

0. TEAR DOWN THIS WALL! - Story Preface
1. A CHANGE IN LEADERS
2. POTSDAM SHOCK - CHURCHILL VOTED OUT
3. HITLER GETS KNOWN
4. A NEW LEADER IN BERLIN
5. TERROR ACROSS EUROPE
6. LAND and AIR WAR in BERLIN
7. BERLIN FALLS
8. TO POTSDAM
9. POST-WAR BERLIN
10. DECISIONS and CONSEQUENCES
11. A DIVIDED CITY
- 12. TEAR DOWN THIS WALL!**



This image depicts a section of the Berlin Wall as it appeared in 1986, three years before the “Fall of the Wall.” Photo by Thierry Noir at Bethaniendamm in Berlin-Kreuzberg. License: [CC BY-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/)

Twenty-four years after President Kennedy declared that he was a Berliner, Ronald Reagan came to the city to celebrate its 750th anniversary.

By this time, Mikhail Gorbachev was leader of the Soviet Union and was developing a working relationship with the American president. They had, among other things, discussed peace and reducing nuclear arms.

Reagan, known as an excellent communicator, planned to say some tough words during his June 12, 1987 speech. Its draft (written by speech writer Peter Robinson) contained lines which some staffers thought too provocative:

General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization: Come here, to this gate!

Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate!

Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!

Trying to talk Reagan out of saying “tear down this wall” proved impossible. It was, said the president, “the right thing to do.”



Thereafter, finding a work-around the wall, many East Germans were leaving their country through Hungary. No longer effective at keeping the population "penned in" - to use another Reagan phrase - the people themselves would "tear down this wall."

On the 9th of November, 1989, the government of East Germany opened checkpoints along the Berlin Wall, allowing East Berliners to freely travel to West Berlin. Two days later - on the 11th of November - the first slab of the wall's concrete was removed as a crowd of thousands cheered.

The next day, the wall was opened at Potsdamer Platz - once a busy European crossroad.



To celebrate the occasion, West Berlin's Philharmonic Orchestra gave a benefit concert for East Berliners, performing Beethoven's 7th Symphony (in A major). Its second movement - considered by some lovers of classical music to be one of the most beautiful pieces ever written - is especially poignant. (You can watch Herbert Von Karajan and the Berlin Philharmonic perform it. The second movement begins at about 11:18 into [the video](#).)

The Brandenburg Gate was finally opened on the 22nd of December, 1989. On Christmas Day, Leonard Bernstein conducted an international orchestra as musicians from five countries performed Beethoven's 9th - the "Ode to Joy." (Follow the links to watch it.) One hundred million people, in twenty-two countries, heard the broadcast.

Heard louder than the broadcast, however, was the will of the German people. They - not the Potsdam conferees or subsequent rulers - had the final say.

Credits:

The in-text images depict:

(1) A photo of the Berlin Wall, at the closed Brandenburg Gate. Translated into English, the sign says "Attention - You are now leaving West Berlin."

(2) "Checkpoint Charlie," located in the American sector of West Berlin, was no longer needed when the German people tore down the Soviet-era wall which separated their city into East and West.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/TEAR-DOWN-THIS-WALL-Victory-in-Europe-End-of-WWII>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/TEAR-DOWN-THIS-WALL-Victory-in-Europe-End-of-WWII>

Questions 2 Ponder

How Do We “Stick to Our Guns” Despite Massive Opposition?

When President Reagan gave a speech in Berlin, during June of 1987, he wanted to use some forceful words to make a point about the Berlin Wall. Most of his advisors thought some of the words he planned to say should never be said in public. Reagan disagreed.

As President of the United States, Reagan was in a position of power. He used the words he'd been urged not to say. But what happens in our own lives, when we really believe it is important to express an opinion which others may oppose but we think has to be expressed?

If we're convinced it's the right thing to say, how do we “stick to our guns” - and say it - despite the opposition of others, including our friends?

Media Stream



Berlin Wall - Check Point Charlie Closed

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/>



Berlin Wall at the Brandenburg

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/>



President Reagan at the Brandenburg Gate

Image online, courtesy the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.

PD

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/President-Reagan-at-the-Brandenburg-Gate>



Potsdamer Platz

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

PD

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Potsdamer-Platz>



Potsdam Square Between 1890 and 1905

Image online, courtesy the U.S. Library of Congress.

PD

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Potsdam-Square-Between-1890-and-1905>



Potsdamer Platz in 1903

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

PD

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Potsdamer-Platz-in-1903>



TEAR DOWN THIS WALL!

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/TEAR-DOWN-THIS-WALL-Illustration->



Ronald Reagan - Video - "Tear Down This Wall"

Video clip of June 12, 1987 speech in Berlin - online, courtesy U.S. National Archives and Reagan Library.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Ronald-Reagan-Video-Tear-Down-This-Wall->



Berlin Wall - Checkpoints Opened, November 9, 1989

Clip from BBC's *Breakfast News*, broadcast 10 November 1989. Copyright, BBC, all rights reserved. Clip provided here as fair use for educational purposes.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Berlin-Wall-Checkpoints-Opened-November-9-1989>



Berlin Wall - November 9, 1989

Clip from BBC's *Breakfast News*, broadcast 10 November 1989. Copyright, BBC, all rights reserved. Clip provided here as fair use for educational purposes.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Berlin-Wall-November-9-1989>



Beethoven's Ninth - Fall of the Wall Concert, Part 1

Beethoven's 9th Symphony, performed by the Bavarian Broadcast Symphony Orchestra - under the direction of Leonard Bernstein - to celebrate the fall of the Berlin Wall. The concert was broadcast throughout the world and performed on Christmas Day, 1989.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Beethoven-s-Ninth-Fall-of-the-Wall-Concert-Part-1>



Beethoven's Ninth - Fall of the Wall Concert, Part 2

Beethoven's 9th Symphony, performed by the Bavarian Broadcast Symphony Orchestra - under the direction of Leonard Bernstein - to celebrate the fall of the Berlin Wall. The concert was broadcast throughout the world and performed on Christmas Day, 1989.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Beethoven-s-Ninth-Fall-of-the-Wall-Concert-Part-2>



Beethoven's Ninth - Fall of the Wall Concert, Part 3

Beethoven's 9th Symphony, performed by the Bavarian Broadcast Symphony Orchestra - under the direction of Leonard Bernstein - to celebrate the fall of the Berlin Wall. The concert was broadcast throughout the world and performed on Christmas Day, 1989.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Beethoven-s-Ninth-Fall-of-the-Wall-Concert-Part-3>



Beethoven's Ninth - Finale

Beethoven's 9th Symphony, performed by the Bavarian Broadcast Symphony Orchestra - under the direction of Leonard Bernstein - to celebrate the fall of the Berlin Wall. The concert was broadcast throughout the world and performed on Christmas Day, 1989.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Beethoven-s-Ninth-Finale>

Beethoven, Symphony No. 7 in A Major, Op. 92

Some lovers of classical music consider the second movement of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony to be one of the most beautiful pieces of music ever written.

See it performed, in this clip, by the Berlin Philharmonic (under the direction of [Herbert Von Karajan](#) who never looks at a score and keeps his eyes shut throughout).

The second movement begins at about 11:18 in this video clip. Move the video forward to hear it.

Karajan recorded his [Beethoven Symphonies](#) (for Deutsche Grammophon) between 1968 and 1973. This recording, of the 7th, was made in 1972.

NPR provides [more information](#) about the 7th Symphony and its second movement:

The Seventh Symphony's premiere concert [on December 8, 1813] was performed to benefit the soldiers wounded a few months earlier in the battle of Hanau. It was one of Beethoven's most successful concerts.

Viennese audiences, miserable from Napoleon's 1805 and 1809 occupations of Vienna and hopefully awaiting a victory over him, embraced the symphony's energy and beauty.

Even today, the second movement remains extremely popular and is often performed separately. The NPR history and analysis continues:

Occasionally, Beethoven wrote something that was immediately recognized as both artistically great and hugely popular. An example is the second movement of his Seventh Symphony, a piece that was often performed separately from the complete Symphony and that may have been Beethoven's most popular orchestral composition.

It also exerted extraordinary influence on later composers, as the slow movements of Schubert's "Great" C-major Symphony and E-flat Piano Trio, Mendelssohn's "Italian" Symphony, Berlioz's Harold in Italy, and other works attest.

After its premiere, the Seventh Symphony was repeated three times in the following 10 weeks; at one of the performances the "applause rose to the point of ecstasy," according to a newspaper account.

Clip from [Karajan - Beethoven - The Symphonies](#). Online, via YouTube.

[Quoted passage](#), regarding the 7th Symphony, from NPR.

[View this asset at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Beethoven-Symphony-No.-7-in-A-Major-Op.-92>

