

Versailles Treaty Simulation

The catastrophe of World War I brought the dynasties and Empires of the 19th century to a bloody conclusion and created the circumstances that shaped the twentieth century. The Treaty of Versailles, which concluded that war, was the first major attempt by the United States to solve world problems and promote social, political and diplomatic stability. Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points provided an idealistic template based on 19th century thought which ignored the rampant nationalism unleashed by World War I. This nationalism would ultimately lead to World War II, the collapse of colonialism, the Cold War and ethnic clashes throughout the century. The Versailles Treaty provides a springboard to a variety of issues critical to understanding the developments of the twentieth century and the role of the United States in those developments as well as the background to current world problems.

This simulation places participants in the role of one of the major negotiators at the Treaty of Versailles. Students will be divided into groups of four with each group member representing one of the major victorious powers, Britain, France, Italy and the United States. Students will become familiar with the conflicting goals of the four allies as well as the treaty provisions that disappoint the Italians or anger the Germans and ultimately contribute to the rise of Hitler and Mussolini. They will also become aware of the various territorial disputes (between Germany and Czechoslovakia; Germany and Poland; Poland and the Soviet Union; Romania and the Soviet Union; Hungary and Romania) which figure prominently in both the pre-World War II diplomacy and the subsequent wartime decisions of these countries. Finally, students will confront the dilemmas of creating nations and determining boundaries in the multi-ethnic and multi-religious areas of Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia and Kosovo.

The simulation is designed in two stages, a treaty negotiation stage and a territorial decision stage with each stage requiring about forty-five minutes of class time. These stages could take place consecutively or be spaced to allow for class discussion, group planning, background preparation or reading/research assignments between the two stages. During the treaty negotiations, each negotiator will receive points for gaining agreement on a particular treaty provision that his country supports. They must consider the needs of their country and the punishment of the Central Powers while trying to establish a stable future for Europe and the World. During the territorial decisions, the group will attempt to implement their decisions on a map of Eastern Europe depicting the distribution of ethnic and religious groups.

The simulation could serve as an opening or concluding activity for a much broader unit of study. A general discussion about nationalism and those characteristics that promote or undermine success as a nation can be prompted by this simulation. Issues raised include national self-determination, social cohesion, cultural diversity, economic viability and shared historical experience. Other discussion topics could focus on political structures and procedures to protect the interests and rights of national minorities, or issues of national defense such as military strength, economic development, natural defenses, regional defense alliances and world peace organizations.

National Goals for Treaty Negotiations

FRANCE

Annex German Provinces of Alsace-Lorraine (Non-negotiable)	4 points
Punish Germany and weaken them as a future threat	
Divide Germany into two countries – Protestant north/Catholic south	2 points
Remove minority ethnic territories and colonies from Central Powers	2 points
Severe war reparations imposed on Central Powers	2 points
Severe arms restrictions and destruction of German Navy	2 points
International Concerns, Agreements and Rivalries	
Defensive treaty with U. S. and Britain	2 points
A large Polish nation established on other side of Germany	2 points
Limit Italian and British acquisition of territory or colonies	2 points
Acquire Central Powers' colonies in Africa and the Middle East	2 points

BRITAIN

Punish Germany and weaken them as a future threat	
Destruction of German Navy and limitations in future armaments	4 points
Remove minority ethnic territories and colonies from Central Powers	2 points
Severe war reparations and payment of debts	2 points
International Concerns, Agreements and Rivalries	
Establish League of Nations	3 points
Maintain unity of Germany to resist the spread of Bolshevism	2 points
Establish democratic governments in Eastern Europe	3 points
Acquire Central Powers' colonies in Africa and the Middle East	2 points
Limit Italian or French acquisition of territory or colonies	2 points

UNITED STATES

International Concerns, Agreements and Rivalries	
Establish League of Nations [Reject defensive treaty with B and F]	4 points
National Self-determination, boundaries based on ethnic identities	4 points
Establish democratic governments in Eastern Europe	3 points
Maintain unity of Germany to resist the spread of Bolshevism	2 points
Limit European colonization, Central Powers' colonies go to League	3 points
Limited Punishment of Central Powers	
Limit the war reparations on Central Powers	2 points
Destroy German fleet and remove Central Powers' colonies	2 points

ITALY

Increase Italian world power and stature	
Annex the Austrian province of Slovenia (ethnic Slovenians)	3 points
Annex the Austrian province of Croatia (ethnic Croatians)	3 points
Expand boundaries of Italy to include all Italians	3 points
Acquire Central Powers' colonies in Africa and the Middle East	3 points
Punish and weaken the Austro-Hungarian Empire	
Severe war reparations and payment of debts	2 points
Independence to ethnic minorities	2 points
Separate Austria and Hungary into two independent countries	2 points
Establish League of Nations [Negative points for a B/F/US treaty]	2 points