

The Marshall Plan Lesson Plan

Grade Level

This lesson was developed for students in grades 9-12, in conjunction with the Nuremberg Exhibit at the New Mexico Holocaust and Intolerance Museum and specifically, the book, *A Government Girl in Germany* created by Dorothy Adams Greene, 1949, which describes her travels through Europe in the years following the end of World War II.

Subject

World History, U.S. History

Rationale

Understand how the Marshall Plan helped Europe recover from the effects of World War II.

Key Questions

Who was George Marshall?

What was the Marshall Plan and was it successful?

How has the Marshall Plan changed the way the world, and specifically the U.S., responds to war?

Pre-Lesson Work

Read pages 4-5, 13, 60-1 from *A Government Girl in Germany* for description of life in Germany after the war.

<https://online.flippingbook.com/view/306576642/>

Standards

National Standards for Civics and Government

Grades 6-8

III.B.1.3

To achieve this standard, students should be able to identify historical and contemporary examples of important foreign policies, e.g., Monroe Doctrine, Marshall Plan, immigration acts, foreign aid, arms control, promoting democracy and human rights throughout the world.

Grades 9-12

IV.B.1.2

To achieve this standard, students should be able to explain how and why the United States assumed the role of world leader after World War II and what its leadership role is in the world today.

New Mexico Social Studies Standards – High School U.S. History

Theme 8, History 19. Grades 9-12 Summarize U.S. diplomatic and military policies during the Cold War.

Theme 8, Geography 13. Grades 9-12 Describe how particular historical events and developments shaped human processes and systems between 1945 and 1975.

Vocabulary

Rehabilitation Demoralizing

Truman Doctrine

Dislocation Palliative

Containment:

Enterprise Alleviate

Marshall Plan

Cold War

NATO

Opening Question

What role/responsibilities do the victors in war have to the countries that lost and may have sustained significant damage to their infrastructure and their population? Consider what the Treaty of Versailles did to Germany after World War 1.

Read In small groups or as a class read <https://www.marshallfoundation.org/the-marshall-plan/>

(A copy of the speech is attached at the end of this lesson plan.)

OR

Listen to Marshall's speech in Harvard Yard in June of 1947,
<https://www.marshallfoundation.org/the-marshall-plan/speech/>

The recorded speech is 10 minutes 51 seconds.

Have students answer the following questions as they study the speech.

1. Why does Marshall think that Americans are not able to understand the situation in Europe?
2. What are some of the conditions that are making rehabilitation of Europe more difficult?
3. How did the farmers react to the situation and what has happened as a result?
4. What does Marshall think the role of the United States should be?

Effect of the Marshall Plan

From Library of Congress <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/marshall/marsh-overview.html>

Although others helped draft the Economic Assistance Act of 1948 that established the ERP, the plan was named for George C. Marshall because of his indispensable role, his influence, and his

extraordinary prestige with Congress and the American people. A graduate of the Virginia Military Institute, Marshall was by World War II army chief of staff, a post he held throughout the war. He exerted tremendous influence during the war years and afterwards assumed key civilian posts in the Truman Administration. He became secretary of state in 1947 and later served as secretary of defense. For his efforts in reviving Europe, Marshall won the 1953 Nobel Peace Prize, the first professional soldier to receive it.

Over the four-years during which the Marshall Plan was formally in operation, Congress appropriated \$13.3 billion for European recovery. Although modest in terms of Europe's total gross national product, the aid supplied critically needed materials to get production operating again. The United States also benefited from the plan by developing valuable trading partners and reliable allies among the West European nations. Even more important were the many ties of individual and collective friendship that developed between the United States and Europe.

The plan was the boldest, most successful, and certainly the most expensive foreign policy initiative ever attempted in peacetime. A milestone in the growth of U.S. world leadership, the Marshall Plan has had far-reaching consequences. In the short run, it relieved widespread privation and averted the threat of a serious economic depression. In the long run, it enabled the West European nations to recover and maintain not only economic but political independence. It also paved the way for other forms of international cooperation such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and today's European Union.

Additional Resources

[The Candy Bomber](#)

<https://www.defense.gov/News/Feature-Stories/story/Article/3073227/the-sweet-legacy-of-a-berlin-airlift-hero/#:~:text=Candy%20Bomber-,Lt.,the%20air%20on%20tiny%20parachutes.&text=He%20would%20rock%20the%20wings,plane%20was%20carrying%20the%20chocolate.>

See also

<https://www.amazon.com/Mercedes-Chocolate-Pilot-Airlift-Dropped-ebook/dp/B00EXBQB6Y>

[The Marshall Plan and the Cold War](#)

<https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/education/presidential-inquiries/marshall-plan-and-cold-war>

[Photo Analysis Activity](#)

Use the photo analysis worksheet to examine the following photographs of post-War Europe.

https://www.archives.gov/files/education/lessons/worksheets/photo_analysis_worksheet_former.pdf

<https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/education/presidential-inquiries/marshall-plan-and-cold-war>



image courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration, 540139



Savage Continent: Europe in the Aftermath of World War Two, By Keith Lowe | The Independent
| The Independent



Photo Credit: Children of an eastern suburb of London, who have been made homeless by the random bombs of the Nazi night raiders, waiting outside the wreckage of what was their home. Taken September 1940. National Archives, via Wikimedia Commons.

Transcript of Marshall's speech to the Harvard class:

Handout version: The speech was not given at the formal June 5 morning commencement exercise but after lunch when the twelve honorary degree recipients made speeches to the graduates, friends, and alumni. The speech was tape-recorded.

The following is from the State Department's handout version of June 4, 1947.

I need not tell you gentlemen that the world situation is very serious. That must be apparent to all intelligent people. I think one difficulty is that the problem is one of such enormous complexity that the very mass of facts presented to the public by press and radio make it exceedingly difficult for the man in the street to reach a clear appraisal of the situation. Furthermore, the people of this country are distant from the troubled areas of the earth and it is hard for them to comprehend the plight and consequent reactions of the long-suffering peoples, and the effect of those reactions on their governments in connection with our efforts to promote peace in the world.

In considering the requirements for the rehabilitation of Europe the physical loss of life, the visible destruction of cities, factories, mines and railroads was correctly estimated, but it has become obvious during recent months that this visible destruction was probably less serious than the dislocation of the entire fabric of European economy. For the past ten years conditions have been highly abnormal. The feverish preparation for war and the more feverish maintenance of the war effort engulfed all aspects of national economies. Machinery has fallen into disrepair or is entirely obsolete. Under the arbitrary and destructive Nazi rule, virtually every possible enterprise was geared into the German war machine. Long-standing commercial ties, private institutions, banks, insurance companies and shipping companies disappeared, through loss of capital, absorption through nationalization or by simple destruction. In many countries, confidence in the local currency has been severely shaken. The breakdown of the business structure of Europe during the war was complete. Recovery has been seriously retarded by the fact that two years after the close of hostilities a peace settlement with Germany and Austria has not been agreed upon. But even given a more prompt solution of these difficult problems, the rehabilitation of the economic structure of Europe quite evidently will require a much longer time and greater effort than had been foreseen.

There is a phase of this matter which is both interesting and serious. The farmer has always produced the foodstuffs to exchange with the city dweller for the other necessities of life. This division of labor is the basis of modern civilization. At the present time it is threatened with breakdown. The town and city industries are not producing adequate goods to exchange with the food-producing farmer. Raw materials and fuel are in short supply. Machinery is lacking or worn out. The farmer or the peasant cannot find the goods for sale which he desires to purchase. So the sale of his farm produce for money which he cannot use seems to him an unprofitable transaction. He, therefore, has withdrawn many fields from crop cultivation and is using them for grazing. He feeds more grain to stock and finds for himself and his family an ample supply of food,

however short he may be on clothing and the other ordinary gadgets of civilization. Meanwhile people in the cities are short of food and fuel. So the governments are forced to use their foreign money and credits to procure these necessities abroad. This process exhausts funds which are urgently needed for reconstruction. This a very serious situation is rapidly developing which bodes no good for the world. The modern system of the division of labor upon which the exchange of products is based is in danger of breaking down.

The truth of the matter is that Europe's requirements for the next three or four years of foreign food and other essential products—principally from America—are so much greater than her present ability to pay that she must have substantial additional help, or face economic, social and political deterioration of a very grave character.

The remedy lies in breaking the vicious circle and restoring the confidence of the European people in the economic future of their own countries and of Europe as a whole. The manufacturer and the farmer throughout wide areas must be able and willing to exchange their products for currencies the continuing value of which is not open to question.

Aside from the demoralizing effect on the world at large and the possibilities of disturbances arising as a result of the desperation of the people concerned, the consequences to the economy of the United States should be apparent to all. It is logical that the United States should do whatever it is able to do to assist in the return of normal economic health in the world, without which there can be no political stability and no assured peace. Our policy is directed not against any country or doctrine but against hunger, poverty, desperation and chaos. Its purpose should be the revival of a working economy in the world so as to permit the emergence of political and social conditions in which free institutions can exist. Such assistance, I am convinced, must not be on a piece-meal basis as various crises develop. Any assistance that this Government may render in the future should provide a cure rather than a mere palliative. Any government that is willing to assist in the task of recovery will find full cooperation, I am sure, on the part of the United States Government. Any government which maneuvers to block the recovery of other countries cannot expect help from us. Furthermore, governments, political parties or groups which seek to perpetuate human misery in order to profit therefrom politically or otherwise will encounter the opposition of the United States.

It is already evident that, before the United States Government can proceed much further in its efforts to alleviate the situation and help start the European world on its way to recovery, there must be some agreement among the countries of Europe as to the requirements of the situation and the part those countries themselves will take in order to give proper effect to whatever action might be undertaken by this Government. It would be neither fitting nor efficacious for this Government to undertake to draw up unilaterally a program designed to place Europe on its feet economically. This is the business of the Europeans. The initiative, I think, must come from Europe. The role of this country should consist of friendly aid in the drafting of a European program and of later support of such a program so far as it may be practical for us to do so. The program should be a joint one, agreed to by a number, if not all European nations.

An essential part of any successful action on the part of the United States is an understanding on the part of the people of America of the character of the problem and the remedies to be

applied. Political passion and prejudice should have no part. With foresight, and a willingness on the part of our people to face up to the vast responsibility which history has clearly placed upon our country, the difficulties I have outlined can and will be overcome.
