Standard 2.1: Aims of the participants & peacemakers-Woodrow Wilson & The Fourteen Points.

Guiding Questions

- Analyze the ways in which Europe was affected by WWI.
- Assess the view that Germany suffered more than France in WWI.
- Why was it difficult for the Allied leaders to reach an agreement over the terms to be imposed on Germany at the end of the war.
- To what extent was Wilson’s 14 points ‘idealistic and impractical.’

I. Problems of the Peacemakers
   a. Economic impact of WWI
      i. Disruption of international trade
      ii. Indebted nations-especially to the United States
      iii. European nations in the war lost overseas markets to non-European nations with the US emerging as the strongest post-war economic power
   b. Social impact of WWI
      i. Massive casualties exacerbated by the Spanish Flu epidemic of 1918-19 that killed over 40 million people.
      ii. Massive food shortages, especially in Germany
         1. Popular protests in Germany grew towards the end of the War
   c. Political impact of WWI
      i. Dissolution of the Russian Empire and the following Bolshevik Revolution leading Russia to exit WWI with the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk
      ii. Problems in Central & Eastern Europe, the Middle and Far East
         1. British and French commitments during the war were expected to be honored.

II. Aims of the Big Three
   a. The United States and Woodrow Wilson's idealism
      i. Claims of fighting for ideals of freedom and democracy rather than territorial gain.
      ii. Push for open negotiations rather than secret agreements
      iii. An end to the global arms race
      iv. Economic Co-operation
v. Creation of a League of Nations to resolve disputes between states.

vi. Views of Wilson

1. Europeans felt he was too idealistic, not understanding of the European situation and the US experienced less suffering than Europe.

2. Did not want Germany to go unpunished, but did not want those to be excessive
   a. A harsh peace would result in Germany seeking retribution
   b. US wanted Germany as a viable trading partner.

3. Fourteen Points from a January 8, 1918 speech to Congress
   a. Reaction to the 14 Points
      i. Many in Allied nations saw the 14 Points as too idealistic and impractical.
      ii. National interests may not be protected
      iii. Britain & France saw the 14 Points as an attack on imperialism
      v. Britain and France reluctantly accepted the 14 Points out of fear that the US would back out of WWI and sign a separate peace.

b. France
   i. Main goal was security & preventing a full German recovery.
      1. Invaded by Germany twice since 1870
      2. Restoration of the balance of power in Europe to contain Germany
      3. Hopes of breaking Germany into smaller states.
      5. Creation of strong and independent Poland and Czechoslovakia to buffer Germany in the East.

c. Britain
   i. Seen as a middle ground between American idealism and French desire for revenge, but Britain was under great public pressure for a harsh peace while the dominions wanted a share of reparations.
   ii. Concern over German Naval threat
iii. Fontainebleau Memorandum
   1. Germany must regard the treaty as fair for any hope of a lasting peace.

iv. Concerns over communist threat spreading to a humiliated Germany

v. Did not want to see France become too powerful, rather a restoration of a
   traditional balance of power.

vi. Resumption of trade between a rebuilt Germany and Britain.

III. Expectations of Italy and Japan
   a. In order to win their support, Britain and France made promises to a number of nations
      during the war. These promises, however, were difficult to balance with the idealism of
      the Fourteen Points.
   b. Italian demands for territory
      i. As Italy joined the war only in 1915, they received little sympathy from the Big
         Three. Additional demands were not met, nor were all of the original promises
         granted.
   c. Japanese promises would not be met, either.
      i. Japan felt it was not treated as an equal partner but rather was racially
         discriminated against.

IV. German Expectations
   a. Germany had actually come close to winning the war and most of the populace did not
      see themselves as a 'defeated' nation.
      i. Germany was never invaded during the course of the war and at the armistice,
         their armies were closer to Paris than to the German border.
   b. The Spring Offensive came close to being a success but was halted by German
      exhaustion and fresh allied troops-the US.
      i. Germany hoped to sign an armistice with the US, believing they would be more
         lenient.
   c. Revolution in Germany
      i. Mutiny by German Sailors in late October 1918 led to other protests and
         mutinies by the army.
      ii. Civilian population joined in as food shortages due to the British blockade
         became even more serious.
      iii. As the protests grew, the Kaiser abdicated and a new republic was declared: The
         Weimar Republic.
      iv. The new government signed the armistice on 11/11/18.
         1. Many in the populace were largely in the dark about the failing war
            effort, blamed the Weimar government for the defeat, calling those that
            signed the armistice the "November Criminals"
   d. Problems facing the provisional government.
      i. Distrust from the populace
ii. Blame for the defeat and the post-war difficulties citizens experienced

iii. Threats of communist movements in Germany grew

e. Post-Armistice

i. Germans felt that blame for the war should be spread throughout the nations.

ii. Hopes that Wilson's Fourteen Points would be the guiding force of the Treaty discussions.

iii. Feelings that the Kaiser had been overthrown and that the new government was not responsible for the actions of the previous.

iv. Belief that the allies would recognize the vulnerability of the new government and, thus, not make demands that would further weaken it.