

Reading Essentials and Study Guide



World War I and the Russian Revolution, 1914–1919

Lesson 4 World War I Ends

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Why do politics often lead to war? How can technology impact war?

Reading HELPDESK

Academic Vocabulary

psychological mental; directed toward the will or mind

cooperation common effort

Content Vocabulary

armistice a truce or an agreement to end fighting

reparation a payment made to the victor by the vanquished to cover the costs of war

mandate a territory temporarily governed by another nation on behalf of the League of Nations

TAKING NOTES: *Organizing Information*

ACTIVITY As you read, use a chart like the one below to identify the national interests of each country as it approached the Paris Peace Conference.

France	Great Britain	United States

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IT MATTERS BECAUSE

World War I continued through 1917. Governments, troops, and civilians were tired of the war. Germany made its last large military attack on the Western Front but this failed, and Germany lost the war. The war finally ended on November 11, 1918. As a result of the war, new nations were formed. A League of Nations was created to resolve future international disputes, or conflicts.

The Last Year of the War

Guiding Question *How did World War I come to an end?*

The year 1917 had not been a good one for the Allies. Allied offensives on the Western Front had been badly defeated. The Russian Revolution began in November 1917. It led to Russia's withdrawal from the war a few months later. On the positive side, the United States entered into the war in 1917. This event gave the Allies a much-needed **psychological**, or mental, boost. The United States also provided new troops and supplies.

For Germany, the Russian withdrawal offered new hope for a successful end to the war. Germany was now free to concentrate entirely on the Western Front. Erich Ludendorff guided German military operations, and he decided to take one final military risk. He wanted a huge offensive in the west.

The German attack began in March 1918. By April German troops were within about 50 miles (80 km) of Paris. However, the German advance was stopped at the Second Battle of the Marne on July 18. About 140,000 fresh American troops had just arrived. French, Moroccan, and American troops were supported by hundreds of tanks, and they forced the Germans back over the Marne. Ludendorff's gamble, or risk, had failed.

More than a million American troops came pouring into France, and Allied forces began to move toward Germany. On September 29, 1918, General Ludendorff told German leaders that the war was lost. He recommended that the government ask for peace immediately.

Collapse and Armistice

German officials soon found that the Allies did not want to make peace with the autocratic government of Germany, which was headed by Emperor William II. The German people were tired and angry with their government, and reforms for a more liberal government came too late.

Sailors in the northern German town of Kiel mutinied, or rebelled against authority, on November 3, 1918. Within days, councils of workers and soldiers formed throughout northern Germany, and they took over civilian and military offices. William II responded to public pressure and left the country on November 9. Then the Social Democrats under Friedrich Ebert announced the creation of a democratic republic. Two days later, on November 11, 1918, the new German government signed an **armistice** with the Allies. This was an agreement to end the fighting.

Revolutionary Forces

The war was over, but the revolutionary forces in Germany had not stopped. A group of radical socialists were unhappy with the Social Democrats' moderate plans and ideas. They formed the German Communist Party in December 1918. A month later, the Communists tried to seize power in Berlin.

Regular army troops supported the new Social Democratic government. The government crushed, or stopped, the rebels and murdered Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht (LEEP•KNEHKT), the

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leaders of the German Communists. A similar attempt at Communist revolution in the city of Munich, in southern Germany, was also crushed. The new German republic had been saved. However, the attempt at revolution left the German middle class with a deep fear of communism.

Austria-Hungary also collapsed and experienced a revolution. The people were tired of war. Ethnic groups wanted their freedom. The Austro-Hungarian Empire did not exist by the time World War I ended. It was replaced by the independent republics of Austria, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, and the large nation called Yugoslavia, which was ruled by a monarch.



Reading Progress Check

Describing What happened in Germany after its military defeat?

The Peace Settlements

Guiding Question *How was a final settlement of World War I established?*

Representatives of 27 Allied nations who won World War I met in Paris in January 1919. They met to make a final settlement, or an official agreement to end the war. The reasons for fighting World War I had changed a great deal over the years. European nations wanted to gain territories when they went to war in 1914. However, they also expressed more idealistic reasons for the war by the beginning of 1918. The focus was on a new order based on principles, rather than on self-interest.

Wilson's Proposals

Woodrow Wilson was the president of the United States. No one expressed these idealistic reasons for war better than he did. Even before the end of the war, Wilson explained his plan, called the "Fourteen Points," to the U.S. Congress. Wilson believed that his plan for a peace settlement would help to justify the enormous military struggle and the many costs of World War I.

Wilson wanted a truly fair and lasting peace. To help achieve this goal, he wanted to make the peace agreements openly and not in secret. His proposals, or suggestions, for the peace agreement included reducing armaments, or military forces and weapons. He also wanted to ensure self-determination, or the right of people to have their own nation.

Wilson said World War I was a people's war against absolutism and militarism, the two enemies of liberty. He argued these enemies of liberty could be eliminated by creating democratic governments and a general association, or partnership, of nations. This association would guarantee the political independence of all states and the protection of their existing borders.

President Wilson described and defended the idea of a new world order that was based on democracy and international **cooperation**. Many Europeans cheered Wilson enthusiastically when he arrived in Europe for the peace conference. However, Wilson soon found that more practical, and less idealistic, goals guided other nations.

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The Paris Peace Conference

Delegates met in Paris in early 1919 to determine the peace settlement. This meeting was called the Paris Peace Conference. Problems soon appeared, however. One was that secret agreements had been made before the war. European nations hoped to gain territory, but these hopes did not agree with Wilson's idea of self-determination for nations.

National interests made the discussions at the Paris Peace Conference difficult. Individual nations had their own goals at the conference. David Lloyd George was prime minister of Great Britain. He had won a large victory in elections in December 1918. He believed that the Germans should pay for the terrible war.

France wanted to ensure its national security. It chiefly wanted to be safe from future German attacks. Georges Clemenceau (kleh•muhn•SOH) was the premier of France. He felt the French people had suffered the most from the Germans. Clemenceau wanted all of Germany's weapons taken away. He demanded huge German **reparations**, or payments, to cover the costs of the war. He also desired a separate Rhineland as a buffer state, or a neutral area, between France and Germany.

Wilson, Clemenceau, and Lloyd George made the most important decisions at the Paris Peace Conference. They acted for the United States, France, and Great Britain. These countries were called the Big Three. Germany was not invited to attend, and Russia could not be there because of its civil war.

Because of all the conflicting demands at the peace conference, it was no surprise that the Big Three argued. Wilson wanted to create a world organization called the League of Nations to prevent future wars. Clemenceau and Lloyd George wanted to punish Germany. In the end, only compromise made it possible to achieve a peace settlement.

Wilson's wish for the creation of an international peacekeeping organization was granted. The conference accepted his idea of a League of Nations on January 25, 1919. In return, Wilson agreed to compromise on territorial issues. He believed that the League could later fix any unfair settlements.

Clemenceau also compromised to gain French security. He gave up France's wish for a separate Rhineland. Instead, he accepted a defensive alliance with Great Britain and the United States instead. However, in the end, the U.S. Senate refused to ratify, or approve, this agreement. This weakened the Versailles peace settlement, which ended the peace conference.

The Treaty of Versailles

The final peace settlement of Paris had five separate treaties with the defeated nations. These nations included Germany, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Turkey. The most important was the Treaty of Versailles with Germany.

The Germans considered it a harsh peace, which was very difficult for them to accept. They were unhappy with Article 231. This was sometimes called the War Guilt Clause because it declared that Germany and Austria were responsible for starting the war. The treaty ordered Germany to pay reparations for all damages that the Allied governments and their people had suffered because of the war.

The military and territorial agreements of the Treaty of Versailles also angered the Germans. Germany had to cut its army to 100,000 men, reduce its navy, and get rid of its air force. Sections of eastern Germany were awarded to the new Polish state.

German land along the Rhine River became a demilitarized zone. This meant that all weapons and fortresses were removed from the area. It was hoped this would serve as a barrier to any future German moves against France. Germany was angered by what they called a dictated peace, but it accepted the treaty.

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The Legacies of the War

The war, the Treaty of Versailles, and the separate peace treaties made with the other Central Powers changed the map of Eastern Europe. The German and Russian empires lost territory. The Austro-Hungarian Empire disappeared.

New nation-states were created from the three empires. These new nation-states included Finland, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, and Hungary. There were also new territorial arrangements in the Balkans. Romania gained more land. Serbia formed the center of a new state called Yugoslavia, which combined Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.

The idea of self-determination was supposed to guide the Paris Peace Conference. However, there was a mixture of different peoples in many areas of Eastern Europe. This made it impossible to draw boundaries along strict ethnic or cultural lines. Compromises left almost every eastern European state with ethnic minorities. There were Germans in Poland. There were Hungarians, Poles, and Germans in Czechoslovakia. There were Hungarians in Romania. There were Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians, and Albanians in Yugoslavia. The problem of ethnic minorities within nations would lead to many conflicts later.

The Ottoman Empire was another centuries-old empire that was broken up by the peace settlement. The Western Allies had promised to recognize the independence of Arab states in the Ottoman Empire. They did this to gain Arab support against the Ottoman Turks during the war. However, the Western nations changed their minds once the war was over. France controlled the territory of Syria, and Britain controlled the territories of Iraq and Palestine.

These gains were officially called **mandates**. Woodrow Wilson had not wanted the Allies to annex, or officially add, any new colonial territories. Under this mandate system, a nation governed a territory on a temporary basis for the League of Nations, but the nation did not own the territory.

World War I destroyed the society that existed in Europe at the time. Nearly 10 million people died. There was incredible damage to land and property. This put the entire the idea of progress into question or doubt. Entire populations had participated in a devastating slaughter.

World War I was a total war, which involved a complete mobilization of resources and people. The power of governments over the lives of their citizens increased as a result. Freedoms of the press and speech were limited in the name of national security. World War I made the practice of strong central authority a way of life.

The disorder and confusion created by the war also seemed to open the door to even greater insecurity and worries. Revolutions broke up old empires and created new states. These changes led to new problems. The hope that Europe and the rest of the world would go back to normal did not last.



Reading Progress Check

Explaining What did Wilson hope to accomplish by creating the League of Nations?
