

World History Debate: Renegotiating the Treaty of Versailles

Task: You are one of several diplomats attending the peace treaty conference in Versailles after the armistice is declared in November 1918. Your job involves arguing the position of your nation at the conference and gaining as much for it as possible within the wording of the treaty. Make sure to read the following synopsis of each country's position. You will be graded on your participation and ability to debate effectively. Good luck, Mr./Madam Ambassador.

Germany: The war's end has created a national crisis. The Kaiser fled the country and the hastily created republic has little experience governing your country. You have severe food shortages and psychologically the casualty losses are devastating. You have colonies throughout the globe and your nation wants to hold onto them. You know that Austria-Hungary's initial involvement in the war has been overlooked and now you are faced with the possibility of blame for the war, since your country sided with it. Besides, your experts have figured that France wants Alsace-Lorraine back and monetary compensation for all her fallen heroes. How will you save your country from heavy reparation payments and loss of territory?

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France: Your nation has suffered tremendous casualties. Much of your eastern border is in ruins from four long years of fighting. Germany is your traditional enemy and you're still angry over the Franco-Prussian War in which you lost Alsace-Lorraine, an area rich in iron deposits, to the Germans. Since Germany started the war, invaded your country and left you without your young men, you're pretty ticked off. Plus, if you can convince the Brits and Italians to force Germany into accepting blame for the war, you might be able to get enough money and colonial territory from the Germans to rebuild your nation. Don't forget about Alsace-Lorraine!

Great Britain: Well, the Kaiser scared the pants off you with those submarines! For 300 years you haven't had to worry about anyone (other than those darn Yanks) challenging your power on the seas. Germany dragged this war out by not giving in and now you face terrible expenses from the war. You're quite sure the French want revenge and you really want to regain your power and prestige by

helping the French with their position in the treaty process. If you succeed, then Germany won't be a threat to you anymore!

Italy: You wisely chose to change sides when it appeared the Germans were going to lose the war. The American entry into the war determined the outcome. You want to satisfy the French and the Brits enough so you can walk away with some new territories. Too bad, so sad for the Germans, but if they were in your shoes, you're sure they'd make the same decision.

U.S.A: President Woodrow Wilson dragged us into this war! He wants this war to be the "war to end all wars," but you know from experience that the Europeans won't be content to stop fighting forever. Since the president is with your group, you know he's going to push for his "Fourteen Points"- an end to secret treaties, give self rule to the little countries whose names you don't remember but had something to do with the war, freedom on the open seas and a "peace without victory." Fat chance on the last issue but what the heck, you're in France and you might as well make the most of it. Personally, you'd rather go back home and leave this treaty business to the folks involved. You don't want to meddle in the affairs of other countries and you're pretty sure Congress agrees with you. How do you disengage yourself from this entire mess?

At the conclusion of this debate, a treaty will be created by all of you.
Things to consider in this treaty include:

- 1.) Responsibility for the war and payments for damages.
- 2.) Division of territories.
- 3.) Who will have independence? Will new nations be created to comply with Wilson's "self-determination" policy? If so, where will we take the territory from?
- 4.) What kind of agreement will we make about sea travel?
- 5.) What kinds of treaties will we allow in the future?
- 6.) How many kinds of weapons will we allow each other to stockpile and how large will we make our standing armies and navies?