

100th Anniversary of the Paris Peace Conference

The Hope for World Peace After WWI

The Paris Peace Conference began on January 18, 1919 in Versailles just outside Paris, France. The meeting included diplomats from 30 nations to discuss and establish the terms for what was hoped to be lasting peace after the widespread devastation of “The Great War.” Representatives from the United Kingdom, the United States, France, and Italy - the “Big Four” - dominated the discussions that ultimately led to the Treaty of Versailles officially ending World War I. Members of the losing side of the war, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Turkey and Bulgaria -the Central Powers, were excluded from the conference until they were each presented with treaties negotiated by the Allies. The conference lasted nearly a year and ended on January 16, 1920 with the formal inauguration of the League of Nations.

U.S. President Woodrow Wilson strongly negotiated for his idea of a “peace without victory” to help ensure that Germany, the leader of the Central Powers, wasn’t treated too

harshly. However, Prime Ministers Georges Clemenceau of France and David Lloyd George of Britain argued that Germany must accept sole responsibility for the war, forfeit some of their territorial lands, greatly limit the size of their army and naval forces and pay large sums of money in reparation to the Allies. In the end, Wilson compromised on the treatment of Germany in order to push through the creation of his idea for the League of Nations. The goal of the League was to promote international cooperation and to achieve peace and security among the partnering nations which Wilson believed would prevent future wars.

Newspaper Activities:

Look through the newspaper and other sources for people working to find peaceful solutions to a conflict. Compare and contrast one modern example with the Paris Peace Conference.

One of the key requirements for peacemaking is being able to envision oneself in someone else’s shoes. As you read news about a conflict think about the issues from every point of view. As a class, discuss a possible solution to the problem that is fair to all concerned and compromises between two or more opposing viewpoints.



U.S. Signal Corps photo - pictured from left to right, Prime Minister David Lloyd George (Great Britain) Premier Vittorio Orlando (Italy) Premier Georges Clemenceau, (France) President Woodrow Wilson (United States)

Despite popular U.S. opinion of joining the League and 32 states passing resolutions in favor of the Treaty of Versailles, the U.S. Senate remained opposed. Many believed the Treaty gave the League Council Congress’ power to declare war. In a final vote of the Senate on March 19, 1920, the Treaty of Versailles fell short of ratification by seven votes. As a result, the U.S. Government negotiated and signed a separate peace treaty with Germany - the Treaty of Berlin - on August 25, 1921. The United States never joined the League of Nations.

Ultimately, the global peace did not last long and the League of Nations ceased its activities after failing to prevent the Second World War.

Reading the newspaper, in-print or online, is a great way to gather information about the world we live in. Help educate the next generation of peacemakers, become a Newspaper In Education sponsor!