Model answers: The Peace Treaties of the First World War

**What did Lloyd George hope to achieve from the Treaty of Versailles?**

Lloyd George hoped to achieve a lasting peace at the Paris peace conference. He also needed to make Germany pay for starting the war as the British public had voted him in as Prime Minister on the promise that he would do this. He personally did not want Germany to be crippled as he feared that this would lead to resentment and could lead to them starting another war in revenge. He also did not want them crippled because Germany had been Britain's leading trading partner before the war and he wanted this trade resumed so that Britain's economy could grow again.

**In what ways did the Treaty of Versailles weaken Germany’s armed forces?**

Germany’s armed forces were considerable weakened by the Treaty of Versailles. They had to reduce the army to 100,000 men, with no conscription. They were not allowed to have an airforce or any armoured vehicles live tanks. The navy was reduced to 6 ships and no submarines.

**What did President Wilson hope to achieve at the Paris Peace Conference?**

Wilson was an idealist and hoped to fulfil his ‘fourteen points’ at the peace conferences. He wanted ‘to make the world safe for democracy’ by establishing ‘peace without victory’. He didn’t want countries responsible for war punished too harshly but wanted to prevent another war happening. He believed people had the right to self-determination, they should love within their own country. He wanted the League of Nations to be set up to uphold peace. And, among other things wanted Alsace-Lorraine returned to France and freedom of the seas.
Explain why Germany was made to pay reparations

The first and most pressing reason for Germany to pay reparations was due to the damage caused by the First World War (particularly in France). This was estimated at several billion pounds (the figure £6.6 billion being agreed later).

However, along with the war guilt clause 281, reparations stood in some way to humiliate the German Nation. However, it was in many ways a safeguard against German rearmament, which could not occur with the huge instalments of money (and raw materials) being taken in reparations.

Explain why the terms of the Treaty of Versailles caused so much bitterness in Germany.

German people did not like having to accept the blame for the First World War in the ‘war guilt clause’ because they did not believe they were solely to blame. Because of the war guilt clause Germany had to pay huge reparation payments of £6600 million to Britain and France. This was a huge amount for a country that had just emerged from a world war to pay. This crippled and already weak economy in Germany. Germans were a proud nation and were very proud of their country. Having to disarm was a damaging blow to Germany both in making the country vulnerable and damaging its pride. Germany who, lost territory to France, Poland, Czechoslovakia and therefore German people were no loner part of Germany. The German people resented the Treaty of Versailles because it made Germany weak and wanted to make the German people feel ashamed and humiliated.

Explain why Clemenceau wanted the Treaty of Versailles to be harsh on Germany.

Clemenceau wanted the Treaty of Versailles to be harsh on Germany for four main reasons. Firstly, he wanted revenge for French suffering. Most of the fighting had been carried out in north east France and many of her beautiful provinces had been devastated especially by the retreating German troops. France wanted compensation for this by punishing Germany harshly. Secondly, French people naturally hated German people. Especially after 1871 and the Franco-Prussian war when the Germans took Alsace-Lorraine from France. The public wanted Germany to pay because almost all families knew someone who had died. Also the government wanted to punish Germany harshly through Clemenceau to be popular with the public. Thirdly,
Clemenceau wanted to weaken Germany economically and militarily harshly so that another war could not start. France anted to cripple Germany economically through her industry to stop her posing a threat in the future but also to punish her for the horrors of world war one. France also wanted a harsh settlement for French security requirements. Germany invaded France through the Rhineland and Clemenceau wanted to create a 'Rhonish Republic' in the Rhineland to act as a 'buffer zone' against Germany. Therefore, Clemenceau wanted a harsh treaty for revenge, for the public, to prevent war and for security requirements.

The following were all equally important reasons why Germany hated the Treaty of Versailles:

(i) limitations on its armed forces;
(ii) the loss of raw materials and industries;
(iii) the loss of land.

Do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer referring only to (i), (ii) and (iii).

10 marks

The Treaty of Versailles decreased Germany's army to 100,000 men, 36 battleships and no allowed air force. This left Germany feeling vulnerable and militarily weak. They couldn't help but fell defenceless when the other countries were supposed to be disarming and weren't and they only had a very limited armed forces. The Demilitarisation of the Rhineland for France to feel more secure also annoyed the Germans as this was their land and they felt as though they were being controlled and victimised. This was very important as this was what led to National Aggression and rearmament in the future. The loss of raw materials and industries also created a hatred for the Treaty as these were Germany's only way of making money in order to pay the reparations bill. The Saar coalfield, which was a large part of Germany's economy was stripped away from them in the treaty and without it, there was little sauce of income into the country. Also the industrial land in which they took away contained German speakers who were angry that they didn't get the right for self-determination. This was fairly important as this was what caused the inability to pay the second instalment of the reparations bill causing the Ruhr invasion. This affected everyone through hyperinflation and made the Germans hate the Treaty passionately.

The loss of land in the treaty was an extremely important reason why the Germans hated the Treaty. Overall, Germany lost 10% of their land and all of their colonies. 3.5 million Germans were given to Poland when the land was taken and German speakers were lost in surrounding countries. The Germans hated this because they
lost the right of self-determination despite the fact that they should have been
given it. This also gave Hitler fuel for his foreign policy later.

I don't agree with this statement as I fell the most important reason was the
limitations imposed on its armed forces. Germany were left feeling weak, militarily
vulnerable and victimised straight after a war which is why so many Germans hated
it.
How far did Clemenceau, Lloyd George and Wilson share the same aims at the peace negotiations of 1919? Explain your answer.

Clemenceau, Lloyd George and Wilson did share some of the same aims at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. The most important of these is that there should be peace in the world after the atrocities of the First World War.

They all agreed that this would be achieved through countries disarming. They all wanted to punish Germany in the same way for WW1 but the degree of punishment was different for all three of them. Wilson thought that Germany take the blame and pay some compensation for France and Britain but he did not want the treaty to be too harsh as he feared that Germany would be resentful and seek revenge in the future. Lloyd general also knew that too harsh a treaty on Germany would cause trouble in the future but he promised the people of Britain that he would squeeze Germany “until the pips squeaked”.

Clemenceau wanted revenge for the damage caused to France and Germany weakened to the point where she would be unable to ever be a threat to France again.

Clemenceau persuaded the other two that Germany should take all the blame and pay compensation for the war.

Overall, the leaders at the conference did share many of the same aims but Clemenceau was unable to persuade Wilson and Lloyd George that a harsh treaty on Germany was a way to ensure peace because Germany would then be able to start another war.
Explain how the following together contributed to German hatred of the Treaty of Versailles:

(iv) the reparations settlement;
(v) the military restrictions;
(vi) the loss of territory.

10 marks

the Germans hated the Treaty of Versailles due to the harsh terms imposed on her, especially the reparations, the military and territorial losses.

Firstly, the Germans resented the reparations payments. They were forced to pay £6.6 billion as compensation to the victorious nations. This angered the Germans because they felt this was too much to pay and they needed as much money as possible to rebuild their industry. Even the economist Maynard Keynes, in 1921 felt that much money was excessive. The thought of paying money to France, their enemy angered most of the public.

Secondly, the military restrictions also angered many Germans. The army and navy were something to be proud of and cutting the army to only 100,000 men wounded national pride. Also, they weren't allowed an airforce and the navy were only allowed 15,000 sailors. As with reparation payments, they felt the military terms too excessive.

Thirdly, territorial losses meant 12.5% of Germany's lands were given away with 16\% of the population. This angered the German people because this went against Wilson's idea of self-determination where everyone has the right to live in their own nation. Therefore many Germans felt hard done by because many of the terms were contradictory.

Therefore, in the context of economic, military and territorial terms, the Germans hated them all equally. There were convinced by the war leaders that they were winning the war, when they lost it came as a big surprise and the German public were even more shocked about the terms. The Kaiser had fled and a new democratic government was in place so the restrictions punished Germany when the main culprit had fled. The thing Germany was most angered about was the fact that Wilson had promised to base the treaties on the fourteen points which didn't punish Germany directly, but tried to prevent another war. He believed in 'peace without victory' so the Germans believed they wouldn't be punished too harshly. Economically, Europe needed a strong Germany. Territorially, self determination should have been a major factor. Militarily, all countries should have disarmed. In conclusion the Germans felt they were treated too harshly economically, militarily and territorially which provoked hatred for a number of reasons.