

# The Berlin Wall: Document Based Question

**Cold War Historical Context:** Between 1945 and 1990, the relations between the two superpowers swung between confrontation and détente. Each tried to increase its worldwide influence and spread its competing economic and political systems. At times during this period the competitors were at the brink of war. One such period of confrontation was the development of the Berlin Wall by the USSR and the GDR (East Germany) governments. This wall separated East and West Berlin (as well as families and friends) for more than thirty years.

**Directions:** Using the documents below complete the Document POV and Significance worksheet and respond to the question posed below in two to three paragraphs.

**Question:** *Why was the Berlin Wall built? How did the Berlin Wall prove or disprove the security of the USSR's control of East Europe?*

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## **Document 1**

This is an excerpt from John F. Kennedy's "Ich bin ein Berliner" speech

*"Freedom has many difficulties and democracy is not perfect. But we have never had to put a wall up to keep our people in to prevent them from leaving us. I know of no town, no city, that has been besieged for 18 years that still lives with the vitality and the force, and the hope, and the determination of the city of West Berlin. What is true of this city is true of Germany: Real, lasting peace in Europe can never be assured as long as one German out of four is denied the elementary right of free men, and that is to make a free choice. In 18 years of peace and good faith, this generation of Germans has earned the right to be free, including the right to unite their families and their nation in lasting peace, with good will to all people."*

## **Document 2**

Soviet Government Response to American Protest on Berlin Wall, August 18, 1961

*"The Soviet Government fully understands and supports the actions of the GDR which established effective control on the border with West Berlin in order to bar the way for subversive activity...against the G.D.R. and other countries of the socialist community . . . The FRG has been transformed into a center of subversive activity diversion, and espionage, into a center of political and economic provocation against the G.D.R."*

## **Document 3**

The following is the text of a 1962 brochure from the GDR. It was published in English for foreign distribution.

*"Through our protective measures of 13 August 1961 we have only safeguarded and strengthened that frontier which was already drawn years ago and made into a dangerous front-line by the people in Bonn and West Berlin. How high and how strongly fortified a frontier must be, depends, as is common knowledge, on the kind of relations existing between the states of each side of the frontier ... We no longer wanted to stand by passively and see how doctors, engineers, and skilled workers were induced by refined methods unworthy of the dignity of man to give up their secure existence here and work in West Germany or West Berlin."*

## **Document 4**

Kennedy to Khrushchev during meeting on Berlin Wall, Fall 1962:

*"I made it clear to Mr. Khrushchev that the security of Western Europe, and therefore our own security, are deeply involved in our presence and our access rights to West Berlin; that those rights are based on law and not on sufferance; and that we are determined to maintain those rights at any risk and thus meet our obligation to the people of West Berlin, and their right to choose their own future."*

## Document 5

Photo: "Escape Attempt At Inner German Border"



## Document 6

Gertrud Kielberg, former West Berliner

*"There were some quiet nights, but then there were also nights when you got really frightened because you heard a gunshot or the dogs were barking very loud and you heard the commands of the People's police, they dominated the night."*

## Document 7

Annette Simon, former East Berliner

*"There were moments when I felt very locked in and claustrophobic ... I definitely had this feeling that I would probably never see Paris or London before I was 60."*

## **Document POV and Significance**

|                   | <b>Author</b> | <b>Point of View (POV)</b> | <b>Audience</b> | <b>Significance</b> |
|-------------------|---------------|----------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| <b>Document 1</b> |               |                            |                 |                     |
| <b>Document 2</b> |               |                            |                 |                     |
| <b>Document 3</b> |               |                            |                 |                     |
| <b>Document 4</b> |               |                            |                 |                     |
| <b>Document 5</b> |               |                            |                 |                     |
| <b>Document 6</b> |               |                            |                 |                     |
| <b>Document 7</b> |               |                            |                 |                     |