

# THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES

Last night, for the first time since August in the first year of the war, there was no light of gunfire in the sky, no sudden stabs of flame through darkness, no spreading glow above black trees where for four years of nights human beings were smashed to death. The Fires of Hell had been put out.

Phillip Gibbs in the *New York Times* (11 November 1918)

## THE CONFERENCE

The First World War (1914-1918) was very destructive. Approximately 10 million people were killed. The 'Western Front' was totally destroyed, as were many other areas in Europe. On November 11, 1918, Germany signed a cease-fire. It was called 'the Armistice.'

In January 1919, delegates from several countries met in Paris, France to discuss the terms of the peace treaty to end the war. Each of the delegates came to the conference with different ideas, plans, and goals. The Germans were not invited to the conference and had no say in the making of the peace treaty. Although Germany complained about the severity of the Treaty, in the end Germany had no choice but to sign the document.

Four of the most important leaders were:

Woodrow Wilson	Georges Clemenceau	David Lloyd George	Vittorio Orlando
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• President of the United States of America</li><li>• Wanted to end the war by making a fair peace treaty</li><li>• Devised 'Fourteen Points' plan</li><li>• Wanted self-determination for the peoples of Eastern Europe</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prime Minister of France</li><li>• Wanted revenge and to punish the Germans</li><li>• Wanted Germany to pay for the damage done during the war</li><li>• Wanted to weaken Germany so they could never invade France again</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prime Minister of Great Britain</li><li>• He wanted justice, but he did not want revenge</li><li>• Wanted Germany to pay for the damage done during the war</li><li>• Worked to help Wilson and Clemenceau compromise</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prime Minister of Italy</li><li>• Italy had declared war on Germany in 1915, changing from the alliance with Germany at the beginning of the war. He had been promised territory as a reward for changing sides.</li><li>• Worked to get the extra land for Italy.</li></ul>

"...Only two nations are for the time being left out. One of them is Germany, because we did not think that Germany was ready to come in, because we felt that she ought to go through a period of probation. She says that she made a mistake. We now want her to prove it by not trying it again..."

Source: *The Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, Ray S. Baker and William E. Dodd, eds., Authorized Edition, Vol. 1, New York, 1924, pp. 30-44

Treaty of Versailles- Handout 1

- 5. Germany could not join the League of Nations.
- 6. Germany could never unite with Austria.

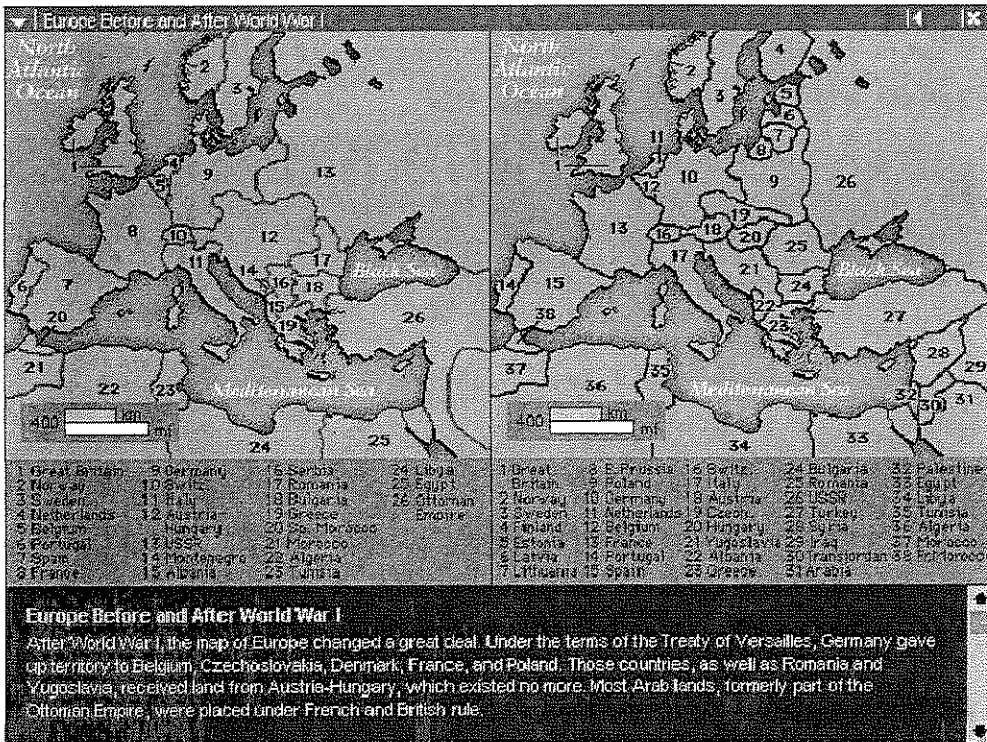
We will get everything out of her [Germany] that you can squeeze out of a lemon and a bit more.... I will squeeze her until you can hear the pips squeak.

From a speech in 1918 by Sir Eric Geddes, a British politician standing for election as an MP.

"...I want to say that I did not find any of my colleagues in Paris disinclined to do justice to Germany. But I hear that this treaty is very hard on Germany. When an individual has committed a criminal act, the punishment is hard, but the punishment is not unjust. This nation permitted itself, through unscrupulous governors to commit a criminal act against mankind, and it is to undergo the punishment, not more than it can endure but up to the point where it can pay it must pay for the wrong that it has done..."

Source: *The Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, Ray S. Baker and William E. Dodd, eds., Authorized Edition, Vol. 1, New York, 1924, pp. 30-44

MAPS OF EUROPE



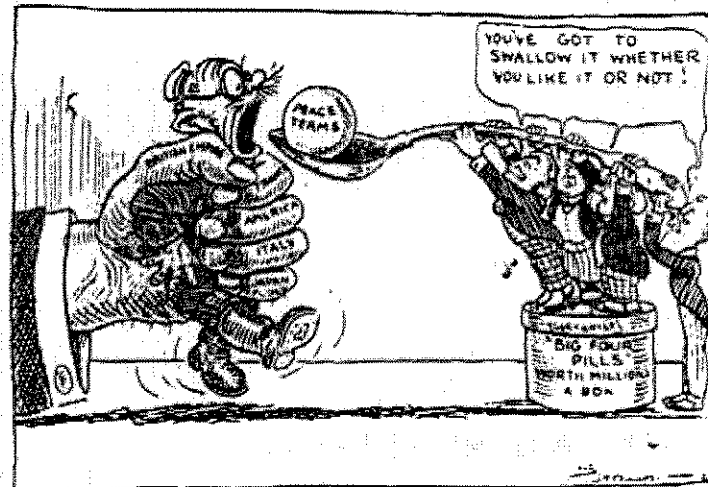
# Reactions to the Treaty of Versailles

The following sources give the reactions of both the British and Germans to the Treaty of Versailles.

## Source A: British MP 1918

The Germans are going to pay every penny; they are going to be squeezed, until the pips squeak

## Source B: British Cartoon, 1919



## Source C: German Newspaper, 1919.

### *Vengeance! German Nation*

Today in the Hall of Mirrors, the disgraceful Treaty is being signed. Do not forget it. The German people will with unceasing labour press forward to reconquer the place among nations to which it is entitled. Then will come vengeance for the shame of 1919.

## Activities:

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1. Look carefully at Sources A, B and C.  
Copy out the sentences below that are true:

Most Germans thought that the Treaty of Versailles was very fair.  
Most Germans hated the Treaty of Versailles and wanted revenge.  
The man being squeezed by the giant hand in Source B is German.  
The man being squeezed by the giant hand in Source B is French.  
The person being squeezed does not want to swallow the pills.  
The man being squeezed likes his medicine.  
Source B was published in 1920 in a German newspaper.  
Source B was published in 1919 in a British newspaper.

2. Look again at Source B. Do you think that the cartoonist agreed with the way Germany was being treated? Why?
3. How much did the pills Germany is supposed to be eating cost?
4. Do you think the German cartoon figure could afford to pay for the pills? Why?
5. Does Source A agree with the way that Germany is being treated in Source B. Why?
6. Look at Source C. How do you think most Germans would have felt about the Treaty of Versailles?
7. Which country would be pleased with the fact that Germany had to pay £6.6 billion pounds in damages? Why?