

**GREAT WAR (1914-
1918): FRANCE:
CLEMENCEAU'S VIEWS
AT VERSAILLES**



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Description

Through an analysis of primary and secondary sources, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain the reasons behind Clemenceau's desire to cripple Germany after the Great War and how the final treaty contained many of those ideas.

Subjects

European History
World History

Grade Level

11-12

Duration

90 minutes (2-3 wk. prep)

Tour Links

- Versailles
- Champs-Elysses
- Place Clemenceau
- Assemblée Nationale
- Clemenceau Museum

Essential Questions

- Who was Georges Clemenceau?
- How and why was he able to take the lead at the Versailles conference of 1919?
- What were Clemenceau's major demands for the peace treaty imposed on Germany?
- In particular, what were his sticking points on the items listed below?
 - German disarmament of its military
 - War guilt
 - Reparations
 - French and German territories along the border

Academic Summary

"Humanity is mad. It must be mad to do what it is doing. What a massacre! What scenes of horror and carnage! I cannot find words to translate my impressions. Hell cannot be so terrible. Men are mad!"
French Soldier's diary from the Battle of Verdun, 23 May 1916

No allied nation suffered like France during the Great War. Its armies had been decimated (over 70% of its soldiers were killed, wounded or missing); much of its farmland was now an unusable wasteland; many of its cities were on the verge of collapse; much of its industry lay in ruins; the horrors of gas attacks, trench warfare and machine guns were ingrained on the psyche of an entire generation. Much of the war itself had been fought on its soil. As the elderly French prime minister, Georges Clemenceau, rose to address the peace conference at Versailles, a hush fell over the delegates. The French were bitter. Twice in Clemenceau's lifetime, they had been attacked and had suffered at the hands of the German empire. Never again. In Clemenceau's address, he outlined the basic theme of France's position regarding Germany and the end of the war: blame, guilt and punishment.

I come now to the order of the day. The first question is as follows: "The responsibility of the authors of the war." The second is thus expressed: "Penalties for crimes committed during the war." ... [The task at hand] is a very vast field. But we beg of you to begin by examining the question as to the responsibility of the authors of the war. I do not need to set forth our reasons for this. If we wish to establish justice in the world we can do so now, for we have won victory and can impose the penalties demanded by justice.

We shall insist on the imposition of penalties on the authors of the abominable crimes committed during the war. Has anyone any question to ask in regard to this? If not, I would again remind you that every delegation should devote itself to the study of this first question, which has been made the subject of reports by eminent jurists, and of a report which will be sent to you entitled, "An Inquiry into the Criminal Responsibility of the Emperor William II."

There it was: in one short speech, Clemenceau had outlined the French position. Germany alone was responsible for the war and should therefore bear the punishment of defeat. Over the next few months, Clemenceau would stand firm on his positions. He would give Wilson his League of Nations, but he would also make sure Germany would never again have the ability to wage war against France. We know, of course, that Clemenceau's planning was all for naught, as within a generation Hitler's armies would march down Champ-Elysees, but in 1919, Clemenceau's words and his ability to stand firm in the peace conference carried the day.

Through an analysis of primary and secondary sources, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain the reasons behind Clemenceau's desire to cripple Germany after the Great War and how the final treaty contained many of those ideas.

Objectives

1. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain the events surrounding the Peace Conference of Versailles in 1919 and the role played at the conference by French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau.
2. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain how the French delegation to the Versailles conference in 1919 saw the issues listed below.
 - a. German War Guilt
 - b. German Disarmament
 - c. German / French territories along the border
 - d. German Reparations
3. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain how the language of the final peace treaty contained many of Clemenceau's objectives.

Procedures

I. Anticipatory Set

- Writing / Question: Should victors in a war be able to punish the losing nations? If so, should there be limitations on how much to punish, or should the winners simply be able to dictate whatever terms they choose to impose on the losers? (5 min)
- Handouts – Copies of documents and readings from the websites listed. (5 min)

II. Body of Lesson

- Lecture / PPT – The Roles and Goals of Clemenceau in creating the Treaty of Versailles (20 min)
- Video – Treaty of Versailles (15 min)
- Independent Activity – Students read the articles and sources on The Paris Peace Conference of 1919, specifically looking at French aims and how those goals eventually made it into the final treaty, taking notes as appropriate. (25 min)
- Suggestion: Have the students read some of these articles and sources for homework before class.
- Group Activity – Socratic Seminar: Discussion on Clemenceau's goals at the peace conference (15 min)

III. Closure

- Assessment – Essay: Explain in detail the goals Clemenceau had at the Versailles Peace Conference of 1919.

Extension

On tour: Musée Clemenceau

While on tour, students should find time to visit the Musée Clemenceau (Clemenceau Museum) at 8 Rue Ben Franklin in Paris. The Museum, housed in a four-room apartment, from which he could see and gain inspiration from the Eiffel Tower, and where Clemenceau lived for over thirty-five years until his death in 1929, contains his books, travel souvenirs, clothes and other artifacts belonging to the Prime Minister. Students can see firsthand where Clemenceau lived and worked, battling the problems of an empire and a nation.

Web Links

Lesson Plan Websites

- www.pbs.org/greatwar/resources/casdeath_pop.html
WWI Casualty and Death Tables – at the PBS website
- www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1918wilson.html
Woodrow Wilson: Speech on the Fourteen Points Jan 8, 1918 – full text at the Internet History Sourcebook website at Fordham University
- <http://spartacus-educational.com/FWWclemenceau.htm>
Spartacus Education (UK) website article on Georges Clemenceau
- www.johndclare.net/ToV3_keynes_on_clemenceau.htm
“Notes on Clemenceau” by John Marnard Keynes, British delegate to the Peace Conference at Versailles
- www.firstworldwar.com/source/parispeaceconf_clemenceau.htm
George Clemenceau's Opening Address at the Paris Peace Conference, 18 January 1919 (primary source)
- www.musee-clemenceau.fr/en/
Musée Clemenceau – in the 4-room apartment where the Prime Minister lived for 35 years.
- photosofwar.net/war-photos/french-soldiers-wwi/
“French soldiers wait in the trenches at the Western Front during the First World War, 1916” (primary source (photograph)).
- history-sjcdubbo.wikispaces.com/file/detail/The+roles+and+goals+of+Clemenceau+in+creating+Treaty+of+Vresailles.ppt
“The Roles and Goals of Clemenceau in Creating the Treaty of Versailles” PowerPoint
- www.teachingchannel.org/videos/choosing-primary-source-documents?fd=1
Reading Like a Historian: Primary Source Documents (video) – great 2 minute video on how to incorporate primary sources into the Common Core and history classes. From Shilpa Duvor of Summit Preparatory Charter High School in Redwood City, CA – highly recommended for teachers.
- net.lib.byu.edu/~rdh7/wwi/versa/versa7.html
Peace Treaty of Versailles, Articles 231-247 and Annexes Reparations, on the BYU website.
- www.history.ucsb.edu/faculty/marcuse/classes/33d/projects/1920s/VersaillesTreatyCarlos.htm
The Versailles Treaty (website) – by Carols Magana on the University of California Santa Barbara website
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=7e8SPrcaalk
Treaty of Versailles (video)
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=ShRA8HRMR4Q
Paris Peace Conference – 1919 (video)

Background Information

- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georges_Clemenceau
“Georges Clemenceau” – Wikipedia article
- www.passports.com/group_leaders/on_the_road/france/paris
On the Road: Paris – from Passports Educational Travel
- www.passports.com/group_leaders/on_the_road/france/versailles
On the Road: Versailles – from Passports Educational Travel
- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I_reparations
“World War I reparations” – Wikipedia article
- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Versailles
“Treaty of Versailles” – Wikipedia article

Other Relevant Lesson Plans from Passports Educational Travel

- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/austria/great-war-austrian-ultimatum-to-serbia
Great War – Serbian Front: Austrian Ultimatum of 1914
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/england/england-and-the-great-war-causes-of-the-war-1914
Great War – Lights Going Out in 1914
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/england/england-and-the-great-war-wilfred-owen
England and the Great War – Wilfred Owen: Dulce et Decorum Est
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/england/england-and-the-great-war-armistice-day-1918
England and the Great War – Armistice Day 1918
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/germany/great-war-treaty-of-versailles
Great War – Treaty of Versailles 1919
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/france/great-war-battle-of-the-somme
Great War – Battle of the Somme 1916
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/france/battle-of-verdun-1916
Great War – Battle of Verdun
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/france/great-war-first-battle-of-the-marne-1914
Great War – First Battle of the Marne 1914
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/germany/great-war-schlieffen-plan
Great War – Germany: The Schlieffen Plan
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/russia/great-war-eastern-front-treaty-of-brest-litovsk-1918

Key Terms

- Alsace-Lorraine
- Clemenceau
- Great War
- German War Guilt
- Reparations
- Treaty of Versailles 1919
- Versailles

