

After the Wall Teaching Materials

Good Bye Lenin!

Resources

Good Bye Lenin! (2003), directed by Wolfgang Becker.

General Questions

1. Why does Christiane fall into a coma? Think about how her experiences of the protest compare to her own political views.
2. How do the everyday lives of Alex and Ariane change during the period that their mother is in a coma? In particular, think about how fast and far-reaching these changes are.
3. What challenges does Alex face while he is recreating 'GDR' life for his mother? How does his attempt to reconstruct the GDR affect his own perception of it?
4. What is the significance of Christine's bedroom, which has been called '79m² of the GDR', in the film? How do Christiane's east German friends respond to it when they visit for her birthday?
5. To what extent does Alex's reconstruction of the GDR become a coping mechanism for himself?
6. How do Alex's views of the GDR develop throughout the film? Compare the scenes at the beginning of the film, where he is participating in the anti-government protests, to those towards the end, where he argues with Ariane and Lara about his desire to continue with his GDR reconstruction.
7. What are the differences between the ways that Alex and Ariane respond to unification? Why do you think their responses are so different?
8. How are different generations depicted in the film? Choose two characters from the older generation and two from the younger generation and think about how they deal with unification differently.

9. Watch the scene where Christiane leaves the flat. Given her background in the GDR, what do you think she is most surprised about?
10. What is the significance of space travel in the film? Watch the following scenes and think about how they trace the development of Alex:
- the opening scenes where Alex is a child;
 - the taxi scene, where the driver looks like Sigmund Jähn;
 - the rocket launch at the end of the film.
- How does the depiction of Sigmund Jähn and space travel relate to ideas of childhood and the transition from socialism to capitalism?

Points for Discussion

- What is your impression of life in the GDR after watching the film?
- Has the film affected the ways that you think about capitalism? How?
- Why do you think that many of the characters in the film found the unification process challenging? If you had been in charge of the unification process, what changes would you have made to ensure it was easier for the characters?
- Consumerism plays a central role in the depiction of unification in the film. Discuss the following points:
 - To what extent and how did consumerism characterise unification?
 - How did attachment to the GDR become more orientated around consumerism in the capitalist context of unified Germany?
 - Following unification, easterners are said to have rushed to buy western products. In the mid-1990s however, they appear to have reverted to buying eastern goods. What reasons can you suggest for this shift?