

The Wall Falls Down

Historical note: After World War II, Germany and its largest city, Berlin, were divided into parts occupied by the Allies (the United States, Great Britain, and France) and the Soviet Union. The Western half was democratic; the Eastern half was Communist. From 1945 to 1961, people from East Berlin escaped to the West. So, in 1961, the government on the eastern side constructed a large wall to completely separate East Berlin from West Berlin.

November 10th, 1989

Dear Peter,

- ① I need to tell you a story that feels like a dream to me even though I saw it with my own eyes: last night the Berlin Wall started to come down.
- ② For years, the concrete monster divided the Germans of East and West Berlin. In a way, it seemed to separate my city just as much as the Atlantic Ocean separates the two of us.
- ③ I had never known life on the wall's eastern side, though my parents assured me it existed. They were able to travel there to visit relatives, but our East German relatives could never follow them back. Crossing the wall was not something they considered. Armed guards stationed above at all times made sure of it.



Juan Manuel Moreno

- ④ But as the years went on, we heard whispers that someday things would change. Yesterday, that day finally came. It started with a broadcast—a government official said that people could cross, effective immediately. East Germans swarmed the border and demanded the gates be opened. From the western side, we cheered them on. At first, the border guards tried to shoot water from giant hoses at the East Germans, but the people kept coming. There were just too many. The guards were soon overwhelmed and gave up.
- ⑤ People grabbed the hoses and used them to climb the wall instead. At the top, they danced and shouted as we cheered. Soon, to prevent a stampede, the guards opened the massive gates. Everywhere, reunited friends and families hugged and shouted in the street. But going through the gates wasn't enough.
- ⑥ Soon, people from both sides grabbed hammers. Joyfully, East and West Germans swung at the wall, breaking chunks off the concrete barrier that had separated us for so long. The East Germans had never seen our side of the wall. Now they could see we had painted it over the years. It was covered in colorful graffiti and hopeful messages. They could finally see how much we had longed to see them, just as they had longed to see us. I've heard the whole scene was captured on TV—did you see it in New York?
- ⑦ I hope one day you can come visit our reunited city!

Your Cousin,
Alexander



Juan Manuel Moreno

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Standard: Read Closely **Skill:** Identify & Use Text Evidence

Name _____

1. Complete the *Questions Chart* on page 185. Use evidence from the passage to answer each question.



Answer questions 2–6.

2. Which information from the passage BEST shows why the events of the previous night feel like a dream to Alexander?
 - A. The government constructed a large wall to separate East Berlin from West Berlin.
 - B. A government official made an announcement that people could cross the border immediately.
 - C. The Berlin War had been up for 28 years, and Alexander had never seen the other side of the wall.
 - D. People on the eastern side of the Berlin Wall grabbed water hoses and used them to climb to the top of the wall.
3. Based on the information in his letter, what can you infer about Alexander?
 - A. He is excited to see the Berlin Wall come down.
 - B. He has never been to the United States of America.
 - C. He is disappointed to see the Berlin Wall come down.
 - D. He is related to people who fought during World War II.

4. What is one question you can ask about Alexander?
Use evidence from the passage to answer the question.

5. Why did Alexander's East German relatives never cross the Berlin Wall? Use evidence from the passage to support your answer.

6. The announcement that people could cross the wall immediately was made by mistake. How did that mistake affect the events of November 9th that Alexander tells about?

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Answer Key

1. Possible responses: *Who?*: Alexander is writing a letter to his cousin Peter.
What?: Alexander is telling Peter about his experience the night before. He witnessed the announcement that the Berlin Wall would be coming down.
Where?: Alexander is in West Berlin. Peter lives in New York.
When?: November 10, 1989
Why?: Alexander is excited that the Berlin Wall is coming down, and that East and West Berlin will finally be reunited.
How?: People began to swing at the Berlin Wall with hammers. They broke chunks off it.
2. C
3. A
4. Possible response: What words does Alexander use to describe the Berlin Wall? Answer: He uses the words “concrete monster” that “divided the Germans of East and West Berlin.”
5. Possible response: Alexander’s East German relatives never crossed the wall because armed guards guarded the wall to prevent people from crossing.
6. Possible response: The announcement affected the events because people on the eastern side of the wall immediately stormed the wall to try to cross. The officials were not ready and were overwhelmed by them. They tried to spray water on them but gave up. People grabbed the hoses and tried to climb them. To prevent a stampede, the officials opened the gates. Then, people on both sides began to hammer at the wall.