The Berlin Wall & Beyond

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# Introduction

The end of World War II led to the division of Europe into two opposing ideological camps. Once united as allies in their war against the Nazis, the United States and the Soviet Union became the world’s competing powerbrokers for the next 40 years. Amidst the redrawing of national boundaries and the political realignments taking shape, Berlin quickly became the symbolic capital of the Cold War. Only four short years after the end of World War II, the western sectors of Berlin—during the airlift—had been transformed, in western eyes, from a bastion of Nazism to the symbolic last outpost of democracy under threat in Europe. The spatial division of Germany between East and West reflected, in fact, the pattern for the entire continent.

Up until 1961, Berlin, though divided, still had borders that remained somewhat permeable. But when tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States increased in the late 1950s over Berlin, East Germans began escaping to the West in record numbers. In order to stem the growing flow of refugees from the German Democratic Republic into the West, the East German government built a wall to cut off future access to West Berlin. No longer divided merely by the metaphoric “Iron Curtain,” Berlin, Germany, and Europe were now divided by an 800-mile inner German border. Between August 1961 and November 1989, at least 81 people were killed trying to escape; another 5,000 made it to the West and about as many tried and failed.

If the Wall was a symbol of the division of Germany and Europe, the fall of the Wall came to signify East German liberation, German unification, and the end of the Cold War. Today, Berlin symbolizes the new political order and finds itself, once again, at the heart of Europe. On the domestic front, German unification has posed numerous challenges. Between the reunification of Germany and the dismantling of the Soviet Union in 1991, Germany’s new parliament voted to move the capital of the new Germany to Berlin. Yet even today, the capital of unified Germany remains a city of contradictions and jarring discontinuities. It bears the scars of destruction and division. Berlin’s demons may never be fully exorcised, but it is the struggle with the ghosts of its past and the formulation of new visions for the future that makes this “unfinished metropolis“[[1]](#footnote-1) the most compelling of cities.

# Objectives

1. Recognize how walls and borders function in everyday life and become aware of the historical parallels to the Berlin Wall found throughout world history.
2. Relate the construction of the Berlin Wall by the East German regime to the East-West tensions of the Cold War.
3. Understand how the Wall was both a symbol of political division and a reality for people living in both halves of Berlin.
4. Understand how East-West perceptions and differing perspectives affected the process and aftermath of reunification and the significance of perceptions in our society and everyday lives.
5. Analyze documents, objects, and other primary sources and its historical context pertaining to East-West perceptions and reunification.
6. Understand the significance of historical memory and recognize ways in which we preserve or memorialize history today, specifically the Berlin Wall and the East-West division of the Cold War.

# Historical Teaching Standards Alignment

The Berlin Wall & Beyond teaching curriculum has been designed to meet specific historical teaching standards from the [National Center for History in Schools (NCHS)](http://www.nchs.ucla.edu/). The curriculum fulfills some or all of the standards from the [World History Era 9 Standards](http://www.nchs.ucla.edu/Standards/world-history-standards/world-era-9), including, but not limited to:

## Standard 1

How post-World War II reconstruction occurred, new international power relations took shape, and colonial empires broke up.

### Standard 1A

The student understands major political and economic changes that accompanied post-war recovery. Therefore, the student is able to:

* Explain how the Western European countries achieved rapid economic recovery after World War II. **(Unit 1)**
* Analyze connections between the political stabilization of Western European societies and the Marshall Plan, and the European Economic Community. **(Units 1 and 2)**
* Explain why fascism was discredited after World War II and how popular democratic institutions were established in the German Federal Republic. **(Units 1 and 2)**

### Standard 1B

The student understands why global power shifts took place and the Cold War broke out in the aftermath of World War II. Therefore, the student is able to:

* Explain how political, economic, and military conditions prevailing in the mid-1940s led to the Cold War. **(Units 1 and 2)**
* Analyze major differences in the political ideologies and values of the Western democracies and the Soviet bloc. **(Units 1 and 2)**
* Compare the impact of Soviet domination on Eastern Europe with changes that occurred in German society under Allied occupation. **(Units 1, 2, 3, and 4)**
* Explain the causes and international and local consequences of major Cold War crises, such as the Berlin blockade, the Hungarian revolt, and the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. **(Units 1, 2, 3, and 4)**

## Standard 2

The search for community, stability, and peace in an interdependent world.

### Standard 2B

The student understands how increasing economic interdependence has transformed human society. Therefore, the student is able to:

* Explain the effects of the European Economic Community and its growth on economic productivity and political integration in Europe. **(Units 1 and 2)**
* Compare systems of economic management in communist and capitalist countries. **(Units 1, 2, 4)**

### Standard 2C

The student understands how liberal democracy, market economies, and human rights movements have reshaped political and social life. Therefore, the student is able to:

* Explain why Cold War tensions eased in the 1970s and analyze how the development of the Reagan-Gorbachev “summit diplomacy” affected progress toward détente. **(Units 3, 4, and 5)**
* Explain why the Soviet and other communist governments collapsed and the Soviet Union splintered into numerous states in the 1980s and early 1990s. **(Units 5 and 6)**

## Standard 3

Major global trends since World War II.

### Standard 3A

The student understands major global trends since World War II. Therefore, the student is able to:

* Explain why the Cold War took place and ended and assess its significance as a 20th-century event. **(Units 5, 6, and 7)**

Although the curriculum is focused on how the Cold War took shape in Europe (and, more specifically, in Germany), when supplemented with additional information regarding Asian, African, and Latin American history and conflicts, this program can serve as a base to fulfill all [World History Era 9 Standards](http://www.nchs.ucla.edu/Standards/world-history-standards/world-era-9) from [NCHS](http://www.nchs.ucla.edu/).

# Unit 1: The “Iron Curtain”

## Introduction

The Allied bombing of Berlin, particularly during the last year of the war, as well as the Soviet assault from the East destroyed some 40% of the capital, reducing many parts of the city to a heap of rubble. The city that had made itself into the power center of Europe at the expense of tens of millions of lives was now occupied by foreign powers. After Germany’s unconditional surrender, which put an end to World War II, few people at the time could have determined the political environment that would shape German, European, and world history for the next 40 years.

During the war, the Allies disagreed over the future of postwar Germany. At the Yalta Conference, held from February 4-11, 1945, the “Big Three” (British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, American President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Joseph Stalin, leader of the Soviet Union) came to several agreements. First, they decided that Germany would be carved into four occupied zones to oversee demilitarization and denazification of the country, with France’s zone being taken from the Americans and British. Second, Stalin agreed to participate in the United Nations, with the understanding that each of the 16 Soviet Socialist Republics under Russian control would also be granted membership. Finally, Stalin made several concessions regarding Soviet-occupied Poland, including that a more “democratic” government would be installed in the country through “free” elections.

However, many things changed between February and the start of the Potsdam Conference (July 17-August 2, 1945). President Roosevelt died on April 12, nearly a month before the Nazis surrendered on May 8, and Vice President Harry S. Truman replaced him. Truman felt that Roosevelt was being too soft on the Soviets and mistrusted Stalin’s intentions in Eastern Europe. Further complicating matters, during the conference, Clement Attlee replaced Churchill as Prime Minister.

Although Stalin had agreed with Roosevelt that he would declare war with Japan 90 days after the surrender of Germany, the time never came. At Potsdam, Truman had hinted to Stalin of a new weapon—the atomic bomb, which was to strain the relations between the two countries even further.

After witnessing the power of the bomb in Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9, respectively, Stalin tightened his grip on Eastern Europe. He annexed several countries as Soviet Socialist Republics and brought others in as Soviet satellites, including: Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Albania, and East Germany. These countries formed a buffer between the capitalist West and the Communist East and would come to be known as the “Eastern Bloc.”

In early 1946, the future conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States was already apparent to Churchill. In March, he delivered a speech at Westminster College in Missouri entitled “The Sinews of Peace:”

From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic an Iron Curtain has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia; all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject, in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and in some cases increasing measure of control from Moscow. [[2]](#footnote-2)

This emerging Cold War was to play out on many fronts, but Germany, and especially Berlin, became a poignant symbol of the ensuing fight.

Political Structure in Occupied Germany  
The Allied Control Council for occupied Germany gave governing authority of these zones to a Kommandantur, the council of military commandants from each zone. The zones of occupation for the United States, the USSR, Great Britain, and, later, France would mark the line that was to become the East-West division of Europe. Each of these zones would be under the sphere of influence of its occupying country. Berlin, though lying wholly in the Soviet Zone, was also divided into four sectors and put under a similar four-power agreement.

Each of the four Allied occupation forces sought to implement policies that would punish Germany for its aggression while also preventing a resurgence of German militarism. From the beginning, however, these occupation arrangements were fraught with difficulty. In the Soviet zone, the Soviet Military Administration quickly sought to take control of all key positions in Berlin’s administration. The British and Americans set up a local management system that would promote the creation of democratic institutions of government in their respective areas of influence. In short, each nation sought to reshape its zone in Germany in its own image. But it was becoming clear that the Soviets and the Western Allies, who together were supposed to make policy for Germany by unanimous agreement, would not be able to agree on economic measures to help German recovery. As a result, the United States, together with the British, combined their zones to establish a political structure uniting the three western zones. The bizone (comprised of the US and British zones) and eventually the trizone (including the French) comprised a new West German political and economic unit, to be known as the Federal Republic of Germany or *Bundesrepublik*.

#### Economic Reform in Occupied Germany

To facilitate the economic recovery of Western Europe, the United States introduced the European Recovery Program -- better known as the Marshall Plan. This program represented a major shift in Western policy. Besides guaranteeing America an overseas market for her goods, the Marshall Plan was designed to help fortify Western Europe as a bulwark against the expansion of Communism in central Europe. This spelled a decisive shift in priorities away from anti-Nazism and towards anti-Communism. This economic aid helped Western nations reach prewar economic levels and even surpass them, making the years 1948-1952 some of the most prosperous in European history.

In fact, the Marshall Plan aid was also offered to Eastern European countries, including the Soviet Union. However, the non-negotiable terms of receiving aid, including the implementation of a market economy, were the antithesis of the planned economy in the USSR, which Stalin hoped to introduce to the Eastern Bloc countries. Fearing a weakening of the Soviet sphere of influence in the East, Stalin immediately rejected the plan, forcing the Eastern countries to do the same. Instead, Soviet foreign minister Vyacheslav Molotov devised an alternative form of aid for the East from the USSR. The Molotov Plan, a precursor to COMECON, or the Council for Mutual Economic Assitance, was a system of bilateral trade agreements, meant to strengthen the economic alliance and interdependence in the East. COMECON was characterized by central planning, which meant that although prices would be competitive in capitalist states, member states would have price stability. The centralized Soviet government subsidized this uniformity.

## Activities & Discussion Questions

### Activity 1-A

1. Have students draw mental maps of their neighborhood, city, or country.
   1. Discuss the images and perceptions they have of their immediate neighborhood and city, using their drawn maps as guides. Make sure to discuss borders and barriers (both tangible and psychological) within the students’ neighborhoods, city, or country. Relate this to Churchill’s “Iron Curtain.”
      1. Although there wasn’t a tangible wall separating East and West, what psychological, political, and economic factors divided the European continent following World War II?

### Activity 1-B

1. Have the class read Robert Frost’s poem the *Mending Wall* [Document 1] by either passing the document out or putting it on a projector.
   1. Have the students express their opinions of the poem aloud and work out its meaning as a class or in small groups.
   2. Then prompt the students: do they agree with the sentiment seemingly expressed in the first stanza that walls/borders represent artificial barriers against which the natural order revolts? Or are they, as the second stanza implies, important boundaries that foster cooperation and respect between neighbors by delineating personal space?

#### Discussion 1-B

* 1. Next, lead students in a class discussion to reflect on borders in their own city or country, such as fences that divide neighboring properties, by offering the following questions: How might divisions or physical barriers change one’s perception of the other side? How do barriers inform one’s place and position locally, or internationally? How do barriers or fences foster respect between neighbors yet often sow the seeds of discord and division?
     1. Berlin as a large city is divided into sectors in such a way similar to how Los Angeles County is divided into multiple townships (e.g. Downtown; Beverly Hills; Santa Monica; East Los Angeles; etc.). These sector lines predated the construction of the Berlin Wall, which actually following municipal divisions from prewar Berlin. Discuss the role that this type of inner-city division plays in how an individual may identify himself.
     2. How would urban city planning as we know it also foster divisions? (E.g. highways; tunnels; railroads; etc.)
  2. To round out the discussion prompt the class to consider other walls that have been constructed throughout world history (e.g. the Great Wall of China, the Roman emperor Hadrian’s Wall in Britain, the U.S.-Mexico border fence, the Israeli wall in the West Bank, or even the digital “Great Firewall” in modern China).
  3. Focus on a historical example or two brought up by the students. Compare the purposes of these examples with the Berlin Wall:
     1. E.g. The Roman emperor Hadrian’s Wall contained the marauding Picts within Scotland. The Israeli wall in the West Bank encompasses the dual purpose—like the Berlin Wall—of keeping Israeli settlers safely within its confines and Palestinians outside. Indeed, this argument was used in East Berlin classrooms, where students were led to believe that the Wall kept out western spies and agitators. While the “Great Firewall” continues to impose a bygone level of geographic isolation on the Chinese people by censoring the flow of information, borders and distance become increasingly irrelevant through the ease of information sharing in the digital age.
     2. Remember to keep in mind that the point of the discussion is to show the historical occurrence of walls, that the Berlin Wall is in many respects not unique to world history, and that such barriers persist into the modern world.

#### Assignment 1-B

* 1. At the end of the discussion pose the following questions or assign them as a written assignment.
     1. Find a historical wall or barrier (e.g. Great Wall of China) then compare and contrast it with the Berlin Wall.
     2. What are the possible reasons for erecting such barriers, specifically for individuals and nations?
     3. Are these borders arbitrary or logical?
     4. Do these “walls” succeed in accomplishing their intended goal?

# Unit 2: A World Divided

## Introduction

Tensions continued to escalate throughout the late 1940s. The Greek Civil War, which lasted from 1946-1949 and was fought between the Greek government army (backed by the US and Britain) and Democratic Army of Greece (the military branch of the Greek Communist Party, backed by the USSR), became one of the first battlegrounds for the Cold War. In response to the growing concern that the Communists might overrun Greece and spread into Turkey, President Truman spoke before Congress to ask for aid to be sent to combat the Communists. This address came to be known as the Truman Doctrine, which was delivered on March 12, 1947 and stated:

This is no more than a frank recognition that totalitarian regimes imposed on free peoples, by direct or indirect aggression, undermine the foundations of international peace and hence the security of the United States.

The peoples of a number of countries of the world have recently had totalitarian regimes forced upon them against their will. The Government of the United States has made frequent protests against coercion and intimidation, in violation of the Yalta agreement, in Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria. I must also state that in a number of other countries, there have been similar developments.

At the present moment in world history, nearly every nation must choose between alternative ways of life. The choice is too often not a free one.

One way of life is based upon the will of the majority and is distinguished by free institutions, representative government, free elections, guarantees of individual liberty, freedom of speech and religion, and freedom from political oppression. The second way of life is based upon the will of a minority forcibly imposed upon the majority. It relies upon terror and oppression, a controlled press and radio, fixed elections, and the suppression of personal freedoms.

I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.

I believe that we must assist free peoples to work out their own destinies in their own way.

I believe that our help should be primarily through economic and financial aid, which is essential to economic stability and orderly political processes.[[3]](#footnote-3)

The Truman Doctrine came to dominate American responses to international crises throughout the last half of the 20th century. From Greece and Turkey to Korea and Vietnam, the Truman Doctrine pledged to aid democracies in the fight against tyranny, and this was no more evident than in Berlin.

#### The Berlin Blockade & Airlift

In February 1948, Communists launched a successful coup d’état in Czechoslovakia, further tightening their control on the region and strengthening their buffer against a possible Western invasion. By June, the Western powers introduced currency reform in western Germany, which was meant to stabilize the economy and to combat the black-market economy that had dominated since the end of the war. In response to the perceived economic threat by the Western Allies, the Soviet authorities imposed a blockade of West Berlin. They also announced that the four-power administration of Berlin was no longer valid and that the Western Allies had no right to occupy Berlin. Blocking off all communication by rail, road, or waterway with Western sectors, the Soviets attempted to push the Western Allies out of Berlin to consolidate their foothold in Europe.

Since Berlin was located in the middle of the Soviet zone of Germany, the Western sectors depended on the land routes and waterways of East Germany for transporting supplies. The Western Allies responded to the Soviet attempt to cut off the city by airlifting vital supplies to the blockaded western sector of Berlin. Between June 24, 1948 and May 12, 1949, Allied planes flew nearly two million tons of food, coal, and other necessities to the besieged city. At the peak of the airlift, planes were landing every ninety seconds in West Berlin. After eleven months and 277,000 Allied flights, the Soviets were forced to abandon the blockade. The airlift saved West Berlin and frustrated the blockade. It also solidified the ties between the people of West Germany and the Western Powers, who now viewed Germans living in western Berlin as good democrats and partners in the fight against Communism. West Berliners were also deeply appreciative of western efforts against the Russians. Only four short years after the end of World War II, the western sectors of Berlin had been transformed in western eyes from a bastion of Nazism to the symbolic last outpost of democracy under threat in Europe.

In 1949, the division between the Soviet and Western zones of Germany became official. Two separate German states were established, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), or West Germany, under Western influence, and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in the East, under Soviet influence. According to the Potsdam agreement, however, these states were to be considered temporary. In the West, an economic upswing already promised the return to normal life. Life in East Germany, however, underwent serious changes.

#### Sovietization and Its International Consequences

In July 1952, on Stalin’s order, East German Communist Party General Secretary Walter Ulbricht initiated an intensification of Sovietization. The growing concentration on heavy industry further exacerbated the shortage of food and consumer goods. Authorities also hoped to increase the required work and quotas for the same wages, which was meant to take effect on June 30, 1953. As a result of the harsh living conditions, thousands fled from the East. This mass emigration led to a “brain drain,” the flight of qualified workers. In response to the emigrations and hoping to lessen Stalin’s demands prior to his death in March 1953, Soviet authorities ordered East Germany to loosen its stronghold. However, the damage had already been done.

On June 17, a general strike erupted at the Stalin-Allee construction site. The boulevard, which was meant to be the leading achievement of GDR reconstruction in East Berlin, was now overflowing with tens of thousands of protestors who not only marched against the unfair working conditions, but also against Communist control. Within a few hours, Soviet troops and tanks had opened fire and cleared the area. It is estimated that as many as several hundred died, although the exact number remains unclear. June 1953 became a defining moment in East German identity and solidified the government’s ties to their Soviet backers. As a result of the protest and in true Soviet style, the GDR intensified the surveillance of its citizens through the use of the Stasi, the state secret police.

In 1955, in response to the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which was an organization of Western countries that vowed to defend one another against attack, the Soviet Union forced its Eastern European satellites to sign the Warsaw Pact. The Pact was similar to NATO in that it promised mutual military aid and was the military counterpart to COMECON.

Despite the Warsaw Pact, in 1956, the Soviets were again forced to enter the Bloc to ensure their power. A student protest erupted in Budapest on October 23 and soon grew into a mass demonstration across the whole of Hungary, which led to the collapse of the government. The Soviets, however, were unwilling to lose their grip on the country, sending in an enormous force to regain control. Several thousand Hungarians died, and the invasion showed what the Soviets were capable of in order to retain control.

In 1957, the Western countries saw a need to further integrate their economies in order to match the East. The Treaty of Rome sought to break down economic barriers and establish a common market for West European goods, thereby creating the European Economic Community (EEC), the capitalist answer to COMECON. The common market established standardized regulation of goods and labor and abolished protective tariffs between member nations (originally, France, Italy, West Germany, Belgium, Netherlands, and Luxembourg). It was thought that uniting former enemies economically would help to prevent further conflicts. The European Economic Community (in addition to the European Coal and Steel Community, established in 1951 by the Paris Treaty to create a common market for those products specifically, and the European Atomic Energy Community [EURATOM]), established in 1958 to regulate the distribution of nuclear power, eventually formed the basis of the European Union and grew to include 28 member states.

#### Exodus West and Enforced Division

The further integration of the West (and especially West Germany) no doubt put the Soviets on edge. By 1958, the USSR sought once more to push the Western powers out of West Berlin, demanding that all representatives of Western countries leave Berlin. Nikita Khrushchev, who assumed leadership of the Soviet Union following Stalin’s death, issued an ultimatum that led to the exodus of hundreds of thousands of people from East Germany via West Berlin. Allied troops did not move, however, and the ultimatum was rescinded a month later.

Despite the political crises and heightened tensions between the FRG and the GDR, the border between East and West Berlin still remained somewhat permeable. Residents from the East were able to hold jobs in the West and could visit friends and family there. Moreover, between 1949 and 1961, more than 2.5 million East Germans fled to the West. Some resettled in West Berlin, but most quickly completed the political step they had taken by making themselves part of the West German economy.

On arrival (by foot, by subway, or surface transportation, which still connected the sectors of Berlin), refugees from East Germany were directed to the West Berlin suburb of Marienfelde and the busy reception center devoted to registering and the initial processing of newcomers. Few East German refugees chose to remain in West Berlin. Not only was the employment picture less promising compared with the burgeoning prosperity of West Germany, but, as the newcomers knew only too well, West Berlin was still surrounded by Soviet and Warsaw Pact forces prepared to swallow the city and its inhabitants on short notice. Instead, the recent arrivals, with new identification papers, were promptly flown to Hanover or Frankfurt for further processing. After a week or two spent in a second reception center, marked by more screening and indoctrination to life in the West, the new “Bundesbürger,” as citizens of the Federal Republic, were released to tackle the job market and begin a new life in the capitalist world.

To stem the flow of refugees from the GDR through Berlin, the East German government had long sought Russian authorization to cut off all access to West Berlin.

On August 13, 1961, GDR soldiers and labor gangs began erecting fence posts and barbed wire along the border separating the Soviet and western sectors of the city. All streets connecting the eastern and western sectors of the city were blocked, subway lines that crossed the border were closed, and telephone service between the two sectors was abruptly cut off. The Berlin Wall eventually stood 13 feet high and extended 43 kilometers (roughly 27 miles) within the city. Another 112 kilometers (approximately 70 miles) of fortified barriers, known as the “outer ring,” encircled the city, enclosing Berlin. Along much of the eastern side of the inner city wall ran a broad “death strip’” surrounded by a smaller wall and electrified wire fence. The only points of passage along the wall were 11 closely guarded openings, the most famous being “Checkpoint Charlie,” which was initially designated for military and diplomatic traffic. During the remainder of August, an additional 25,605 East Germans managed to escape through remaining gaps in the Wall. Soon after, soldiers were given orders to shoot at refugees trying to flee. Between August 1961 and November 1989, at least 81 people were killed trying to escape; another 5,000 made it to the West and about as many tried, but failed. No longer divided merely by the metaphoric “Iron Curtain,” Berlin, Germany, and Europe were now divided by a reinforced cement wall.

West Berlin was now more than ever an island within the surrounding German Democratic Republic (GDR). At the same time, it became the quintessential symbol of Western freedom, in contrast to a system of government that had to wall in its citizens to prevent them from leaving. This message was emphasized by President John F. Kennedy’s famous speech delivered in 1963 to thousands of Berliners in front of City Hall in the Schoenberg district of West Berlin. From 1949 until the formal establishment of two states on August 13, 1961, more than 2.5 million Germans had fled the GDR to the West, the majority of whom did so through West Berlin. Despite ongoing political tensions, the border between the two sides remained open until the Wall was built. Residents on both sides were able to hold jobs in West or East Berlin and visit family members on either side. The Wall immediately divided the two cities physically, leaving many individuals suddenly separated from and unable even to contact family and friends or their employment.

## Activities & Discussion Questions

### Activity 2-A

1. Instruct the students to read the introduction on the Berlin Wall and the Cold War.
2. Either organize the students into groups and distribute [Image 1] and [Image 2] to each group or display them on a projector. Have the students compare and contrast the photographs taken of the construction of the Berlin Wall on August 13, 1961 along the same street (Zimmerstrasse) from the Eastern and Western points of view.
3. Next, hand out an Image Analysis Worksheet to each student and have them analyze the images in the context of the Cold War.

#### Discussion 2-A

1. Discuss the following as a class:
2. How does the Wall provide the first physical symbol of Winston Churchill’s 1946 metaphor of the “Iron Curtain” between the East and the West?
3. What does the sudden construction of the Wall say about the level of trust between the Allied powers and the Soviet Union?
4. In what ways did the sudden and initially secretive building of the Berlin Wall exacerbate West-East tensions during the 1960s?

#### Assignment 2-A

1. Have the students write a short paragraph journal entry from the perspective of one of the onlookers on the eastern or western side. Ensure that students are cognizant of how the nearly overnight construction of the Wall suddenly altered life in the city, separating employees from their jobs, disrupting transportation, and dividing families and friends. Additionally, encourage them to consider the above themes as well as the contemporary political climate when composing their entries.

### Activity 2-B

1. Have the students read, watch, or listen to John F. Kennedy’s 1963 “The Proudest Boast” speech [Document 2] and/or view the West German Postcard of Walter Ulbricht. The postcard satirically quotes Walter Ulbricht the chief secretary of the East German Communist party and leader of the GDR. The words in bold read, “No one has the intention of erecting a wall!” Ulbricht gave the statement at a press conference on June 15, 1961 just two months before construction on the Wall clandestinely began on August 13th.
2. Have the students draw a political cartoon satirizing either the surreptitious construction of the Wall or President Kennedy’s 1963 speech. Focus the students’ attention on such themes as the ineffectiveness of Kennedy’s speech on changing the status quo or the absurdity of building a wall arbitrarily through a city.

### Activity 2-C

1. Show the students the image of people fleeing across the West-East Berlin border ca. 1961 [Image 3] and let them read the excerpt from Khrushchev’s memoirs *The Berlin Crises* [Document 3].
2. Help the students to think critically about the established narrative and reasons for the construction of the Berlin Wall. Between 1949 and 1961, more than 2.5 million East Germans fled to the West, many of whom comprised the educated workforce of the East. Pass out the Document Analysis Worksheet and have the students analyze [Document 3].

#### Discussion 2-C

1. Referring back to [Document 3], recounting the East German point of view, ask students of the positive effects the construction of the Wall had in East Berlin.
   1. How was the construction of the Berlin Wall in some ways an act of economic survival for East Germany?
   2. In what ways does the document show the internal Soviet logic behind the wall and how does it challenge the established narrative seemingly supported by the picture?
2. Next, divide the students into groups advocating for or against the construction of the Wall. Have them debate the merits and faults in East Germany’s solution to its “brain drain” problem and what solutions they would have implemented had they been the ruling Politburo in East Germany.
   1. Consider an alternative history in which the Wall was unsuccessfully constructed, either with or without Allied interference. There is speculation that, had it not been for the construction of the Wall, a third World War would have been at hand. If the Wall had failed to exist for any reason, based on the economic and political factors of the post-War world prior to the construction of the Wall, what would the consequences have been?

# Unit 3: Living with the Wall

## Introduction

Though East Germany’s government built the Wall to prevent its citizens from leaving for the West, it also effectively underlined the separation of West Berlin from West Germany, emphasizing the role of the city as an outpost surrounded by a hostile army, and with token contingents of American, British, and French soldiers on the inside. The imposed isolation of West Berliners prompted the Hungarian composer György Ligeti to describe West Berlin as a “surrealist cage: those inside are free.”[[4]](#footnote-4) As Ernst-Michael Brandt describes in *Die Ziet*: “In those days he tried to explain to his little daughter about the existence of West Berlin. He soon realized however that it's easier for a five-year-old child to grasp the rotation of the earth, sunrise and sunset, than to understand the grotesque situation of a divided city, especially when one part is also an island. Neither television from the West nor the daily encounters with the wall on the way to her kindergarten made any difference. West Berlin was The West, and it was as far away as Africa, which after all was where bananas came from.”[[5]](#footnote-5)

Given West Berlin’s forced isolation, FRG authorities worried that West Berliners would flee the fortress city for other cities. To coax residents and businesses to stay put, the FRG poured large amounts of money into West Berlin in the form of subsidies, tax cuts and low-rent housing. Generous subsidies for the arts also made West Berlin into the FRG’s cultural capital. Since residents of West Berlin were exempt from serving in the military, the city also became the destination for young people of a variety of political, social, and personal convictions.

East Berlin also offered the best material conditions anywhere in the GDR and its residents were better off than citizens in any other Eastern Bloc country. Like its western counterpart, the East German government also invested large amounts of money into the capital, restored old buildings and erected new structures to embody socialist principles. While shortages of inferior consumer goods and the long lines to acquire them were a staple of daily life in Communist countries, chronic shortages were less pronounced in East Berlin than elsewhere in the country. Competing as it was with West Berlin’s higher standard of living, East Berlin also offered more special hard-currency stores that sold Western goods and other hard-to-find items. However, many East Berliners felt the desire to escape, which prompted more and greater security measures. As Peter Schneider commented, “The one sure thing was that every improvement in the border system had spurred the creative drive to find a new loophole. The urge to master the Wall didn’t differ in substance from the impulse to climb K2. The Wall, like the mountain, was there, and the challenge would persist as long as the Wall remained standing.”[[6]](#footnote-6)

Not all was calm in the Eastern Bloc. In 1968, the leader of the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia, Alexander Dubček, sought to liberalize the country against Moscow’s wishes. The Prague Spring reforms he initiated ended following failed negations with the Soviets and the invasion of other Warsaw Pact troops. By September, Leonid Brezhnev (Khrushchev’s replacement since 1962) issued a statement known as the Brezhnev Doctrine, in which he proclaimed that Warsaw Pact members could invade any country attempting to replace Communism with capitalism.

During his reign, Brezhnev had helped to lessen political tensions abroad, but he also put a stop to the cultural “Thaw” that Khrushchev had championed during his tenure. No longer were people allowed to speak out against the government in art, music, and literature; no more were people permitted to experiment to improve industry and manufacturing.

In fact, Brezhnev’s years were characterized by economic stagnation and bureaucratization in the Soviet realm. Because the centralized planned economy functioned only through the fulfillment of quotas (at times, arbitrarily assigned by bureaucrats), workers had no incentive to improve the quality of the product like in capitalist markets. All industries were state-owned and had a monopoly on production of their products. Unlike in capitalist economies where supply is determined by the demand for the product and competition drives companies to make products of higher quality more cheaply, supply in communist economies was determined by the center, causing shortages of some products and the overproduction of others. The state-run monopolies were not concerned with cost since they were subsidized by the state.

Despite the tense atmosphere of the late 1960s, the Cold War began to enter a period of détente and cooperation between the world’s superpowers. President Richard Nixon met with Brezhnev following his visit to China in 1972, during which they came to several important agreements, including the first Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT I), which limited the number of ballistic missiles between each side, and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, which banned the development of missile interception systems.

#### Rebuilding Berlin

As Berlin and Germany became the battleground of the Cold War, the competition between East and West also found expression in the more visible realm of architecture and urban planning. Since approximately one-third of all houses in Berlin had been destroyed by bombing, the construction of new residential and government buildings offered an opportunity to wipe away the remnants of the past and imbue the city with a character consistent with the new political and social orientation of each side. In this way, urban development came to be seen as a genuine expression of political activity, since planning and architecture were concerned with representing the ideals of the body politic. Thus, West Germany quickly came to view West Berlin as the last “outpost of freedom” and was held up as evidence of western political and economic superiority, while the GDR sought to transform East Berlin into the “showcase of Communism.”

However, unrest simmered on both sides of the Wall. In contrast to the radical student movements and violent street politics in West Berlin, the GDR sought to neutralize all signs of political dissent in East Berlin. Since East Berlin remained the “showcase,” it was of utmost importance for the regime that no opposition surface in East Berlin. The Stasi achieved a crackdown on dissenters through constant surveillance. The incarceration of thousands of suspected dissenters was responsible for the political quiescence in East Germany’s capital city and may also help explain why East Berliners did not take part in the 1989 revolution until the end.

From the rubble of the Nazi state, both East and West sought to make visible a new set of social and political ideals in the urban landscape.

In East Germany, some of the most ambitious building schemes were undertaken in Berlin, since the city was proclaimed the capital of the new East German State (contrary to the Potsdam Agreement signed by the Soviet Union and the United States[[7]](#footnote-7)). Consistent with the Soviet architectural style known as “socialist realism,” building in East Berlin was supposed to emphasize the heroic spirit of the masses. In its structure and architectural form, it was believed that “the city [was] the expression of political life and the national consciousness of the people.”[[8]](#footnote-8) The signature building project initiated by the East German government in the early 1950s was a monumental housing development located on the newly renamed Stalin Boulevard (Stalin-Allee) in East Berlin. The grandly proportioned, three-kilometer-long street was meant to display the ideals of the socialist experiment: the unified will of the masses, simplicity, equality, and order.

Not insignificantly, the Stalin Boulevard development also highlighted the power of the state in its relation to the individual. This was reflected in the scale of the project, as well as in the fact that the East German Communist Party General Secretary, Walter Ulbricht, initiated the plan. Dotted with giant statues of the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, the wide avenue was designed to accommodate military parades and other displays of state power. The president of the GDR at the time, Wilhelm Pieck, described the project as “the greatest widely visible symbol of our policy of peace and the improvement in the conditions for all our population.”[[9]](#footnote-9) But the expense of this monumental architectural undertaking made it impracticable as a model for future building projects. Henceforth, new residential buildings were built with less expensive and more functional prefabricated methods, while still displaying the essential ideals of socialism.

In the West, planners and architects were interested in marking a sharp break with the troubled German past. In light of the Nazi catastrophe, any attempt to return to aesthetic forms that represented the values of the pre-World War I social order was viewed as fundamentally tainted. At the same time, West Germans wanted to avoid all types of monumental building reminiscent of Nazi architecture and Albert Speer’s grandiose plans to rebuild Berlin. As a consequence, West German architecture and urban planning drew on the modernist traditions begun during the Weimar Republic (the German government from 1919 to the Nazi takeover in 1933).

Modernist architecture rejected traditional forms that relied on decorated facades, elaborate gables, and pillars, and emphasized instead functionalism over form. New buildings in West Berlin thus conformed to an aesthetic that preferred clean lines, uncluttered by useless ornamentation and favored as building materials glass and steel to wood and brick.

In response to East Berlin’s grand Stalin Boulevard project, the West Berlin city council invited submissions from world-class architects to design new housing units for the southern edge of West Berlin’s public park, the Tiergarten. As a rival to the Stalin Boulevard that is several miles away from the Hansaviertel, the new residential quarter of West Berlin was to embody quintessential modernist values, where each building was unique, and individualism and privacy were preferable to standardization and density of population. Unlike the Stalin Boulevard project that was dictated from above, the Hansa Quarter was the result of artistic competition and the collaboration of many architects. While westerners viewed the Stalin Boulevard project as totalitarian, development in the Hansa Quarter was to epitomize the spirit of democracy, although its eclecticism led many to later argue that as art, it remained thoroughly uninspired.

#### Maintaining East Berlin: State Security

Paradoxically, it is the State Security or “Stasi” that may eventually be remembered best from the 45 years of Russian hegemony over the eastern part of post-war Germany. Admirers of totalitarian methods and the workings of a police state need look no farther than the GDR to see such techniques in action. Modeled on the Soviet secret police, the Stasi carried surveillance to even greater extremes, which, when paired with a dysfunctional system of justice, left many citizens to languish in harsh confinement for supposed crimes of disloyalty, planned escape, or black market activities.

That the Stasi could take on such dimensions grew primarily out of the uprising in June 1953. Taken by surprise by the eroding morale among workers, the communist party bosses turned to intensified surveillance as a means of stemming the tide of skilled labor now crossing into West Germany via West Berlin in quest of better wages but also to find a future without the tyranny of socialist norms and quotas.

By 1961, party boss Walter Ulbricht obtained his wish when Russian leader Khrushchev authorized building a physical wall in Berlin effectively putting a stop to the “brain drain.” The Stasi turned at this point to other security work, notably the use of destabilizing incursions (“Zersetzung”) on groups and even personal relationships in order to expose pro-Western links or criticism of the State. When the GDR collapsed, the Stasi tried to destroy their voluminous files but with only limited success. A government office was created after the fall of the Wall to investigate Stasi abuses and to permit ex-GDR citizens to examine salvaged papers in order to learn who among their family, friends, and co-workers had been a Stasi-snitch and what might have been reported to the authorities. The current President of Germany, Joachim Gauck, served as commissioner of this heavily consulted bureau during its first decade.

Economic hardship and political suppression continued into the 1980s, causing greater and mounting tensions on both sides of the Wall. Following Brezhnev’s death in 1982, the Soviet Union and its satellites in the Eastern Bloc stood on the brink of reform and chaos.

## Activities & Discussion Questions

### Activity 3-A

1. Pass out [Documents 4-7] demonstrating the views that children (Dirk and Sven or Brigitte and Tanya) acquired growing up with the Wall in East and West Berlin respectively.
   1. Have the students answer the following questions after reading the documents:
      1. What have the children learned in school about the purpose of the Wall?
      2. What contradictory kinds of information do they possess?
      3. How do they evaluate these two sources of information?
      4. What is the eastern children’s attitude toward the West?
      5. How did the Wall affect their day-to-day life?
      6. How did the children compare the East with the West?
      7. How would you characterize the western children’s attitude toward the East?
      8. How would you evaluate the importance of personal experiences in shaping children’s views of the East and West, compared with what they learned in school and at home?

#### Discussion 3-A

* 1. In either small groups or as a class, have the students discuss the origin of the children’s perceptions of the other side. In the discussion, review those factors which both united these children and divided them.
     1. Where did these images come from? Help students become aware of how the views expressed by Dirk and Sven reflected the official ideological positions of the East and West German governments.
     2. How did the children weigh the advantages and disadvantages of living on both sides of the Wall?
     3. What did they have in common?
     4. How had the political become personal?

#### Assignment 3-A

* 1. Assign each student a child from either East or West Berlin to interview. Have the students write a report on the kind of information that could be garnered from this historical source (oral interviews), the benefits and drawbacks of oral history records (especially from children), and why such oral records are an important complement to primary written and photographic historical sources.

### Activity 3-B

1. Present the following quote from Kennedy’s 1963 speech in front of the Berlin Wall to the entire class: “You live in a defended island of freedom, but your life is part of the main [-land].”
   1. Prompt the class to consider the meaning of this quote. Encourage the students to think on the geographic location of West Berlin. Have the students share their reflections. Remember: the point of this brief exercise is to clarify to the students the importance of the Berlin Wall—especially Checkpoint Charlie—as a stage for protests both by global leaders—embodied perhaps best by Kennedy—and everyday West Germans alike throughout the course of the Cold War. Along the thousands of miles that comprised the border between the East and West, West Berlin remained the only western outpost inside Soviet controlled areas, providing an important beacon of freedom within the Communist sphere of influence.

### Activity 3-C

1. Hand out Kennedy’s 1963 speech “The Proudest Boast” [Document 2] to the class while displaying a photograph of a 1970s peace protest at Checkpoint Charlie [Image 5].
   1. Have the students analyze the speech with the Document Analysis Worksheet or the image with the Image Analysis Worksheet. Make sure to explain to the students beforehand the importance of West Berlin as an “island of freedom” (see Activity 4-A).

#### Discussion 3-C

* 1. Organize the class into groups or conduct a general class discussion. Using the [Image 5] and [Document 2], engage students with the following questions:
     1. Referring to [Document 2], Kennedy’s 1963 speech “The Proudest Boast,” why did he choose to deliver it in West Berlin, nearly 110 miles in the heart of the GDR, as opposed to any other place where the West and East bordered one another?
     2. How had the construction of the Wall transformed Berlin into a stage and showcase for the Allies and the Soviet Union?
     3. How important was the Berlin Wall as a symbol of the Cold War?
     4. Thinking on Kennedy’s (and later Reagan’s) speech at the Berlin Wall, how was his speech, like the image of the protestors, an act of political theatre and posturing?
     5. Did the speech have a tangible impact on the Berlin situation?

#### Assignment 3-C

* 1. Have students think of a political, satirical, or inspirational slogan that they would have displayed on a sign during Kennedy’s speech or attempted to graffiti on the Berlin Wall. Students should then write a paragraph clarifying the meaning of their slogan and its relevance to the social, political, or cultural atmosphere of the Cold War in the 1960s and 1970s.

# Unit 4: The Increasingly Irrelevant Wall

## Introduction

The fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 has often been called Europe’s first non-violent revolution, since the collapse of single-party Communist rule in Eastern Europe was brought about by mass flight and political protest in East Germany. With the election of President Ronald Reagan and the ascension of Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister in the United Kingdom, the détente of the 1970s escalated into a renewed Cold War. Both conservatives, Reagan and Thatcher were outspoken critics of the Soviet Union, its ideology and economic structure. Reagan even went as far as to call the USSR the “evil empire.” By 1985, Reagan’s anti-communist position grew into the Reagan Doctrine, which not only included the policy of containment found in the Truman Doctrine, but also promised to intentionally subvert leftist governments.

By the mid-1980s, even the Soviet Union (following the economic stagnation of the late Brezhnev years) saw the need for reform. So, in 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev was made leader of the Soviet Union and embarked on a path of political and economic reform. In fact, he initiated the first and decisive challenges to the repressive regime of Erich Honecker (who succeeded Walter Ulbricht as General Secretary of the East German Communist Party in 1971). During the 1980s, Gorbachev had embarked on a process of reform in the Soviet Union that was intended to make the Soviet Union more modern and efficient. He implemented a policy of *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (economic restructuring). Even more important, he rejected the policy of prior Soviet governments, which was to intervene militarily in any Eastern Bloc country if the Communist regime in power was threatened. The fact that the Soviet Union did not intervene in Poland, Hungary, or East Germany in the face of internal opposition during the 1980s was probably the single most important factor leading to the collapse of communism in each of those countries. While Gorbachev had envisioned an Eastern Bloc strengthened by economic reform and political liberalization, in the end, the introduction of reform emboldened dissatisfied citizens throughout Eastern Europe to bring down the entire system.

Already during this decade, the governments of Hungary and Poland faced challenges from domestic opposition. Unlike the East Germans, it was not unusual for Hungarians to be openly critical of Soviet rule and the Communist system. In response, the government relaxed controls on the economy and introduced political reforms, including the development of a multi-party system. In Poland, the push for reform began with striking shipyard workers in 1980. The strikes led to the formation of an independent union called “Solidarity,” which, through an alliance with intellectuals, artists, and the Catholic Church, united much of the nation against Communist rule.

While the spirit of reform swept across Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the East German government still tried to fortify itself against change of any kind. Erich Honecker believed that his regime had no need for the type of reform being promoted by Moscow. In fact, when Gorbachev came on an official visit to East Berlin in 1986, Honecker banned all Soviet publications that advocated even gradual change. Despite the hard line taken by the Honecker regime, a reform movement in East Germany nevertheless crystallized. However, the actions of almost all East German citizens were monitored by the elaborate surveillance system of the dreaded secret police. For this reason, churches became the loci of the burgeoning political protest movement since they were the only public venue in which citizens were allowed to meet in relative freedom. The Nikolaikirche, a Protestant church in Leipzig, organized candlelit marches through the city each Monday night. However, Gorbachev’s limited reforms were not enough to calm the growing tide against Soviet control.

Although Reagan and Gorbachev had made great strides at diplomatic summits in 1986 in Reykjavík and in 1987 in Washington (during which the leaders signed the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, or INF, eliminating intermediate range missiles on both sides), the changes were not enough for the Western countries. In a visit to West Berlin on June 7, 1987, in solidarity with the protesting East Germans, Reagan made a speech in front of the Brandenburg Gate:

We hear much from Moscow about a new policy of reform and openness. Some political prisoners have been released. Certain foreign news broadcasts are no longer being jammed. Some economic enterprises have been permitted to operate with greater freedom from state control. Are these the beginnings of profound changes in the Soviet state? Or are they token gestures, intended to raise false hopes in the West, or to strengthen the Soviet system without changing it? We welcome change and openness; for we believe that freedom and security go together, that the advance of human liberty can only strengthen the cause of world peace.

There is one sign the Soviets can make that would be unmistakable, that would advance dramatically the cause of freedom and peace. General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization: Come here to this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall![[10]](#footnote-10)

The first real chink in the Iron Curtain became visible in Hungary, not East Germany. On May 2, 1989, the newly elected and reformed Communist government in Hungary dismantled the barbed-wire fence on its border with Austria. Since East Germans were free to travel only within Eastern Bloc countries, thousands of East Germans headed for the Hungarian-Austrian border in the hopes of crossing into the West. At first, the Hungarian government did not admit East Germans into Austria without a proper travel pass issued by the GDR. However, the border was soon overrun with East Germans, and, on September 11, Hungary formally opened its border with Austria, offering East Germans their first escape route to the West since the Wall was built. East Germans also crossed the border into Poland and Czechoslovakia, flooding the West German embassies for travel documents to the West.[[11]](#footnote-11) In September, there were over 10,000 East Germans squatting at the West German embassy in Prague.[[12]](#footnote-12) Eager to avoid embarrassment and to resolve the matter, the East German government agreed to allow all its citizens waiting in embassies passage into West Germany.

Even within the GDR, the growing tide of opposition could not be stopped. With official preparations underway to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the GDR, Gorbachev’s official visit to East Berlin became the occasion for public protests against the government. East Germans were now demanding reforms, including the freedom to travel. Although East Berlin police and the military banned demonstrations during Gorbachev’s visit, protesters appealed to Gorbachev to support their demands, calling for the dismantling of the Berlin Wall. The protesters turned the cynical slogan of the state—that the GDR was a nation of the people—into their own: “Wir sind ein Volk” (We are one people) declared on a leaflet distributed at the October 9,1989 demonstration to include the secret police and pressure them to avoid violence. This slogan would be reformulated into “We are the people” (Wir sind das Volk) among the demonstrators, which was picked up by the media. Gorbachev, wanting to support reform but wary of offending his host, reportedly warned Honecker to face the consequences that “life punishes those who come too late.”[[13]](#footnote-13) Yet even as he faced continued demonstrations in Dresden and Leipzig, Honecker proclaimed the Berlin Wall would stand for another hundred years.[[14]](#footnote-14) It barely stood for another month.

On October 9, the weekly Leipzig demonstrations resumed with the numbers of protesters now reaching into the tens of thousands. Honecker considered suppressing the demonstrations as had been done at Tiananmen Square in Beijing four months earlier. In the end, however, he did not order the police to meet the demonstrators with force. Instead, he left it to local authorities in Leipzig to respond as they saw fit. Leipzig police did not stop the protests. Just one week later, Honecker was ousted by the Politburo for having failed to deal effectively with the GDR’s internal problems and emigration crisis. Egon Krenz, his longtime deputy, was now appointed the new head of the GDR. But the demonstrations did not subside. By November 4, 700,000 people demonstrated in East Berlin demanding freedom of travel and the resignation of the government in power. Behind the scenes, the new government scrambled to respond. At a routine press conference on the evening of November 9, Günter Schabowski, a member of the Politburo, offhandedly announced a new set of travel regulations that would allow East Germans to leave the country.

Within minutes of the news broadcast, thousands of East Berliners rushed to the border with West Berlin and stormed the checkpoints. For the first time in decades, East Germans could freely leave their country. Jubilant West Berliners greeted East Berliners in a surreal atmosphere of excitement and disbelief. As the grand party at the Wall continued through the night, 50,000 East Berliners joined their West Berlin neighbors drinking champagne and dancing atop the Wall. In one of the most memorable acts of political symbolism in our time, East and West Berliners took hammers and pickaxes to the Wall, helping to demolish the artifice that had so deformed the politics, culture, and society of Berlin, Germany, and Europe. That night, though the East German government had not intended it, the Berlin Wall was breached for good. In 1990, East Germans voted overwhelmingly to merge with the Federal Republic of Germany. In 1991, the German Parliament voted to move the capital of unified Germany from Bonn to Berlin. By that time, excepting a few segments preserved as monuments, the Wall was completely removed. The reunification of Berlin and Germany in 1990 ended the 45-year division and occupation of the city.

## Activities & Discussion Questions

### Activity 4-A

1. Ask each student to list the events or processes that they believe to have led to the collapse of the Berlin Wall in chronological order.
   1. Next, have the entire class create a timeline for the Wall based on what they already know. Encourage students to incorporate a wide range of events and reasons. Some important events may include:
      1. The reform of Eastern European trade Unions represented by Lech Walesa in Gdansk, Poland in 1980.
      2. The more lenient Soviet control over Eastern Europe due to Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan (1979-1989).
      3. Russian reform precedents such as *glasnost* and *perestroika* enacted by Gorbachev in the mid 1980s.
      4. The increasingly dire fiscal crisis that the GDR underwent as the Soviet Union slowly began pulling away.
      5. International pressure best personified in Ronald Reagan’s 1987 speech at the Berlin Wall.
      6. The thousands of East Germans that fled to the west through Hungary into Austria in the summer of 1989 after the Hungarian border was opened on May 2, 1989.
      7. The mounting internal dissent within the GDR, as exemplified by the September 2,1989 demonstrations in Leipzig, involving seventy thousand protestors that the East German government refused to suppress.
      8. The fall of the Berlin Wall (or its implied irrelevance) after the announcement on November 9, 1989 that travel visas would be issued to all East Germans wishing to travel to the West through Berlin or along the thousand-mile border between the two Germanys. Within hours of the announcement jubilant crowds formed and began crossing freely for the first time since August 13, 1961.

#### Discussions 4-A

* 1. Have the class discuss the importance of each event on their timeline. Make sure to establish the importance of the event in the collapse of the Berlin Wall as well as the role this event played in the collapse of the Soviet Union.

#### Assignment 4-A

* 1. Assign each student to choose an event from their timeline and have them write a report on that particular event and its significance to the Berlin Wall or the Cold War.

### Activity 4-B

1. Pass out *The* *Washington Post* article of Reagan’s speech in 1987 [Document 8] along with the *Holes in the Iron Curtain* article dating from 1989 [Document 9]. Have the students read the excerpts from both the documents.
   1. Have the students extract a small quote of their own choosing from one of the articles. Then assign them to write a small paragraph (4-6 sentences) about the forces that aided the collapse of the Berlin Wall or furthered its irrelevance. Make sure to have the students explain the significance of their quote and use it as evidence in their paragraph.

#### Discussion 4-B

* 1. After reading both articles, use the following questions to begin a class discussion. Pose these questions to the whole class or have the students answer them in small groups. It is important to understand these historical events not solely as a series of influential political events, but also as the result of complex social, economic, and political processes at work.
     1. Given that Ronald Reagan directed his speech specifically to the Premier of the Soviet Union at the time, Mikhail Gorbachev, instead of the general party secretary of East Germany Erich Honecker, how effective (or ineffective) was it in facilitating the collapse of the Berlin Wall?   
        **Note:** Remind students of the October 7th protests in East Berlin (see item 1-G. in ACTIVITY 5-A)
     2. Based on the article *Holes in the Iron Curtain*, what significant events had already begun to render the Wall impotent prior to its collapse on November 9, 1989?
     3. What is the difference between these two articles in the events they narrate?
     4. Judging from the tone of the articles, which of the two events was seen as having a larger impact on the wall at the time? Which of the two events is more commonly remembered now in popular history or common Cold War understanding as being the turning point in the continued existence of the Wall?
     5. Why do you think that in understanding historical events, explanations are often boiled down into a series of main points? (E.g. The causes for the American Revolution which are often erroneously attributed solely to no taxation without representation.)
     6. What are the advantages and disadvantages in understanding and learning the history of the Cold War and history in general through these means?
     7. There had been some speculation that prior to Reagan’s bold challenge towards Gorbachev there had occurred some negotiation between Washington DC and the Soviet Union regarding the fate of the Wall, which could most likely have played a role in staging Reagan’s speech in relation to the fall of the Wall sometime afterwards. What could be some aspects of these types of historical events that the media or the government might withhold from the public? How much could our interpretation of certain events be altered when we take into consideration the information that had been or could have been withheld?

#### Assignment 4-B

* 1. Compose a letter to relatives in East Germany as if you were one of the thousands of East German refugees who fled to the West through Hungary and Austria when Hungary opened its borders on May 2, 1989.

Activity 4-CEvaluating the Limitations of Primary Sources

1. Pass out the excerpt from the London *Times* November 10, 1989 [Document 10] and the *New York Times* cover article [Document 11] from the same date to the class or put them on a projector for the entire class to read.
   1. First have the students complete the Document Analysis Worksheet for the two articles or complete the worksheets together as a class.
   2. Next, have the students pretend they are historians a thousand years in the future and that the only primary source documents left in existence about the events surrounding the fall of the Berlin Wall are the two they have just finished analyzing. Ask them to write a paragraph about the fall of the Berlin Wall as if they were composing it for their own history textbook.

#### Discussion 4-C

* 1. Have the students answer the following questions in a class discussion, in groups, or individually.
     1. What is the main impetus cited by these two sources for the opening of the wall?
     2. Based upon your knowledge of the Cold War era in world history and the timeline of events leading to the collapse of the wall (see ACTIVITY 5-A-1), what other factors played a more prominent albeit less proximate role in the collapse of the wall?
     3. Concerning viewpoints, what advantages do you as a historian possess over contemporaries in addition to hindsight (think processes vs. events)?
     4. What advantages does a contemporary have in composing a historical narrative over a future historian? Take a look at the *New York Times* article again—what did the reporter try to capture by interviewing people from the crowd?
     5. Referring back to the *New York Times* article, what about the history of the Berlin Wall and the Cold War could you infer from it?
     6. Considering world history in a broader context, in what ways might primary sources inevitably add bias to the historical narrative?
     7. If the London *Times* and the *New York Times* articles were indeed the last two surviving contemporary accounts of the fall of the Wall, how would a historical account based on these sources be unavoidably biased (from which side of the Iron Curtain did these reports originate)?

#### Assignment 4-C

* 1. Write a short speech or announcement that president Barrack Obama might have given on the day that the Berlin Wall came down.

# Unit 5: Reunification—When East and West Come Together

## Introduction

Pictures from the night of November 9, 1989, in Berlin went around the world. Showing masses of exuberant people and lines of cars exiting through the crossing points, and by the next morning, the physical chipping away at the Wall to widen the initial breaches, these images suggest a great unity of purpose behind the urgency to sample freedom after so many years of doing without.

Unification was manifest, but was it what East and West truly wanted? In the early years after the formal division of occupied Germany, much lip service was given to the goal of “united fatherland” (from the East German anthem) or to compassion for “our brothers and sisters in the Zone” (West German cliché). In the fullness of time, however, and especially after the Honecker regime took over in 1971, the idea of German unity had been, for the most part, taken off the table. The text of the GDR anthem by Johannes R. Becher was suppressed, and the policy of “Ostpolitik” (policies toward the East) promulgated by West German Chancellor Brandt left breathing room for the existence of two German states, recognizing East German sovereignty and further easing tensions along the Iron Curtain.

Thus, when East Germans filled the streets with protest demonstrations in the late 1980s, the demand was for free elections (i.e. with multiple candidates) and a lifting of travel restrictions. Indeed, it was the manner in which the Wall was opened that returned unity to the foreground. Even when parliamentary elections (Volkskammer) were held in March 1990, with a plentitude of political parties competing, there was a widespread assumption that the GDR would go forward, minus the oppressive communist leadership and without the Stasi, of course. This mind-set is the one that endured for many in the East, despite the official reunification achieved six months later in the general election, which was virtually swept by the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party of West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and his glib promise of “flourishing landscapes” to replace the depleted East. In large part, reunification came so swiftly because the CDU won in the East, perhaps catching some off guard at the quickening pace. In fact, German reunification was celebrated on October 3, 1990 and is commemorated each anniversary as “German Unity Day.” Waking up to its status as the “neue Länder” or “new states,” the former GDR might well feel, as was often expressed, that it had been “colonized” by the larger entity, the Federal Republic.

In true colonial fashion, citizens of the East, in the role of the minority, suffered disrespect and discrimination in their dealings with West Germans.

Commonly identifiable by their Saxon accent (Sachsen had been the dominant geographical component in the GDR), easterners were the butt of jokes, sometimes self-deprecating, alluding to their lack of sophistication. “Ossis” (“Ost, meaning east) as they came to be called, in contrast with “Wessis,” were poor if not unemployed, their Socialist achievements, once a point of pride, were disparaged as obsolete, and their infrastructure was in critical need of investment to be paid for grudgingly by Western taxpayers.

Not being allowed to forget the GDR contributed for both Ossis and Wessis to the persistence of the condition known as the “Wall in the Head” (experienced by West Berliners, too, who had lived in the shadow of the Wall). The physical barriers in Berlin had largely vanished within 18 months, but the world they enclosed may require another generation or more to recede in memory. Indeed, the growth of “Ostalgie,” or nostalgia for the East, to be taken up in the next unit, may even prolong the phenomenon.

## Activities & Discussion Questions

### Activity 5-A

1. Split the students into two groups—one will represent the GDR and the other will represent the Federal Republic. These groups will engage in a debate regarding the pros and cons of their systems (e.g. certain societal freedoms for women and a sense of community in GDR that are non-existent in the West; democracy and greater consumer freedom in the West). Either side may do prior research so that substantive arguments may be made. Encourage students to discover aspects about their government that were unknown to them prior to this activity, such that would allow them to further examine each system in all its positive and negative aspects. Students should come away from this activity with the ability to think critically of different systems of governments.
   1. By staging this divide, students should understand the ideological division that had taken place for the decades when the Wall had remained standing.
   2. During the days of the Wall, very little information was coming out of the East and into the West. Easterners, meanwhile, received much of their knowledge of the West through popular media (i.e. television, Western pop music). How would this imbalance in information received distort East-West perceptions?
   3. Discuss the effect that the physical divide may have had on East and West Germany. Contemplate on the efforts that have been made by both Western society and Soviet society to influence their realms and push away opposing viewpoints.
   4. What did East Germany have that West Germany did not and vice-versa? How did these matters affect the process of reunification?

### Activity 5-B

1. Pass out the article excerpt by Carol Mueller on the 1989 GDR protests [Document 12] and the table that lists the frequency that various claims/grievances were demonstrated [Document 13].
   1. Have the students highlight the claims/grievances behind each dated protest on [Document 12] and discuss these grievances and their relevance or irrelevance to reunification.
   2. Examine [Document 13]; what does this table inform us regarding the claims and intents of the East Germans? What can be inferred from the frequency of demonstrations regarding unification (for or against)?
   3. Based on East Germany’s initial claims for social reform within the GDR and their initial attitudes towards the idea of reunification, in what ways had the East already built a mental barrier between themselves and the West?

#### Discussion 5-B

* 1. Pass out [Image 5] and [Image 6] to the class or have the images displayed on an overhead or PowerPoint presentation. These images are paintings by East German artists depicting the flood of East Germans heading westward after the fall of the Wall in 1989, taken from the November 1990 issue of the popular GDR periodical *Das Magazin*. [Image 5] is of a sea of people crossing a bridge—presumably of East Germans crossing the Bornholmer Bridge over to West Berlin. [Image 6] is of East Germans flying from their apartment windows and over the Wall towards the West (in Mary Poppins fashion).
     1. Using the Image Analysis Worksheet or through class discussion, analyze these two images and the messages they are conveying in regards to the fall of the Berlin Wall. To what extent were the representations of these images exaggerated and why? What are the connotations behind these images?
     2. [Image 5], which depicts a sea of people crossing a bridge into the West, relates itself with the phrase, “voting with your feet,” illustrating how East Berliners are voicing their advocacy for unification by physically crossing the border. [Image 6], on the other hand, which depicts a flock of East Germans flying over the Wall towards the West with their umbrellas, is related with the phrase, “voting with your dreams,” a metaphoric expression rendered figuratively by this painting. How do these paintings and their relation with these two phrases imply East German sentiments regarding unification? How does voting “with your dreams” differ from voting “with your feet”?
     3. If these paintings were displayed in a West German art gallery or museum, how would the West Germans react to them? Are the artists conveying a biased or a neutral message through these works of art?
     4. Based on these images, what do the students perceive to be the artists’ stance towards reunification?

### Activity 5-C

1. “*Besserwessi*”—wordplay on the German term “*besserwisser*”, which is a term for “know-it-all” or “smart aleck.” Display this term on the board, overhead, or PowerPoint presentation for the students to ponder over.
   1. How does this term convey the Ossis’ (East Germans’) perception of the Wessis (West Germans)? Ask the students to discuss the connotation of this term and similar contemporary terms in our society that hold a similar connotation.
   2. When unification took place, all the customs that East Germans had been raised with were all of a sudden rendered obsolete to the dominant West German way of life; they were suddenly required to relearn “basic” knowledge such as understanding insurance and taxation and being able to make informed choices among consumer brands for the same type of product.
      1. Discuss how East Germany was basically colonized by West Germany and was expected to conform to West German law and customs. With that in mind, explore what the East Germans may be conveying through this term “*Besserwessi”* in all its truths and resentment.

#### Discussion 5-C

* 1. Have students think of jokes or terms that associate with stereotypes towards minorities (racial stereotypes; stereotypes based on hair color; gendered stereotypes; etc.)
     1. How do these jokes and stereotypes affect our perception of another group of people? In what ways do these perceptions or preconceived notions have a positive or negative effect on society?
     2. Some stereotypes of East Germans may include laziness or backward thinking and of West Germans over-aggressiveness and insensitivity. How might these stereotypes have foreshadowed the process and aftermath of reunification?

#### Assignment 5-C

* 1. Have the students research an Ossi-Wessi joke on their own (translated, if necessary) and analyze the background behind that joke.
     1. What is the truth behind the joke that may make it funny to an Easterner or a Westerner? What is the historical or social context behind that particular joke or term?
     2. Does that joke contribute to a greater stereotype?
     3. E.g. “The plane from the West is approaching East Berlin. The flight attendant announces ‘Please fasten your seat belts and set your watches back ten years.’”

### Activity 5-D

1. “As we razed the Berlin Wall we had no idea that [the barrier] existed also within us.” –Rainer Kurze (East German poet). This quote should be displayed either on the board or on an overhead or PowerPoint presentation for the students to read and ponder on their own. As they gather their thoughts, pass out or display [Image 7] on an overhead or PowerPoint presentation as a visual for the students.
   1. Ask students to share their thoughts on what could be implied from this “barrier” or “wall in the head” that had been built.
   2. We have discussed much about the roles of walls and barriers in everyday life as well as in history and contrasted it with the Berlin Wall—what are the reasons or causes as to why we or others may have built invisible walls and what kind of effect does that have on the people who try to make contact with us?
   3. Discuss similar circumstances in which an “invisible wall” has been built between two groups of people with differing ideologies or historical antagonisms. For example, the American Civil War had imprinted antagonisms among Southerners towards the North more than a century after the end of the war. Or the tensions between North and South Korea—if ever a peace is negotiated and the two Koreas were unified their situation in terms of an “invisible wall” would also be very similar to that of East and West Germany.

### Activity 5-E

1. Pass out the article/review from the *Wall Street Journal* on late East German author Christa Wolf [Document 14] and the interview with East German author Holger Teschke [Document 15] to be read amongst the students or aloud for the whole class. Both documents should invite discussion regarding the extent that the East-West divide reaches today. Students should understand that although the Berlin Wall had fallen roughly 25 years ago, the divide is still very present in Germany today and it affects everyday life as well as domestic politics and economics.
   1. What is the significance behind Christa Wolf and the criticisms she received as a loyalist to the GDR?
      * + 1. Do you find justification in Wolf being eulogized as a victim in the hands of the media for her loyalist attitudes?
          2. What about the media’s scrutiny about her lack of criticism toward the totalitarian nature of the state, or their derisions of Wolf as the “state poet” of the GDR?
          3. In what ways does this review of Wolf’s last work describe to us the extent that bias and prejudice still exist between East and West Germany today?
          4. How could these multiple views and biases distort our own opinions? In what ways do we experience the same forms of bias and prejudice in our own polarized society?
   2. How does Holger Teschke approach the East-West divide? What can be inferred of Teschke’s viewpoint towards the reunification from the interview?
   3. Teschke points out a present economic divide that is further widening the gap between East and West, which he believes will not diminish for another generation. Is there any way to speed up the healing process of forty years worth of division?
   4. In comparing Teschke’s interview with the review of Wolf’s book, Teschke expressed a clearer understanding of the widening divide present between the East and the West while Wolf persisted with her view of the GDR as a “happy memory.”
      * + 1. How is it that Teschke was able to provide a more realistic and less biased assessment of the divide than Wolf was?
          2. What are some factors that may affect their perceptions towards East-West relations (i.e. generational gap; amount of exposure to the totalitarian nature of the GDR; etc.)?
          3. How do East Germans among themselves assess East-West relations differently?
          4. Would West Germans be more consistent in their opinions towards the East Germans or would they be just as mixed in opinions as Holger Teschke and Christa Wolf?
   5. What attitudes and other intangible obstacles are preventing the Germans from closing the East-West gap between them?
      * + 1. How does Wolf’s and Teschke’s memories affect their own interpretations of the GDR and of the Cold War?
          2. How do their memories of the GDR and the Cold War differ from those of a West German’s or even an American’s?
          3. To what extent does the gap in historical memory between East and West contribute to the lingering divide between them?

# Unit 6: Over 25 Years after the Fall—Memories of the Cold War and the Berlin Wall

## Introduction

Despite being on East German territory, the west-facing side of the Wall was often clandestinely painted on by Westerners. From the mid-1980s until the Wall’s collapse, a group of Western artists, including Thierry Noir, Indiano, Keith Haring, and Kiddy Citny, painted large murals on the Wall. Immediately after the fall of the Wall, Wallpeckers, or "Mauerspechte,” like Alwin Nachtweh and other fledgling entrepreneurs, chipped away at the painted parts of the Wall to sell as souvenirs. They sold everything from tiny chips to large chunks of the brightly painted wall to anyone who wanted to “own a piece of history.” A GDR foreign trade company auctioned off some 100 panels of the “best” segments with the most graphic artistic statements. In June 1990, about 40 pieces of the Wall were sold in an auction in Monaco, with prices ranging from $12,000 to $36,000.[[15]](#footnote-15) In the early months after the opening of the Wall, many segments of various sizes were sold into public and private collections.

Within a year, most of the remainder of the Wall, seen at that time as an unsightly blight on the city, was systematically removed by West German contractors (who employed East German military personnel) and ground up for paving materials.

Today, the surviving auctioned pieces can be found in many unusual places. One large slab stands in the men’s room of a Las Vegas casino. The Argentine news corporation, Perfil Group, bought 20 segments in 1991, and they currently reside in the company’s lobby.[[16]](#footnote-16) Eight large sections can be found in Fulton, Missouri, where Churchill gave his famous “Iron Curtain” speech. The pieces stand at Westminster College, which, with the help of Edwina Sandys, Churchill’s granddaughter, received the pieces as a gift from German officials in 1991. The College reports that similar pieces were selling in Berlin at that time for $60,000 to $200,000.[[17]](#footnote-17) A list of segments and their histories can be found on Wikipedia.[[18]](#footnote-18)

The last remaining stretch of the Wall left in its original position is known today as the “Eastside Gallery.” In March 2013, real estate developers announced that they would be removing a portion of the Gallery to provide easier access for luxury apartments, sparking a huge wave of protest. This demonstration, though ultimately unsuccessful, highlights the often-conflicting relationship that Berliners have with the Wall. How best to commemorate or forget this chapter in German, European, and world history is still contentiously debated.

#### After 25 Years

Few chapters in history offer such clearly defined contours as the rise and fall of the German Democratic Republic, with the construction of the Wall barrier, as a point of reference. A monstrosity for the 20th century, the Wall demands an explanatory narrative, which is only slowly taking shape.

The 25th anniversary of the opening of the Wall (November 9, 1989) is upon us, and the numbers of those who experienced Germany’s division first hand are decreasing, whether East Germans from “behind the Wall;” West Germans growing up startlingly clueless about the GDR, except for a class excursion to West Berlin or Jena; or tourists who saw the Wall from its colorful side after street artists had left their marks with new messages continuously covering up the old. Such memories are served by nostalgia museums (“Ostalgie”) such as the DDR Museum in Berlin’s center, opposite the landing for sightseeing boats where it can’t be missed. Dresden has such a museum as well, and Leipzig even has a Stasi museum.

A carnival atmosphere overruns "Checkpoint Charlie" these days, with its souvenir shops and a replica of the famous sentry station. Visitors who take in the privately-managed "Museum at Checkpoint Charlie" will be rewarded with a sober retelling of the narrative of divided Germany, while in the north of the city, somewhat off the tourist track, a section of the double wall, complete with watch tower and “death strip” is under construction, largely for instructional purposes in the schools.

For East Germans, personal memories abound: from a shared idealism of socialist progress, arbitrary justice or censorship, to the enforced separation and growing apart of families over the years. Yet the unreliable subjectivity of the eyewitness is said colloquially to be the enemy of the contemporary historian. Memories in comparison to facts are considered too unruly to provide for a truthful interpretation of the past. As Timothy Garton Ash recalls, “Today, our sons like us to tell them stories, preferably funny ones, about life under communism and particularly about the secret police. For them these are like tales from Narnia. As for the painted fragment of the Berlin Wall, which now props up some books, that might as well have come from Pompeii.”[[19]](#footnote-19) The question of who and what is entitled to be remembered, however, became a crucial issue in the climate of post-reunified Germany.

The fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 and the subsequent integration of the GDR into the former West German Federal Republic in October 1990, left material remnants abruptly devoid of their cultural and political meaning. The political changes were enormous and they even impacted the value of common objects that poignantly marked an era, a country, as irredeemably past. In 1990, untold households emptied their lives into the trash -- throwing out 1.3 tons per person.[[20]](#footnote-20) However, GDR-era objects, housed in museums, came to represent the East German experience to the German and international public. They are pressed to serve, on the one hand, master narratives fashioned by state-funded museums in Germany, such as House of the History of the Federal Republic of Germany, located in Bonn, Berlin, and Leipzig. These museums tend to emphasize themes of repression and resistance in their portrayal of the former East. What they present comes across to some former East Germans as an oversimplified Western perspective on GDR history. On the other hand, GDR-era objects contribute to alternative narratives based on a past that is still present and vivid in personal memories, which are found in private collector’s museums throughout Germany and in a grant-funded nonprofit museum located in the United States called The Wende Museum. These alternate types of museums show how multiple intentions and practices in and around museums and their collections intersect to remake and un-make existing narratives.

Other collections and the work of numerous scholars, meanwhile, attempt with limited funding to reconstruct the history of the period. The city of Berlin, for whom it should be an obligation, has yet to untangle the politics required for such a resource as a museum of the Cold War. The current debate focuses on whether or not to prioritize the (West) German perspective or to provide a more global and inclusive view of Berlin in the Cold War. A similar debate to the one surrounding the narration of East German history and memory appears to raise its head, while various museums named “Cold War Museum - Berlin” opened their doors to the public in Germany and in the United States. The resolution of how best to account for Berlin’s historical role in the Cold War has yet to present itself. It is enmeshed in the contemporary debates of how best to narrate histories of the Cold War that account for the multiple participants in the shaping of that history.

The Berlin Wall is clearly an enduring symbol of what the Cold War had been, and it only recently has garnered value as a historical artifact. The initial disregard for the Wall led to its disappearance from the urban landscape of Berlin, Germany’s capital city. Today segments and pieces of the Wall are dispersed throughout the world and have come to symbolize personal histories, historical accomplishments, and democratic freedom. Nevertheless, many Berliners still struggle with what the Wall meant to them and means to their own national identity.

## Activities & Discussion Questions

### Activity 6-A

1. Review all that has been covered from the first lesson up until lesson six by first asking the students all that they can recall by memory, including material that they had learned outside of the classroom or on their own free time. Students may be asked to draft a timeline for themselves that maps the lifespan of the Berlin Wall from 1961 to 1989, all done purely from memory and without any outside material to consult. Afterwards, have students compare their timelines with their peers to see what they have in common or what events they may have missed.
   1. Ask the students which events most of them had commonly included in their timeline. Have them explain the significance of those particular events.
   2. Which events in their timelines do they personally find the most significant in terms of the Cold War in Germany and the Berlin Wall? Why do they consider those particular events so significant and worth remembering?
   3. Have the students elaborate on both their opinion and knowledge of the Cold War and the Berlin Wall prior to these lessons as compared to now.
      1. What have they taken away from the lessons regarding the global conflicts as well as the domestic conflicts that the Cold War had brought about?
      2. To what extent have their opinions regarding the Cold War and the Berlin Wall changed (if at all) after these lessons?
      3. Based on what they know now, can the end of the Cold War explicitly be defined by the fall of the Berlin Wall?

### Activity 6-B

1. Pass out the excerpt taken from Jana Hensel’s book *After the Wall* [Document 16] for the students to read among themselves. Next, pass out printouts of the website for “Monument to Cold War Victory” for the students to read [Document 17]. Both these documents are meant to incite a comparison of memories, memorials, and methods and a discussion of the intentions behind commemoration.
   1. Both the excerpt and the website indicate to some extent differing perspectives of past events and differing interpretations of their aftermath.
      1. In examining these readings, what are some key words or phrases that indicate the position or the connotation of either reading?
      2. What can these readings tell us about memories and differing perspectives or interpretations?
      3. How could these sentiments affect our attitudes and perspectives towards our memories of the past?
   2. Discuss the excerpt from Hensel’s *After the Wall*.
      1. Judging from the excerpt, what can be inferred of Hensel’s attitude towards this new unified Germany?
      2. Should her account be considered an accurate representation of East German attitudes towards unified Germany and the fall of the Wall?
      3. How would the memories of her West German contemporaries differ?
      4. In what ways would the East Germans and the West Germans have their own separate collective memory of the Cold War and the Berlin Wall?
   3. Consider the document indicating a proposal to commission a Cold War victory monument in the United States.
      1. What does this proposal of a victory monument have to say about the American method of commemoration, particularly that of war?
      2. How does the method of commemorating events correlate with the collective memory of those events?
   4. Take the Vietnam War Memorial as another example of American war commemoration: although the Americans lost the Vietnam War, a memorial was still erected directly paying tribute to those who had lost their lives in battle rather than as a symbolic commemoration.
      1. What are the commonalities or the divergences between the Vietnam War Memorial and this Cold War Victory Monument (or even other war memorials) in terms of intentions and purpose, aside from the dichotomy of victory and defeat?
      2. Are memorials intended to symbolize or define the end of an event, in the same way that the fall of the Berlin Wall is meant to symbolize the end of the Cold War?
      3. Do all wars require a definitive end—such that culminates into a victory and a loss—complete with a commemoration or memorial of some sort?
      4. In what other ways do we commemorate war and other significant historical events?

#### Assignment 6-B

* 1. Students will research a Cold War museum or Cold War/Berlin Wall memorial of their choice. The museum or memorial may be located in any part of the world. Students should be ready to provide details of the museum or memorial they choose to research, including location, specific focus (e.g. Berlin Wall, Eastern Bloc cultural artifacts, DEFA films, etc.), [if a museum] specific items or exhibitions unique to the museum, and source of funding or special endorsements.

### Activity 6-C

1. Students will share what they have researched for the previous assignment with the rest of the class.
   1. Where is the museum/memorial located? Does its location influence the theme or collections of the museum/memorial?
   2. What are the aspects or features that make this museum or memorial unique? Does it have any items or features specifically attributed to it?
   3. Why did the student choose this specific museum/memorial? What are the aspects of it that he/she finds interesting or significant? Where does this museum/memorial stand in conjunction with his/her opinion of the Cold War and of the Berlin Wall?
   4. Overall, how does this museum or memorial remember (or forget) the Cold War?
      1. If the museum or memorial is specifically focused on the Berlin Wall or has some focus on the Wall, how does it memorialize the Berlin Wall?
      2. Does it in any way pay tribute to or remember those who were affected by the Wall or by the fall of the Wall? (Does not necessarily have to be those who were killed attempting to breach the Wall.)

#### Discussion 6-C

* 1. Pass out the two articles regarding the protests to defend the East Side Gallery in Berlin from land development and construction [Document 18.1 and Document 18.2] for students to read among themselves. Looking back to 1989 when the Wall fell, Germans from both the East and the West were very eager to finally tear apart the very symbol that had kept them divided for four decades. In the years following unification in 1990, many had considered the Wall an “eyesore” and called for its immediate removal. From 1989 onward, segments of the Wall had been chipped away to be sold to civilians and tourists as souvenirs, shipped out to multiple parts of the world for memorial showcase, and even ground into grit for autobahn construction. The East Side Gallery in Berlin is the longest stretch of the Wall that still remains standing in its original location today and had served as an easel for eager artists to express themselves. When discussing these two articles and the Berlin Wall as it is remembered (or forgotten) today, consider the shift of attitudes towards the Wall from its fall in 1989 to the present day.
     1. From calling for its immediate collapse and demolition to protests protecting it from land developers, what are some factors that could account for this shift of attitudes towards the Wall? What can this shift tell us about the significance of historical memory, how it evolves overtime, and why it evolves?
     2. Despite this changing of attitudes, there are still some Germans who consider the Wall to be an “eyesore” and hope to see it vanish once and for all. Are there any benefits to forgetting certain darker aspects of historical memory that could justify such attitudes? To what extent do perspectives and lived experiences affect our memory of certain events or symbols, and our desire to preserve or repress memories?
     3. Like Big Ben in London, the Berlin Wall served for 20 years as a significant historical monument through which West Berlin gained millions in tourist revenue. With this information in mind, does this in any way alter the intentions behind the preservation of the Berlin Wall (i.e. for purposes of revenue versus purposes of historical commemoration)? Would capital interests garnered by the German tourist industry have anything to do with the demonstrations protecting the East Side Gallery?

#### Assignment 6-C

* 1. Pass out copies of an excerpt from the article “‘GDR on the Pacific’: (Re)Presenting East Germany in Los Angeles” [Document 19] for the students to read preferably in their spare time as a take-home assignment. Urge students to pay close attention to portions of the article that indicate intentions behind commemoration and the significance of German history in Los Angeles.

### Activity 6-D

1. List the different public sites in or near Los Angeles where segments of the Berlin Wall are located (i.e. the Wall on Wilshire; Loyola Marymount University; Ronald Reagan Library; Richard Nixon Library; Wende Museum). Initiate class discussion by first asking the students if any of them had ever visited any of the listed sites.
   1. What were the students’ first impressions of the sites they visited and what had they taken away from that particular Berlin Wall memorial?
   2. Based on the information they had taken away from the previous lessons and the assigned reading, why would there be Berlin Wall memorials located in the specific sites that they have visited? What are the intentions behind commemorating the Berlin Wall at these sites? What kind of significance does the Berlin Wall have in the Los Angeles community that we would choose to commemorate it at these sites?
   3. Are these Berlin Wall memorials sufficient enough in providing the Los Angeles community a clear representation of the Cold War and divided Germany? How else can we provide the community a clearer picture of Cold War history? Are there any other Cold War or German related exhibits in Los Angeles aside from these Berlin Wall memorials?

#### Discussion 6-D

* 1. Refer back to the excerpt from the article “GDR on the Pacific” that was assigned to the students. Students will be provided an opportunity to first share their opinions regarding the reading before diving into discussions involving the significance of German history in Los Angeles and the importance of preserving historical memory.
     1. Discuss the meaning behind Los Angeles or other cities such as Washington DC as appropriate locations for collecting and remembering European history. Is there an advantage for a museum to be in a city that can be understood as a “neutral ground” or an “ahistorical” location? The article makes the case for the advantages of the Wende Museum being located in Los Angeles, outside of Germany and Eastern Europe. Does the city’s position as an “ahistorical” location and disconnection to the official narrative about German Cold War history diminish our understanding of German Cold War? What new perspectives on this history does the Wende Museum have to offer?
     2. What value does such a museum as the Wende Museum have for students in Los Angeles and the U.S.? Do you agree with the article’s conclusions?
  2. Consider this quote taken from an article from the German journal *Die Zeit*: “In Germany, no art police are on patrol, we briefly need to be reminded. [...] And yet a peculiar constraint prevails: Iron Curtains traverse the German art landscape, intellectual off-limit zones wherever one looks. For even 20 years after the fall of the Wall, the Cold War has not come to an end, not in the minds of many museum directors.”
     1. Through this quote, explain how individual memories of the past directly affect the methods of interpreting that past. How different would German art museums be in their exhibitions if all former constraints were finally forgotten?
  3. Consider the Wende Museum as a Cold War institution thousands of miles away from the source. As stated in the reading, “the Wende Museum’s focus is on materials that are not included in other museum collections for practical and political reasons. [...] Other materials have been donated to the museum by former historical participants who believe that their personal collections would be politicized by European institutions.”
     1. Do all museums have a certain amount of subjectivity laced within them based on the dominant historical interpretation in the area?
     2. Explain how materials and artifacts that somehow once held heavy political implications in one nation suddenly have no political bias once analyzed in another nation. Does this in any way alter the memory behind those materials or artifacts just as it alters any hints of political implications behind them?
     3. In what ways does the Wende Museum as a “neutral” institution succeed in maintaining an objective interpretation of the Cold War in Germany or of East Germany as a state?
     4. Have students share how their understanding of the Berlin Wall and the Cold War in Germany would have changed had it not been for this “ahistorical” environment.

# Activity & Document List

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Activity** | **Document / Image** | **Worksheet Title/ Materials** | |
| 1-A | * None | * Paper and Writing Implement | |
| 1-B | * Doc. 1(*Mending Wall*) |  | |
| 2-A | * Image1 * Image 2 (Zimmerstraße East and West Berlin) | * Images Analysis Worksheet | |
| 2-B | * Doc. 2 (“Proudest Boast”) | * Document Analysis Worksheet | |
| 2-C | * Image 3 (Peace Sign protest) * Image 4 (“People Fleeing” ca. 1961) * Doc. 3 (*The Berlin Crises*) | * Document Analysis Worksheet | |
| 3-A | * New Doc. 4 * Doc. 5 * Doc. 6 * Doc. 7 | * Written Document Questions Worksheet | |
| 4-A | * Quote from Doc. 2 | * None | |
| 4-B | * Doc. 2 * Image 4 (Peace Protest at Checkpoint Charlie) | * Document/Image Analysis Worksheet |
| 5-B | * Doc. 8 * Doc. 9 |  |
| 5-C | * Doc. 10 (London *Times*) * Doc. 11 (*New York Times*) | * Document Analysis Worksheet |
| 6-B | * Doc. 12 (Excerpt of JSTOR article by Carol Mueller) * Doc. 13 (table of GDR protest) * Image 5 (Bornholmer Bridge painting) * Image 6 (painting of East Germans and umbrellas over the Wall) |  |
| 6-D | * Image 7 (“Kopfgeburten” cartoon) |  |
| 6-E | * Doc. 14 (*WSJ* Christa Wolf review) * Doc. 15 (Holger Teschke interview) |  |
| 7-B | * Doc. 16 (*After the Wall* excerpt) * Doc. 17 (“Monument to Cold War Victory”) |  |
| 7-C | * Doc. 18 (guardian.co.uk article on East Side Gallery protests) * Doc. 19 (“GDR on the Pacific”) |  |

# Document Analysis Worksheet

1. Basic Document Information

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Type of Document** | **Date/Time Period of the Document** | **Author /Speaker** | **Audience** |
|  |  |  |  |

1. Analysis Questions
2. Is the source official (i.e. from the government) or unofficial, private or public? Is this document a primary, secondary, or tertiary source? Explain.
3. List the main points conveyed by the document. What are the key words and ideas expressed?
4. Describe the historical event(s) that provided the impetus for the creation of this document. What can the reader glean about historical event(s) from reading this document? What specifically is it referring to?
5. Does this document contain political, geographic, social or other biases? Can you think of other documents that might contradict the narrative portrayed in this document?
6. To you what is the most important sentence or two from this document? Write a couple sentences explaining your quote’s significance.
7. In what ways was this document tailored for its intended audience? Explain with examples from the document.

# Image Analysis Worksheet

1. Basic Photograph Questions

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Approximately when/where was the image made/taken? | Who created the image, and why did they do so? | What is the subject of the image? |
|  |  |  |

1. Analysis Questions
2. Make a list of the important things within this image and your observations.

1. What is the situation of the people in the image? Provide evidence from the image that tells you this.
2. What message do you think the image conveys? What additional questions does this image raise?
3. Why is this image relevant to the Cold War? Provide details from the image to explain you answer.

1. Is this image an original or a reproduction? How can you tell?
2. Write your own caption for the image:

1. Richie *Faust’s Metropolis*, p.xvii. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/churchill-iron.asp [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Transcribed directly from: <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/mp3clips/politicalspeeches/harrytrumandoctrine4563444444444444444444222222222222222223.mp3>; audio is public domain. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. David Clay Large, *Berlin*. New York: Basic Books, 2000. p. 455 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Michael Brandt, *Die Ziet*, August 9, 1991. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Peter Schneider, *The Wall Jumper*, p. 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The Federal Republic moved to make Bonn, not Berlin, its capital since Berlin, because of its status under Allied jurisdiction, was only part of the West in a limited fashion. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. David Lodge Clay, p. 246 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Quoted in Alexandra Richie, *Faust’s Metropolis* (New York: Caroll and Graf Publishers, 1998), p. 711. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Taken from <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1987/061287d.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. It was the policy of West Germany to grant automatic citizenship to any East German able to apply. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. David Clay Large, *Berlin*, p. 522. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Quoted in Angela Stent, *Russia and Germany Reborn: Unification, the Soviet Collapse, and the New Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 89. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Clay Large, *Berlin*,p 523. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. <http://community.seattletimes.nwsource.com/archive/?date=19900625&slug=1079064> [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. <http://www.cnn.com/2013/11/08/travel/berlin-wall-locations/> [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. <http://www.nationalchurchillmuseum.org/berlin-wall-history.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Berlin_Wall_segments> ; More information can also be found in German: Polly Feversham and Leo Schmidt, *The Berlin Wall Today - Cultural Significance and Conservation Issues* (Berlin: Bauwesen, 1999). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Timothy Garton Ash, *The File: A Personal History*, p. 155. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Thomas Ahbe, *Kultur der Propaganda*, p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)