



The Berlin Wall

THE BERLIN WALL

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Look at a world map and find Berlin, Germany. Do you know what happened to Berlin after World War II?
2. Do you know who controlled Berlin right after the war ended?
3. Why do you think the Berlin Wall was built?
4. How did the political situation change in Eastern Europe in the late 1980's?
5. When were East and West Germany unified?





The Berlin Wall

The Berlin Wall was a barrier that separated West Berlin from East Berlin and the rest of East Germany.

After World War II, the city of Berlin was divided into four sectors. The Soviet Union controlled the eastern sector. The United States, Britain, and France controlled its western sectors.

East Berliners could still visit, shop, and even work in West Berlin. But by 1961 East Germany's poor economy and increased political tension between the Soviet Union and the West caused thousands of East Germans to move to the West. To stop people from leaving, on August 12, 1961, a wall was built to close the border.

The Berlin Wall began as a barbed-wire fence but was eventually fortified with concrete slabs. It was 96 miles long and almost 12 feet thick. Checkpoints along it allowed tourists from abroad, diplomats, and Western military personnel to cross into East Berlin. Guards patrolled it to prevent escapes, but 5,000 people escaped over the wall into West Berlin. Another 192 were killed and 200 were injured in failed attempts.

About 1987, the political situation began to change. Mikhail Gorbachev, president of the Soviet Union, eased tensions with the West and introduced some liberal reforms, including more open government. Citizens in other Communist-controlled European countries began to demand similar reforms.

In 1989, large anti-government demonstrations in East Germany forced the government to resign. The new government promised to lift the travel ban for East Germans. On November 9, a government minister mistakenly announced that they could cross into West Berlin immediately. That night, thousands went to the wall and the overwhelmed guards opened the checkpoints to let them through.

Within a year, the Berlin Wall was dismantled except for short sections that were left as memorials. East and West Germany were unified on October 3, 1990.



ESL Lesson Plans - Famous Places - Berlin Wall

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

A. True or False. Read the statements below. If the statement is true, write T beside the sentence. If it is false, write F. If it is false, correct the information.

1. From the time Berlin was first divided, East Berliners were not allowed to travel to West Berlin. _____
2. The Berlin Wall was built to stop West Berliners from entering East Berlin. _____
3. No one ever successfully escaped over the wall. _____
4. The Berlin Wall existed for almost 30 years. _____
5. Parts of the Berlin Wall were not torn down. _____

B. Practice asking and answering the following questions with your partner. Then write the answers in complete sentences.

1. What was the Berlin Wall? _____

2. Why was the Berlin Wall built? _____

3. Describe the Berlin Wall. _____

4. Who was allowed to cross into East Berlin? _____

5. How did Mikhail Gorbachev play a part in the dismantling of the Berlin Wall? _____

6. Why was the East German government forced to resign in 1989 and what did the new government promise to do? _____

7. What important event occurred on November 9, 1989? _____

**VOCABULARY REVIEW****A. Match the words on the left with the correct meaning on the right.**

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| _____ 1. barrier | a) staff, workers |
| _____ 2. tension | b) stop something from happening |
| _____ 3. fortify | c) hurt |
| _____ 4. abroad | d) something that stops movement |
| _____ 5. diplomat | e) an order that something must not be done |
| _____ 6. military | f) make stronger |
| _____ 7. personnel | g) army |
| _____ 8. prevent | h) problems, stress, difficult relations |
| _____ 9. injured | i) a person who represents his/her government in another country |
| _____ 10. ban | j) overseas, in a foreign country |

B. Choose the correct word from the left column above to complete the following sentences.

1. She has learned two foreign languages while studying _____.
2. The director of _____ is planning to hire twenty new workers.
3. Many governments have decided to _____ smoking in public buildings.
4. Three people were seriously _____ in the car accident.
5. Seat belts help _____ serious injuries in car accidents.

C. Choose the word(s) with the closest meaning to the underlined words in the following sentences.

1. The Berlin Wall was built to close the border.
a) traffic b) travel c) dividing line between two countries
2. Mikhail Gorbachev eased tensions with the west.
a) lessened b) easy c) increased
3. He introduced some liberal reforms.
a) taxes b) changes c) demonstrations
4. Large anti-government demonstrations forced the government to resign.
a) quit b) fight c) escape
5. Within a year, the Berlin Wall was dismantled.
a) forgotten b) opened c) torn down.

**ANSWER KEY****PRE-READING QUESTIONS**

1-5. Individual answers.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS**A. True or False**

1. F 2. F 3. F 4. T 5. T

B. Written Answers

1. The Berlin Wall was a barrier built in 1961 to separate West Berlin from East Berlin and the rest of East Germany.
2. The government of East Germany built the Berlin Wall wall to prevent its citizens from crossing over into West Germany where the economy was in much better shape.
3. The Berlin Wall was 96 miles long and 12 feet thick. It started as a barbed-wire fence but was later fortified with concrete blocks.
4. Some tourists from abroad, diplomats, and Western military personnel could cross into East Berlin.
5. Mikhail Gorbachev introduced some liberal reforms and more open government in Russia and this caused the citizens of East Germany to demand similar changes.
6. When large anti-government demonstrations forced the East German government to resign in 1989, the new government promised to allow East Germans to travel to the West.
7. Guards opened the checkpoints in the Berlin Wall and East Germans crossed into West Berlin.

VOCABULARY REVIEW**A. Matching**

1.d 2.h 3.f 4.j 5.i 6.g 7.a 8.b
9.c 10.e

B. Choose the correct word

1. abroad 2. personnel 3. ban 4. injured 5. prevent

C. Choose the word(s) with the closest meaning

1. c 2. a 3. b 4. a 5. c