

After the Wall Teaching Materials

Hohenschönhausen

Resources

Hohenschönhausen: <http://en.stiftung-hsh.de/>

General Questions

The Prison

1. Between 1945 and 1951, *Hohenschönhausen* changed from Special Camp 3 to a Soviet Prison and finally to a Remand Prison. What were the purposes of these three sites, and how did the prison change during its development?
2. Once the site had been turned into a Remand Prison, what were the 'crimes' of the majority of the inmates?
3. What were the conditions like in the Remand Prison?
4. Why were there some western inmates in the prison?

The Stasi

5. According to the webpage entitled 'Ministry of State Security', the ministry saw itself as the 'shield and sword' of the SED. What do you understand by this?
6. Name four responsibilities of the Ministry.
7. Who was Erich Mielke? What happened to him after the Wall fell?
8. What was the role of the Inoffizielle Mitarbeiter?
9. What impact did the 17 June uprising of 1953 have on the actions of the Ministry? Do you think these actions are justified?

The Museum

10. According to 'The Memorial' homepage, what are the three tasks of the museum?
11. Who took up the cause for turning the prison into a memorial?
12. Who funds the museum? Why do you think that this is significant? What impact might it have on the exhibitions in the museum?
13. What does the museum consist of?
14. Who leads the tours of the museum? Do you think this group is in the best position to provide insights into the Stasi? Explain your answer.
15. How do you think the tours would differ if they were led by former Stasi officers? Do you think this group should also run tours in the museum? Why (not)?

Group Activities

1. The museum's website claims that, because aspects of the prison have been preserved since the fall of the Wall and tours are led by former inmates, visitors are offered an 'authentic' experience. Discuss the idea of authenticity with the rest of your group. Think about the following ideas:
 - What is authenticity? Can you define the term in this context?
 - Is it possible for museums to offer 'authentic' insights into history? Why (not)?
 - Is it problematic for the museum to claim authenticity when it only focuses on the Stasi, and does not provide any information on other aspects of the GDR?
 - How important is authenticity when it comes to understanding historical events?
2. When thinking about processes of remembering the GDR, it is important to remember that its population all experienced the socialist state differently. Think about how the following groups would respond to the prison, and how it may influence their own remembering processes:
 - a former Stasi officer;
 - a former *Hohenschönhausen* inmate;

- an easterner who had no direct contact with the Stasi;
 - an easterner who was only a young teenager when the Wall fell.
3. Imagine you are a west German, or a person who has never lived in a socialist state.
- What impression would you have of the GDR from visiting *Hohenschönhausen*?
 - Do you think it is important for such people to visit the museum? Why (not)?
 - Do you think visiting the museum would be a useful way of learning about the GDR? Why (not)?
 - What else could people do to ensure that they learn about other aspects of the socialist state?