

German Culture Workshop

Monuments and Memorials in Contemporary Germany

Useful vocabulary:

das Denkmal
an etw denken
das Mal

das Mahnmal
jdn mahnen

das Ehrenmal
jdn/etw ehren

die Erinnerung
sich an jdn/etw erinnern

das Gedächtnis
etwas im Gedächtnis behalten

Quotations:

Robert Musil (Austrian writer, 1880-1942):

μ das Auffallendste an Denkmälern ist nämlich, dass man sie nicht bemerkt. Es gibt nichts auf der Welt, was so unsichtbar wäre wie Denkmäler

Albert Schweitzer (German/French theologian, philosopher, physician, 1875-1965):

Das schönste Denkmal, das ein Mensch bekommen kann, steht in den Herzen seiner Mitmenschen

Uli Löchner (contemporary German writer):

Denkmäler verkörpern fast ausnahmslos historische Lüge

Erhard Blanck (contemporary German writer and painter):

Denkmäler sind die fragwürdigen Fragezeichen der Geschichte. Schließlich fragen die meisten: "Wer war das überhaupt?"

Group 1: Memorial to the victims of the Allied bombings of Dresden in 1945

Task:

Design a memorial to the victims of the Allied bombings in Dresden in 1945, taking into account the below information. Decide on a location for the memorial and a suitable design to reflect the historical details (but consider how the design might tackle any potential difficulties that such a memorial might throw up). Sketch out your design to present to the rest of the group.

Historical background:

During the last few months of the Second World War, US and UK bombers undertook heavy bombing raids on Dresden, destroying over 90% of the city centre and causing thousands of deaths (ca. 25,000). The Allies justified this action by claiming that Dresden was an important military and industrial target. However, critics of the bombings claim that Dresden did not hold such strategic significance, and that the bombing campaign caused an unnecessary loss of life

Group 3: Monument to the 17 June 1953 uprisings

Task:

Design a monument to those who took part in the uprisings of 17 June 1953, taking into account the below information. Decide on a location for the memorial and a suitable design to reflect the historical details (but consider how the design might tackle any potential difficulties that such a memorial might throw up). Sketch out your design to present to the rest of the group.

Historical background:

On 17 June 1953, approximately 500,000 workers went on strike in the GDR (in Berlin and other towns and cities) in the first and only mass uprising against the government until 1989. They were demonstrating against a 10% rise in work norms (meaning that they had to work 10% more for no extra pay). While their initial aim was to reverse this policy, their demands escalated to include calls for free elections and the resignation of the government. However, the uprising was quashed by Soviet tanks, and it is estimated that between 50 and 250 people lost their lives; a number were sentenced to death and thousands were imprisoned. The uprisings were never officially remembered in the GDR, as the government interpreted them to be the work of Western agents and provocateurs.

Who wants a memorial?

A group of veterans who demonstrated on 17 June 1953 wish to see the demonstrations remembered in the public sphere before living memory of this event dies out.

Where should it be located?

Choose between three possible locations in Berlin:

1)

Group 4: Monument to Helmut Kohl

Task: