

After the Wall Teaching Materials
Museums about everyday life in the GDR
The DDR-Museum, Berlin and the Dokumentationszentrum
Alltagskultur der DDR, Eisenhüttenstadt

Resources

DDR-Museum, Berlin: <http://www.ddd-museum.de/en/>

Dokumentationszentrum Alltagskultur der DDR, Eisenhüttenstadt:
<http://www.alltagskultur-ddr.de/pages/home.html>

DDR-Museum, Berlin: General Questions

1. On the museum's homepage, the museum is advertised as unique. What are the reasons for this?
2. In what ways is the museum interactive? Do you think this is a useful concept for a museum? Why (not)?
3. Where does the museum get its funding from? How does this influence the direction of the museum?
4. Where does the museum get the majority of its artefacts from?
5. Name the seven activities that you can do at the museum. Which one is most surprising to you? What would it teach you about the GDR?
6. Use the information on the website to describe a typical apartment in the GDR. How do they differ from apartments in capitalist societies?
7. 'Everything is available, just not at all times and not everywhere, especially not when you need it.'
What do you understand by this quotation? What was different about consumerism in the GDR and why?
8. What is the story behind the 'Praise of Communism' mural in the museum? Why do you think the museum was so keen to buy it?

9. The museum's website claims that the Stasi exhibition follows a 'double strategy'. What does this mean? Do you think it is important? Why (not)?
10. Read the page 'Life in the GDR'. What impression does this give you of day-to-day life in the GDR?

Dokumentationszentrum Alltagskultur der DDR, Eisenhüttenstadt: General Questions

1. What do you think the creators of the museum wanted its visitors to learn?
2. The homepage of the museum's website explains that its main focus is GDR objects. What sort of objects does it exhibit? Do you think this is a useful way of understanding the GDR?
3. How many objects does the museum have and where does it get them from?

Exhibition: 'Leben in der DDR'

4. Which three areas of GDR society does this exhibition focus on?
5. Two important parts of this exhibition are the 'Dorfkonsum', which shows aspects of GDR consumer culture, and the display of important events in the former east. Which do you think is most significant when it comes to learning about everyday life in the GDR? Why?
6. Why do you think that some of the population of the GDR were willing to donate objects to this exhibition?

Exhibition: 'Historische Wohnung'

7. What does this exhibition consist of?
8. What is the aim of the exhibition?
9. In your opinion, is it important to educate visitors about regions of the GDR, or would exhibitions be more useful if they provided information about the whole of the GDR? Give a reason for your answer.

10. Which of these exhibitions would you be most interested in visiting?
Why?

Discussion Questions: A Comparison of the two museums

1. How do the two museums differ? Name three pieces of information that you would get from one museum, but not the other.
2. If you were a teacher planning a school trip to teach about the GDR, which museum would you take your students to? Why?
3. Which museum would you prefer to visit? Why?
4. Imagine you are an east German who has objects to donate to one of the museums. Which one would you choose? Why?

Group Activities

1. A museum of my past

Both of these museums collect a lot of their artefacts from east Germans. Imagine you are in the same position as an easterner and choose six objects that you would donate to represent your past. Give a reason for each of your choices.

Afterwards

How has thinking about which objects you would donate to represent your past influenced your thoughts about easterners?

- What do you imagine that these museums would mean to them?
- How do you think they feel when they visit the museums? Why?
- How do you imagine different easterners would react to the museums?
Think about, for example:
 - someone who used to be a committed member of the party;
 - a former dissident in the GDR;
 - someone who had no direct involvement with the party.

2. Getting the message across

You have been commissioned to produce a leaflet advertising one of the museums. The leaflet should target westerners who have never visited the east and have learned most of what they know about the GDR from the media. Choose one of the museums and design a leaflet which includes the following information:

- why they should visit;
- what they will learn;
- why it is important to learn about the GDR;
- why the museum you have chosen is better than the others.