

Goethe TOP Program Lesson Plan “The Stasi and Espionage in the GDR”

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Unit Length: 5-6 Day Lesson Plan based on a 50-minute period week
Audience: World History 9th or 10th Grade
Standards: <http://nchs.ucla.edu/standards/worldera9.html>

This unit is to fall right after a week’s coverage of post-WWII background. The student should have a working knowledge of the start of the Cold War, the pertinent events of the late 1940s, and how Germany and Berlin were divided after the war.

Important Acronyms:

GDR: German Democratic Republic (English for *Deutsche Demokratische Republik*, DDR; more commonly known in English as **East Germany**)
SED: Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Socialist Unity Party of Germany)
SMA: Soviet Military Administration (organization in charge of East Germany after WWII)
KPD: Named given to Communist Party of Germany founded in 1920s
MSS: Ministerium für Staatssicherheit-Stasi (Ministry for State Security)

Day 1:

Assign *East Germany History Packet* (From Facts on File) reading the night before and make sure student bring the reading to class the next day.

1. Start with the Quick Write to be incorporated into class notes. Have students identify the following (you can have them write these on their notes):

Creation of Two Germanys by 1949

West Germany

Official Name of Country:
Type of government:
Allies:

East Germany

Official Name of Country:
Type of government
Main forms of economic output:
Allies:

3. Short Discussion on Reading:

Select a student to re-read aloud the paragraphs under History before the Ulbricht Years through to the end of "Strict Party Control." Ask the following questions after the student has read the paragraph. You can have these on an overhead/handout and have students write in answers as they go along. Alternatively, these could have been assigned along with the previous night's homework and class time would simply be to re-read the passage together (there is some tricky history there and tough terms) and then answer the questions.

Intro Paragraph:

What does the author mean that the Soviet Union demanded "reparations" from East Germany?

Why would this cause a strained relationship between the two governments (USSR and GDR)?

The Ulbricht Years:

What key events helped East Germany become more powerful in Eastern Europe in the 1950s?

Relations with West Germany:

What events caused Ulbricht to ultimately erect the Berlin Wall in 1961?

Strict Party Control:

What happened to the economy in the 1950s?

Why could this era have caused so workers to flee to West Germany?

What changes occurred in the 1960s that had a somewhat positive effect on employment in the GDR?

Summarize reading:

*Established communist government with strong ties to Eastern European countries, strained with USSR

*SED in control

*Strict monitoring of economy, with emphasis placed on production and turning around economy

**Massive emigration of East Germans to the West during 1950s due to economic strife

*Major result of this: Berlin Wall erected in 1961 to curb drain of people to west to save economy

4. Intro to the Stasi:

Now discuss briefly some broader questions:

a) How do you think the average GDR citizen felt about the government and what it was providing its citizens during the 1950s and 1960s?

b) If the SED constructed a physical wall to stop people from leaving the country, what would this say about their police or secret service forces in the country?

Put the following two passages on the overhead:

The SED's security service became the Ministry for State Security (Ministerium für Staatssicherheit-**Stasi**). Its role was to persecute opponents of the Communist state and protect state and party apparatus against subversion.

from *The Berlin Wall: A World Divided, 1961-1989* by Frederick Taylor (2006)

Australian Journalist Anna Funder in her book *Stasiland* (2003) wrote of the Stasi as the following:

The Stasi was the internal army by which the government kept control. Its job was to know everything about everyone, using any means it chose.

The Stasi's brief was to be "shield and sword" of the Communist Party... the SED. But its broader remit was to protect the Party from the people. It arrested, imprisoned and interrogated anyone it chose. It inspected all mail in secret rooms above post offices (copying letters and stealing valuables), and intercepted, daily, tens of thousands of phone calls. It bugged hotel rooms and spied on diplomats. It ran its own universities, hospitals, elite sports centers and terrorist training programs for Libyans and the West Germans of the Red Army Faction. It pockmarked the countryside with secret bunkers for its members in the events of World War III. Unlike secret services in democratic countries, the Stasi was the mainstay of State power. Without it, and without the threat of Soviet tanks to back it up, the SED regime could not have survived. (pg. 57)

Ask the students: What do you think Funder means by the statement "But its broader remit (goal) was to protect the Party from the people"? What does this say about the SED's belief in the citizens of the GDR?

Now, let's look at the Stasi in action. Here is the opening clip from the 2006 Academy Award Winning Foreign Film *The Lives of Others*

Movie website: <http://www.sonyclassics.com/thelivesofothers/swf/index.html>

Pass out ***Lives of Others Handout*** for students to work on throughout this unit. Have students answer first set of questions while watching film (or after).

Watch the First Two Selections.

Day 1 Homework:

Tonight students will start a journal that they will keep for the remaining days of the unit. Tonight they will do Journal #1, which asks them to respond to the Bigger Picture Questions from Selections 1 and 2. Tell students to bring journals to class everyday.

Day 2: The “Enemies” of the GDR

1. Select 2-3 students to share their responses to the Bigger Questions from Scenes 1 and 2.
2. Now tell them we are going to start a simulation that will continue for the remainder of the unit.
3. For this activity, students are all to assume that they are typical working-class citizens of the GDR. One student will be secretly selected to be the informant; however they are socially and economically of the same class as all other group members.

Structuring Class for the Week and Assigning Roles:

- 1) Arrange desks in five groups of 6 with each desk in the group labeled 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (use a sticky note)
- 2) Assign each group of desks a letter: A, B, C, D, E (This is their group number. They will be working with this group for the entire week) You can place a piece of paper on each group with the corresponding letter.
- 3) When students come in the room, have them come directly to your desk and show them their seat assignment card (use sticky notes) keeping this hidden from other students (You can have them look at their card and have them pass it immediately back to you. They then go and take their seat).
- 4) Tell them that if they have a star next to their number, they are their group’s informant. Make sure to assign the informant role to a different number in each group so students don’t try and scheme about which number is the informant. Make sure to tell the informants **not** to reveal their identity.

Seat Assignment Card: Group A, Seat 1
Seat Card, Group B, Seat 2*

Activity 1:

Tell students that as seen in the opening of “The Lives of Others” one of the main concerns of the Stasi was to figure out who aided escapees over the Berlin Wall. Geld Wiesler, the main character of the movie, a Stasi an expert interrogator, noted that these people were the enemies of socialism.”

Ask: What is an “enemy of socialism”? (Hint: What is the opposite of socialism?)

Read them the following excerpt from *Stasiland* (pg. 96). This is an excerpt from an interview with an ex-Stasi member named Herr Winz. He notes about their “enemy”:

...You were right. Capitalism is even worse than you told us it would be. In the GDR, you could go out alone at night as a woman. You could leave your apartment door open...This capitalism is, above all, exploitation! It is unfair. It’s brutal. The rich get richer and the masses get steadily poorer. And capitalism makes war! German imperialism in particular! Each industrialist is a criminal at war with the other, each business at war with the next...Capitalism blunders the planet too!

This activity asks students to ponder other “threats” to the Stasi. Ask them:

What types of activities besides escaping into West Germany would be considered a “threat” to the state?

Create a graphic organizer based on these categories and give students 10 minutes in their group to fill this out. Make sure to expand this chart to fit on whole page and tell students to leave room for notes.

Categories	Type of activity that could be “threatening”	Person who would commit this activity
Political		
Economic		
Social		
Religious		
Intellectual		
Artistic		

2. Reproduce chart on overhead or board and have each group share out a category or two. Record their answers on the board and have students fill in answers that they did not have.

3. After one category is done, ask the students to circle the one activity that they think would be the most threatening to the Stasi. Share this out with the class.

4. Watch selection 3 and 4 of *The Lives of Others*. Again have students fill out the answers as they go along.

Day 2 Homework:

- a) Bigger picture questions from Selections 3 and 4 of movie
- b) Journal 2

Day 3: The Role of the Informant

1. Have them meet in groups today. Sit in their original order.
2. Have them take out their movie notes and think briefly about the last scene we saw at Dreyman’s 40th birthday party. The scene hinted at a very important piece of the Stasi organization: who was this? The Informant.
3. Put the following quote on an overhead.

“After the Wall fell the German media called East Germany ‘the most perfected surveillance state of all time.’ At the end, the Stasi had 97,000 employees---more than enough to oversee a country of seventeen million people. But it also had over 173,000* informers among the population. In Hitler’s Third Reich, it is estimated that there was one Gestapo agent for every 2000 citizens, and in Stalin’s USSR there was one KGB agent for every 5830 people. In the GDR, there was one Stasi officer or informant for every sixty-three people. If part-time informers are included, some estimates have the ratio has high as one informer for every 6.5 citizens.” Funder *Stasiland* (pg. 57)

**According to an article in *Der Spiegel* published in 2008, this number might be much higher. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,540771,00.html>

4. Ask them this question: For our school of 1,400 how many Stasi employees would this mean?

5. Share with them briefly the *Der Spiegel* article above. As it notes, the typical informant was male, between 25-40 years of age.
6. In class journal entry #3: Xerox these three questions off and have students write directly in their journals.
 - *What industries do you think the GDR was most interested in having informants in?
 - *Would informants be needed in high schools? Why or why not?
 - *If you were to think about your average school day, where do you think you would run into informants? At what locations? How many might be in your neighborhood?
7. Share responses.
8. Xerox reading #1 by Anna Funder: Interview with Herr Bock and do a popcorn reading of this. (Appendix A)
9. What then was the pay off of being an informer? How does this relate to the theme of “power” and “control” as seen in *the Lives of Others*?
10. Where were informers then in Germany? Again we turn to Anna Funder: “Overt or covert, there was someone reporting to the Stasi on their fellows and friends in every school, every factory, every apartment block, every pub.” (*Stasiland*, pg. 6)
11. Explain Homework:

Day 3 Homework: Surveillance Report

Informant to secretly select 1 student in group to watch and report on
 Non-informants to write surveillance report on the teacher

Disclaimer:

The goal is two-fold: for students to compose a report in the manner of the Stasi, and to create a slight sense of paranoia among the student body in the classroom, mimicking the social atmosphere of the GDR.

Teachers should make every effort possible to select their informants carefully and to create groups of like-minded students to avoid any potential friendship conflicts.

Student surveillance reports should be constructed in the most neutral manner possible, using their best efforts to keep the integrity and privacy of students in tact (See Appendix C for Assignment). In order for the homework assignment to be fair and equitable, all students will write a report. The non-informants are instructed to watch the teacher throughout the day and detail their activity while the informants are to select a member from the group and do the same. Stress to the students that this is not about singling someone out or blowing the whistle on supposed inappropriate behavior. We are to assume here that the person being watched is part of a routine check up on a randomly selected group of citizens. Tell them that this is just like airport security checks where TSA might check every 10th person, not for reason of suspicion, but purely as a formality of security. Remind them that the Stasi did not need any reason to watch people.

Day 4: Stasi Reports and Further Investigative Activities

Students to sit in groups again.

1. Have students turn in homework faced down. Pull out the informants' reports. (They will have a star next to their names) while students are reading article on Michael Jackson's Stasi report. Scan reports quickly and select 2 student reports and 2 teacher reports that appear to be neutral and that have followed the rules.

Article Link:

<http://www.time.com/time/arts/article/0,8599,1914581,00.html?iid=tsmodule>

2. After students read, have them do in class Journal Entry #4

*How could Michael Jackson's concert be considered a threat to East Germany at this time?

*Do you think that the Stasi had a right to be worried? Explain.

*What other bands/types of bands in the 1980s them might have been a threat as well?

*How did economics play a part in the deal that Michael Jackson's organizers came to with regard to this concert?

*If Wiesler (from the *Lives of Others*) had an iPod, what would be on this?

3. Pass out reports to random students (of surveillances on the teacher) and have them read. Then the teacher will read 2-3 reports from the informants. Comment on the information collected. Ask if it seems superfluous? Useful? What would the Stasi have thought of their work?

4. Then ask them the following questions:

*How did you feel before the report was read? Were you nervous, anxious?

*What do you think about the information related? Does it seem to reflect a careful observation of the student being watched?

*How could you as an observer get more detailed information on the person you observed?

*What would have helped you to act more secretly with your efforts?

5. Now tell students that we are going to read a short excerpt about other Stasi techniques for gathering data. Make sure that students know who she was and her goal of writing the book.

6. Xerox Appendix B excerpt from *Stasiland* on Funder's visit to the Leipzig Stasi headquarters, which was turned into a museum after the Wall fell. Do again a popcorn reading.

7. Ask them what they make of their odor sampling technique? Would this have really worked?

8. Now tell them that we are going to segue way into talking about how teenagers and young adults in the GDR might have had a brush with the Stasi.

10. Assign homework reading on a teenager/young adult in the GDR who came into trouble with the Stasi.

Readings:

- 1) Carsten Kaaz, youth, grew up in Berlin 1970s, from *In the Shadow of the Wall*, Appendix C
- 2) Miriam Weber, young girl in Leipzig 1960s, from *Stasiland*, Appendix E
- 3) Klaus Jentzsch, GDR rock' n' roller from *Stasiland*, Appendix E

Tell them that they will be recounting their person's story in class tomorrow, so they will need to know the details very well. They can take a page of notes on their lives and what happened to them regarding the Stasi.

Day 4 Homework: Journal #5 and reading assignment above.

Day 5: The Stasi and Youth

1. Set up room in groups of 3s.
2. Assign student to the role of Carsten, Miriam, or Klaus depending on what they read.
3. In groups, tell each student to spend 3-4 minutes introducing themselves, tell each other about their story, how they got in trouble with the Stasi, and what happened to them in the end. In the case of Carsten, he is related what happened to his friend Uwe George.
4. Next have students brainstorm via the below graphic organizer the similarities and differences in their experiences with the Stasi.

	Similarities	Differences
Experiences with the Stasi		

5. Have students brain storm the following on the bottom of the graphic organizer: If the three had to give advice to an average teenager in the GDR during the 1980s, what 3 most important pieces of information would they tell them?
6. Share out responses.
7. Watch selection 5 of *Lives of Others*. Have students fill out answers as they watch the movie. Make sure that they stay in their same seats (with group of 3)
8. In their character, have them respond to bigger picture question in a group. What would Klaus say about power and control in the GDR? How did this affect him?
9. Then share answers with class.
10. Explain evening homework.

Homework Day 5: Journal # 6

Day 6: When the Wall Fell

1. Arrange classroom for a *Take a Stand* activity. Have desks at edge of classroom. Have “Yes” written on one side of the room and “No” on the other.
2. Tell students to stand in the middle at first.
3. Read Question 1: The German government should allow people the right to have access to their files collected under the Stasi.

Tell students to move to the side of the room that best exemplifies their feelings. They can be in the middle, against the wall (where signs are), near to the wall, etc. Call on individual students to explain their placement.

4. Read Question 2: German businesses should keep secret the past identity of their workers, to protect former Stasi members & informants from harassment. Go through the same process as above.
5. Tell the students now to assemble themselves back into their original group of 6.
6. What really happened? Read short quote from Anna Funder
“Stasi men are by and large less affected by the unemployment that has consumed East Germany since the Wall came down. Many of them found work in insurance, telemarketing and real estate. None of these business existed in the GDR. But the Stasi were, in effect, schooled in the art of convincing people to do things against their own interest.” *Stasiland*, pg. 92

Of the many ex-Stasi she interviewed, the most common jobs were:

- private detectives
- private business
- business advisor for Western companies who want to build in East Germany

7. *Xerox Der Spiegel* article and have students do a popcorn reading.
<http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,635486,00.html>
8. Discuss conservative and liberal attitudes about the situation.
9. Tell students about the puzzlers in Berlin whose job it is to put together pieces of files shredded by Stasi at the last minute (when the Wall was coming down). Many wait anxiously to hear news about loved ones who might have disappeared or the like.
10. Finally ask students if they would want to know who the informants were? What type of pressure could this put on relationships in the class? Think of how this might have played itself out when the Wall Fell.
11. Optional: Show last 30 minutes of *the Lives of Others* and tell them what happened to Dreyman and Wiesler.

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East Germany History Packet

From Facts on File

<http://www.2facts.com/stories/digest-home-feature.asp>

Germany: Allied Occupation

Germany's unconditional surrender ended the Third Reich. The Allies reduced Germany to its prewar western boundaries and assigned a large portion on the east to Poland. Setting up four occupation zones, they tried war criminals and dismantled factories. But as their policies diverged, Germany was split into two parts. Britain, the U.S., and, eventually, France wanted to rebuild Germany into a major Western European power capable of countering the expansionist tendencies of the Soviet Union. In 1948 they merged their zones into one region, supplied with U.S. aid, and encouraged the Germans to form a democratic government. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, imposed a Communist German government, under Soviet domination, on East Germany. In 1949 this practical polarization of Germany was legalized by the creation of two German states.

Germany, East

Officially German Democratic Republic (GDR; Ger. *Deutsche Demokratische Republik*), former republic of central Europe, bordered on the N by the Baltic Sea, on the E by Poland, on the S by Czechoslovakia and West Germany, and on the W by West Germany. The GDR had an area of 108,178 sq km (41,768 sq mi). East Germany was established on Oct. 7, 1949, as one of two successor states--West Germany being the other--to the nation of Germany, defeated and occupied by the Allies in World War II. The GDR ceased to exist when it merged with West Germany on Oct. 3, 1990.

Population

One of the problems faced by the GDR was the steady decrease in the number of young people living within its borders. In the mid-1950s official estimates put the total population of East Germany at 17.6 million; by 1990 the figure was 16.6 million, with a majority of the population older than age 30. (By contrast, similar figures for West Germany were 50 million in the mid-1950s and 61 million in 1990, with a majority of people under age 30.)

Political Divisions

East Germany consisted of 15 districts (*Bezirke*): Cottbus, Dresden, East Berlin, Erfurt, Frankfurt, Gera, Halle, Karl-Marx-Stadt, Leipzig, Magdeburg, Neubrandenburg, Potsdam, Rostock, Schwerin, and Suhl. The capital of the country was East Berlin.

Education and Culture

Schooling in the GDR was compulsory and free for children between the ages of 6 and 16. Schools were comprehensive, with integrated curricula, on the Soviet model. Each school was divided into a lower school (grades one to three), a middle school (grades four

to six), and an upper school (grades seven to ten). Students wishing to attend a university continued their studies for two years at a polytechnical high school. The state sponsored seven universities, at East Berlin, Dresden, Greifswald, Halle, Jena, Leipzig, and Rostock.

The government exercised a high degree of influence on artistic and intellectual life. It subsidized about 600 museums, 44 important libraries, more than 100 theaters, and about 80 major orchestras in cities all over the nation. East Berlin was home to most of the theatrical companies, including the German State Opera, the Comic Opera, the Folk Theater, the German Theater, and the Berliner Ensemble. The state also controlled the publishing industry.

Economy

Before World War II the economy of the region that became East Germany was primarily agricultural, although important industries were located in some of the cities. The region suffered heavily during the war, and the rebuilding process in East Germany was handicapped by the large war reparations exacted by the Soviet Union. The large estates that had dominated eastern Germany for decades were broken up, and their lands were redistributed in small parcels to the peasants. This arrangement was judged to be inefficient by the central government, and beginning in 1952 individual farmers were persuaded to combine their resources by establishing collective farms. By the early 1980s about 80% of the farmland was held by collectives. An additional 8% was held by state farms run directly by the government.

Sustained postwar economic recovery began with the initiation in 1949-50 of a rehabilitation program, which was succeeded by a 5-year plan modeled on the programs initiated in the Soviet Union beginning in the 1920s. A special effort was made to increase the production of the many industrial items that had been supplied by western Germany before 1945. Most of the GDR's leading industrial enterprises were established in the Berlin area and in the cities of the S, such as Dresden. Iron and steel, chemicals, machinery, electronic equipment, precision instruments, and textiles were among the most important products. Several large factories also produced motor vehicles. By the late 1950s the industrial capacity of the GDR had been restored to its prewar level. In the 1960s and early '70s the country's industrial plant was increased dramatically, so that by the end of the 1970s the GDR ranked among the world's leading economic powers. Among the nations of Eastern Europe it was outdistanced only by the USSR.

The country's economy was dominated by the state. Virtually all manufacturing industries, commercial and financial enterprises, and transportation facilities were nationalized. According to official statistics, industrial production increased by 113% between 1970 and 1985, agricultural output rose by 37%, and exports increased more than fivefold. By the late 1980s, the gross national product of the GDR was approximately \$207.2 billion, or about \$12,500 per capita.

What these generally favorable economic statistics masked was a rise in foreign debt and a deterioration of work standards, infrastructure, and environmental quality. Despite the

best efforts of its rulers, East Germany became a nation that offered little opportunity to most of its citizens. What had been a moderate flow of emigres turned into a flood of refugees seeking the freer, more prosperous life in the West portrayed on their television screens. East Germany eventually collapsed of its own weight. By 1990, when the GDR ceased to exist, agencies in the Federal Republic of Germany estimated that it would cost more than \$200 billion to modernize the East's telecommunication and transportation systems, privatize its industries, pay off its foreign debt, subsidize the withdrawal of Soviet troops, finance the establishment of a unified German currency, and ease the economic hardships the citizens of the former GDR were expected to experience in making the transition to a market economy.

Currency

The decline of the East German currency, the ostmark, mirrored the problems in the GDR economy. At reunification, most East Germans were allowed to redeem up to 4000 ostmarks for West German marks on a one-for-one basis. Thereafter, redemptions were permitted on a two (ostmarks) for one (mark) basis. The free market placed an even lower value on the ostmark for those who held large amounts of the outmoded currency, because the West Germans declined to subsidize the currency dealings of large traders.

Communications

The mass media were controlled by the central government. Radio DDR provided the main domestic radio service; it offered two basic programs, with regional variations. A government-owned network supplied television service, and most viewers in the GDR could also receive West German programming. The GDR had 39 daily newspapers, with a combined daily circulation of more than 9 million. The leading newspapers were produced by the dominant Socialist Unity party of Germany.

Government

East Germany's first constitution was adopted by a Communist-dominated "people's congress" in May 1948 and took effect with the establishment of the German Democratic Republic in October 1949. From 1968 through 1989 the GDR was governed under a constitution that defined the country as a sovereign Socialist state in which all political power was exercised by the working people. In practice, power resided with the Socialist Unity party of Germany (Sozialistische Einheitspartie Deutschland, or SED), a Marxist-Leninist (Communist) organization. The 1968 constitution guaranteed the SED a leading role in national affairs, and its general secretary, as head of the party's political bureau, was usually the most powerful person in the country. After the government collapsed in 1989, the SED reconstituted itself as the Party of Democratic Socialism and contested the elections held in March 1990. The party came in third following the Alliance for Germany, a conservative coalition backed by West Germany's Christian Democrats, and the Social Democratic party, which had close ties with the Social Democrats in West Germany.

Under the 1968 constitution, East Germany's unicameral parliament, the People's Chamber (Volkskammer), consisting of 500 deputies, met only for short sessions. To carry out its functions at other times, the People's Chamber elected a Council of State.

The East German judicial system was headed by the supreme court, which sat in East Berlin. It supervised and heard appeals from district and county courts. Each of these tribunals consisted of three elected magistrates. Members of the supreme court were chosen by the People's Chamber, and district and county assemblies selected magistrates for courts within their jurisdictions. Social courts and disputes commissions handled minor proceedings.

Each of the 15 districts (*Bezirke*) of East Germany had an elected assembly (*Bezirkstag*), which chose a council, headed by a chairperson, as its executive body. The districts were subdivided into counties, with such units as cities, boroughs, and villages.

Medical service was nationalized in East Germany and was provided under the auspices of the Ministry of Health. Particular emphasis was placed on the prevention of disease. All employed persons were required to carry health insurance, which was offered by the trade union confederation and by the state.

The National People's Army was established in 1956. It consisted in the late 1980s of an army (with 120,000 members), a navy (16,000), and an air force (37,100). Paramilitary forces included some 49,000 border troops and a Workers' Militia with a potential strength of 500,000. When Germany reunified in 1990, these independent East German military organizations were dissolved and the GDR's connections to the Warsaw Pact were severed.

HISTORY

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The German Democratic Republic, established under Soviet auspices in 1949 in reaction to the Allied-sponsored founding of the Federal Republic of Germany, insisted on being internationally recognized as an independent Socialist state. Despite Soviet demands for heavy reparations, it developed a potent economy and long held a key position in the Soviet bloc.

The Ulbricht Years

Walter Ulbricht, an old-line German Communist party stalwart, presided over the destiny of East Germany for more than a quarter of a century. Head of the Socialist Unity (Communist) party (1946-71), Ulbricht dominated the government as first deputy premier and as chairman of the Council of State (1960-73).

Determined to transform the war-ravaged fragments of his country into a major Communist power, Ulbricht designed a foreign policy to foster friendly relations with other Communist-led states. In 1950 East Germany made a treaty with Poland, accepting

the Oder-Neisse border, and joined the other Communist nations in the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. In 1954 its position markedly improved when the Soviet Union ended its demands for reparations and granted the GDR diplomatic recognition. The next year East Germany helped found the Warsaw Pact, the Soviet answer to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and in 1956 it formed an army. Ulbricht made a treaty with the USSR in 1964, promising to help maintain communism in Eastern Europe, and negotiated an unfavorable trade agreement in 1965 in return for Soviet political support. In 1968 Ulbricht sent German troops to aid the Soviets in crushing an uprising in Czechoslovakia.

Relations with West Germany

East Germany's relations with capitalist West Germany were strained by the claim of the West German chancellor Konrad Adenauer that all Germans were one nation, and his consequent insistence on dealing with the Socialist Unity party rather than with the East German government. Matters were further complicated by the division of Berlin. To stop the flow of dissatisfied East Germans to the West, a situation draining East Germany's trained work force, Ulbricht set up a police-guarded corridor, 3 mi deep, along the western frontier, leaving only Berlin as a practical escape route. He finally blocked it in 1961 by building the heavily fortified Berlin Wall. In 1968 he imposed new restrictions on already limited travel from West Germany to West Berlin.

Strict party control

In domestic affairs, Ulbricht's first concern was to rebuild an economy that inherited only one-fourth of prewar Germany's resources but was required by the Soviet Union to pay three-fourths of overall German reparations to aid Soviet war recovery. He did so by imposing an iron discipline comparable to that of Joseph Stalin in the Soviet Union. The Socialist Unity party completely controlled the government, which had already taken over all large industry and agriculture and gradually acquired all small holdings as well. Emphasis was on heavy industrial production to satisfy Soviet requirements. In 1953 increased production quotas and food shortages caused worker revolts, which were put down by Soviet troops.

As a result of the Berlin Wall and the New Economic System of 1963, a policy characterized by some decentralization and by computerized planning, economic recovery in the GDR occurred rapidly. As workers' incomes and benefits improved and many workers were given advanced technological education, they became somewhat more reconciled to the Communist government. A more fully Socialist constitution was approved in 1968.

New Leadership

After 1971, when Ulbricht was succeeded by Erich Honecker (1912-94) as party leader, no single figure dominated the East German government. Relations with West Germany improved as the West German chancellor Willy Brandt and Willi Stoph (1914-), the East German premier, agreed to ease West German travel restrictions to West Berlin (1972) and instituted formal diplomatic relations (1973). New trade, aid, and travel

agreements were signed with West Germany in 1984, and in 1987 Honecker became the first East German head of state to pay an official visit to West Germany.

The End of the GDR

Communist rule unraveled in 1989 after Hungary, suspending a 20-year-old accord with the GDR, allowed thousands of East German citizens to cross the border from Hungary into Austria and thence to West Germany, where they received asylum. As the political crisis mounted, Honecker was forced out in October (ultimately going into exile in Chile, where he died four years later); and Egon Krenz (1937-) became president and party leader. In November the Berlin Wall was opened, other barriers to emigration were dropped, and tens of thousands of East Germans began streaming into West Berlin. Meanwhile, revelations of corruption among high officials during the Honecker era left the Socialist Unity party in complete turmoil. Krenz lost his state and party posts, and the Communist government agreed to allow free elections for a new People's Chamber, which took office in March 1990. By July the economy of the GDR had merged with that of West Germany, and on Oct. 3, 1990, the GDR ceased to exist and East Germany became part of a reunited country. (George Kish)

***The Lives of Others* Movie Handout**

Film: *Das Leben der Anderen (The Lives of Others)*
Website: <http://www.sonyclassics.com/thelivesofothers/swf/index.html>
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0405094/synopsis>
Setting: 1984, East Berlin

The Ministry of State Security, the Stasi, was one of the most powerful secret police and espionage services the world had yet to see. They were highly professional and infiltrated almost every aspect of GDR life in their efforts to control “enemies of the state.”

Main Characters:

Gerd Wiesler- highly skilled Stasi officer and expert interrogator

Lieutenant Colonel Grubitz- former classmate of Wiesler, now heads Culture Department of Stasi

Georg Dreyman: East German playwright, boyfriend of Christa-Maria Sieland

Minister Bruno Hempf (high ranking member of the central committee of the SED; former member of the Stasi)

Christa-Maria Sieland- famous East German actress, dating Georg Dreyman, secretly in a relationship with Minister Hempf to retain a favorable position in the acting scene of the GDR

Paul Hauser: friend of Dreyman’s and political activist

Albert Jerska: once famous theater director from the GDR, blacklisted for many years by the government

Selection 1

Scene: Training for Stasi & Hohenschönhausen prison (central Stasi detention center)

Timing: 7 minutes

1. What does he do when student questioned their sleep deprivation technique?
2. How could Wiesler determine the truth from a lie?
3. Why was the prisoner being questioned?
4. Why do you think that an odor sample would be helpful for an investigation?
5. What does Wiesler say about the “enemies”?

Bigger picture question: Does it appear that the Stasi are doing anything particularly illegal in this scene?

Selection 2

Scene: At the opening of Dreyman's play

Timing: 5 minutes

1. What does Wiesler say immediately upon seeing Georg Dreyman? Why do you think he judges him as so? How could he be an enemy?
2. Grubitz, the head of culture of the Stasi, thinks Dreyman is "clean" and should not be monitored. What does he mean by clean?
3. What causes Grubitz to change his mind about monitoring Dreyman? (this occurs when he goes to talk to a prominent member of the SED)
4. What does Minister Hempf promise Grubitz if he "finds something"?
5. What is your opinion now of Grubitz? Of Wiesler?

Bigger picture question: How does this scene seem to illustrate about the relationship between the German communist party and the Stasi? Who is the true enemy here?

Selection 3:

Scene: Wire-tapping Dreyman's Apartment (start with Dreyman playing ball outside with children)

Timing: 5 minutes

1. When Wiesler notices that a woman sees him through the peep hole, what happens?
2. What is her "repayment" for her services?

Bigger picture question: What does this seem illustrate in terms of loyalty to the SED?

Selection 4:

Scene: 40th Birthday Party of Dreyman. The scene begins with Wiesler turning on the lights to his recording room. Dreyman has just come back from talking with his friend Albert Jerska, a playwright that has been blacklisted (meaning that he can no longer direct) by the government (perhaps for portraying something too critical about the government or the GDR). Georg tries to give his friend some hope about returning to the theater soon. (Scene stops with Wiesler beginning to type his report.)

Timing: 7 minutes

1. Dreyman asks Frau Meineke to help him with his tie. How does she react to this?
2. When he asks her “if she could keep a secret about this” what happens?
3. When Jerska says to Dreyman that he was reading Bertolt Brecht, Wiesler makes a note of this in his journal. Why? What could this mean?
4. One of Dreyman’s friends, Paul Hausner (wearing glasses) accuses another director at the party of being with the Stasi. When Dreyman tries to calm him down, Paul angrily states what he believes about how Jerska was blacklisted. Who does he think did this?
5. Paul tells Dreyman before he leaves that “if you don’t stand up, you’re not human.” What does he want Dreyman to do?

Bigger Picture Question: In this scene you have 3-4 instances of friendships becoming difficult because of real or supposed Stasi interference. What does this say about relationships and friendships in the GDR?

Selection 5:

Scene: Dreyman confronts Christa-Maria about her relationship with Minister Hempf. Scene begins with Wiesler meeting a young kid in the elevator of Dreyman’s apartment complex.

Timing: 6 minutes

1. What does the kid say about the Stasi?
2. How does the Minister treat Grubitz?
3. What does Grubitz tell Wiesler about their work on the love story?
4. Dreyman confronts Christa-Maria her affair with Minister Hempf and tell her to have more faith in herself and her talents. This scene shows Georg’s beliefs are different than Christa- Maria’s about the “system”?

Bigger Picture Question: In these four quick scenes, there is one common theme: Power being in the hands of one person and that person’s actions controlling the destiny of another. How would this have affected the average GDR citizen on a daily basis?

Stasi Surveillance Report

Name of Informer (Create a False Name)

City, Date

Place a star next to your false name if you were selected as an informer.

Report on (Create False Name of Student)

In short paragraph form, note the time of each activity watched and what the student did. Be as detailed as possible.

Your remarks should be limited to facts. Please do not name other students in report by their actual name. Use other descriptors such as height, hair color, apparent age, or ethnic background. Your statements need to be neutral, non-offensive, and as close to reality as possible. They should be as un-biased and non-judgmental.

School rules for respectful behavior applies above else.

Response needs to be typed.

Example:

1. Snack Break, 10:23 am Student X spoke with administrator at front desk about a missing lunch bag. Student noted that she left bag on a chair next to the front desk before school and returned 10 minutes later after using the restroom to find out that it was gone. Administrator responds that she had not seen the lunch. Student X raises voice and states that she is "shocked" that someone could have done this. Student X runs out of building. 10:25 am Student uses cell phone device to place a phone call. Student speaks for 1.5 minutes and hangs up when she hears the bell ring. Student places cell phone in purse and walks toward the 1000 building.

Try and observe the student in at least 5-7 interactions throughout the day. This can be in class or during lunch.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

Stasi Unit Journal Activity

Journal 1:

Bigger picture question 1: Does it appear that the Stasi are doing anything particularly illegal in the first scene (the interrogation of the prisoner)?

Bigger picture question 2: How does the scene seem to illustrate about the relationship between the German communist party and the Stasi? Who is the true enemy here?

Journal 2:

Bigger picture question 1: What does wire-tapping scene and Frau Meineke's observation illustrate in terms of loyalty to the SED?

Bigger Question 2: At Dreyman's 40th birthday party you have 3-4 instances of friendships becoming difficult because of real or supposed Stasi interference. What does this say about relationships and friendships in the GDR?

Today you received your assigned character for the week.

*What role did you receive?

*How do you feel knowing that in the midst of your class there are 5 informants among your peers? Explain your initial feelings.

*If you were selected as one of the informants, what was your initial reaction to having received your assignment?

Journal 3: In class journal writing

*What industries do you think the GDR was most interested in having informants in?

*Would informants be needed in high schools? Why or why not?

*If you were to think about your average school day, where do you think you would run into informants? At what locations? How many might be in your neighborhood?

Journal 4: In class journal writing on Michael Jackson Stasi Report

*How could Michael Jackson's concert be considered a threat to East Germany at this time?

*Do you think that the Stasi had a right to be worried? Explain.

*What other bands/types of bands in the 1980s them might have been a threat as well?

*How did economics play a part in the deal that Michael Jackson's organizers came to with regard to this concert?

*If Wiesler (from the *Lives of Others*) had an iPod, what would be on this?

Journal 5:

Today you heard surveillance reports from the class informants (secretly delivered to the teacher) on select students in the class as well as read testimony about actual Stasi procedures.

*How did it feel to have reports read about the espionage activity in the class?

*What about when you were working with your group- how did you feel?

*Were you surprised by the information revealed in the reports?

Journal 6:

Tomorrow you will learn about what happened when the Wall Fell to a majority of the Stasi members including the fate of their miles upon miles of personal files.

Tonight, ponder these questions:

*What do you predict happened to the majority of informants for the Stasi? Did they hide their identity?

*What do you predict happened to the higher ups who worked directly for the Stasi? Did they flee the country? Did they get charged for serious crimes? What types of industries would they work in? How were they treated by their fellow countrymen after the reunification of Germany?

*Do you believe they are levels of "guilt" to be assigned to those who worked for the Stasi? Who were the most guilty? Are they even guilty of anything at all?

*Should the people of Germany (and indeed the world) have access to their Stasi files? Should these all be destroyed? Explain your answer carefully.