

Escape to Freedom

A story of one teenager's attempt to get across the Berlin Wall

About the Story

Lexile: 930L

For qualitative complexity factors, go to Scope Online.

Learning Objective:

to read a true story about the Berlin Wall and write an article explaining why the Berlin Wall is important to remember

Key Skills:

literary devices, author's craft, text structure, key ideas, text features

Essential Questions:

- Why is it important to learn about the past?
- How do humans respond to adversity?
- What is oppression?

Standards:

This article and lesson support these Common Core anchor standards:

R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, W.2, SL.1, L.4, L.5, L.6

For more standards information—including TEKS—go to Scope Online.



Your Teaching Support Package

Find your full suite of materials at
scope.scholastic.com.

Video: Behind the Scenes

Audio:

- The article (English and Spanish)
- Vocabulary

Differentiated articles:

- Lower-Lexile version (printable)
- Spanish version (printable)

Literature Connections: ideas for connecting to curricular texts

Activities to print or project:

- Vocabulary
- Video Discussion Questions
- Close Reading and Critical Thinking
- Key Ideas: Preparing to Write
- **Core Skills Workout:** Central Ideas & Details*, Summarizing*, Text Features
- Quiz*
- Nonfiction Elements*
- Contest Entry Form

**Available on two levels*

Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

Close Reading, Critical Thinking, Skill Building

1 Preparing to Read

Do-Now: Free Write

(5 minutes)

Write the following on the board for students to respond to as they enter the classroom: *Imagine that when you wake up tomorrow, you discover that a wall has been put up separating _____ and _____. No one is allowed to cross to the other side of the wall.* [Fill in the blanks with two adjacent areas near you—your town and the next, two sections of your city, etc.] *In your writing journal, write about how the appearance of this wall would make you feel and how it would affect your life.*

Watch the video.

(15 minutes)

Project or distribute the **Video Discussion Questions** and preview as a class. Then watch the **Behind the Scenes video** and discuss the questions as a group.

Preview vocabulary.

(8 minutes, activity sheet online)

Project or distribute the **Vocabulary Words and Definitions**. Review as a class. Highlighted words: *bleak, notorious, regime, ruthless, undetected, vied, vilified*

2 Reading and Discussing

Read and discuss the article.

(45 minutes, activity sheets online)

- Have a volunteer read aloud the As You Read box on page 5.
- Play the audio at Scope Online while students follow along in their printed magazines.
- Have students work in groups to discuss the following questions.

Close-Reading Questions

▶ **Why do you think author Kristin Lewis chose to not reveal that Hartmut was trying to escape his country until the last line of the introduction?** (literary devices, author's craft) *Lewis likely chose to not reveal exactly what Hartmut was doing to draw readers into the story. By describing what seems to be a dramatic escape attempt without explaining what Hartmut is escaping from, Lewis creates suspense and makes readers want to find out what will happen.*

▶ **What is the main purpose of the section “No Freedom”?** (text structure) *The main purpose of this section is to show how different life was in West Germany compared with East Germany and to help readers understand why someone like Hartmut would risk his life to leave his country.*

▶ **How was the Cold War different from other wars you've learned about, such as World War II?** (key ideas) *The Cold War wasn't a war with battles and guns and soldiers. Instead it was fought through fear and threats.*

▶ **In the section “A Dangerous Swim,” many paragraphs are short—some are only one sentence. What effect does this have on the reading experience?** (author's craft) *The short paragraphs heighten the drama and suspense. With only one or two thoughts in each paragraph, the story stretches, leaving readers on edge as they come to the end of each paragraph. The way Lewis breaks up the text in this section also helps readers imagine themselves in Hartmut's place, experiencing moment by moment what Hartmut was experiencing.*

▶ **Consider the sidebar “What to Know About The Cold War” on page 9. What do the photo and information in the sidebar help you**

understand about what life was like during the Cold War? (text features) *The sidebar helps you understand that the Cold War was an uncertain and frightening time. From the fact that children had to practice bomb drills at school, you can infer that many people were terrified of the thought of war breaking out between America and the Soviet Union.*

- Reconvene as a class to discuss the following critical-thinking questions.

Critical-Thinking Questions

▶ **At the end of the article, Hartmut says, “When people are informed, they learn the lessons of what history teaches us.” What does he mean? What kinds of lessons can history teach us?** *Hartmut means that events in the past can offer information that we can use now or in the future to help us make good decisions. For instance, learning about a past mistake can help us recognize when we are about to make a similar mistake again—and avoid doing so. By the same token, learning about a past success can help us understand what we can do now to be successful. It’s important to learn about history because otherwise we will miss opportunities for humanity to grow and improve over time.*

▶ **Resilience is the ability to bounce back—to recover from misfortune. How does Hartmut show resilience?** *Hartmut shows resilience in many ways. After making it through a dangerous and challenging journey as he escapes East Berlin, he finds the courage and strength to risk his life and his freedom again when he goes back and helps others escape. Hartmut is caught doing this and is imprisoned—and then shows resilience once again, after he is set free, by choosing to continue helping others by sharing his story and counseling others.*

3 Skill Building

Featured Skill: Key Ideas

(15 minutes, activity sheet online)

Have students work in groups to complete the activity sheet **Key Ideas: Preparing to Write**. This activity will prepare students to respond to the writing prompt on page 10. *For alternate culminating tasks, see the box below.*

Differentiate and Customize

For Struggling Readers

Make a timeline of key events in the article, starting with the end of World War II and ending with the fall of the Berlin Wall.

For Advanced Readers

Explain why the Berlin Wall is considered a symbol of the Cold War. Your answer may be in the form of an essay or a slideshow. Support your answer with information from the article as well as one additional source.

For Historians

Write the dialogue for an imaginary interview between a journalist and Hartmut just after he gets out of the hospital after his escape. Optionally, create a video of the interview.

For Artists

Make a drawing, a painting, or another work of visual art showing the Berlin Wall. Rather than creating a realistic depiction, use color and imagery to show how the wall affected people’s lives and what it represented.