



MY PROJECT



BERLIN

GRAFFITI AND THE BERLIN WALL

MAJOR PROJECT

A GUIDE FOR TEACHERS



## Graffiti and the Berlin Wall Major Project

### *Introduction*

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 was an event of immense political, social, and symbolic importance in modern world history. East and West Germany were reunited for the first time since the Second World War, and it was also one of the major events that signaled the ultimate end of the communist regime in the Soviet Union two years later, which officially ended the 46 year-long Cold War. Since its construction in 1961, the Wall effectively divided a city, separating families and communities, and simultaneously created new communities. It was one of the clearest visual markers of the ideological conflict that defined the Cold War and became a physical canvas upon which West Berlin residents and visitors expressed their personal ideas and sentiments about the Wall itself, about the Cold War, the USSR, and anything else through the medium of graffiti art. The West side of the wall was covered with graffiti, while the East side remained blank because people were prohibited from coming close enough to the wall to paint on it.

This project is designed to prompt students to consider graffiti as one form of public expression, using it to communicate very specific messages about the chosen topic of peace and the barriers that exist to achieving peace. Students will have the opportunity to work collaboratively with one another at the classroom level, contribute to an exhibit showcasing student work from across the nation at the Diefenbunker: Canada's Cold War Museum, as well as have the possibility to interact with their wider community by negotiating for the use of a public space upon which to record their work. This project aims to prompt students to think critically about the concept of peace – how it is defined, achieved, and maintained – and to also think about the barriers to peace that exist. By linking their graffiti project with the graffiti covering the Berlin Wall, students will be able to explore graffiti as a vehicle of free speech, political activism, and artistic expression.

### *The Project*

There are two main ways of completing this project. The first involves consulting with members of the community in order to seek out a graffiti-friendly wall that is available for use by students for this project. However, this route may not be feasible in most cases, and an equally meaningful alternative is to simply use a large swath of newsprint paper or fabric, and have students create a mural that can then be hung on a wall, be it in the classroom, the school, or elsewhere. There are a variety of approaches that classes can take to actually realizing a design for their chosen canvas. Whether students work





individually on small sections to create a patchwork design, or in small groups to realize a few larger ideas, or collaboratively as a whole to create one cohesive concept, the murals should all reflect some idea or multiple ideas about barriers to peace and peace itself. The materials selected for the project are also flexible, and the class can decide whether to use fingerpainting, spraypainting, brushes, fabric paint and glue with other textile materials, or any other medium that is deemed most effective.

As a quick introduction to the issues of the Cold War and the Berlin Wall, please feel at liberty to use any of the resources included with the My Project Berlin curriculum package, particularly the introductory slideshow, “An Introduction to the Berlin Wall”. You may also invite students to complete some preliminary research on the graffiti that existed and exists today on the Berlin Wall to get a sense of a specific historical and political conflict in which this medium was used. Some excellent online resources exist at [www.eastsidegallery.com](http://www.eastsidegallery.com), and at [berlinwallart.com](http://berlinwallart.com).

### The Museum

The Diefenbunker: Canada’s Cold War Museum, would like to extend an invitation to your class to participate in our upcoming exhibit on museum education and the My Project Berlin resources. If you would like to take part in this exciting opportunity, we ask that you send us copies of photographs of your class mural, or that you post them to the exhibit’s Twitter account, @BerlinWall2014. Posts to our Twitter feed will be projected digitally in the exhibit space for visitors to see and enjoy, and they will also be publicly available on Twitter so your class will be able to not only view your own work, but that of other classes from across the country who have also chosen to participate in this project. Hard copies of photographs that will be posted in the exhibit can be mailed to:

“Community Structure and Exchange Project”  
Diefenbunker: Canada’s Cold War Museum  
3911 Carp Rd  
Carp, ON  
K0A 1L0

If you have any questions or comments about this project or about any of the other resources included in My Project Berlin, please contact Heather Montgomery (Education Manager) at [education@diefenbunker.ca](mailto:education@diefenbunker.ca), or 1-613-839-0007 ext. 223. We look forward to hearing from you and seeing your contributions!



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