

HANDOUT 2.5.1 WHY WAS THE BERLIN WALL BUILT?

After viewing the Vimeo video [The Wall: A World Divided](#), answer your assigned question. Record the answers to the other questions during the class discussion.

1. Following World War II, how was Germany divided?
2. In which section of Germany was Berlin located?
3. How was Berlin divided?
4. How did many people fled East Germany to the West?
5. What were some reasons people fled East Germany?
6. How did the continued loss of its labor force affect East Germany?
7. What did the East German government decide was the best way to stop people from leaving East Germany?
8. When was the Berlin Wall built and what was it made of?
9. Why were the families living on *Bernauer Straße* in a strange situation?

Source:

Stange, E. (n.d.). *The Wall: A World Divided*. Retrieved March 29, 2021, from <https://vimeo.com/110165265>. (3–9:50 minutes)

HANDOUT 2.5.2 WHY WAS THE BERLIN WALL BUILT? ANSWER KEY

1. Following World War II, how was Germany divided? ***The Allies divided Germany among themselves, with the Soviets taking the eastern part of Germany and the United States, Britain, and France dividing the western portion.***
2. In which section of Germany was Berlin located? ***Berlin was located in the Soviet-controlled portion of Germany.***
3. How was Berlin divided? ***Berlin was divided among the victors, with the Soviets taking the eastern half and the other Allies taking the western part.***
4. How did many people fled East Germany to the West? ***People would travel from East Germany into East Berlin then to West Berlin, and from there, they would be resettled in West Germany.***
5. What were some reasons people fled East Germany? ***People did not like life under communism, the lack of prospects, and the lack of political freedom.***
6. How did the continued loss of its labor force affect East Germany? ***It threatened East Germany's economic survival.***
7. What did the East German government decide was the best way to stop people from leaving East Germany? ***They built a barbed wire fence down the center of Berlin.***
8. When was the Berlin Wall built and what was it made of? ***The wall was built August 13, 1961, using barbed wire fencing.***
9. Why were the families living on *Bernauer Straße* in a strange situation? ***The street and front doors of the buildings were located in West Berlin, but the insides of the buildings, and the occupants, were in East Berlin.***

HANDOUT 2.5.3 THE CHILDREN OF WEST AND EAST BERLIN

As a group, read the excerpts of testimonies and examine the drawings from the children of West and East Berlin. Then answer the questions on **Handout 2.5.4**.

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1: SVEN, WEST BERLIN

After the war, they—the Russians, Amis [Americans], French, and English—divided Germany and Berlin. Then they built the Wall. I'm not sure why. But it means we have to travel three or four hours through the GDR [German Democratic Republic] to get to our country. It's better here than there. When I travel through the GDR, I see them in their small cars, all crowded [laughter], while we go by in our Mercedes. They don't live as well as we do.

Also, they're less free over there than we are. They can't say what they like. If someone goes to Alex Platz and shouts, "I hate the GDR," the Russians will grab him right away and throw him in jail. Here, if you shout you don't like the mayor, nobody bothers you. You can say what you like.

Over there they don't like us. Children have to all go out and greet Honecker when he visits, and he tells them we're all rotten people here—fascists who only want war. We don't want war. We want a reunification. In our national hymn there is a verse that calls for our brothers over there to be with us again. And we want to help them be freer. But in their national hymn, they just sing to their *Genossen* [comrades], never to us. (p. 44)

2: DIRK, EAST BERLIN

In school we learn that the Wall was built to keep out spies from the West, who wanted to ruin our country. Maybe that's true, and sometimes I worry that the FRG [Federal Republic of Germany] or America will start a war with us. But I also hear other things. Last week I saw a television program from the West about the border. I learned a lot of things I never heard here. It really makes me sick, the border. You can see it behind our school; it's really well protected. There are always lots of guards there, and this television program said they even have automatic shooting machines. To shoot us if we try to leave.

And then they tell us how wonderful it is here. But they know if people had the chance, most would leave. Why else is the border there? If I could, I think I would go there. But I don't know if I would want to live in the West; I'd be worried about all the unemployment and chaos there. But we have relatives over there, and I would like to visit them sometimes. I know they're supposed to be our enemy, and I think some of them are. But not my aunt.

What the government doesn't understand is that most people would just want to be able to visit over there, and then come back here. That's what I want to do. I'd still live here; this is my home. (p. 80)

3: 11-YEAR-OLD BOY, WEST BERLIN

Over there is not as good as here. There they live bad, with never enough to eat or drink. They're always staring at us when we come to visit. We have a BMW, and they have their *Trabis* [Trabant, the most popular and affordable of East German cars]. . . . Since they built the Wall, we have all the good things here—food and other things—and they don't. (p. 57)

4: MATTHIAS, WEST BERLIN

You really need money here on *Kudamm*. When I walk down this street, I just think of how I could spend my money if I had a lot, and sometimes I just think I have to spend it any way I can—that it doesn't matter how. I don't think I want much, but when I am here I begin to forget that. I see a motorcycle, a car, even a necklace, and I want them, and I begin to dream of them. And that's no good. People here always want to have, have, have. Here it seems like the main thing in life is money and good things. But that's not how it should be. The most important thing is contact with others; and people who are greedy have no contact. People end up hating each other because of money.

Over there in East Berlin they have socialism. I don't think it's good that they can't travel where they want; but I hear that there aren't any real rich people there, that everyone is more equal. I think that's more fair. Sometimes I think the Wall keeps that away from us, too—not just the Russians. And it would be better if we had some of that, too. Sometimes I think we should have poverty every six years, and then pick up again. To learn not to want everything, to learn to think about what we really need and don't need. I think after a couple of poverty catastrophes we'd be okay....

To work and to be free, that is important. Over there, people have work. That is good. But they are not free. Here we are freer, but there is less work. People have to feel needed. There's so much unemployment now; and I read somewhere that 50 percent of suicides are people out of work. If I were mayor of Berlin, the first thing I'd do is get people jobs. Then I'd take care of housing problems, so that people who need apartments get them without having to use all their salary for rent. These are two things people "over there" get without having to fight. That's the best thing about life in East Berlin. (pp. 60–61, 65)

5: BRIGITTE, WEST BERLIN

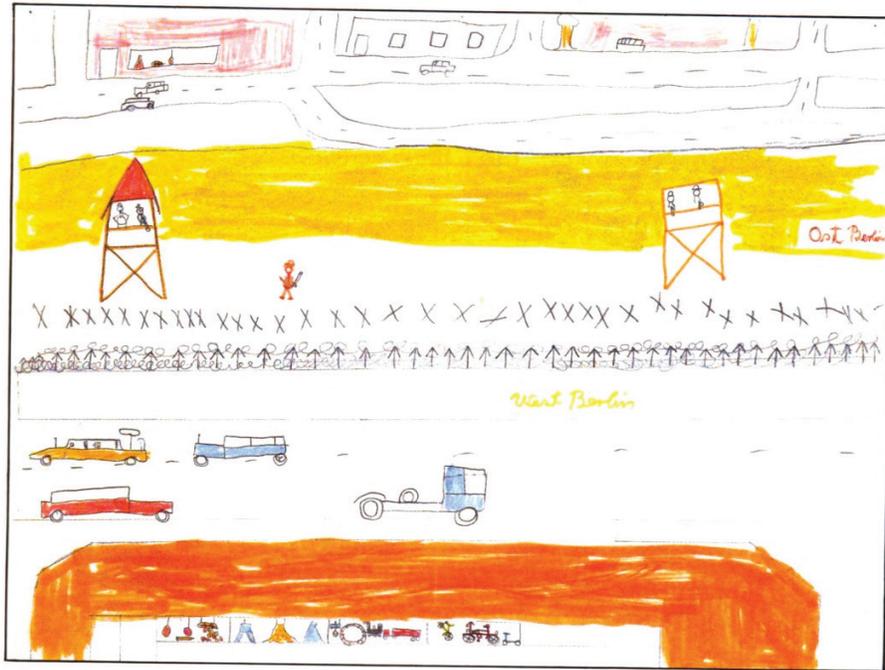
I can see the Wall from my living room window. Yes, I forget about it sometimes, because it's always there. I was born here, and always remember the Wall being there. When I was little we used to play "border patrol" down there, but now I don't spend much time near it. Sometimes we hear their jeeps going by in "no-man's-land," and at night their alarms go off if someone tries to escape, or maybe they just have practice in case someone tries to escape.

Well, two weeks ago someone did try. It was at night, and it's usually pretty quiet here—then all of a sudden I heard a lot of guns being fired over there. I knew someone was trying to get over, and I started to pray that he would make it. But I knew he wouldn't, and I felt so bad for him. A lot of people heard it too, and they got up and went to the Wall and started shouting and cursing at them over there. My mother let me go out with her and I shouted too. Then we started bringing garbage and other stuff over to the Wall and we set it on fire and let the wind blow the stinking smoke over to them. Everyone was so angry and some people were crying. I still wonder who it was that night; his family must be so sad. It's not fair, how they can't leave if they want to. And now I just hate the GDR, for what they do to the people. (p. 53)

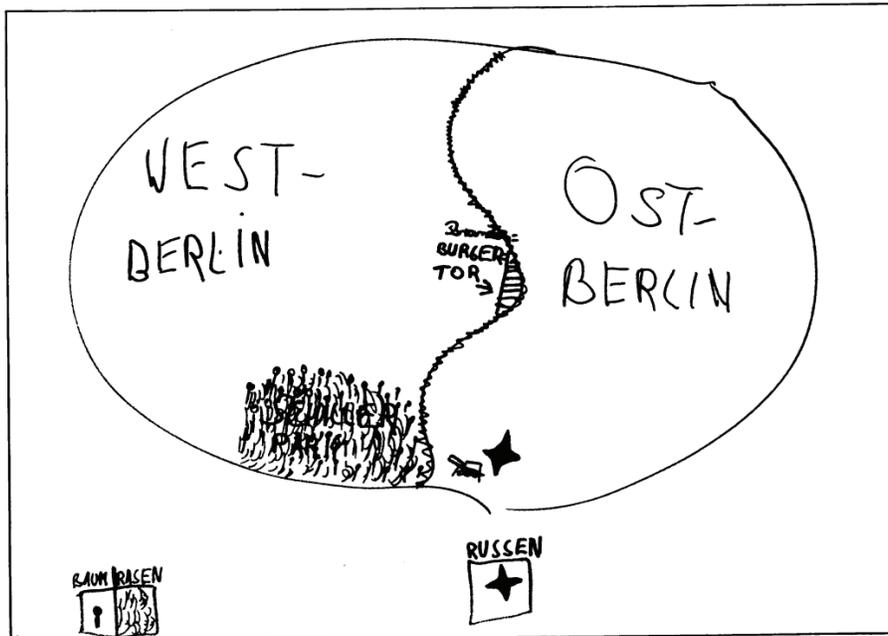
6: TANYA, 12 YEARS OLD, EAST BERLIN

... The Wall was built because people in the West were taking away our doctors and other skilled people. And we were losing a lot of them that way. Also, they were always going by the border, acting like they were getting ready for a war against us. They didn't want us to live here or something. So the Wall was built. I think we do need the Wall still. When I see the news about the West, all I see is crime, demonstrations, murders—nothing else. Sometimes I think the Wall protects us from all that. Soldiers have died defending the border, you know. We learned about one of them in school. I think it's better here because it's stricter. There are more laws, so we don't have demonstrations like they do in the West. We need those laws; and sometimes I wonder why it's not more strict in the West. (p. 104)

Drawing 1. Sven, West Berlin



Drawing 2. 12-year-old boy, West Berlin



Drawing 3. Andrea, East Berlin



Drawing 4. Torsten, East Berlin



Source:

Excerpts of testimonies and examine the drawings from the children of West and East Berlin: Davey, T. A. (1987). *A Generation Divided: German Children and the Berlin Wall*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Drawing 5. 9-year-old American boy living in West Berlin (computer-generated)



© Wood Powell (West Berlin, 1990)

HANDOUT 2.5.4 THE CHILDREN OF EAST AND WEST BERLIN QUESTIONS

Read the excerpts of testimonies and examine the drawings by children who lived in East Berlin or West Berlin during the time of the Berlin Wall in **Handout 2.5.3**. As a group, answer the following questions.

1. What have the children learned 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 attitude of the eastern children toward the West?
5. How did the Wall affect their day-to-day life?
6. How did the children compare the East and the West?
7. How would you evaluate the importance of personal experiences in shaping children's views of the East and West, compared to what they learned at home and in school?

Source:

The Berlin Wall and Beyond, Unit 3, Living with the Wall, <http://theberlinwallandbeyond.weebly.com/activities4.html>.