



**LIFE Behind  
the BERLIN  
WALL**



# *Life Behind the Berlin Wall*

## Teacher's Guide

Suggested Lesson Plan	3
Preview Questions	4
Key Terms & Definitions	5
Viewing Guide	7
Viewing Guide Answer Key	8
Discussion Questions	9
Activity: Who Chooses? Who Benefits? Who Pays? What's Fair?	11
Quiz	12
Quiz Answer Key	14
Enrichment & Integration Activities	15
Berlin Wall Lesson Plan	16
A Letter to Family Lesson Plan	17

# ***Life Behind the Berlin Wall***

## **Suggested Lesson Plan**

*These materials may be used in a variety of ways. For maximum benefit, we suggest the following lesson plan:*

- As a class, discuss the Preview Questions & Key Terms OR assign one of the Preview Questions as an opening journal activity, then discuss.
- Distribute copies of the Viewing Guide for students to use as a note-taking tool during the video.
- Play the video, pausing if needed to facilitate understanding and note-taking.
- Review and discuss answers to the Viewing Guide using Answer Key as a guide.
- Use Discussion Questions to spark class discussion or assign these questions as homework.
- As a class or in small groups, complete the *Who Chooses* Activity.
- Replay the video as preparation for the Quiz.
- Administer and grade the Quiz using Answer Key as a guide.
- Optional: Assign one or more Enrichment Activities as homework.

# ***Life Behind the Berlin Wall***

## **Preview Questions**

(These are meant to be read aloud by the teacher.)

1. How did World War II influence subsequent events in eastern Europe and Germany specifically?
2. Should a society be free to choose their own government and how to live their lives? Why or why not?
3. What are the consequences (both intended and unintended) in forcing a society to live in contradiction to their own individual interests?
4. Why are dictatorships inherently bad?

# *Life Behind the Berlin Wall*

## Key Terms & Definitions

**Barter** – The action or system of exchanging goods or services without using money

**Berlin Wall** – A guarded concrete barrier that physically and ideologically divided Berlin from 1961 to 1989, as well as encircling and separating West Berlin from East German territory

**Black Market** – A clandestine market or series of transactions that has some aspect of illegality or is characterized by noncompliance with an institutional set of rules. Trade that happens outside the rules.

**Capitalism** – An economic and political system in which a country's trade and industry are controlled by private owners for profit, rather than by the state

**Communism** – A political theory derived from Karl Marx, advocating class war and leading to a society in which all property is publicly owned, and each person works and is paid according to their abilities and needs

**Entrepreneur** – A person who organizes and operates a business or businesses, taking on greater than normal financial risks to do so

**Fascist** – Form of far-right, authoritarian ultra-nationalism, characterized by dictatorial power, forcible suppression of opposition, and strong regimentation of society and the economy that rose to prominence in early 20th-century Europe

**Market Economy** – An economic system in which production and prices are determined by unrestricted competition between privately-owned businesses

**Monday Protests** – Series of peaceful political protests against the government of the German Democratic Republic that took place in towns and cities around the country on various days of the week from 1989 to 1991. The Leipzig demonstrations, which are the most well-known, took place on Mondays.

**Parliamentary Republic** – System of democratic governance of a state where the executive derives its democratic legitimacy from its ability to command the support of the legislature, typically a parliament, to which it is accountable

**Planned Economy** – An economy in which production, investment, prices, and incomes are determined centrally by a government

**Standard of Living** – The degree of wealth and material comfort available to a person or community

**Stasi** – The official state security service of the German Democratic Republic from 1950 to 1990. It has been described as one of the most effective and repressive intelligence and secret police agencies to have ever existed.

**Subsidy** – A form of financial aid or support extended to an economic sector generally with the aim of promoting economic and social policy

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# ***Life Behind the Berlin Wall*** **Viewing Guide**

1. Today, Germany is a leading member of the \_\_\_\_\_.
2. East Germany called itself the \_\_\_\_\_ and West Germany called itself the \_\_\_\_\_.
3. A lot of East Germans like \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, & \_\_\_\_\_ moved from the Soviet controlled East towards the freedom of the West.
4. In a planned economy, \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_ determine what is produced.
5. By 1961, more than \_\_\_\_\_ had left East Germany including nearly \_\_\_\_\_ workers.
6. 262 people died while trying to escape over the wall to freedom in \_\_\_\_\_.
7. In 1988, East Germany's unfiltered smokestacks polluted the atmosphere with \_\_\_\_\_ times more particular matter than the West's did.
8. Almost \_\_\_\_\_ of the major rivers in East Germany became biologically dead.
9. In the West, \_\_\_\_\_ had a telephone and in the East it was \_\_\_\_\_.
10. President Reagan: "Mr. Gorbachev, \_\_\_\_\_."
11. The most famous chant of East German protesters became "\_\_\_\_\_."
12. Increasing free market capitalist elements leads to more \_\_\_\_\_.

# ***Life Behind the Berlin Wall***

## **Viewing Guide Answer Key**

1. European Union
2. German Democratic Republic & Federal Republic of Germany
3. Entrepreneurs, Managers, Farmers, Creative People, & Young Professionals
4. Politicians & Civil Servants
5. 2.5 million / 1 million
6. West Berlin
7. Ten
8. Half
9. 99% / 16%
10. Tear down this wall
11. We are the people
12. Growth



# *Life Behind the Berlin Wall*

## Discussion Questions

(These can be used for discussion after the film. Or use them as essay questions and have students respond in writing.)

1. How did the fall of Hitler's regime and the conclusion of the war in Europe guarantee a divided Germany? What impact did this have on East and West Germany?
2. How did Germany end up becoming a Cold War experiment?
3. How did people become an East or West Berliner?
4. Why did the East German "Brain Drain" occur?
5. Why did West German voters support an economic system like that in the United States?
6. What strengths exist within a market economy? What weaknesses, if any?
7. What weaknesses exist within a planned economy? What strengths, if any?
8. Which type of economy would you prefer? Why?
9. Why did East Germany suffer such frequent and varied economic shortages compared to West Germany? How did this impact the economy of East Germany and its citizens?
10. Why did the East Germany people need to be forced to follow the government planners? How were they forced? What does this say about the East German government of the period?
11. What impact did West German advertising and television have on East German citizens?
12. Why did so many people want to move from the East to the West and almost no one want to move from the West to the East?

13. How did East Germany try to keep people in East Germany? When did this begin?
14. How did the Berlin Wall come to be the physical embodiment of the infamous Iron Curtain?
15. How/Why did East German industry pollute the environment so much more than West Germany?
16. How did East Germany's planned economic system lead to serious housing problems for its citizens?
17. Why was it so difficult to buy products such as refrigerators, televisions, telephones, and cars in East Germany?
18. What impact did East German rent freezes have on consumers and property values?
19. What eventually brought about the fall of the Berlin Wall? What does this say about the relationship between government and citizens?
20. How does increasing free market capitalist elements lead to more growth? Why does it benefit both elites and average people?
21. Would you have risked your life to escape from East Berlin to West Berlin? Why or why not?

# ***Life Behind the Berlin Wall***

## **Activity: Who Chooses? Who Benefits? Who Pays? What's Fair?**

The four questions above can be a useful tool for evaluating any policy or system. Posing the questions is a great way to stimulate critical thinking. As a class, or in small groups, discuss the following:

*(For each question, think broadly about all the possible people or groups of people who may be affected, and remember there may be non-monetary costs and benefits.)*

1. Who should choose what form of political or economic system a country should pursue? Why? What should happen if these choices are not unanimous?
2. Who benefited from the West German free market system? Who benefited from the East German planned economic system?
3. Who pays for goods and services in a free market economic system? Who pays when government decides what is best for citizens without taking their opinions into account? Who pays when governments seek to oppress citizens?
4. Is a free market system that allows for winners and losers fair? Is a planned economy directed downward by the government with little regard to the people or economic forces more or less fair than a free market system? Why? Is it ever fair to deny people a voice or a vote? Who gets to decide (who chooses?) who is listened to and who is ignored?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# ***Life Behind the Berlin Wall***

## **Quiz**

1. Germany became divided after its defeat in which of the following?
  - a. The Prussian War
  - b. World War I
  - c. World War II
  - d. The Cold War
  
2. West Germany created what kind of government?
  - a. Communist Dictatorship
  - b. Democratic Parliamentary Republic
  - c. Constitutional Republic
  - d. Democratic Monarchy
  
3. What was the “Brain Drain?”
  - a. Poor public schools in East Germany which caused the nation to fall behind the west
  - b. Government seizing control of the means of production and deciding what to produce
  - c. Colleges and universities all moving to East Germany to pursue greater freedoms
  - d. Creative and productive people moving from Soviet controlled East to the free West
  
4. West Berlin and all of West Germany had a \_\_\_\_\_ economy while East Berlin and all of East Germany had a \_\_\_\_\_ economy.
  - a. market / planned
  - b. planned / market
  - c. barter / money-based
  - d. mixed / planned economy
  
5. How did East German officials seek to control the citizens of East Germany and force them to follow the government planners?
  - a. Positive propaganda and rewards for good behavior
  - b. A large state security apparatus known as the Stasi
  - c. Large scale implementation of social media and social credit scores
  - d. Peer pressure and conformity lessons on children’s television shows

6. How did the East German government seek to keep its citizens inside East Berlin and East Germany?

- a. Creation of a superior economic system that provided cheap goods and high paying jobs
- b. Making political deals with West Germany to ensure anyone who left would be returned
- c. Building an elaborate and deadly system of walls & guard towers known as the Berlin Wall
- d. Ensuring that no airports or train stations were built or operated in East Germany

7. East and West German economic systems, side by side, proved which of the following?

- a. It takes force and military might to achieve positive economic change in a society.
- b. Increasing free market capitalist elements and freedom benefits the most people.
- c. State controlled systems best know how to fulfill individual wants and needs.
- d. Germany should have stayed permanently divided for the betterment of all citizens.

8. Why were consumer products like cars, televisions, telephones, and refrigerators more available and affordable in the West?

- a. East Germany heavily taxed such "luxury items" to pay for essential items.
- b. West Germany produced cheaper quality goods thus costing less.
- c. East German citizens didn't want to purchase such things, so the supply was low.
- d. West German engineers were trying to copy the American economic system.

9. Which country had the highest per capita air pollution worldwide?

- a. West Germany
- b. The Soviet Union
- c. The United States
- d. East Germany

10. What ultimately brought about positive change and reunification in East Germany?

- a. The Soviet Union put direct pressure on East German officials.
- b. Popular protests by the people themselves pressured leaders.
- c. The U.S. military invaded East Germany.
- d. The Cold War officially ended with a signed treaty.

# ***Life Behind the Berlin Wall***

## **Quiz Answer Key**

1. C
2. B
3. D
4. A
5. B
6. C
7. B
8. A
9. D
10. B

# ***Life Behind the Berlin Wall***

## **Enrichment & Integration Activities**

### **Research Project and Presentation:**

Students should be broken up into small groups and choose one of the following Socialist/Communist countries and Command Economies which are/were like East Germany during the Cold War. Students should research the political and economic systems of their chosen country to compare and contrast conditions there with East Germany as well as conditions in traditional free-market economies like those found in West Germany and the United States. Key questions to ask: How/why did socialist structures develop in these countries? Why did they fail/why are they still in place? What struggles exist due to these systems? How are/aren't the people served by these systems? What can bring about positive change in these countries? Students should create visual elements such as PowerPoint presentations, pictures, charts, maps and/or graphs along with their written report. Ensure sources are properly cited and students will share their findings and conclusions with a presentation to the class.

Student groups should choose/be assigned different countries to ensure all countries are covered.

- DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF NORTH KOREA**
- REPUBLIC OF CUBA**
- SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM**
- THE SOVIET UNION**
- VENEZUELA**
- PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA**
- LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC**

# *Life Behind the Berlin Wall*

## Berlin Wall - Lesson Plan

<b>Time to Complete:</b>	Time to complete the lesson: 50 Minutes to extended time depending on class discussion and artistic detail.
<b>Materials/ Technology/ Resources:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The <i>Life Behind the Berlin Wall</i> video (DVD format, or it can be streamed from izzit.org with no login required.)</li><li>• Presentation Method (smartboard, projector, etc.)</li><li>• Viewing Guide</li><li>• Poster Board or other paper suitable for artwork</li><li>• Art supplies to include markers, pens, colored pencils, etc.</li></ul>
<b>Standards:</b>	Use our free and easy-to-use <a href="#">Standard Alignment</a> tool to align this lesson with the standards in your school district.
<b>Learning Objectives:</b>	Students will understand the difference between a free market economy and a command economy along with the associated advantages and disadvantages of the economic systems employed in West and East Germany. Students will use historical photographic evidence to create their own panel of the Berlin Wall complete with artistic messages which illustrate their understanding of the topic and video.
<b>Topics:</b>	West Germany, East Germany, Free Market Capitalism, Command Economy
<b>Absorb:</b>	Watch <i>Life Behind the Berlin Wall</i> video in DVD format, or it can be streamed from izzit.org with no login required.
<b>Overall guiding question(s):</b>	<b>How and why did West and East Germany develop such different economic systems despite being the same people and culture? What are the advantages of a free market economic system? What are the disadvantages of a planned economic system?</b>



**Lesson  
Procedures:  
(50 Minutes)**

1. Watch video: *Life Behind the Berlin Wall*
2. **Procedures:**
  - a. Activity: Have students look up historical photos of the decorated and graffitied Berlin Wall on the West Berlin side. Students should also look up photographs from the East Berlin side in order to note the difference and what that difference represents.
  - b. Students will then create their own decorated section of the Berlin Wall using key terms and concepts from the video in order to illustrate both their understanding of the topic and the freedoms afforded to those in the free-market West.

**Summary &  
Assessment:  
(15 Minutes)**

Assessment can be on content of the illustration, use of key terms and topics and verbal presentation.

Students can present their panel and explain the thought process behind their design and key term choices illustrated in their work and what economic freedom means to them.

**Reflection:  
(5 minutes)**

Ask students if they think governments and people have learned anything regarding economic freedom from the Cold War experiment of East and West Germany.

# *Life Behind the Berlin Wall*

## A Letter to the Family - Lesson Plan

<b>Time to Complete:</b>	50 Minutes to extended time depending on class discussion and student share out.
<b>Materials/Technology/Resources:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•The <i>Life Behind the Berlin Wall</i> video (DVD format, or it can be streamed from izzit.org with no login required.)</li><li>•Presentation Method (smartboard, projector, etc.)</li><li>•Viewing Guide</li><li>•Pen and Notebook Paper</li></ul>
<b>Standards:</b>	Use our free and easy-to-use <a href="#">Standard Alignment</a> tool to align this lesson with the standards in your school district.
<b>Learning Objectives:</b>	Students will understand the difference between a free market economy and a command economy along with the associated advantages and disadvantages of the economic systems employed in West and East Germany. Students will use their understanding of the conditions in both East and West Berlin in order to write a letter to another classmate as if they were a family member on one side or another detailing the living conditions and day to day life in either East or West Berlin.
<b>Topics:</b>	West Germany, East Germany, Free Market Capitalism, Command Economy
<b>Absorb:</b>	Watch <i>Life Behind the Berlin Wall</i> video in DVD format, or it can be streamed from izzit.org with no login required.
<b>Overall guiding question(s):</b>	How and why did West and East Germany develop such different economic systems despite being the same people and culture? What impact did these different systems have on people living on either side of the Berlin Wall?

**Lesson Procedures:  
(50 Minutes)**

1. Watch video: *Life Behind the Berlin Wall*
2. **Procedures:**
  - a. Activity: Break Students into two different groups based on East Berlin and West Berlin.
  - b. Students will then act as if they are writing a letter to a family member on the other side of the Berlin Wall. In their letter they should imagine and explain what it was like to live on whatever side of the Berlin Wall they were grouped in. Letters should include use of key terms and concepts from the video plus their understanding of the time period. Students should write their letters not knowing which student in the other group will be receiving their letter and pay special attention to either the freedoms enjoyed in the West or the restrictions and fear known to have existed in the East.

**Summary &  
Assessment:  
(15 Minutes)**

Assessment can be on content of the letter, use of key terms and topics and verbal presentation.

Students can read their letters aloud to the class and the class can discuss similar themes seen throughout each group's combined letters.

**Reflection:  
(5 minutes)**

Ask students if they think there are other places in the world today as divided as East and West Germany were and to evaluate if that is a good or bad thing. Remind students that divisions do not need to be physical like the Berlin Wall.

Thanks for choosing izzit.org materials! We'd love to hear from you! If you have any comments, questions, or feedback, please email [Ask@izzit.org](mailto:Ask@izzit.org) or call us at the number below. We can't serve you well if we don't know what you need!



**Check out more free educational resources  
at [izzit.org](http://izzit.org), including:**

- Current Events Lessons
- Teachable Moments videos
- Learning Modules
- Online Quizzes
- So much more!