Lesson Question: Why was compromise difficult to achieve at the Paris Peace Conference?

Lesson Goals:

- **Learn** about the end of World War I.
- **Describe** the provisions of Wilson’s **Fourteen Points**.
- **Compare and contrast** the positions of the United States, France, and Britain at the **peace conference**.

Words to Know:

Fill in this table as you work through the lesson. You may also use the glossary to help you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>leniency</td>
<td>a show of <strong>kindness</strong> or <strong>mildness</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>skeptical</td>
<td><strong>doubtful</strong>, disbelieving</td>
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<tr>
<td>disarmament</td>
<td>the <strong>reduction</strong> of military arms</td>
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<tr>
<td>reparations</td>
<td><strong>payment</strong> for damages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-determination</td>
<td><strong>free will</strong>, as in self-government</td>
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The Big Four

Prime Minister David Lloyd George, **Britain**
Premier Vittorio Orlando, **Italy**
Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau, **France**
President Woodrow Wilson, **US**

The Paris Peace Conference

The three Allies had important questions to answer.

1. What should happen to territory that **Germany** gained in the war?
2. Should Germany be forced to **pay** for Allied countries’ pain and suffering?
3. What should happen to Germany’s **military**?
4. What should happen to the people living in the **Ottoman Empire** and in Germany’s **colonies**?
Woodrow Wilson (1856–1924)

- Served as US president during World War I
- Was an **idealist** who was often unwilling to compromise
- Was a university **president** before he entered politics

**Considering Historical Context**

To think about a person in historical context, you need to consider three factors.

**Culture**
- How was this person’s culture different from others’?

**Values**
- Did this person hold different values than others?

**Influences**
- Was this person influenced by outside people or events?

**Wilson’s Position**

As an **idealist**, Wilson supported three main ideas.

1. He favored **leniency** for Germany.
2. He believed in the principle of **self-determination** so that nations could rule themselves.
3. He believed that nations could **cooperate** to prevent future wars.
Wilson’s Call for Peace

Underline Wilson’s two descriptions of the type of peace he wants to achieve.

The present war must first be ended. . . . the treaties and agreements which bring it to an end must embody terms which will create a peace that is worth guaranteeing and preserving, a peace that will win the approval of mankind, not merely a peace that will serve the several interests and immediate aims of the nations engaged.

—Woodrow Wilson, January 1917

Wilson’s Fourteen Points

Before World War I ended, Wilson explained his goals in a speech called “The Fourteen Points.”

- He continued to argue that Germany should be treated leniently.
- Germany grew willing to sign an armistice after hearing the speech.

The Fourteen Points

Wilson discussed several major ideas in his speech, including these points.

1. There should be no secret treaties.
2. Freedom of the seas and free trade between countries should be preserved.
3. Colonists should have a say in their governments.
4. The world’s countries should participate in disarmament.
Wilson also wanted to create a **League of Nations** to:

- foster international **cooperation**.
- **promote** open diplomacy.
- **prevent** future conflict.
France and Britain had very different perspectives toward the terms of peace.

- They had experienced a much more significant loss of life.
- They had experienced more severe economic consequences.

Georges Clemenceau (1841–1929)

- Served as prime minister of France during the final months of the war
- Promised victory and justice for France
- Was skeptical of Wilson’s Fourteen Points

French Demands

Clemenceau had a different set of priorities than Wilson.

- Reparations to punish Germany and repay the French people
- The return of Alsace-Lorraine, which had been taken by Germany in 1870
- Increased territory along the border to protect France in case of a future attack
David Lloyd George (1863–1945)

- Served as prime minister of the United Kingdom during the final year of the war
- Won an election by calling for the punishment of Germany
- Understood that compromise was necessary to reach a settlement

British Perspectives on Germany

Like Wilson, Lloyd George favored leniency for Germany.

He thought that:

- treating Germany harshly would lead the country to seek revenge in the future.
- Britain’s trading relationship with Germany needed to be preserved.
- Germany’s armed forces and navy needed to be dismantled.
David Lloyd George’s Perspective

We must not allow any sense of **revenge**, any spirit of **greed**, any grasping desire to override the fundamental principles of **righteousness**.

—David Lloyd George, November 11, 1918

British Perspectives on the Fourteen Points

Like Clemenceau, David Lloyd George was **skeptical** of Wilson’s Fourteen Points.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In support of Wilson’s ideas</th>
<th>In opposition to Wilson’s ideas</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• He <strong>favored</strong> the creation of a League of Nations.</td>
<td>• He wanted to <strong>protect</strong> British naval interests, so he <strong>opposed</strong> freedom of the seas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• He wanted to protect Britain’s <strong>empire</strong>, so he opposed <strong>self-determination</strong>.</td>
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The Paris Peace Conference

World leaders met in Paris in January 1919 to:

• begin planning the peace process.
• reach a compromise that would meet their different goals and values.

Compromise

Wilson demanded:
• a League of Nations.
• self-determination.

Clemenceau demanded:
• revenge for the suffering of the French people.

David Lloyd George forged a compromise.

The Compromise and the Treaty of Versailles

In June 1919, the Treaty of Versailles was signed.

• Clemenceau agreed to a League of Nations.
• Wilson agreed to a “war guilt” clause that condemned Germany.
Timeline: The End of World War I

- July 1914 – November 1918: World War I
- April 1917: The United States entered the war.
- January 1919: The Paris Peace Conference was held.
- June 1919: The Treaty of Versailles was signed.
The leaders of the United States, the United Kingdom, and France had competing values and goals for peace after World War I. Wilson demanded a League of Nations and self-determination. Clemenceau demanded revenge for the suffering of the French people. David Lloyd George forged a compromise that would lead to the Treaty of Versailles.
Use this space to write any questions or thoughts about this lesson.