

WORLD WAR I PEACE TALKS

Purpose

In this activity, you will look at various plans for peace after the First World War and weigh the merits (advantages) of each according to diverse international interests. The simulation approach allows for deeper reflection on the human and material costs of “total war,” and helps you see firsthand how countries’ different wartime experiences played into the peace talks of 1919 that followed Germany’s surrender. Ultimately, this will lay the groundwork for considering how treaties, although written in the name of peace and prosperity, can contribute to future problems.

Practices

Causation, contextualization

During this simulation, you will practice causal reasoning as you explore the effects of the First World War from primary and secondary sources, and as you consider the implications of the actual peace process of 1919. You will also use historical empathy as you try to draft treaty terms from one country’s postwar point of view.

Process

In this activity, you’re going to take part in a simulation that mimics the peace talks that occurred toward the end of World War I.

Step 1—Simulation Prep

First, complete the information sheet about the costs of the First World War by country. Once you have completed this sheet, your teacher will assign you to one of the following country groups: Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, Japan, South Africa, and the United States. You will be taking on the role of one of the delegates for that country as you deliberate possible terms to include in the World War Peace Treaty.

Once you are in your group, take some time to compare the data you found on your assigned country, and analyze the social, political, and economic effects of those numbers on your country.

Step 2—Simulation

Your teacher will moderate this world summit, which is of utmost importance. Over the course of the simulation, the delegates (you!) will examine five different issues and determine which terms best address each issue. You will be given one issue at a time for deliberation as well as three possible terms to be included in the treaty regarding that issue.

Take out the World War I Terms Worksheet and pick one student in your group to record notes. You are about to take part in five rounds of deciding the terms for each issue brought on by the war. At the end of the five rounds, you will have the terms for your peace treaty.

Your teacher will read the issues to you one by one, and once you’ve had a chance to discuss the terms with your group, you will have to make a choice as to which is best. Then, you’ll record your reasoning on your worksheet, and take turns posting your country’s choice on the front board with a brief explanation/defense of your reasoning.

After all the countries have posted, the winning choice (the term that appears the most) gets to stay up on the board, and the others get taken down. Do this for each of the five rounds, leaving the “winning” terms on the board after each round. What will emerge is a list of terms that sound a lot like the actual World War I peace treaty.

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Step 3—Responses to the Treaty's Terms

To wrap up the simulation, draft a brief statement (one or two paragraphs) from your assigned country's perspective, in response to the Treaty's terms. Then, your teacher will debrief you about the actual peace conference and the terms that came out of it. Are you surprised by any of the terms?

To wrap up, discuss the following questions with your class.

- The preparation worksheet you filled out included more nations than those included in the simulation. How might the end result have changed had these nations been included in the peace talks?
- What are the advantages of punishment versus reconciliation and how do you balance these two things during conflict resolution?
- How do you think Germany responded to the treaty?

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Name: Date:

The Cost of World War I Worksheet

Directions: Use the Internet to determine the financial and human cost of World War I for each of the following countries. You can use the links below or do your own research to find these numbers.

Step 1

- <https://spartacus-educational.com/FWWcosts.htm>
- <https://www.dva.gov.au/newsroom/media-centre/media-backgrounders/overview-australias-involvement-first-world-war>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I_casualties
- <https://www.census.gov/history/pdf/reperes112018.pdf>
- <https://www.bl.uk/world-war-one/articles/colonial-troops>
- <https://scottmanning.com/content/world-war-i-troop-statistics/>

Country	World War I expenditures (in US dollars) 1914-1918	Deaths from World War I (civilian and military)	Deaths as percent of population	Number of soldiers mobilized for the war effort	Number of colonial soldiers who participated in the war*
France					
Belgium					
Germany					

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Country	World War I expenditures (in US dollars) 1914-1918	Deaths from World War I (civilian and military)	Deaths as percent of population	Number of soldiers mobilized for the war effort	Number of colonial soldiers who participated in the war*
Great Britain					
United States					
India (under the British Raj)					
Japan					
Russia					

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Country	World War I expenditures (in US dollars) 1914-1918	Deaths from World War I (civilian and military)	Deaths as percent of population	Number of soldiers mobilized for the war effort	Number of colonial soldiers who participated in the war*
Australia (part of the Commonwealth of the British Empire)					
South Africa (part of the Commonwealth of the British Empire)					
Austria-Hungary					

**Note: Only some of these countries had colonies.*

1. What countries included in the table were members of the Central Powers?

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2. What countries included in the table were members of the Allied Powers?

3. What country spent the most money on the war?

4. What country had the largest number of casualties?

5. What country had the highest percentage of casualties?

6. What country had the largest number of colonial troops participating in the war?

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7. Overall, which country fared worst and why?

8. Overall, which country fared best and why?

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World War I Terms Worksheet

Country/Point of View: _____

Issues	Terms: A, B, or C?	Our Country's Reasoning:
War Guilt <i>Which country or countries should be blamed for causing World War I?</i>		
Reparations <i>Which country or countries should pay for the damages of war? How much?</i>		
Military Power <i>Should all countries be permitted to keep a powerful military in peacetime?</i>		
Colonial Possessions <i>Should countries be permitted to keep their colonial possessions in the wake of World War I?</i>		
League of Nations <i>Should countries join an international peacekeeping & decision-making organization?</i>		