominated the period. This book aims to provide an in-depth account of major events, and help students to develop the skills required to be successful at Cambridge IGCSE® (0470 syllabus) and Cambridge O Level (2147 syllabus).

The chapters follow the curriculum content for the twentieth century topics offered by the Cambridge IGCSE® and O Level History courses. Each chapter reflects the structure of the different options in the syllabus and throughout each chapter you will find descriptions of key terms, mini-biographies of the major historical figures, short structured tasks, as well as exam-style questions.

Cambridge IGCSE® and O Level overviews

For Cambridge IGCSE® and O Level candidates:

Paper 1: two questions on Section A and one question on a topic in Section B

Paper 2: one question on a prescribed topic taken from Section A. The question will consist of five parts.

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either Component 3 (coursework): a 2000-word extended piece of writing based on a topic from Section B or a topic devised by the Centre

Paper 4 (written paper): one question on a topic

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We hope that 20th Century History for Cambridge IGCSE® and O Level will be an invaluable tool for all students studying Cambridge IGCSE® and O Level History.

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Introduction

The First World War was described by British Prime Minister David Lloyd George as “the cruellest and most terrible war that has ever scourged mankind”. In its simplest form it was a bid by the Central Powers—Germany assisted by Austria–Hungary, Turkey, and Bulgaria—to achieve supremacy or domination in Europe. When this bid failed in the autumn of 1918, the initiative lay with Germany’s opponents, the Allies—principally Britain, France, and the United States—to bring about a new peace in Europe.



Objectives

- consider the roles of individuals such as the “Big 3”
- examine the impact of the treaty on Germany
- look at contemporary opinions about the Treaty of Versailles

As soon as the First World War came to an end in November 1918, plans were immediately made for a peace conference to take place in Paris during 1919. This conference produced a number of peace treaties that are referred to collectively as the **Versailles Settlement**.

▲ Fig. 1.1 San Francisco Examiner, 1918

Versailles Settlement

A term used to describe the entire peace settlement of 1919–23. The phrase does not mean the same as Treaty of Versailles, which is just one part of the Versailles Settlement.

The Versailles Settlement

Treaty	Date	Country affected
Versailles	June 1919	Germany
Saint Germain	September 1919	Austria
Neuilly	November 1919	Bulgaria
Trianon	June 1920	Hungary
Sèvres	August 1920	Turkey
Lausanne	June 1923	Turkey

▲ Table 1.1

The Versailles Settlement was the result of discussions held between the victorious countries. Every country concerned wanted a peace settlement that would last and prevent a repeat of the slaughter of the First World War. The problem was that this could be achieved in a variety of ways. This led to strong disagreement among the peacemakers on a number of key issues, such as the extent to which the defeated countries should be punished or the victorious countries rewarded. Disagreement led to compromise with the result that the Versailles Settlement, and especially the Treaty of Versailles, soon becoming the focus of fierce criticism and debate.

Clemenceau, Lloyd-George, Wilson: the aims of the “Big Three”

The Paris Peace Conference was attended by 32 states representing more than two-thirds of the world's population. Soviet Russia was not invited, following the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917 and the defeated powers were also excluded from the negotiations. The main peacemakers were the countries primarily responsible for the defeat of Germany and its allies: France, Italy, the United States, Britain, and Japan. Within this group the major players were France, the United States, and Britain. These countries were represented by Prime Minister Clemenceau, President Wilson, and Prime Minister Lloyd George respectively. The aims and motives of the three statesmen, the “Big Three”, were to determine the nature of the peace settlement.

France

George Clemenceau (1841–1929)

Nicknamed “The Tiger”.

Pre-political career

Medical doctor, journalist, schoolteacher, newspaper proprietor.

Political positions

Minister of the Interior (1906); Prime Minister of France (1906–9 and 1917–20); President of the Paris Peace Conference (1919–20).

Character and outlook

A hard-headed, tough, and uncompromising politician. His unforgiving attitude towards Germany developed following the German invasions of France in 1870 and 1914. He wanted a harsh peace to be imposed on Germany.



French Prime Minister George Clemenceau's primary concern at Paris was to achieve a peace that would ensure the future security of France. He thought that if Germany was sufficiently weakened it would be unable to threaten the peace of Europe again. There were a number of reasons why Clemenceau thought that his country was open to future attack across its eastern frontier:

- France shared a common border with Germany
- this border was not defined by a natural frontier such as a major river
- the invasion of France in August 1914 was the second time in 50 years that France had been invaded by Germany. On the first occasion in 1870, during the Franco-Prussian War, France had lost the province of Alsace-Lorraine.

Quick question 1

How would photographs such as that in Figure 1.2 have affected Clemenceau's approach to the peace settlement with Germany?

Source 1

Extract from a speech by Georges Clemenceau to the Paris Peace Conference, 16 June 1919.

The conduct of Germany is almost unexampled in human history... not less than seven million dead lie buried in Europe, while more than twenty million others carry upon them the evidence of wounds and sufferings, because Germany saw fit to gratify her lust for tyranny by resort to war. ... Justice, therefore, is the only possible basis for the settlement of the accounts of this terrible war.



▲ **Fig. 1.2** Aerial view of the war damage to the French town of Albert, 1914–18

In addition to this, France had made a much greater sacrifice during the course of the war than either Britain or the United States and there was a national desire for revenge against Germany. This was bolstered by the behaviour of the German army as it retreated across north-eastern France during the final stages of the war, causing deliberate damage by flooding mines and destroying bridges, railways, small towns, and villages.

As a result of his desire to increase the security of his country, Clemenceau went into the conference chamber with a series of demands designed to weaken Germany. These demands included:

Reparations

The name given to the compensation that the defeated powers had to pay the Allies for damage caused and for war pensions. Reparations could be paid in cash or in goods such as coal or timber.

- permanent disarmament involving disbanding most of Germany’s army, navy, and air force
- a very high level of **reparations** with a definite figure to be named in the treaty
- the return of Alsace-Lorraine to France
- a significant portion of Germany’s colonies to be handed over to France
- the Rhineland area to be formed into an independent state so that France no longer shared a common border with Germany
- the Saar Basin to be transferred to France.

	Military deaths	Civilian deaths	Wounded
France	1.4	0.3	4.3
Britain	0.9	0.1	1.7
United States	0.1	0.001	0.2
Italy	0.6	0.6	0.9

▲ Table 1.2 First World War casualties (in millions)

Task

How far does Source 1 agree with Source 2 about the motives behind the peace settlement?

In total, these demands represented an extremely stern form of justice, though not as extreme as recommended by the French President Poincaré. He wanted Germany to be broken up into a collection of smaller states. If Germany had been dismembered and crippled absolutely by the peace terms as France insisted, then it would not have been in a position to challenge the peace of Europe 20 years later.

The United States

Thomas Woodrow Wilson (1856–1924)

Pre-political career

Lawyer, academic (political science), President of Princeton University.

Political career

Governor of New Jersey (1911–13); President of the United States (1913–21).

Character and outlook

An idealist who took the United States into the First World War to make the world "safe for democracy". He devised the Fourteen Points in early 1918, which he hoped would form the basis for a peace settlement. He was the main inspiration behind the League of Nations.



Source 2

Extract from a speech by President Woodrow Wilson to a joint session of Congress, 2 April 1917.

The world must be made safe for democracy. Its peace must be planted upon the tested foundations of political liberty. We have no selfish ends to serve. We desire no conquest, no dominion. We seek no indemnities for ourselves, no material compensation for the sacrifices we shall freely make. We are but one of the champions of the rights of mankind.

President Woodrow Wilson's hopes and expectations from the peace settlement were very different from those of France; but the United States' experience of the war was also very different.

- The United States had not declared war on Germany until April 1917 and was not fully involved in the war until more than a year later.
- At no point was US territory invaded and relatively few US lives were lost with civilian fatalities of less than 800.
- The war had provided profitable trading and business opportunities for US manufacturers, merchants, and financiers.

The lack of a national grievance meant that Wilson could stand back and take a more detached view of the peace proceedings. He was determined to earn his place in history as the guiding spirit behind what he hoped would be a "fair and lasting peace". This objective could be achieved, so Wilson believed, by making his Fourteen Points the basis of the peace settlement.

The Fourteen Points had been drawn up during the later stages of the war. They resulted from Wilson trying to identify the general causes of the conflict and then devising remedies for each cause. Here are three examples.

- Wilson believed that secret treaties had led to misunderstandings and suspicion between the most important countries before the war. He therefore recommended that there should be open diplomacy and no secret treaties (see Point 1).
- He decided that one of the causes of the war had been the build-up of armaments—naval ships, aircraft, and weaponry for the army. Wilson therefore recommended that all states should disarm, maintaining just what was needed for basic defence (see Point 4).
- Wilson hoped to promote the long-term stability of Europe by recognising the principle of **self-determination**. In practice, this meant allowing national groups such as Slovaks, Czechs, and Poles to form independent national states (see Points 9, 10, 12, and 13).

Wilson's approach to the peace was based on ideals and high principles and he inevitably clashed with the self-interested ambitions of Britain and France, especially with regard to acquiring Germany's colonies. Nevertheless, several aspects of his Fourteen Points were incorporated into the peace settlement.

Self-determination

Allowing an area to decide its own political future, usually by means of a vote.

Task

To what extent were Points 1, 4, 8, and 14 of Wilson's Fourteen Points reflected in the Treaty of Versailles?

Wilson's Fourteen Points	
1	No more secret treaties.
2	Free navigation of the seas in peacetime and wartime.
3	Removal of economic trade barriers.
4	Reduction of armaments for all countries.
5	Impartial settlement of colonial disputes, taking into account the interests of both the colonial populations and the governing countries.
6	German troops to leave Russia.
7	Independence for Belgium.
8	Return of Alsace-Lorraine to France.
9	Readjustment of Italian frontiers in line with nationality.
10	Self-determination for peoples of Austria-Hungary.
11	Evacuation and restoration of invaded Balkan countries.
12	Self-determination for peoples in the Turkish Empire.
13	Establishment of an independent Poland with access to the sea.
14	Establishment of a general association of nations.

▲ Table 1.3

Britain

Lloyd George's views in November/December 1918

David Lloyd George (1863–1945)

Pre-political career

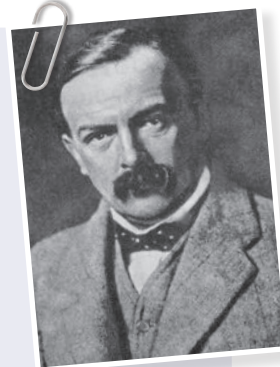
Lawyer.

Political career

Entered national politics as a Liberal in 1890. Held various Cabinet positions (1906–16), including Chancellor of the Exchequer and Minister for Munitions; Prime Minister (1916–22).

Character and outlook

A dynamic, persuasive, and unconventional politician, he was acclaimed as the man who won the war. As more of a realist than an idealist, he wanted a peace that would punish Germany but not too harshly.



Before the Paris Peace Conference began, it looked as if Britain shared the French desire for a harsh peace settlement to be imposed on Germany. This was quite understandable given Britain's experience of the war.

- Unlike the United States, Britain had suffered direct attacks on its mainland both in 1914, when German naval ships bombarded a number of Yorkshire coastal towns, and during the Zeppelin raids of 1915–18 when London, Edinburgh, and other towns were attacked.
- Britain had sustained heavy casualties during the war.
- Britain's economy had been severely disrupted, especially the export sectors.
- Britain was concerned about the security of France's eastern frontier because if that were to be crossed by hostile troops it would only be a matter of time before Britain was directly threatened also. France's eastern frontier was effectively Britain's outer defence.

Britain was as concerned as France that Germany's war-making potential be reduced. Furthermore, the British public demanded vengeance against Germany immediately after the war. In the general election of November 1918, Prime Minister Lloyd George knew that if he was to be re-elected then he would have to reflect these views. Accordingly, he insisted that Germany should pay for the full cost of the war. Lloyd George also wanted a sizeable share of Germany's colonies.

Lloyd George's views from January 1919

Yet, despite every indication that Lloyd George would unite with France against the high principles of President Wilson, he soon changed his outlook. By the time that he had arrived in Paris in January 1919, Lloyd George had decided that a more moderate peace settlement was in British interests. What had caused Lloyd George to change his mind?

- Lloyd George came to realise that the future economic well-being of Britain depended largely upon the economic revival of Europe. This, in turn, depended upon the revival of the German economy. Germany was Britain's most important European customer prior to 1914.
- If Germany was deprived of the Rhineland, where much of its industry was located, it would not be wealthy enough to buy British goods on the same scale as before the war.
- A very high reparations figure would also check Germany's economic recovery since it would take away money that could otherwise be used for investment.
- A weak Germany would provide an inadequate barrier against the spread of communism from the east. Communism was regarded by many as a much greater threat to Europe than the revival of German military power.
- Lloyd George was also anxious that the treaty should not be regarded as excessively harsh by Germany as he was convinced that this would give rise to a sense of intense grievance. This might lead to attempts to overturn the treaty.

Lloyd George's impact on Clemenceau

Because of these factors, Lloyd George managed to persuade Clemenceau to make a number of key concessions:

- to abandon the idea of an independent Rhineland state
- to abandon the idea of naming a definite and very high figure for reparations in the treaty
- to abandon the idea that the Saar Basin on the border shared by Germany and France be transferred to France
- to abandon the idea that Danzig be handed over to Poland.

These concessions by France had the added advantage for Britain that German domination in Europe would not be replaced by French domination. It was in Britain's interest to maintain a balance of power in Europe, for this would help preserve Britain's position as a world power.

What were the main terms of the Treaty of Versailles?

There were a number of key points in the treaty.

1. War Guilt Clause (Article 231)—Germany and its allies had to accept total responsibility for starting the war.

Source 3

Extract from an election speech by Lloyd George given in Bristol, 11 December 1918.

We propose to demand the whole cost of the war from Germany. Germany must pay to the last penny.

Source 4

Extract from a speech by Lloyd George to the House of Commons, 16 April 1919.

We want a peace which will be just, but not vindictive. We want a stern peace because the occasion demands it. The crime demands it. But its severity must be designed, not to gratify vengeance, but to vindicate justice. ... Above all, we want to protect the future against a repetition of the horrors of this War.

Discussion

How far do Sources 3 and 4 suggest that Lloyd George wanted a harsh peace to be imposed on Germany?

Demilitarised

Without troops, armaments or fortifications.

Plebiscite

A vote on a single issue in the manner of a referendum. Plebiscites were held after 1918 in areas of uncertain nationality to establish which country the populations wished to be governed by.

Why was Danzig important?

- There were heated discussions about the status of Danzig during the peace negotiations.
- Before the war Danzig was a flourishing German sea port. With the creation of an independent Poland, Germany was set to lose West Prussia and Danzig.
- The population of Danzig was overwhelmingly German and its transfer to Poland might have created an unstable situation. Yet Poland needed a sea port from which to trade with the outside world.
- A compromise was reached whereby Danzig was made a Free City and placed under League of Nations control.

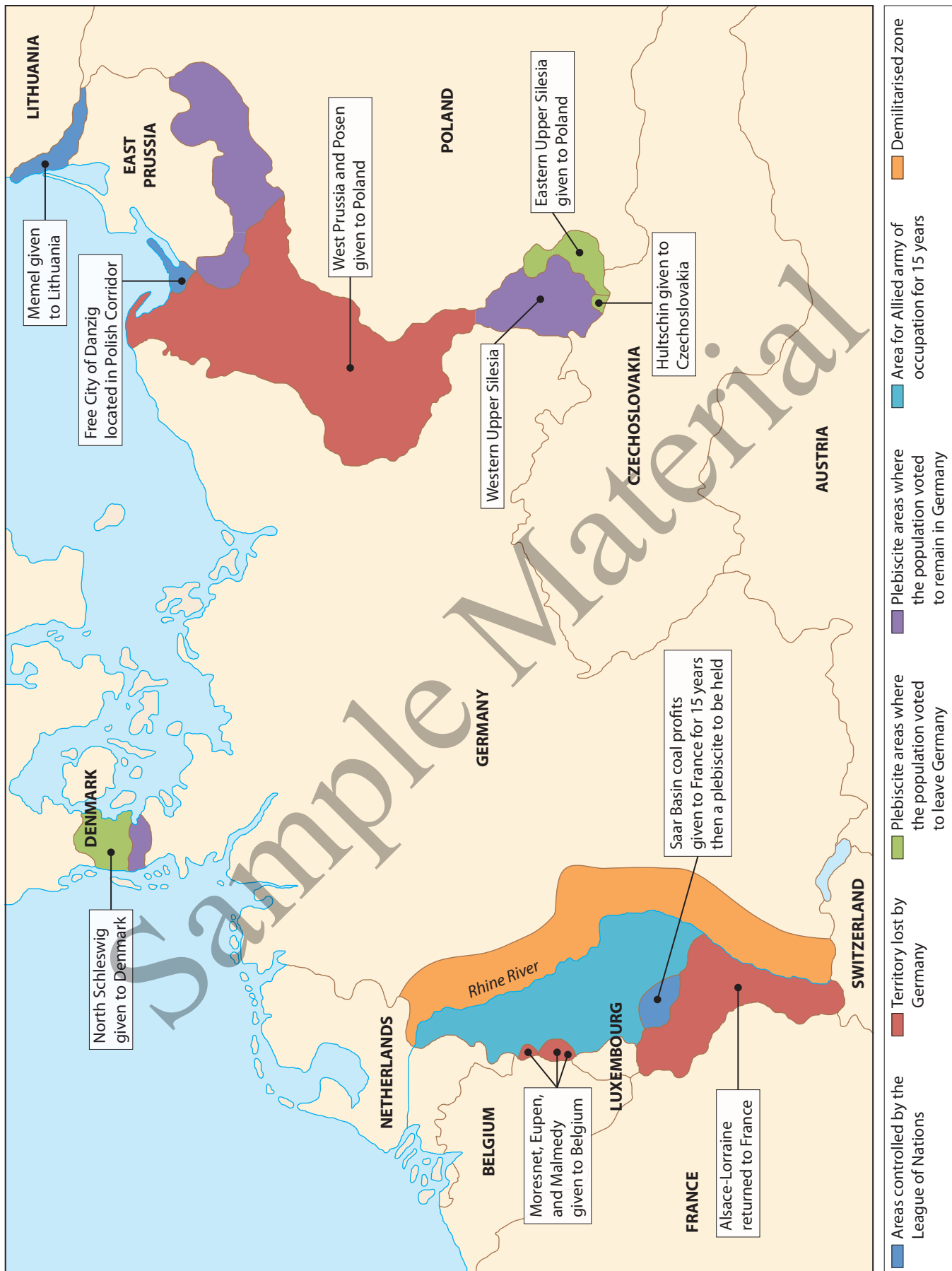
2. Reparations—Germany had to accept liability for reparations, the amount of which would be decided by a Reparations Commission.
3. Disarmament—this restricted Germany's ability to wage war in the future.
 - The German army was to be restricted to 100 000 with no conscription.
 - No tanks, armoured vehicles or heavy artillery were permitted.
 - No military or naval air force was permitted.
 - The navy was to be restricted to 6 battleships, 12 destroyers, six light cruisers, 12 torpedo boats, and no submarines.
 - The Rhineland was to become a **demilitarised** zone with no German troops or fortifications allowed in the area. In addition, there was to be an Allied army of occupation on the west bank of the Rhine for 15 years.
4. Territory—German territory was taken away.
 - Germany was to lose all its colonies in Africa and the Far East (see Table 1.5).
 - Alsace-Lorraine was to be returned to France.
 - Eupen, Malmédy, and Moresnet were to be transferred to Belgium.
 - North Schleswig was to be transferred to Denmark.
 - West Prussia, Posen, and parts of Upper Silesia were to be transferred to Poland.
 - Hultschin was to be transferred to Czechoslovakia.
 - The Saar Basin was to be administered by the League of Nations for 15 years when a **plebiscite** would decide whether it should belong to France, to Germany or remain under League control. During the period of League administration, the profits of the coal mines were to go to France.
 - Memel was to be transferred to Lithuania.
 - Danzig was to become a Free City administered by the League of Nations. Poland could use the port for its external trade.
 - The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was to be cancelled, with Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania taken away from Germany and set up as independent states.
 - Union between Germany and Austria was forbidden.
5. The Covenant of the League of Nations—Germany had to accept the Covenant or constitution of the League of Nations even though it was excluded from the original membership.

Task

Copy and complete the table, summarising the aims of each of the Big 3 nations in your workbook. You will not be able to complete the final column until later in the chapter.

	Leader	Main aims	Reason for these aims	How far were their aims achieved?
France				
United States				
Britain				

▲ Table 1.4



▲ **Fig. 1.3** The Treaty of Versailles: territorial changes, 1919

Source 5

Extract from *A History of Germany, 1815–1945* by William Carr, published in 1972.

If Clemenceau had had his way, instead of being restrained by Britain and America, the Rhineland would have become an independent state, France would have taken over the Saarland and Danzig would have become part of Poland.

Quick question 2

How important was the proposed Anglo-American Treaty of Guarantee for France in the Paris peace negotiations?

The terms of the Treaty

Since the “Big Three” wanted such very different outcomes regarding the treatment of Germany, with Clemenceau wanting a harsh peace, Wilson a lenient peace, and Lloyd George a relatively moderate peace, it was virtually impossible to devise a settlement that would please all parties. Nevertheless, each of the main negotiators still received much of what they wanted.

France

The Versailles Treaty satisfied a number of Clemenceau’s specific demands with regard to Alsace-Lorraine and the transfer of some of Germany’s former colonies (see Table 1.5). France was also likely to become the major recipient of German reparations. Of course, Clemenceau’s main concern was the defence and security of France and it was clear that the treaty also went some way towards achieving this.

- France would be secure on its eastern frontier providing Germany kept to, or was forced to keep to, the military terms of the treaty. It was also necessary that the Rhineland remained free of German troops and fortifications.
- Versailles deprived Germany of a significant proportion of its land, population, and resources (see Table 1.6), which reduced its economic power and military capacity.

The proposed Anglo-American Treaty of Guarantee for France

Clemenceau was worried, however, that this might not be enough. He feared that Germany would recover its strength and seek changes to the treaty. To protect against this, he wanted a Treaty of Guarantee with his Allied partners. This would mean that Britain and the United States would be committed to coming to France’s assistance in the event of future German aggression. Unfortunately for France, such a treaty failed to materialise. This was because the US Congress refused to approve the peace settlement and the United States withdrew into diplomatic isolation. Britain was unwilling to provide any guarantees to France on its own.



▲ **Fig. 1.4** The signing of the Treaty of Versailles in the Hall of Mirrors, Palace of Versailles, 28 June 1919

This meant that despite all the positive features of the Versailles Treaty, France still felt dangerously exposed on its eastern frontier. Clemenceau's relative failure led to his defeat in the presidential elections of January 1920 and resignation from the office of Prime Minister shortly afterwards.

Versailles Settlement: distribution of major German and Turkish colonies			
German colonies	Britain	France	Japan
Togoland	•	•	
Cameroon	•	•	
German south-west Africa	•		
German east Africa	•		
Mariana Islands			•
Caroline Islands			•
Marshall Islands			•
German New Guinea	•		
Turkish colonies			
Iraq	•		
Transjordan	•		
Palestine	•		
Syria		•	
Lebanon		•	

▲ **Table 1.5**

Source 6

Extract from *The Kings Depart: The German Revolution and the Treaty of Versailles* by Richard M. Watt, published in 1969.

Woodrow Wilson had first come to Paris with great hopes – the conference represented the opportunity he had always dreamed of – to completely remake the world according to the liberal and democratic ideas to which he had dedicated his life. But he had found the task so dominated with conflicting claims, hatreds, fears and greeds, that he was forced to settle for a compromise that satisfied no one.

The United States

President Wilson had mixed feelings about the peace settlement. The positive features were as follows.

- He was pleased that he had successfully persuaded his partners to accept that the Covenant or constitution of the League of Nations should be included in all the peace treaties; this would help to make the new peacekeeping organisation become a reality.
- Wilson was also partly satisfied by the requirement in all the peace treaties that the defeated powers should disarm. This represented at least some movement towards his objective of disarmament for all countries.
- Wilson was relieved that the Rhineland was not going to be made into a separate state and was going to remain part of Germany. Not only did this reduce the potential harshness of the peace, it made it much more likely that Germany would remain a major economic power able to do business with the United States.

Colonies	100%
European land	13%
Population	10%
Coal resources	26%
Iron ore deposits	75%

▲ **Table 1.6** Versailles Settlement: Germany's loss of resources



▲ **Fig. 1.5** A Parisian newspaper claims that the Treaty of Versailles has avenged France for its defeat in the Franco-Prussian War

Successor states

The successor states from the Versailles Peace Settlement were Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. Poland had been eliminated from the map of Europe at the end of the 18th Century but the peacemakers wanted to reinstate the country. In contrast, Czechoslovakia was a completely new state forged out of provinces of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire such as Bohemia and Moravia. Similarly, Yugoslavia was a new state formed by merging Serbia with south-western provinces of the former empire such as Dalmatia, Croatia, and Bosnia.

Mandated territories

Mandates were former German or Turkish colonies handed over to the Allies to be governed by them on behalf of the League of Nations.

- For very similar reasons he was pleased that Germany was not going to be burdened with a very high reparations figure in the treaty.
- With regard to the Versailles Settlement as a whole, Wilson was delighted by the creation of an independent Poland together with the two entirely new “**successor states**”, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia.

However, Wilson thought that the Versailles Treaty was too harsh on Germany and there were particular elements of the Versailles Settlement with which Wilson was less than happy.

- At the insistence of Britain, the principle of free navigation of the seas was abandoned.
- There was little disguising the fact that Britain, France, and Japan had rewarded themselves with Germany’s former colonies, even though, officially, these colonies were to be governed as **mandated territories** on behalf of the League of Nations (see Table 1.5).
- While national self-determination for the people of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire was broadly implemented, there were some noticeable exceptions:
 - Austria was not allowed to unite with Germany
 - the Sudeten Germans were not consulted about their future.

The most upsetting circumstance concerning the peace settlement for Wilson, however, came when he failed to persuade the necessary two-thirds of the US Congress to approve the treaties together with the League of Nations.

Why the US Congress rejected the peace settlement

- Wilson’s political opponents, the Republicans, had gained a small majority in the Senate in November 1918.
- Wilson’s health and persuasive powers were clearly in decline after his stroke in October 1919.
- Many Americans did not want to be further involved in European affairs. There were fears that if the United States signed up to the peace settlement and became a leading member of the League of Nations, then it would be in danger of being drawn into another European war.

Britain

Source 7

Extract from a speech by Lloyd George to the House of Commons, 21 July 1919.

We have restored where restoration was just, we have organised reparations where damage and injury have been inflicted, and we have established guarantees and securities ... against the repetition of these crimes and horrors from which the world is just emerging. We have disarmed; we have punished. We have demonstrated ... that you cannot trample on national rights and liberties, that you cannot break solemn covenants with impunity.



▲ **Fig. 1.6** US Congress building

Lloyd George was probably the most satisfied of the major peacemakers. He had wanted a moderate peace which would allow the European economy to revive, and that is largely what he achieved. There were some features of the peace settlement

that he did not like, such as the placing of German-speaking peoples under French or Polish rule, but on the whole he got his way. Lloyd George's main achievements at Paris were twofold.

- He successfully persuaded Clemenceau to adopt a more moderate approach towards Germany by offering him an Anglo-American guarantee against future German aggression.
- He directly promoted British interests by extending its colonies, adding an additional 1.8 million square miles and 13 million new subjects (see Table 1.5). The British Empire was at its peak in 1919.

Fortune also favoured Lloyd George when the Germans decided to scuttle their fleet at Scapa Flow. This meant that any German naval threat was removed for the foreseeable future.

Lloyd George felt that the Versailles Treaty punished Germany without destroying its economy or ability to contribute to the future prosperity of Europe. This was good for British business and reassuring for those who feared the westward spread of communism. In contrast to Clemenceau, Lloyd George returned from Paris in triumph and the House of Commons voted to approve the treaty with an overwhelming majority.

The impact on Germany by 1923

Germany had numerous criticisms of the Versailles Treaty.

1. It was too harsh

Germany's general objection to the treaty was that it was too harsh. Many Germans felt that their country was being punished twice over.

- They had to pay reparations as punishment for starting a war which many believed was not entirely of their own making.
- They were deprived of the very resources (coal, iron ore) that were needed to pay these reparations.

Germany had, however, imposed an equally harsh treaty on Soviet Russia at Brest-Litovsk in March 1918.

Russia had been expected to pay reparations and suffer drastic losses of territory and resources, so it could be argued that Germany was now getting a taste of its own medicine.

2. It was a diktat

Germany objected that the treaty was a **diktat** or a dictated peace. German statesmen and officials were excluded from the negotiations leading up to the treaty. They were simply handed a draft copy and invited to express comments and criticisms in writing. This led to some minor changes including the holding of a plebiscite in Upper Silesia. Germany had little choice but to sign the treaty. If they had refused then the Allied naval blockade would have continued and the Allies would have restarted the war.

Task

Copy and complete the following table in your workbook.

	Positive features	Negative features
France		
United States		
Britain		

▲ **Table 1.7** *The Versailles Settlement: positive and negative features*

Task

Study Sources 5, 6, and 7. Who was the more satisfied with the Versailles Treaty: Wilson, Clemenceau or Lloyd George? Use the sources and your own knowledge to explain your answer.



▲ **Fig. 1.7** *Berlin protests against the Treaty of Versailles*

Diktat

Something that is imposed or dictated without discussion.



▲ **Fig. 1.8** Headline in the London Evening Standard newspaper, 8 May 1919

Quick question 3

Why was Germany angry about the terms of the Treaty of Versailles?

3. The War Guilt Clause was unfair

Article 231 or the War Guilt Clause was included in the treaty at the insistence of the Allied lawyers. They wanted to establish a legal basis for reparations: if you cause damage, and it is entirely your fault, then you must pay compensation. Germany felt that this clause rubbed salt into their wounds. They were also not convinced that they, together with their allies, were totally responsible for starting the war. After all, it could be argued that the first military action in the immediate lead-up to the conflict was the Russian mobilisation of July 1914.

The political and economic impact of the Treaty of Versailles

The political impact

When, on 28 June 1919, two representatives of the new German government, the Weimar government, signed the Treaty of Versailles, this was an action made under duress. The Allies had made it clear that they would restart the war if Germany refused to sign and, in the opinion of leading German generals, this would have led to military defeat. But though the Weimar government had little option but to sign the treaty, it became instantly unpopular for having done so. The treaty was the symbol of Germany's dishonour and humiliation and now the Weimar government had agreed to it. The authority of the new republic was seriously undermined.

- Right-wing politicians and activists expressed their disapproval by supporting attempts to overthrow the government, such as the Munich Putsch of November 1923.
- Right-wing extremists carried out a number of assassinations of high-ranking government ministers, such as Walter Rathenau (Foreign Minister) and Matthias Erzberger (Finance Minister).
- Left-wing extremist groups exploited the unpopularity of the Weimar government by promoting rebellions, such as that of March 1920 in the Ruhr.
- Many members of the army, furious with the government for agreeing to the disarmament clauses of the treaty, joined the Freikorps, an unofficial, anti-communist vigilante group. When the government tried to disband this group in March 1920 following pressure from the Allies, Freikorps units under the command of Wolfgang Kapp staged a coup in Berlin and declared a new national government. The army refused to intervene and the Weimar government was on the point of collapse. It survived thanks to a general workers' strike which brought public services to a standstill.

The signing of the Treaty of Versailles, therefore, meant that the new democratic Weimar Republic was operating under a major disadvantage from the very beginning of its existence and was deprived of much-needed support during its early years.

The economic impact

Germany claimed that in signing the treaty it was also signing a blank cheque since although it had to agree to the principle of paying reparations, no figure was actually stated in the treaty. When the figure of £6.6 billion was announced by the Reparations Commission in 1921, Germany claimed that this amount was more than it could afford to pay. Whether this was true or not is difficult to assess, but there is no doubt that Germany did not want to pay such an amount.

The Versailles Treaty undoubtedly caused major economic problems for Germany and the Weimar Republic. Germany lost valuable economic resources, yet had to repay war debts together with reparations. The immediate post-war period was characterised by inflation, rising unemployment and the attendant problems of poverty and homelessness. Crisis came in 1923 and was triggered by the reparations issue.

- Germany had paid its first instalment of reparations in 1921 but then claimed that it was unable to make the 1922 payment.
- France felt that Germany was simply trying to escape from its treaty obligations and together with Belgium decided to take direct action. In January 1923 French and Belgian troops occupied the Ruhr, Germany's most valuable industrial area. The intention was to seize coal and other resources to the value of the missed payments.
- The German government was not in a position to order armed resistance and so instead ordered the German population of the Ruhr to offer passive resistance or peaceful strike action.
- France responded to this by expelling more than 100 000 Germans from the region and killing over 130.
- The German government now faced a situation in which its expenditure had increased, due to the need to rehouse and feed the displaced Ruhr population, yet its income had declined due to the ending of Ruhr taxation receipts.
- To make up for the lost revenue the German government began to print money. This stoked up the existing high inflation into hyperinflation. The German mark became worthless and middle-class savings lost their value. Bartering became increasingly popular as the best means to protect the value of a payment. Hence eggs, cigarettes or bags of sugar were used as a form of currency.

Clearly, such a state of affairs had to be resolved quickly. In August 1923, Gustav Stresemann became Chancellor and the following month took the unpopular decision to end the passive resistance in the Ruhr. In October he introduced a temporary new currency, the Rentenmark, with a strictly controlled circulation and soon after this, he agreed to resume reparation payments. Germany's finances had been stabilised. The reparations problem was partly solved by the Dawes Plan of April 1924 which introduced a more flexible repayments schedule (see page 191). Five years later, the Young Plan reduced the outstanding amount to £2 billion. The whole issue of reparations caused enormous bitterness and achieved very little since Germany received more in US loans during the 1920s than it ever paid back to the Allies.

Disarmament

Germany's dislike of the disarmament clauses was partly to do with status and prestige but there were also practical objections:

- Germany claimed that 100 000 men were insufficient for border defence
- it would also be difficult to deal with revolts and uprisings.

Quick question 4

How far was the 1923 hyperinflation caused by the Treaty of Versailles?



▲ **Fig. 1.9** The wreckage of German warplanes in a Munich scrapyard following the disarmament clauses of the Treaty of Versailles

Task

Which of Wilson's Fourteen Points (see Table 1.3, page 6) can be identified in the treaties dealing with Germany's former allies?



▲ **Fig. 1.10** ‘The Reckoning’, British cartoon published in 1919

Quick question 5

Do you think Clemenceau would have agreed with the point of view expressed in Figure 1.10?

Wilson’s Fourteen Points

Germany always maintained that the armistice was signed on the understanding that the peace settlement would be based upon Wilson’s Fourteen Points. However, the Treaty of Versailles was seen by the German people as a betrayal of this promise in a number of ways.

- There is no mention in the Fourteen Points of war guilt or reparations.
- The Fourteen Points proposed disarmament for all and a general assembly of nations. In the treaty, Germany was required to disarm but there was no equivalent requirement for the victorious countries. Similarly, Germany was not allowed to join the League of Nations, at least not for the time being.
- The Fourteen Points stressed the idea of self-determination, yet in the treaty it was clear that this was not to apply to Austria, Alsace-Lorraine or, until 15 years had passed, the Saar Basin.

In fact, the Allies never made a promise to follow Wilson’s principles to the letter though they did indicate that they would use them as guiding principles for the peace settlement. The principle of self-determination was used in many areas including parts of East Prussia, Upper Silesia, and Schleswig.

Discussion

Imagine that in June 1919 a debate takes place in a town hall in central Germany. The motion is: “The German government has no alternative but to sign and accept the Treaty of Versailles”. The following guest speakers have been invited:

1. an armaments manufacturer
2. a shopkeeper from Danzig
3. a coal miner from the Saar Basin
4. a farmer with land on the west bank of the Rhine.

What do you think each of these speakers would say? Would they be for or against the motion? How would their personal circumstances be likely to affect their views?

Area	Year	Result
Schleswig	1920	Partitioned between Germany and Denmark
East Prussia: Allenstein and Marienwerder	1920	Remained part of Germany
Upper Silesia	1921	Partitioned between Germany and Poland
Saar Basin	1935	Returned to Germany

▲ **Table 1.8** Plebiscite areas

An assessment of the Treaty

The Versailles Settlement soon became the subject of fierce debate, though it was the Versailles Treaty that attracted the most attention. Opinions on the treaty can be divided three ways.

Those who thought the treaty was too harsh

Most Germans would have taken this view although it was shared by many others from other countries.

Source 8

Extract from a speech made by a German member of the Reichstag in 1919.

The criminal madness of this peace will drain Germany's national life-blood. It is a shameless blow in the face of common sense. It is inflicting the deepest wounds on us Germans as our world lies in wreckage about us.

Source 9

Extract from an article written by a British journalist in 1922 quoted in *International Relations* by K. Shephard, published in 1992.

It was a peace of revenge. It was full of injustice. It was incapable of fulfilment. It sowed a thousand seeds from which new wars might spring. The wild impossibility of extracting those vast reparations from the defeated enemy ought to have been obvious to the most ignorant schoolboy.

Those who thought the Versailles Treaty was not harsh enough

Many French supported this view.

Source 10

Comment by Marshal Foch at the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, 1919.

This is not a peace treaty, it is an armistice for twenty years.

Source 11

Extract from a memorandum given by President Raymond Poincaré of France to the Paris Peace Conference, 1919.

Germany is supposedly going to undertake to have neither troops nor fortresses on the left bank and within a zone extending 50 kilometres east of the Rhine. But the Treaty does not provide for any permanent supervision of troops and armaments on the left bank any more than elsewhere in Germany ... We can thus have no guarantee that after ... fifteen years and the evacuation of the left bank, the Germans will not filter troops by degrees into this district.



▲ **Fig. 1.11** *Peace And Future Cannon Fodder*, Daily Herald, 13 May 1919. The caption reads, *The Tiger: "Curious, I seem to hear a child weeping!"*

Those who thought the Versailles Treaty was fair

There were some who believed the treaty to be fair or that it represented the best that could have been achieved in the circumstances.

Tasks

1. How useful is Source 8 as evidence of German objections to the Treaty of Versailles?
2. Does Source 9 surprise you? Explain your answer using the source and your own knowledge.
3. Does Figure 1.10 show that Sources 8–9 were wrong? Explain your answer using the sources and your own knowledge.
4. What message is the cartoonist trying to give in Figure 1.11?
5. How far do Sources 8–10 and Figures 1.10–1.11 support the view that the Treaty of Versailles was a compromise that satisfied no one?

Source 12

Extract from the diary of Edward M. House, a US diplomat, June 1919.

To those who are saying that the Treaty is bad ... I feel like admitting it. But I would also say in reply that empires cannot be shattered and new states raised upon their ruins without disturbance. To create new boundaries is always to create new troubles. The one follows the other. While I should have preferred a different peace, I doubt whether it could have been made.

Source 13

Extract from a speech by President Wilson delivered to the League of Nations, September 1919.

Do not think of this treaty of peace as merely a settlement with Germany. It is that. It is a very severe settlement with Germany, but there is not anything in it that she did not earn. Indeed, she earned more than she can ever be able to pay for, and the punishment exacted of her is not a punishment greater than she can bear, and it is absolutely necessary in order that no other nation may ever plot such a thing against humanity and civilization.

Key points

- The aims and motives of Clemenceau, Lloyd George, and Wilson between November 1918 and the signing of the peace treaties.
- The terms of the Treaty of Versailles.
- The reactions of the “Big Three” to the treaty.
- How the treaty affected Germany up to 1923.
- The range of contemporary opinions on the peace settlement.

Revision tips

- Make sure you know why the “Big Three” held the positions they did with regard to Germany. You will find that the difference between the “Big Three” reflected their different wartime experiences and defensive positions. You will need to be familiar with Wilson’s Fourteen Points and the reasons Lloyd George’s views changed after November 1918.
- The terms of the Treaty of Versailles have to be learnt. You will also need to be able to identify which terms pleased or displeased each of the “Big Three”.
- You will need to be able to explain the various reasons why Germany objected to the Treaty of Versailles.

Review questions

1. What were the aims of each of the “Big Three” at the Paris Peace Conference?
2. To what extent were the aims of the “Big Three” achieved at the Paris Peace Conference?
3. Describe the military restrictions imposed on Germany by the Treaty of Versailles.
4. Describe Germany’s territorial losses under the Treaty of Versailles.
5. What problems did the Treaty of Versailles cause for Germany?
6. Explain why there was so much bitterness over the Treaty of Versailles in Germany.
7. Which was more important in causing Germany’s dissatisfaction with the treaty: the imposing of reparations or the War Guilt Clause?
8. To what extent was the Treaty of Versailles justifiable at the time?

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