

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Advanced History Reading Assignments

Read the text below and answer the questions!

## A Turning Point in Modern History

The Treaty of Versailles, signed on June 28, 1919, officially ended World War I, a devastating conflict that had reshaped the geopolitical landscape. The treaty was signed in the opulent Hall of Mirrors at the Palace of Versailles, symbolizing both the grandeur of diplomacy and the gravity of its consequences.

The treaty's terms were primarily dictated by the Allied powers, particularly France, Britain, and the United States, with little input from the defeated Central Powers. Germany bore the brunt of the treaty's harsh conditions, including territorial losses, military restrictions, and the controversial "war guilt clause," which placed full responsibility for the war on Germany and its allies. This clause justified the imposition of reparations that crippled the German economy during the interwar years.

While the treaty aimed to establish lasting peace, it sowed the seeds of resentment and instability. France, still reeling from the devastation of the war, demanded harsh penalties to ensure Germany could not rise again as a military threat. British Prime Minister David Lloyd George sought a middle ground, fearing that overly punitive measures might lead to future conflict. Meanwhile, U.S. President Woodrow Wilson championed his vision of a League of Nations, an international organization intended to prevent future wars. Although the League was established, the United States never joined, reflecting the isolationist sentiment prevalent in American politics at the time.

Critics of the treaty, both at the time and in hindsight, argue that it failed to address the underlying causes of the conflict and instead exacerbated them. The economic and political instability in Germany created fertile ground for extremist ideologies, paving the way for Adolf Hitler's rise to power and the outbreak of World War II just two decades later.

The Treaty of Versailles serves as a stark reminder of the complexities of peacebuilding and the unintended consequences of punitive diplomacy. Its legacy continues to influence discussions about international relations and conflict resolution.

### QUESTIONS

1. Where and when was the Treaty of Versailles signed?

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2. What was the purpose of the "war guilt clause," and why was it controversial?

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3. How did France and Britain differ in their approach to the treaty's terms for Germany?

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4. What was Woodrow Wilson's main goal during the negotiations, and was it fully realized?

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5. What were the long-term economic and political effects of the treaty on Germany?

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