

TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT

The Great War: A Finale

From Leilani Jones

Grade – 11th

Length of class period –80 minutes

Inquiry – (What essential question are students answering, what problem are they solving, or what decision are they making?)

How did the conclusion of World War I affect different people differently?

Objectives (What content and skills do you expect students to learn from this lesson?)

1. Students will analyze the effects that the armistice and the Treaty of Versailles had on different groups of people including civilians, soldiers, and delegates of nations.
2. Students will be able to interpret bias in eyewitness accounts and explain the importance of bias in documents.

Materials (What primary sources or local resources are the basis for this lesson?) –

1. Armistice-The End of World War I, 1918-

<http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/pfarmistice.htm>

2. Signing the Treaty of Versailles, 1919

<http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/pfversailles.htm>

Activities (What will you and your students do during the lesson to promote learning?)

Opener: When telling a story, how does your perspective influence what you say?

Have students discuss this question either in a small group or whole class format.

Emphasize the importance of facts that are included/left out, inclusion of other peoples' perspectives, and how the story changes over time for various reasons. (5-7 minutes)

1. Introduce the concept of Armistice Day and the Treaty of Versailles to students. Break students into partners and assign them either the Armistice Day Document or the Treaty of Versailles Document. Have students read through their document and ask them to keep track of their thoughts in the graphic organizer provided. (35 minutes)

2. As students finish, ask them to find another pair that is also finished. Their task is to explain to the second partners the information that they gathered from reading the article. They must explain the article without showing their graphic organizer to the other group. Students should then begin working on the question: How did the end of World War I affect different groups of people differently? In your opinion, which group suffered the

most negative effects and why? (15-20 minutes)

3. When most students are ready, have them come together as a class to debrief on the articles. Ask students who they read about, what they learned, how the end of World War I affected the people in their article. End with a discussion on how the authors' biases were evident in the article. In what places could you tell that the author was greatly influenced by their own experiences in World War I? How did the position/rank/national origin of the author affect how they described other people in the story? (20 minutes)

Closure: 3-2-1: 3 reasons it is important to think about bias when we read primary sources, 2 things I learned about Armistice Day/Treaty of Versailles, 1 thing I still don't understand from today's lesson.

How will you assess what student learned during this lesson?

1. Students will use a graphic organizer to analyze their assigned document, and will work with a partner to understand the other perspective.
2. Students will complete a 3-2-1 in addition to a whole class discussion about the significance of bias in historical documents.

Connecticut Framework Performance Standards –

- 1.3 Demonstrate an understanding of significant events and themes in world history/international studies.
- 2.2 Interpret information from a variety of primary and secondary sources, including electronic media.

Armistice - The End of World War I, 1918

The final Allied push towards the German border began on October 17, 1918. As the British, French and American armies advanced, the alliance between the Central Powers began to collapse. Turkey signed an armistice at the end of October, Austria-Hungary followed on November 3.

Germany began to crumble from within. Faced with the prospect of returning to sea, the sailors of the High Seas Fleet stationed at Kiel mutinied on October 29. Within a few days, the entire city was in their control and the revolution spread throughout the country. On November 9 the Kaiser abdicated; slipping across the border into the Netherlands and exile. A German Republic was declared and peace feelers extended to the Allies. At 5 AM on the morning of November 11 an armistice was signed in a railroad car parked in a French forest near the front lines.

The terms of the agreement called for the cessation of fighting along the entire Western Front to begin at precisely 11 AM that morning. After over four years of bloody conflict, the Great War was at an end.

"...at the front there was no celebration."

Colonel Thomas Gowenlock served as an intelligence officer in the American 1st Division. He was on the front line that November morning and wrote of his experience a few years later:

"On the morning of November 11 I sat in my dugout in Le Gros Faux, which was again our division headquarters, talking to our Chief of Staff, Colonel John Greely, and Lieutenant Colonel Paul Peabody, our G-1. A signal corps officer entered and handed us the following message:

Official Radio from Paris -
6:01 A.M., Nov. 11, 1918.
Marshal Foch to the
Commander-in-Chief.

1. Hostilities will be stopped

on the entire front beginning
at 11 o'clock, November 11th
(French hour).

2. The Allied troops will not
go beyond the line reached at
that hour on that date until
further orders.

[signed]
MARSHAL FOCH
5:45 A.M.

'Well - *fini la guerre!*' said Colonel Greely.

'It sure looks like it,' I agreed.

'Do you know what I want to do now?' he said. 'I'd like to get
on one of those little horse-drawn canal boats in southern
France and lie in the sun the rest of my life.'

My watch said nine o'clock. With only two hours to go, I
drove over to the bank of the Meuse River to see the finish.
The shelling was heavy and, as I walked down the road, it
grew steadily worse. It seemed to me that every battery in
the world was trying to burn up its guns. At last eleven
o'clock came - but the firing continued. The men on both
sides had decided to give each other all they had-their
farewell to arms. It was a very natural impulse after their
years of war, but unfortunately many fell after eleven o'clock
that day.

All over the world on November 11, 1918, people were
celebrating, dancing in the streets, drinking champagne,
hailing the armistice that meant the end of the war. But at
the front there was no celebration. Many soldiers believed the
Armistice only a temporary measure and that the war would
soon go on. As night came, the quietness, unearthly in its
penetration, began to eat into their souls. The men sat
around log fires, the first they had ever had at the front.
They were trying to reassure themselves that there were no
enemy batteries spying on them from the next hill and no
German bombing planes approaching to blast them out of
existence. They talked in low tones. They were nervous.

After the long months of intense strain, of keying themselves
up to the daily mortal danger, of thinking always in terms of
war and the enemy, the abrupt release from it all was

physical and psychological agony. Some suffered a total nervous collapse. Some, of a steadier temperament, began to hope they would someday return to home and the embrace of loved ones. Some could think only of the crude little crosses that marked the graves of their comrades. Some fell into an exhausted sleep. All were bewildered by the sudden meaninglessness of their existence as soldiers - and through their teeming memories paraded that swiftly moving cavalcade of Cantigny, Soissons, St. Mihiel, the Meuse-Argonne and Sedan.

What was to come next? They did not know - and hardly cared. Their minds were numbed by the shock of peace. The past consumed their whole consciousness. The present did not exist-and the future was inconceivable."

References:

Colonel Gowenlock's account appears in Gowenlock, Thomas R., *Soldiers of Darkness* (1936), reprinted in Angle, Paul, M., *The American Reader* (1958); Simkins, Peter, *World War I, the Western Front* (1991).

How To Cite This Article:
"Armistice - The End of World War I, 1918," EyeWitness to History,
www.eyewitnesstohistory.com (2004).

Signing the Treaty of Versailles, 1919

The Paris Peace Conference began on January 18, 1919, with 21 nations in attendance. The representatives of Germany and the other defeated Central Powers were not allowed to sit at the conference table. The "Big Four" - President Wilson of the United States, Prime Minister Lloyd George of Great Britain, Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau of France and Prime Minister Vittorio Orlando of Italy - dominated the conference and made the important decisions. Wilson pushed for inclusion of his Fourteen Points especially the League of Nations. Many of his proposals, however, clashed with the secret treaties and territorial rearrangements already made by the other three European powers. The three European leaders found it difficult to hide their contempt for what they saw as Wilson's naivete and superior attitude.

France's primary objective was to ensure her security. In 1814, 1815, 1870, and again in 1914, German armies had swarmed across France's borders. France sought a peace treaty that would assure that her homeland would never again be invaded by her German neighbor. Additionally, as the war had been fought on French soil, the French looked to the Germans to pay for the restoration of her devastated homeland.

The political wrangling became intense. At one point Wilson had to step between Lloyd George and Clemenceau to prevent a fist fight. At another time Wilson threatened to leave the conference. Orlando did leave for a time. Finally, agreement was reached and a treaty presented to the German representatives on May 7, 1919. The terms were harsh. Germany was stripped of approximately 13% of its pre-war territory and all of its over-seas possessions. The Ruhr - Germany's industrial heartland - was to be occupied by allied troops. The size of Germany's military forces was drastically reduced. The treaty further stipulated that Germany would pay for the devastation of the war through annual reparation payments to its European neighbors. The victors ignored the bitter complaints of the German delegation.

On June 28, two rather obscure German representatives signed the treaty. Celebration erupted. The signing ceremony brought the curtain down on the final act of the Great War. No one present was aware that it also signaled the opening act of a conflict that would erupt twenty years later with even more terrible consequences.

The End of One War, Prelude to the Next

Sir Harold Nicolson was a member of the British delegation to the Treaty of Versailles. He offers his observations of its signing on June 28, 1919:

"We enter the Galerie des Glaces (Hall of Mirrors). It is divided into three

sections. At the far end are the Press already thickly installed. In the middle there is a horse-shoe table for the plenipotentiaries. In front of that; like a guillotine, is the table for the signatures. It is supposed to be raised on a dais but, if so, the dais can be but a few inches high...There must be seats for over a thousand persons. This robs the ceremony of all privilege and therefore of all dignity.

...the delegates arrive in little bunches and push up the central aisle slowly. Wilson and Lloyd George are among the last. They take their seats at the central table. The table is at last full. Clemenceau glances to right and left. People sit down upon their escabeaux but continue chattering. Clemenceau makes a sign to the ushers. They say 'Ssh! Ssh! Ssh!' People cease chattering and there is only the sound of occasional coughing and the dry rustle of programs. The officials of the Protocol of the Foreign Office move up the aisle and say, 'Ssh! Ssh!' again. There is then an absolute hush, followed by a sharp military order. The Gardes Republicains at the doorway flash their swords into their scabbards with a loud click. 'Faites entrer les Allemands,' says Clemenceau in the ensuing silence.

Through the door at the end appear two huissiers with silver chains. They march in single file. After them come four officers of France, Great Britain, America and Italy. And then, isolated and pitiable, come the two German delegates. Dr. Muller, Dr. Bell. The silence is terrifying. Their feet upon a strip of parquet between the savonnerie carpets echo hollow and duplicate. They keep their eyes fixed away from those two thousand staring eyes, fixed upon the ceiling. They are deathly pale. They do not appear as representatives of a brutal militarism. The one is thin and pink-eyelidded. The other is moon-faced and suffering. It is all most painful.

They are conducted to their chairs. Clemenceau at once breaks the silence. 'Messieurs,' he rasps, 'la seance est ouverte.' He adds a few ill-chosen words. 'We are here to sign a Treaty of Peace.' The Germans leap up anxiously when he has finished, since they know that they are the first to sign. William Martin, as if a theatre manager, motions them petulantly to sit down again. Mantoux translates Clemenceau's words into English. Then St. Quentin advances towards the Germans and with the utmost dignity leads them to the little table on which the Treaty is expanded. There is general tension. They sign. There is a general relaxation. Conversation hums again in an undertone.

The delegates stand up one by one and pass onwards to the queue which waits by the signature table. Meanwhile people buzz round the main table getting autographs. The single file of plenipotentiaries waiting to approach the table gets thicker. It goes quickly. The Officials of the Quai d'Orsay stand round, indicating places to sign, indicating procedure, blotting with neat little pads.

Suddenly from outside comes the crash of guns thundering a salute; It announces to Paris that the second Treaty of Versailles has been signed by Dr. Muller and Dr. Bell. Through the few open windows comes the sound of distant crowds cheering hoarsely. And still the signature goes on.

We had been warned it might last three hours. Yet almost at once it seemed that the queue was getting thin. Only three, then two, and then one delegate remained to sign. His name had hardly been blotted before the huissiers began again their 'Ssh! Ssh!' cutting suddenly short the wide murmur which had again begun. There was a final hush. 'La seance est levee' rasped Clemenceau. Not a word more or less.

We kept our seats while the Germans were conducted like prisoners from the dock, their eyes still fixed upon some distant point of the horizon."

References:

Harold Nicolson's account appears in: Nicolson, Harold, *Peacemaking, 1919* (1933); Elcock, Howard, *Portrait of a Decision: The Council of Four and the Treaty of Versailles* (1972); Goldberg, George, *The Peace to End Peace; the Paris Peace Conference of 1919* (1969).

How To Cite This Article:
"Signing the Treaty of Versailles, 1919," EyeWitness to History, www.eyewitnesstohistory.com (2005).

Name: _____

Partner's Name: _____

Directions: You will be assigned one article to read and answer the questions below. Read the article carefully because you will need to explain it to people who have not read your article. After both you and your partner have finished answering the questions, explain the article to another group who has also finished working. You must explain the answers to the questions without showing anyone else your paper. The other group should be able to fill out their graphic organizer in their own words without having to peek at your paper. Then you will switch roles, and the other group will teach you about their article.

	Armistice Day	Treaty of Versailles
Summarize the background of the article. What is going on at the time that the accounts are being given?		
Who is the author? How does his background influence what he writes and experiences?		
Who does the author encounter? How does the author portray them?		
How do you think the author feels about the event that he witnesses? (Use evidence from the article to support your answer).		