

History Through H@ndles: The Cold War

Bring the Cold War to life for your students with social media! In this activity, you will use Twitter and the Newseum's Berlin Wall Gallery (Hubbard Concourse) to explore the role of the citizen journalists in reflecting and shaping public opinion.

GRADE LEVEL: Middle and high school

TIME: 30 minutes

MATERIALS: Mobile devices with Internet access

PREPARE

1. Choose a hashtag for your students to use in each tweet and write it on the board. We suggest #ClassNameColdWar (ex: #English9ColdWar).
2. If desired, create two Twitter accounts for your students to use, one for East Berliners and one for West Berliners.

DO

1. Tell students: Residents of East Berlin and West Berlin had very different experiences of the Cold War. Today, you are going to take on the role of a loyal resident of the East or West. They will read about key events during the Cold War, and tweet their reactions from their assigned perspective.
2. Assign students to one of two groups: East Berlin or West Berlin.
3. Go to the concourse level and gather students at the exhibit entrance.
4. Remind students to read each exhibit panel, to tweet using the assigned hashtag, and to respond to each other's tweets.

DISCUSS

As a group, review the series of tweets. Analyze the factors that affect point of view and the role of technology in shaping public opinion. Prompts include:

- How were the East and West Berlin tweets similar? Different?
- What clues did you use to tell if someone was from East or West Berlin?
- If you were an outsider, which side's record would you find more believable? Why?
- Do you think tweets provide a more or less accurate record of current events than print newspapers? Why?
- Do you think the Cold War would have turned out differently if Twitter existed? Why or why not?
- What makes a modern Twitter campaign successful?