



SOUNDTRACKS

SONGS THAT DEFINED HISTORY

Music and the Berlin Wall during the Cold War

OVERVIEW

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How did music help people resist what the Berlin Wall symbolized?

OVERVIEW

On September 1944, shortly after the Allied powers liberated Paris from the Nazis, representatives from the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union met in London to plan the future of a post-Hitler Germany. Together they drafted the London Protocol, which partitioned the country into four zones after the war. The western half of Germany would be split between Great Britain, France, and the United States, and the eastern half would be administered by the Soviet Union. The protocol also stipulated that Berlin, while geographically on the eastern side of the country, would also be partitioned, again with the U.S., Great Britain and France controlling the west side and the U.S.S.R. controlling the east side.



After the war ended, the discussion of Germany's future grew contentious. The Soviets wanted to keep it unarmed, while the Western powers felt reestablishing the German Army would restrain the Soviets from expanding into Western Europe. In 1946, the French, British, and American portions of Berlin unified into a single region. Fearing a concentrated Western influence deep in Soviet territory, the USSR attempted a blockade on all the rail and highway access to the western side of the city. In response, the American, British, and French alliance organized the Berlin Airlift, delivering supplies to the city by air. The Soviet blockade failed, and Berlin remained a divided city, insulated in East Germany.

The Soviets were correct in their thinking that a “free” Berlin posed a threat to their influence. By the 1950s, hundreds of thousands of East Germans were migrating to West Germany via Berlin. Fearing a “brain drain” as young, educated Germans left the East, the Soviet Union officially sealed the border between East and West Berlin, and began building a perimeter wall around West Berlin in August 1961.

With the construction of the Berlin Wall, the “Iron Curtain,” once just a symbol of the division between the communist and non-communist world, literally became concrete. The Wall arose almost overnight, separating neighbors, families, and friends. It remained up for almost thirty years. Its fall in November 1990 heralded the end of the Cold War.

Although the Berlin Wall was able to curb the movement of people between East and West Berlin, it could not stop the movement of ideas, art, and culture that continued to connect the

two sides of the city. In the 1960s and 1970s, all Berliners were able to tune into Rock and Roll radio, and a youth counterculture was created that transcended the Wall. This counterculture was not only unified by a mutual love of music, but also in their shared opposition to the proliferation of nuclear weapons, which threatened the annihilation of the entire city. By the 1980s, the Hippie counterculture was slowly taken over by the punk rock scene, which helped a new generation of young people channel their angst and creativity. For forty years, popular and underground music connected East and West Berliners by tapping into a shared sense of fear, anxiety, and hope.

In this lesson, students will consider how Germans resisted what the Berlin Wall symbolized during the Cold War by examining the musical cultures that developed in East and West Germany. To do this, students will watch clips from CNN Soundtracks and analyze primary and secondary historical sources such as newspaper articles, cartoons, interviews, and photographs.

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this lesson, students will:

1. KNOW (KNOWLEDGE):

- An overview of Cold War tensions between the United States and Soviet Union
- A history of the rise and fall of the Berlin Wall, and its impact on people living in Berlin
- How music helped connect a divided city through a shared sense of fear, angst, and hope
- Popular and underground music of the late Cold War Era, including pop, rock, and punk

2. MASTERY OBJECTIVE

- Students will be able to identify how music helped people resist the idea of the Berlin Wall by analyzing primary and secondary sources including videos, interviews, and photographs.

ACTIVITIES

MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY

1. Ask students:

- For what reasons might a country, city, or region want to surround itself by a wall?
- In the current era, how effective might a wall be in stopping the movement of people or goods? What about the movement of ideas or culture?
- What effects might a wall have, especially for those people who might live close to it?

PROCEDURE:

1. Play **Clip 1, Constructing the Berlin Wall**. Ask students:
 - Why was Berlin a contested city after World War II?
 - Why was the Berlin Wall built?
 - What might have it been like to live in Berlin at this time? (*Have students consider how the construction of the Wall might change people's everyday lives, including visiting friends and family.*)
2. Display **Image 1, Barb Dignan's Account of the Berlin Wall**, and have students read the account aloud in class.
3. Display **Image 2, Tina Bain's Account of the Berlin Wall**, and have students read the account aloud in class. Ask students:
 - What was Barb Dignan's experience of living in Berlin while the Wall was being built? What about Tina Bain's?
 - How are Barb's and Tina's accounts similar? How are they different?
 - What do these personal experiences reveal about life in Berlin in 1961?
 - How might you feel if you were in a similar situation as Barb and Tina?
 - In addition to not being able to communicate with friends and family, what other worries or concerns might have the people of Berlin had at this time?
4. Show **Image 3, "Cold War Cartoon."** Ask students:
 - Who is the man to the right? What does he represent in the cartoon? (*John F. Kennedy, President of The United States.*)
 - Who is the man to the left? What does he represent in this cartoon? (*Nikita Khrushchev, Premier of the Soviet Union.*)
 - What are these two leaders sitting upon? Who is controlling the bombs they are on top of?
 - What is this cartoon alluding to? (*The Cold War arms race.*)
 - What statement do you think the illustrator is trying to make in this cartoon?
 - How might have the people of Berlin been especially affected by the arms race during the Cold War? How might they have responded to this threat?
5. Show students **Clip 2, "99 Luftballons."** Ask students:
 - The cartoon you examined was published in the early 1960s. The protests in the clip come from the 1980s. What does this tell you about the proliferation of nuclear weapons during the Cold War?
 - Why were East and West Germans working together protesting for peace in the 1980s?
 - During the early 1980s, why were Germans "terrified" by the threat of nuclear war?
 - How did Nena's "99 Red Balloons" reflect the tension and fear over nuclear weapons during the 1980s?

- West German musician and artist Blixa Bargeld said of West Berliners, “We’re all hostages here.” What do you think he meant by this statement? What were Berliners hostages to?
6. Give students **Handout 1 - Song Lyrics**. Have the class read the lyrics to “99 Red Balloons” aloud in class, then ask students:
- Musician Peter Schilling mentions in the clip that Nena’s song is a “Fairy Tale” of the Cold War. What story is Nena telling in this song? How does the story end? How might it be an appropriate fairy tale for the Cold War?
 - How might the song be speaking to people’s anxieties about the Cold War?
 - How might this song be protesting the Cold War? What is it criticizing in particular?
 - Nena is considered part of the *Neue Deutsche Welle*, or “German New Wave,” a post-punk genre that started in West Germany in the late 1970s. Do you think a similar genre existed in East Germany? Why or why not?
7. Print out images from **Gallery Walk 1 - The West German Punk Scene** and **Gallery Walk 2 - The East German Punk Scene**, and hang each image set on opposing sides of the room.
8. Split the room in half. Tell one side of the class that they are East German, and only have access to the images on their side of the room, and the other side that they are West German and only have access to their side of the room. Display **Image 4, Letter to a Friend**, and have students follow the instructions on the image.
9. Ask students in both groups to share their letters with the rest of the class. Then ask students:
- Based on the letters, what was similar between punk rockers in East and West Germany? What was different?
 - What might the Punk Rock movements in East and West Germany say about what youth in the 1980s valued and criticized?
 - How might have punk music and culture contributed to bringing down the wall?
 - Based on what we’ve examined in class, how did music help connect people in West Berlin and East Berlin?
 - In what ways might have music helped thaw Cold War tensions?
10. Play **Clip 3, The Fall of the Berlin Wall**. Then ask students:
- What was the decision by the East German government that initially led to the Wall being a “redundant structure”?
 - How did Germans at the Wall in Berlin respond to this new freedom of movement?
 - What did you notice about what was happening to the physical structure of the Wall in the video?
 - What were some of the words used by German citizens in the video to describe their experience of the Wall coming down?

SUMMARY ACTIVITY

1. Play **Clip 4, Billy Joel Comes to Russia**. Ask students:
 - Why was Billy Joel allowed to perform in Russia in the 1980s?
 - At the beginning of his concert, Billy Joel told his audience he was “nervous.” Why might he have been nervous? Growing up in Cold War America, what impressions of the Soviet Union might have Billy Joel had?
 - What steps did Billy Joel take to help “break through the barrier of distrust” between the United States and Soviet Union?
 - What message did Billy Joel’s concert send to the East and the West?
2. Tell students that during the concert, Billy Joel referenced Vladimir Vysotsky, a famous Russian poet and musician who also lived during the Cold War. Have students read the lyrics on the second page of Handout 1. Ask students:
 - How are Joel’s and Vysotsky’s lyrics similar? What issues are both musicians discussing?
 - How might these songs relate to the Cold War? How might dishonesty, cynicism, rumors, doubt, and “self-satisfied confidence” contribute to creating divisions between people?
 - Is the message behind these two songs still relevant? What current events or issues might they equally speak to?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

1. Imagine you are organizing a concert to be performed near the Berlin Wall today. Create an original concert poster for the event. Your poster must include artwork, a list of who is performing, the date (1961-1989), and a theme that relates the concert to the Berlin Wall.
2. Watch the full CNN Soundtracks Episode on the Berlin Wall at <https://www.cnn.com/videos/tv/2017/11/09/cnngo-soundtracks-episode-107-berlin-wall-communism.original-series>. Choose another musician or band that performed in Berlin when the city was divided, and research their performance further. Write a two-page essay that answers the question, “How did his/her/their music or performance help connect the people of East and West Berlin?”
3. Near the end of the Soundtracks episode, Klaus Meine, the lead singer of The Scorpions, says, “I was thinking about how [the song] ‘Wind of Change’ still has a strong impact. You know, with this crazy world we go through right now, we’re thinking about building walls again. We’re thinking about separation. I mean, it’s unbelievable. The world could need another wind of change.” Rewrite and update the lyrics to “Wind of Change” to reflect current events and issues related to constructing walls and creating divisions between people.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading (K-12)

Reading 1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Reading 2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

Reading 3: Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Craft and Structure 6: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 8: Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 9: Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity 10: Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing (K-12)

Text Types and Purposes 3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences.

Production and Distribution of Writing 4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge 7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge 9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Language(K-12)

Language 1: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

Language 2: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

Language 3: Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use 5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in a word meaning.

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening (K-12)

Comprehension & Collaboration 1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Comprehension & Collaboration 2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

Comprehension & Collaboration 3: Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

Presentation of Knowledge 4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

NATIONAL CURRICULUM STANDARDS FOR SOCIAL STUDIES – NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES (NCSS)

Theme 1: Culture

Theme 2: Time, Continuity, and Change

Theme 3: People, Place, and Environments

Theme 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

Theme 6: Power, Authority, and Governance

Theme 9 : Global Connections

Theme 10: Civic Ideals and Practices



NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR MUSIC EDUCATION – NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR MUSIC EDUCATION (NAFME)

Core Music Standard: Responding

Interpret: Support interpretations of musical works that reflect creators' and/or performers' expressive intent.

Evaluate: Support evaluations of musical works and performances based on analysis, interpretation, and established criteria.

Core Music Standard: Connecting

Connecting 11: Relate musical ideas and works to varied contexts and daily life to deepen understanding.



RESOURCES

VIDEO RESOURCES

- *Soundtracks* - Construction the Berlin Wall
- *Soundtracks* - 99 Luftballons
- *Soundtracks* - Billy Joel Comes to Russia

HANDOUTS

- Handout 1 - Song Lyrics
- Gallery Walk 1 - The West German Punk Scene
- Gallery Walk 2 - The East German Punk Scene