Why was the Treaty of Versailles so unpopular in Germany?

L/O – To evaluate the terms of the ToV and to identify its effects upon the Weimar Republic.
Philipp Scheidemann who was the German Chancellor in June 1919 resigned rather than sign the treaty, saying,

“May the hand wither that signs this treaty.”

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j1V_dnRjrrg&feature=related

Scheidemann proclaiming the new German Republic in 1918.

(10 minutes)
The Paris Peace Conference

• The armistice was signed by Matthias Erzberger for Germany on 11th November 1918.

• The Allied leaders – David Lloyd George (Britain), Georges Clemenceau (France) and Woodrow Wilson (United States) – then spent several months drawing up the peace treaty at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919.
Who were the key players?

**Georges Clemenceau**
President of France. He was a fiery politician nicknamed ‘The Tiger’.

**David Lloyd George**
British Prime Minister. Lloyd George was an experienced politician.

**Woodrow Wilson**
The American President. He had brought the US into the war in 1917.
I want Germany punished. They have invaded France twice in the last 50 years; they have occupied our land and burned our towns. We have suffered and the Germans have not! I want them to suffer as France has suffered.

I demand that Germany face a peace that is just to France and leaves Germany too weak to ever threaten us again.
When I was elected, I told the British public I would squeeze Germany “until the pips squeak”, but Britain needs trade to recover from the war. The Germans must be punished, but not so much that we can’t trade with them.

And what about the Bolshevik threat? If we make the Germans too poor, they could be attracted towards Bolshevism. We don’t want a revolution in Germany.

There needs to be a balance for peace to work.
Certainly, Germany needs to be punished, but the victors need to look at the issue of how to avoid war. There should be self-determination – the people of Europe, and indeed the World, should be allowed to rule themselves rather than being the subjects of great empires.

And there can be no more ‘old alliances’ – there needs to be a League of Nations to solve international disputes.

This will be my legacy.
Who would have said...

Decide which politician(s) would have said each statement and then drag it to the correct box. Press start to begin.

start
What the treaty covered

- What should happen to the land and colonies of the defeated nations?
- Should there be a League of Nations and how should it work?
- Who should pay for the cost of the war and repairing the damage?
- Who was to blame for the war?
- What should happen to the remaining German armed forces?
When the world leaders met at Versailles, they had to settle a wide range of issues. Imagine you are at Versailles. Read each question and click on the answer of your choice. Press start to begin.
What decisions do you think the Allies made regarding Territory?
See how the war and the Treaty of Versailles changed the map of Europe.

Press play to begin.
Germany split by the Polish Corridor

Alsace-Lorraine returned to France

African colonies taken away.

Saar coalfields now under French rule for 15 years

Germany was also forbidden to unite with Austria or Hungary

How did each of these terms affect Germany?
Which was the most serious, and why?
What decisions did the Allies make regarding the Issues of Reparations, Armaments, War Guilt and the League of Nations?
THE MAIN TERMS OF THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES MNEUMONIC: GARGLE

Guilt – clause 231: Germany accepted blame ‘for causing all the loss and damage’ of the war.

Armed forces reduced – army: 100,000/ no submarines/ no aeroplanes/ 6 battleships/ Rhineland de-militarised

Reparations – £6,600 million – in instalments, until 1984.

Germany lost land – Alsace-Lorraine to France/ Saar to France (15 years)/ West Prussia and Upper Silesia to Poland/ Danzig a ‘free city’/ German colonies became ‘mandates’ of the League of Nations.

League of Nations set up.

The Diktat

- When finished, the Germans were given **15 days** to respond to this ‘peace treaty’.

- Germany had to **accept blame** for the war, pay **reparations** and agree to **reductions** in the **armed forces and territory**.

- The Germans were not allowed to make changes so they called the treaty a **‘diktat’** (dictated peace).
The signing of the Treaty of Versailles
German Reactions to the ToV

- Because of Germany’s military collapse, they had no choice but to accept.

- On 28th June 1919, the German delegation signed the Treaty of Versailles at the Palace of Versailles, outside Paris.

- The ToV was unpopular and became a focus of resentment for the next 20 years. Rathenau, the foreign minister, was assassinated in 1922 for signing the treaty!
Dolchstoss!

- After the war many people were looking for **someone to blame**. The army **hadn’t** been destroyed and Germany was **not invaded**. So who stabbed Germany ‘**in-the-back**?’

- The term was attributed to **General Ludendorff** whilst in conversation with **British General Sir Neill Malcolm** in 1919. He asked Ludendorff why it was that he **thought** Germany lost the war. Ludendorff replied with a **list of excuses**, including that the **home front failed the army**:

  Malcolm asked him: “Do you mean, General, that you were stabbed in the back?” Ludendorff’s eyes lit up and he leapt upon the phrase like a dog on a bone. “Stabbed in the back?” he repeated. “Yes, that’s it, exactly, we were stabbed in the back.” And thus was born a legend which has never entirely perished.

(Virginia Quarterly Review, Spring 1938, USA)

**Do you agree with Ludendorff?**
Why would the views of these two men influence public opinion?

Paul Von Hindenburg (1919)

“The German army had been dagger-stabbed from behind by the civilian populace”

Friedrich Ebert (1919)

Told home-coming veterans: “No enemy has vanquished you”
Before long the myth caught on and the politicians who signed the Armistice Agreement became known as the ‘November Criminals’ who stabbed the army in the back.

**Philipp Scheidemann**
politician who proclaimed the Weimar Republic and was its second Chancellor.

**Stabbing the German army ‘in the back’**

**Matthias Erzberger**
an anti-war politician who signed the armistice.

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1924 right-wing German political cartoon
When the Nazis came to power in 1933 they made the legend an integral part of their official history of the 1920s, portraying the Weimar Republic as the work of the November Criminals and the Jews.
The ‘stab-in-the-back’ myth seriously undermined the legitimacy and credibility of the new Weimar Republic. The myth accused the new government of overthrowing the Monarchy and betraying the army.

Despite it being untrue many people believed it and this belief in the new government as ‘backstabbers’ was confirmed in the minds of many when they signed the Treaty of Versailles in June 1919.

How did signing the Treaty of Versailles undermine the credibility of the new Weimar government further?
What was the impact on Germany?

Look at the areas dealt with in the Treaty of Versailles. Which do you think was the most serious for Germany?

1. Territory
2. Reparations
3. Armaments
4. War guilt
5. League of Nations
German reaction to the treaty

Imagine you are a German in 1919. How would you have felt about your country signing the treaty of Versailles?

How does this newspaper consider the peace settlement?

**Vengeance! German Nation**

Today in the Hall of Mirrors, the disgraceful Treaty is being signed. Do not forget it. The German people will with increasing labour press forward to reconquer the place among nations to which it is entitled. Then will come vengeance for the shame of 1919.

L/O: Explain the reaction to the Treaty of Versailles in Germany
Germany was not allowed to participate in the negotiations. The draft treaty was presented to the Germans in May 1919 and they were given 15 days to decide on their reply. The Germans were outraged at the severity of the treaty. The head of the German delegation, Count von Brockdorff-Rantzau, wrote to Clemenceau:

“We were aghast when we read in documents the demands made upon us, the victorious violence of our enemies. The more deeply we penetrate into the spirit of this treaty, the more convinced we become of the impossibility of carrying it out. The exactions of this treaty are more than the German people can bear.”
The effects of Versailles on Germany

Germany lost more than just the war. The Treaty of Versailles resulted in Germany losing:

- **10% of its land**
- **12.5% of its population**

The land lost was some of the most **productive**. Germany needed the revenue from these areas to rebuild the country and pay the £6.6 billion of **reparations**.

Most Germans saw the restrictions placed on the German army as taking away Germany’s right to **defend** itself.

On top of this, Germany would have to bear the **blame** for starting the war. Most Germans saw this as an attack on the honour of the German nation.
German protest and putsch in response to the Treaty of Versailles
In the years following the Treaty of Versailles, there were many protests and attempted revolutions (putsches) in Germany.

In 1919, the Spartacists (a Communist group) attempted to overthrow the new German Government. They were defeated not by the government, but by a force of right-wing ex-soldiers called the Freikorps.

In 1920, the Freikorps attempted a putsch of its own in Berlin, led by Dr. Kapp. It failed when the people of Berlin went on strike until the government was restored.

In 1923, a right-wing nationalist group led by Adolf Hitler tried unsuccessfully to take over Bavaria. This group would later develop into the Nazi Party.
Conclusion: Reaction of the German people

The Treaty of Versailles was **hated** by Germans. Rathenau, the foreign minister, was assassinated in 1922 for signing the treaty.

The Armistice had not led to a fair settlement. The Weimar politicians who signed it were called **November Criminals** because people felt they had betrayed Germany.

The Treaty therefore had **lasting effects** on Germany:

1.) It **weakened the popularity** of the Weimar Republic
2.) It stirred up **political protest**
3.) It **harmed** Germany’s **economy**
Conclusion: Reaction of the German people

Which was more damaging for the new German Republic – losing the war or signing the Treaty of Versailles? Explain your answer carefully.
How much can you remember about the Treaty of Versailles?
Answer each question by selecting the right answer.
Press start to begin.
Read the definition at the bottom and then 'shoo' the right answer....
press start to begin.