Terms and Tensions

How three treaty provisions shaped postwar Europe

TOT.C.4.1 "Examine German culpability, reparations, and military downsizing as effects of the Treaty of Versailles."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the wording that assigns responsibility for wartime damage, circle two effects of reparations, and number three military limits. Use your marks to compare what the treaty required with how people responded.

What the Treaty Required

1. In June 1919, German delegates faced a treaty they had not helped negotiate. The Treaty of Versailles required Germany to accept Article 231, which assigned Germany and its allies responsibility for losses and damage caused by their aggression in the war. This clause helped provide a legal basis for demanding compensation; it did not say that Germany alone caused every event of World War I. Many Germans called it a "war guilt" clause and rejected its wording. For the victorious powers, especially France, assigning responsibility helped justify measures meant to repair wartime destruction and prevent another attack.

2. Reparations turned the claim of responsibility into a financial obligation. Germany had to compensate Allied governments for specified wartime damage, and a later commission set the total at 132 billion gold marks in 1921. Payments could include money or goods such as coal. France and Belgium, whose towns, factories, and mines had suffered damage, sought resources to rebuild. German leaders argued that the demands strained their economy and challenged their ability to recover. Disputes over deliveries led France and Belgium to occupy the Ruhr, Germany's major industrial region, in 1923. The treaty's bill thus shaped both recovery plans and bitter postwar conflict.

3. Military limits addressed a different fear: that Germany might launch another war. The treaty capped Germany's army at 100,000 volunteers, ended conscription, and banned its air force, tanks, and submarines. It also barred German troops and fortifications from the Rhineland, a region near France and Belgium. These rules reduced Germany's ability to attack quickly and reassured some of its neighbors, but many Germans saw them as a loss of sovereignty. Together, the responsibility clause, reparations, and military limits tried to make Germany answer for past damage while restricting future force. The same terms also fueled resentment inside Germany.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Article 231 support the demand for reparations without saying Germany alone caused every event of the war?

2. How could reparations help France and Belgium while creating a problem for Germany?

3. Choose two military limits from the passage. How could each make Germany's neighbors feel safer?

4. Reparations and military limits served different purposes. Why might both have caused resentment in Germany?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a brief report for a neutral newspaper in 1921 explaining how the treaty's terms might reassure France yet anger Germans. Include one accurate detail each about responsibility, reparations, and military downsizing, and distinguish treaty requirements from possible reactions.

ANSWER KEY

Terms and Tensions

HIGH SCHOOL · TOT.C.4.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the wording that assigns responsibility for wartime damage, circle two effects of reparations, and number three military limits. Use your marks to compare what the treaty required with how people responded. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Article 231 support the demand for reparations without saying Germany alone caused every event of the war?	**It assigned Germany and its allies responsibility for losses and damage caused by their aggression, providing a basis for compensation without assigning Germany sole responsibility for every event.**
2	How could reparations help France and Belgium while creating a problem for Germany?	**France and Belgium sought resources to rebuild damaged areas. German leaders argued that the payments strained Germany's economy and recovery.**
3	Choose two military limits from the passage. How could each make Germany's neighbors feel safer?	**A 100,000-person army reduced the force Germany could send into battle, while the ban on troops in the Rhineland made a quick attack across that border harder. Other supported pairs are acceptable.**
4	Reparations and military limits served different purposes. Why might both have caused resentment in Germany?	**Reparations demanded resources that German leaders said strained recovery. Military limits reduced Germany's armed forces and were seen by many Germans as a loss of sovereignty.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The Treaty of Versailles required Germany to accept responsibility, alongside its allies, for losses and damage caused by their aggression. That provision supported demands for reparations, which could provide resources to rebuild damaged areas of France. Germany was also required to keep its army at no more than 100,000 volunteers and leave the Rhineland free of German troops. Those limits could make French people feel safer from another attack. The requirements did not guarantee peace, however. Germans who disputed the responsibility clause or feared that payments would strain their economy might resent the treaty, while others might object to the loss of military independence.

Accept other passage-supported military limits and reasonable explanations of their effects. For the report, check that students identify all three terms accurately and treat reassurance or resentment as possible reactions, not treaty requirements.