

PARIS 1919

Study Guide

About the Film

Inspired by Margaret MacMillan's landmark book, *Paris 1919: Six Months That Changed The World*, this film takes viewers inside the Paris Peace Conference offering a compelling reflection on post-WWI history and how the decisions made during those six fateful months in 1919 continue to haunt us, for better or worse.

In January 1919, Paris became the centre of the world. Armistice had been declared just a few months earlier in the most devastating war of all time. Almost ten million were dead. Two empires had collapsed. The old world order lay in tatters and a new one desperately needed to be created. Driven by unprecedented urgency, delegations from over 30 nations descended upon Paris for the most ambitious peace talks in history. The French capital became the destination of emirs and presidents, newsmen and royalty, ambitious socialites and enterprising arms dealers, each with their own agenda. At the helm of the conference were the "Big Four" of the allied victors: U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau, British Prime Minister David Lloyd George and Italian Prime Minister Vittorio Orlando.

They endeavoured to engineer a peace treaty for all time. While the Big Four staggered under this mind-boggling agenda, separate committees assessed war reparations and realigned national borders, forming new countries such as Iraq and Yugoslavia with little chance for reflection. Meanwhile, the streets were teeming with starving widows and war amputees – and Germany was rearming.

In viewing *Paris 1919* audiences will gain insight into the monumental task that lay before the Big Four and their diplomatic teams, the lasting legacies that were accomplished in the peace settlement, and the inherent weaknesses of the Paris Peace Conference. As some historians argue, many of the pivotal decisions of 1919 set the stage for the impending conflicts of WWII and numerous present-day disputes.

Paris 1919 takes us inside this complex meeting with engaging characters and narrative, documenting a brief time in history when the prospect of everlasting peace gave hope to a weary world. Bringing events into focus are astute observations from John Maynard Keynes and Harold Nicolson, members of the British delegation and players in a real-life cast that also includes Lawrence of Arabia, Chaim Weizmann, and a young Vietnamese kitchen hand named Ho Chi Minh.

PARIS 1919 was produced by the NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA in co-production with 13 PRODUCTION in association with GALAFILM in co-production with ARTE FRANCE in association with TVO, RTBF BELGIUM TV, SIMPLE PRODUCTION, GA&A PRODUCTIONS – ITALY, SBS-TV AUSTRALIA, TSR SWITZERLAND and YLE TEEMA FINLAND

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About this Study Guide

This Guide is specifically designed for use by educators and students who have studied WWI, but can assist anyone interested in exploring the complex issues surrounding the aftermath of WWI, the Treaty of Versailles and its lasting legacy, as well as the challenges involved in creating lasting peace agreements in our contemporary world.

The Context: Important Facts & Figures

Thirty-Two Diplomatic Delegations and Co.

The Paris Peace Conference received 32 national delegations, comprised of more than 500 diplomats, representing nearly 75 percent of the world's population. A remarkable assortment of other international figures also flocked to Paris, including Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann, Queen Marie of Romania, Lawrence of Arabia, King Feisal and Ho Chi Minh – a kitchen hand at the time who went on to become the first president of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

Newsmen, Socialites and Arms Dealers

About 500 reporters were in Paris to cover the event. The city also became a destination for countless other interested parties: businessmen seeking reconstruction deals, socialites seeking rich husbands, arms dealers flogging their wares and lobbyists and petitioners seeking to advance one agenda or another.

The Treaty of Versailles

The most famous document to come out of the Peace Conference was signed with great public ceremony at the Hall of Mirrors in the Palace of Versailles on June 28, 1919. It officially brought the war with Germany to an end and established the terms of peace. Work continued until 1920 on separate treaties with Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey.

German War Reparations

The final terms established that Germany, in acknowledging its guilt in starting the war, should pay 132 billion gold marks (about \$33 billion U.S.) in reparations. In the end only about \$4.5 billion was paid.

Paving the Path to the Second World War?

John Maynard Keynes, a member of the British delegation, would later criticize the Peace Conference in his book *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, claiming that the final deal imposed impossibly harsh terms on the defeated Germans. In ensuing years many historians have endorsed his view, blaming the Big Four for creating conditions that paved the way for Nazism and WWII. Margaret MacMillan takes exception to this view in her 2002 book, *Paris 1919: Six Months That Changed the World*.

New Countries, New Problems

Iraq, Yugoslavia and Palestine were among the new countries created at the Paris Peace Conference. Many current international problems – the Iraq crisis, the Palestine-Israel conflict, the various Balkan wars and the Kurdish struggle for a homeland – trace their roots to decisions made in Paris in 1919.

Italy and Japan: Allies of Entente Powers

In contrast with WWII, when both would become German allies, Italy and Japan fought against Germany in WWI and had delegations at the Peace Conference. The Japanese, represented by senior diplomats rather than their prime minister, pushed unsuccessfully for provisions to ban racial discrimination in the first Covenant of the League of Nations.

First World War Casualties: Unprecedented in History

The First World War, with its newly developed weaponry and systems of warfare, claimed more lives than any previous war. An estimated ten million died, including 1.7 million Russians, 1.6 million Germans, 1.3 million French, 900,000 Austro-Hungarians, more than 600,000 Britons and about 60,000 Americans. Canada lost about 60,000 men, and Newfoundland – which sent its own forces – lost about 1,500.

Heavy French Losses

Being on the frontlines, France not only suffered huge casualties – one quarter of all men between 18 and 30 died and over four million were wounded – but also sustained massive blows to its economy. About six thousand square miles had been decimated – regions that prior to the war produced 20 percent of the nation's crops, 90 percent of its iron ore and 60 percent of its steel.

Fallen Empires

The war saw the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and left the Ottoman Empire fatally weakened. In Russia, the 1917 Revolution had ended the rule of the Tsars, and Bolshevism was inciting both interest and fear throughout Europe and North America.

1918 Flu Epidemic

Adding to the chaos and suffering of the post-war period, a virulent flu epidemic swept across the globe between 1918 and 1920, claiming up to fifty million lives.

Worldwide Social Unrest

A cause of concern to political classes everywhere, the 1917 Russian Revolution had incited a wave of social unrest across Europe and North America, with general strikes taking place from Paris to Glasgow and San Francisco to Winnipeg.

How to use this Study Guide

This Study Guide is divided into three sections:

- I. The first section presents some of the major challenges faced by the peacemakers in Paris. Thoughtful consideration and discussion of these challenges **before, during and after** viewing will allow students to uncover and appreciate the complex forces which were at play.
- II. The second section is organized around the seven chronological chapters of the film. For each chapter the viewer is presented with questions and/or statements to anticipate learning **before viewing**, provoke active engagement **during viewing**, and thoughtful discussion and possible investigation **after viewing**.
- III. The third section focuses on questions that address broad ranging themes or concepts that may require further research or investigation.

SECTION I

Before viewing

- Ask students to anticipate the challenges faced by peacemakers striving to create a lasting world peace.
- Engage students in a discussion about the actual forces at play that could have posed challenges to the peacemakers of 1919.
- Following this initial discussion, introduce students to the challenges listed below. Have them consider how these might have affected negotiations.

Challenges faced by those charged with creating the peace – Questions to Consider:

- 1. Is it possible for all stakeholders to be satisfied?**
Address the challenge of conflicting agendas among the Big Four and other participants assembled in Paris.
- 2. Can values be placed on dead soldiers, lost livestock and destroyed countryside?**
Address the challenge of measuring the costs of war.
- 3. Will new national boundaries be fair and just?**
Address the challenge of redrawing national boundaries in the aftermath of WWI.
- 4. Can new nations be successfully created out of dissolved empires?**
Address the challenge of creating autonomy and identity in new nations.
- 5. Is there a place for idealism in peacemaking?**
Address the challenge of maintaining the ideals and principles of the 14 Points when faced with the natural inclination towards blame.
- 6. Is it too much to expect international organizations to be able to maintain world peace?**
Address the challenge of creating the League of Nations and establishing trust in the principle of Collective Security.
- 7. Can a new world order remedy enduring causes of conflict such as religious and ethnic divides and power hierarchies?**
Address the challenge of engaging the United States (i.e. a New-World nation previously isolated from Old-World conflicts) in the new internationalism required of the League of Nations.

During viewing

- Have students reflect on how these challenges affected the negotiations.

After viewing

- Use the open-ended questions in bold (above) as points of discussion and encourage students to make connections between challenges of the past and continued challenges for present-day peacemakers.

SECTION II

Chapter 1: “The World Comes to Paris” (00:00–15:58)

Summary: Paris, January 20, 1919. The Great War ended two months ago. No peace treaty has been negotiated and a dozen small wars are still raging in Europe. The scale of the war’s destruction is seen in the ever-present maimed, injured and mourning citizens. Ten thousand politicians, diplomats, arms sellers and spies are arriving in Paris for a conference that will forever shape the course of history.

Before Viewing

- Have students consider how the above-noted context in which the nations are assembling might affect the course of the meeting.

During Viewing

- Ask students to identify the leaders of the “Great Powers”: France, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, and the United States, and keep in mind what each nation hopes to achieve at the conference. How similar are their objectives?
- Who are some of the other stakeholder nations (for example, Australia and Greece) and individuals (Zionist Chaim Weizmann and Emir Feisal)? What do they hope to achieve in Paris?
- Ask students to consider what the character Harold Nicholson means when he states: “The Americans have won the war; now they will win the peace.” How valid do students feel this statement is?

After Viewing

- Ask students: “Who is John Maynard Keynes,” and “What was his role at the Conference”? Encourage students to take note of Keynes’ involvement. Ask them to notice how Keynes provides insight into the economic realities of peacemaking.
- Ask students: “Who is Harold Nicholson?” and “What role does he play at the Conference”? Ask students how his diary entries have deepened their understanding of the Paris Peace Conference.

Chapter 2: “Constructing a Lasting Peace” (16:11–25:56)

Summary: Negotiations are underway and hundreds of experts have started to draft up parts of a peace treaty. Land and money are what most delegates covet. They know the conference is their last opportunity to acquire territory before borders are frozen. In addition, they want Germany to pay for the immense costs of the war. The real problem will come when the Allies try to put a dollar figure on what each of their eight million dead soldiers is worth. No accounting of any war in history has ever tried to do that.

Before Viewing

- Engage students in a discussion about the problems that could arise in trying to add up the costs of war.
- What challenges do students think the cartographers might have to contend with in redrawing national boundaries?

During Viewing

- Ask students to take note of the motives of each of the Great Powers and how effective they are at pushing their agendas. Identify the major areas of contention between the leaders.
- Ask students to identify the challenges the cartographers face as they start to redraw the map of Europe
- Students should note the reaction of some nations to the promise of “collective security” in the League of Nations. For example, will it compensate for military security?

After Viewing

- Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Yugoslavia were created in the aftermath of WWI. Ask students to discuss the legacy of these new countries. To what degree are the problems in these regions directly related to the principle of self-determination?
- In the film, Woodrow Wilson’s character states, “The League of Nations will offer security that until now could only be found by military alliances. Once you prepare for war you get it. So maybe for once we prepare for peace.” Ask students to investigate how the League of Nations was to accomplish this “preparation for peace.” What went wrong in the 1920s to 1930s?

Chapter 3: “The Price of Peace” (26:25–39:13)

Summary: While British Prime Minister Lloyd George has promised to “pick the Germans’ pockets dry,” President Wilson achieves an astonishing triumph: In the face of considerable opposition in Europe and growing isolationism in America, his League of Nations is passed by the conference. Negotiations have been shaken up, however, by an assassination attempt on French leader Georges Clemenceau, and by the Western leaders’ crass attempts to outdo each other at the negotiating table.

Before Viewing

- Ask students if they feel it is realistic to expect the Old-World nations to trust the internationalism of the New World proposed in the League of Nations? How realistic is it to expect a formerly isolationist United States to embrace the international scope required of the League of Nations?

During Viewing

- Ask students to take note of the opposing positions the leaders take toward the question of German reparations. Keynes’ commentary during this segment exposes the tension between those advocating moderate German reparations and the weighty demands placed by Clemenceau and Lloyd George. Based on the dialogue between Clemenceau, Wilson, and Lloyd George, what appear to be the major areas of contention surrounding the League of Nations?

After Viewing

- Keynes' character presented two alternatives for Germany: "Either we cancel Germany's debt entirely and let her rebuild to become a partner in the world community, or we open our markets to her goods to let her earn the money to pay us back." Woodrow Wilson advocated leniency towards German reparations. Why did Keynes propose such radical solutions? What might have happened if either of his suggestions had been successful?

Chapter 4: "Plenty of Blame: The Germans Arrive" (39:25–54:20)

- Summary: Six German negotiators and 180 secretaries, translators, lawyers, journalists, barbers and cooks set off from Berlin for Paris. They bring with them documents allegedly proving Germany alone did not start the War. "All armies commit acts of savagery. That's what they're paid to do," says the leader of the German delegation. But the Allies have another agenda: "The Germans," Clemenceau says, "are beaten but they're not crushed. We must finish the job."

Before Viewing

- Ask students how the fact that the Germans believed "they signed an armistice, not an admission of defeat" may have impacted the course of events?

During Viewing

- Ask students to consider the following as they watch the segment:
 - What was the intention of stopping the German train in Verdun? Do you believe this helped or hindered the goals of the peace settlement?
 - Using the evidence presented in the film, how plausible is the German case that they alone are not to blame for WWI?
 - Notice how the German approach to the negotiations contrasts with the French (*hint: legal versus emotional*).
 - Based on what you have collected on each of the Big Four's objectives, what have you noticed about the British position over time?
 - Based on what you have seen of the personalities of Clemenceau, Wilson, Lloyd George and Orlando, who poses the greatest threat to reaching a settlement?

After Viewing

- The German negotiators, under the leadership of Foreign Minister Count Ulrich Von Brockdorff-Rantzau, know the French press views Germany as guilty. Why did the Germans remain confident that Wilson would honour the promise of a just peace? Based on the students' understanding of the 14 Points and evidence taken from the film, ask if they believe the Germans were justified in their belief.
- Read students this dialogue between Lloyd George's character and that of Clemenceau:
L-G: "In the end, if Germany feels that she's been unjustly treated, she will find the means of exacting retribution."
C: "I think we've heard that before."
L-G: "If history has taught us anything, it has taught us that."
C: "History has taught France other lessons."

Ask students what they infer from the two men's comments. What does this exchange reveal about the relationship between the two leaders?

Chapter 5: "Time is Running Out" (54:31–1:06.25)

Summary: As the negotiations drag on, much of the world is starving, out of work and disillusioned. All the pent-up anger from the war is boiling over. Britain wants to continue to rule the seas. Italy is out for loot. France wants protection against the day when Germany might return. America – once the world's conscience – wants her loans repaid. And the terms of the treaty are harsher than the Germans ever imagined. Germany will be paralyzed for generations. The Paris Peace Conference is near collapse.

Before Viewing

- The conference enters its fifteenth week and at the same time 100,000 troops per month are returning home. Ask students to discuss what impact this might have on the tone of the conference? What would the impact be on the United States?

During Viewing

- Ask students to consider the following points as they watch the segment:
 - Wilson's popularity is declining in France. Why might this be so and is the criticism of him justified?
 - Why is there a growing sense of urgency at the conference?
 - What issues emerge as the team grapples with establishing the value of reparations. Does this surprise you? Why would the disparity between what is owed and what capital can be raised not have been taken more seriously?
 - How do the original intentions of the Big Four compare to their intentions after months of negotiations?

After Viewing

- Review the contents of the Treaty of Versailles. Brockdorff-Rantzau's response to the terms of the peace treaty is: "We were betrayed." Ask students how valid they feel his response to be.
- Based on students' understanding of the Big Four's objectives for the conference, ask if they feel the Germans were wrong in thinking they would be treated as equals. Was that ever a fair assumption for the Germans to make?
- Clemenceau states, "The Germans are beaten, but they're not crushed." Ask students to speculate on what would have happened had the Germans been totally crushed?
- Using the writing strategy R.A.F.T.S [Role, Audience, Format, Topic, Strong Verb], write a **letter** to a **family member**, **defending** your **position on the terms of the Treaty of Versailles**, as either an **Allied or German observer**.

Chapter 6: "Peace or War?" (1:06.25–1:23.17)

Summary: With time running out in Paris there's a great urgency to get national borders tidied up. The map-makers are instructed to squeeze Shia, Sunni, Kurds and Jews into a new state called Iraq. Orlando and his Italian delegation leave Paris in a huff. Belgium and Japan are threatening to go. The Chinese are not happy. And what if the Germans refuse to sign? Resumed fighting is a real possibility. This time there could be a full invasion of Berlin.

Before Viewing

- Discuss the context in which the delegates scramble to complete the Treaty. Ask students to speculate how the delegates and negotiators must feel knowing there is the possibility Germany could reject of the terms of the treaty.

During Viewing

- Ask students to consider the following points as they watch the segment:
 - What conditions within Europe and abroad are adding to the urgency felt by the delegates?
 - How is each of the Big Four affected by the situation? Does the wider context have an impact on their objectives or strategies?
 - Why might David Lloyd George advocate moderation in dealing with Germany?
 - What is the reason for Wilson's response?

After Viewing

- John Maynard Keynes resigned rather than endorse David Lloyd George's demand for \$300 billion U.S. in German reparations. In defence of his position, he wrote *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, which criticized the harsh treatment of Germany and launched his prodigious career as an economist. Ask students to investigate Keynes' criticism of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. How do historians view his position today?

Chapter 7: “The Treaty of Versailles” (1:23.27 – end)

Summary: The Great War started 1,797 days ago. In a few hours it will be over and a peace treaty will be signed. But all is not well. At the last moment, the Chinese decide to back out; Wilson, they feel, betrayed them. The American president has alienated half a billion people.

Before Viewing

- Ask students to review the goals the Big Four established six months ago. How have they been successful in their goals? How have their goals changed over time?
- With a new government hastily installed in Germany, two reluctant officials are dispatched to Paris to sign the Treaty of Versailles. How do you imagine the Germans feel? Anticipate how the German public will view the signatories.

During Viewing

- Ask students to consider the following points as they watch the segment:
 - Compare the aspirations of the Big Four at the outset of the conference with what was achieved in the final treaty. The film asserts that Clemenceau comes the closest to achieving his goals. Ask students if they support this assertion. Have each of the Great Powers got what they set out to achieve?
 - What happened to each of the leaders of the Big Four and the other key stakeholders mentioned?

After Viewing

- The character Harold Nicholson states: “The peace negotiators were convinced that they would not commit the blunders or iniquities of the Congress of Vienna. Future generations would be equally convinced they would be immune to the defects that assailed the negotiators of Paris. Yet they in turn will be exposed to similar microbes of infection – to the internal inadequacy of human intelligence.” Ask students what they identify as the “microbes of infection” and the “internal inadequacies of human intelligence” that plagued the delegates.
- Ask students to investigate the aspects of the Congress of Vienna the leaders hoped to avoid.
- Ask students to investigate peace settlements of other 20th-century conflicts. Were they similarly plagued with “microbes of infection”?

Note: these points may require further research.

SECTION III

Topics for Further Research and Investigation:

- 1) Wilson assured the leaders that America would provide soldiers to support the League of Nations on foreign soil. Investigate American public and political opinion at the time. Was this promise based on more than Wilson's hopes?
- 2) Historians often blame the absence of the United States' membership in the League of Nations for its failure. Investigate why the Americans did not endorse the League after Wilson's commitments and determine whether America's presence could have altered the course of events leading up to WWII.
- 3) Woodrow Wilson, Georges Clemenceau and David Lloyd George came to Versailles with specific personal and national goals. Investigate each of them. How much did their differing personal and political experience account for their behaviour at Versailles?
- 4) Wilson's commitment to the League of Nations was so strong that in the end he compromised to have it accepted. Compare Wilson's 14 Points and initial aspirations with the actual treaty. How different are they?

Topics Based on the Interview with Margaret MacMillan:

- In the accompanying interview, Margaret MacMillan discusses the importance of the Paris Peace Conference for Canada. Canada is not mentioned in the film; however, as part of the British Empire delegation, it is considered a pivotal step in the development of nationhood. Investigate the role Versailles played for Canada.
- There is much written on the failure of Versailles; however, MacMillan in the interview indicates that much can also be learned from the treaty. What do you think can be learned from Versailles?
- In the interview, MacMillan articulates the standard view of Versailles and WWII. Listen to her assessment of the legacy of Versailles. Investigate another contemporary historian's assessment of Versailles. How do they compare?

PAUL COWAN - FILMOGRAPHY

<u>Year</u>	<u>Film Title</u>	<u>Role</u>
1973	<i>Sword of the Lord</i>	Cameraman
1974	<i>No Way They Want to Slow Down</i>	Cameraman
1975	<i>Descent</i>	Co-director
1976	<i>Coaches</i>	Director/Co-editor
1976	<i>Games of the XXI Olympiad</i>	Cameraman
1977	<i>I'll Go Again</i>	Director/Writer/Editor
1978/9	<i>Going the Distance</i>	Director/Writer/Editor
1980	<i>Coming Back Alive</i>	Cameraman/Co-director
1981	<i>Stages</i>	Director/Writer/Co-editor
1982	<i>The Kid Who Couldn't Miss</i>	Director/Writer
1982	<i>Gala</i>	Cameraman
1983	War series - <i>Anybody's Son Will Do</i> - <i>The Deadly Game of Nations</i> - <i>Goodbye War</i> - <i>The Road to Total War</i> - <i>The Profession of Arms</i>	Director/Cameraman Director/Cameraman Cameraman Cameraman Cameraman
1984	Democracy on Trial: The Morgentaler Affair	Director/Editor/Cameraman/Writer
1986	At the Wheel series - <i>After the Crash</i> - <i>Under the Influence</i>	Director/Writer/Cameraman Director/Writer/Cameraman
1987	<i>No Accident</i>	Director/Cameraman
1987	<i>See No Evil...</i>	Director
1989	<i>Justice Denied</i>	Director/Writer

1991	<i>Double or Nothing: The Rise and Fall of Robert Campeau</i>	Director/Writer/Editor
1995	<i>Lessons</i>	Director/Writer/Editor
1997	<i>Cola Conquest</i> (a three-part series for TV)	Writer
1998	<i>The Love Prophet</i>	Writer
2000	<i>Give Me Your Soul</i>	Director/Writer/Cameraman
2001	<i>Westray</i>	Director/Writer/Cameraman
2005	<i>The Peacekeepers</i>	Director/Writer/Cameraman
2008	<i>Paris 1919</i>	Director/Writer/Cameraman