

1.5 FOUR AMERICAN PRESIDENTS AND THE BERLIN WALL

? FOCUS QUESTION:

- **How are nations connected through international events?**

STANDARD #2 TIME, CONTINUITY AND CHANGE.

STANDARD #9 GLOBAL CONNECTIONS.

LESSON OVERVIEW:

This lesson focuses on the visits of three American Presidents (Kennedy, Reagan and Clinton) as well as Barack Obama as a Presidential candidate (2008) and President (2013) to the city of Berlin and speeches each gave about the symbolic role of Berlin during the Cold War in the heart of Europe. The Berlin Wall can be viewed both as the physical representation of the divided Europe (and world) into the Democratic West and the Communist East, and also the symbol of divisive ideologies. The lesson will allow students to explore other walls in history, both physical and ideological and make connections among these. The symbolic “rebuilding” and “destruction” of the wall at the 20th anniversary commemoration serves as another reminder that there are still walls in the world today that divide people.

TEACHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The building of the Berlin Wall in August 1961 served as a physical representation of the so-called “Iron Curtain” — the ideological divide between the Western Bloc and the Soviet Bloc. In order to fully appreciate the role of US Presidential addresses related to Berlin, the Cold War and United States foreign policy, students need to become familiar with the division of Europe after World War II, the importance of Berlin as an “island” in the heart of East Germany and its role as a “battleground” of Cold War ideologies. These events are detailed in a timeline which can provide the historical context. Since the fall of the Wall in 1989, there have been many articles and books on the subject. This lesson presupposes a certain familiarity with the events of the Cold War and the pivotal role of the city of Berlin.



🕒 TIME:

(2-3) 45 minute class periods

INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES:



Documentary on the building of the Berlin Wall:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=szjFKADu69U>



“Walled In!” (produced by Deutsche Welle):
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OwQsTzGkbiY>

Twentieth Anniversary Commemoration of the Fall of the Berlin Wall (in German):
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2zCRkQFxaDc>



- “Mending Wall” Poem (**Handout 1.5.1 on Instructional Resource Disc**)
- Timeline on the History of Berlin and the Berlin Wall (1945-1990) (**Handout 1.5.2 on Instructional Resource Disc**)
- *Ich bin ein Berliner!* Speech (**Handout 1.5.3 on Instructional Resource Disc**)
- *Tear Down This Wall!* Speech (**Handout 1.5.4 on Instructional Resource Disc**)
- *Berlin is Free!* Speech (**Handout 1.5.5 on Instructional Resource Disc**)
- Barack Obama Speech 2008 (**Handout 1.5.6 on Instructional Resource Disc**)
- Speech Analysis Worksheet (**Handout 1.5.7 on Instructional Resource Disc**)
- *Reagan Wall* Political Cartoon (**Handout 1.5.8 on Instructional Resource Disc**)
- Cartoon Analysis Worksheet (**Handout 1.5.9 on Instructional Resource Disc**)
- Barack Obama Speech 2013 (**Handout 1.5.10 on Instructional Resource Disc**)

PROCEDURE:



DAY 1:

ANTICIPATORY SET: The lesson should begin with the reading and discussion of American poet Robert Frost’s poem “Mending Wall” (**Handout 1.5.1 on Instructional Resource Disc**). After reading the poem, the teacher should ask the students to respond either verbally or in writing or with a partner to a series of questions:

1. What does the wall symbolize for the neighbor?
2. What does Frost say about the wall?
3. Evaluate the neighbor’s opinion.
4. With which opinion does nature hold and why?
5. How do walls exist between people?
6. In what ways do “walls” become metaphysical and/or symbolic in the poem?
7. Depending on the background knowledge of the students, explain the purpose of the following famous walls or barriers in history: Hadrian’s Wall, the Great Wall of China, the Maginot Line, the Bamboo Curtain, the 38th Parallel.
8. Some walls are abstractions impervious to cannon fire or even nuclear weapons. One such wall was apartheid. What was apartheid and how and when was this wall breached?
9. What is the caste system, a type of abstract wall that has existed for centuries in India?
10. What types of walls exist between children and their parents?

After a discussion of the questions related to Robert Frost’s poem, “Mending Wall”, the teacher should introduce the importance of the city of Berlin as a focal point of the Cold War and discuss the construction of the Berlin Wall in August 1961. The teacher might show (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=szjFKADu69U>), a 2-minute documentary on the building of the Wall or the video “*Walled In!*” produced by Deutsche Welle. There’s an excerpt on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OwQsTzGkbiY>. *Eingemauert* makes reference to the German-German border, so the teacher and students can grasp more and better the full dimension of the separation. The teacher might also refer to the Timeline on the History of Berlin and the Berlin Wall (1945-1990) (**Handout 1.5.2 on Instructional Resource Disc**). Another recommended resource is the 24-minute *Field Trip to Berlin* DVD also offered by the Transatlantic Outreach Program.



DAY 2:

Students will next read and/or listen to the speeches of Presidents John F. Kennedy (1963) (**Handout 1.5.3 on Instructional Resource Disc**), Ronald Reagan (1987) (**Handout 1.5.4 on Instructional Resource Disc**), Bill Clinton (1994) (**Handout 1.5.5 on Instructional Resource Disc**), Presidential candidate Barack Obama (2008) (**Handout 1.5.6 on Instructional Resource Disc**), and President Barack Obama (2013) (**Handout 1.5.10 on Instructional Resource Disc**).

1. Students should complete the Speech Analysis Worksheet (**Handout 1.5.7 on Instructional Resource Disc**) adapted from the National Archives and Records Administration for written document.
2. Identify any phrases or words in these speeches which parallel Frost's "Mending Wall".
3. Who was the audience for each President's speech, and what was the key message each President sent to his audience?
4. After listening to and/or reading each speech, compare and contrast the tone of each one.

WHOLE GROUP REFLECTION:

- The teacher should facilitate a discussion on how each speech relates to the foreign policy of each President. How does each speech relate to the Cold War and/or United States' relations with Europe?

MODIFICATION:

- Rather than having all the students read all five speeches, the teacher may restructure the lesson into a jigsaw cooperative learning by creating groups of five and assigning the students to read and become experts on only one speech.

EXTENSIONS:

- Students should examine the political cartoon (**Handout 1.5.8 on Instructional Resource Disc**) on Reagan and the Berlin Wall and complete the Cartoon Analysis Worksheet (**Handout 1.5.9 on Instructional Resource Disc**) developed by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).
- The teacher may want to instruct the students individually or in groups to draw a political cartoon based on one of the other Presidential speeches.
- The 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 2009 was a celebratory event attended by political figures from around the world. The teacher may want to show a program which gives some background of this symbolic "rebuilding" and "demolition" of the wall: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_BnLvzcWks&NR=1 and a program (in German) which captures the excitement experienced by the attendees: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2zCRkQFxaDc>

