

History Scholarship Sample Paper: Sources Booklet

How fair were the treaties at the end of WW1?

*Study the introduction and the sources carefully, and then answer **all** the questions.*

Introduction

WW1 ended in late 1918. The end of the war saw the simultaneous collapse of four great empires – the German, Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman and Russian. After the war, the victorious ‘Great Powers’ (Britain, France, the USA and Italy) met in Paris to discuss how they would re-order the world to ensure that another world war would not happen. Britain was represented by its Prime Minister, David Lloyd George; America by its President, Woodrow Wilson; France by its Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau, and Italy by its Prime Minister Vittorio Orlando.

President Wilson is normally seen as a statesman who had high ideals for how he wanted the world to look after the war. For instance, he had clearly expressed that he wanted people to choose which country they belonged to, that he desired more democracy, and that he wanted an international peacekeeping organization called the League of Nations.

Agreement was eventually reached about how Germany would be treated, and this was published in June 1919 in the Treaty of Versailles. The key terms of this are below:

Article number	Description
1-26	The Covenant of the League of Nations (a new international organization) - Germany was not allowed to join.
42	The Rhineland (an area in western Germany) was demilitarised - the German army was not allowed to go there.
45	The Saarland, an area between Germany and France with rich coalfields, could be exploited by France for 15 years.
51	Alsace-Lorraine (a territory that had been part of western Germany) returned to France.
80	Germany forbidden to unite with Austria.
87	Lands in eastern Germany - the rich farmlands of Posen and the Polish corridor between Germany and East Prussia - given to Poland.

Article number	Description
119	All Germany's colonies taken and given to France and Britain
160	The German army restricted to 100,000 men.
181	The German navy restricted to six battleships and no submarines.
198	Germany not allowed to have an air force.
231	Germany was responsible for causing all the loss and damage caused by the war.
232	Germany would have to pay reparations to the victorious allies, to be decided later - eventually set at 132 billion gold marks.



This map shows Europe in 1919-1920 (this map is approximate as some borders changed in these years)

Source A

Let me contrast the principles in the Fourteen Points [where Wilson had outlined his vision for the world post-WW1] with the principles in the Treaty. National armaments were not reduced. The Colonies were distributed among the victors. The wishes and interests of the populations were (as in the Saar, Shantung and Syria) disregarded. The frontiers of Italy were not adjusted along the lines of nationality. The territories of Poland include many people who are indisputably not Polish. Provinces and peoples were treated as pawns in a game. The territorial settlements were based on adjustments between the claims of rival States. Elements of discord and antagonism were in fact perpetuated.

Adapted from an account of the peace negotiations by Harold Nicolson, a British diplomat, 1919

Source B

German objections to the treaty reinforced growing feelings, particularly amongst the British, that it was too harsh. There was a last minute attempt by the British delegation for modifications.

Attempts to carry out the military and reparations sections of the treaty aroused storms of protest in Germany. Yet the Treaty of Versailles was not excessively harsh on Germany, either territorially or economically. It deprived it of only about 13% of its territory, only about 13% of its economic productivity, and only about 10% of its population. However, the German people were expecting victory and not defeat. It was the acknowledgement of defeat, as much as the treaty terms, which they found so hard to accept.

By the time the Reparations Commission started its work, it had become clear that Germany would not pay the sums originally demanded by the French. Even the sum of £6600 million established in 1921 was reduced again and again to ease Germany's burden. It should also be remembered that the treaty made Germany potentially more powerful than it had ever been before or since. The creation of an independent Poland meant there was now a buffer between Russia and Germany that removed the need for Germany to fight on two fronts.

The peace treaties cannot be blamed for the failure of a lasting peace in Europe. Those who negotiated the terms did their best to construct a durable settlement. The significant defect was to be found with those that applied the settlement in later years.

Adapted from a history book published in 1984

Source C



A British cartoon from 1919 called 'The Reckoning'. The caption for this cartoon read: "Monstrous I call it. Why it's fully a quarter of what we should have made them pay if we'd won." The man in the cartoon represents Germany.

Source D

Wilson, Lloyd George and Clemenceau have unfairly been made scapegoats for the mistakes of those who came later. They tried to be even-handed, but their goals - to make defeated countries pay without destroying them, to satisfy impossible nationalist dreams, to prevent the spread of Bolshevism [communism] and to establish a world order based on democracy and reason - could not be achieved by diplomacy.

From the book 'Peacemakers. Six Months That Changed the World' by historian Margaret MacMillan, 2002.

Source E

I want to say that I did not find any of my colleagues in Paris reluctant to do justice to Germany. But I hear that this treaty is very hard on Germany. When a country has committed a criminal act, the punishment is hard, but the punishment is not unjust. Germany permitted itself, through an unscrupulous government, 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.

From a speech by President Wilson during a tour across the USA, 8 September 1919.