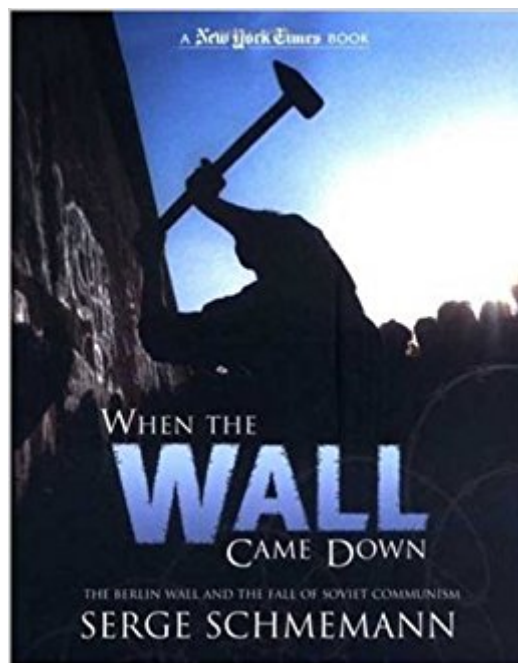




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# New York Times When The Wall Came Down: The Berlin Wall And The Fall Of Soviet Communism



## Synopsis

This is history as only an eyewitness can tell it. In 1989, veteran journalist Serge Schmemmann was in his hotel room when his assistant from East Germany burst in with some incredible news: the Berlin Wall was open. Serge jumped into the first cab he could find and raced to the wall in time to witness one of the great moments of European history. Including articles from the archives of The New York Times, this gripping narrative tells the whole story, from the division of Germany after World War II, to life in the Communist East, to the massive protests that brought an end to the Eastern Bloc, and the fall of the Berlin Wall.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

Grade 6 Up  
Serge Schmemmann recounts the fall of the Berlin Wall from his perspective as a reporter who covered the story for the New York Times. The first section of the book opens with his impressions of the November 9, 1989, night when the Wall was opened. He then explains how war, inflation, and depression contributed to Hitler's rise and the Second World War. He also discusses how the postwar partition of Germany and Cold War tensions led to the construction of the Wall. He credits Mikhail Gorbachev for the reforms that brought it down and ended the Cold War and

concludes by examining the joys and difficulties of German reunification. The second section is a compilation of New York Times articles about the Berlin Wall, the Cold War, and German reunification, with original publication dates ranging from 1955 to 1990. The articles are cross-referenced in the text so that students can easily locate those that are relevant to each time period and topic. Well-chosen black-and-white and color photographs and maps of the city and region supplement the text. Suggestions for further reading list additional New York Times articles by subject. This book offers more complete coverage than Jeremy Smith's *The Fall of the Berlin Wall* (World Almanac Library, 2004), and Schemmann's personal perspective and the numerous articles will help readers understand the intensity of feeling that surrounded this event.

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Gr. 6-9. As a former Bonn and Moscow bureau chief for the New York Times, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Schemmann brings unusual authority to this account of the Soviet bloc's last days. Contrasting the "tightly controlled, communist-ruled East" to the "free, democratic and brightly lit West," he mixes personal observations and general reportage to cover the cold war's origins and course and convey the headiness of the populist push to reunify Germany and to replace Europe's communist governments in the wake of the Berlin Wall's opening. He closes with comments on Germany's rocky economic road since. Enhanced both by an array of colored maps and photos and by edited versions of 13 articles published in the New York Times between 1955 and 1990, this offers students of modern history a clear overview, several behind-the-news revelations, and a generous selection of primary source material. As with other books in this cooperative publishing venture between the New York Times and Kingfisher, a Times-based resource list is appended.

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This book helped a lot towards a research paper I was doing over the Berlin Wall. It provides a great overview and has lots of pictures. This book was probably the best overview I found of the Berlin Wall as it includes information over why the Berlin Wall went up in the first place, what happened while the wall was up, and especially the events leading up to the wall coming down. If you have any interest in the Berlin Wall I would recommend this book.

Book was very helpful for a high school documentary project on the fall of the Berlin wall. Content was easy to understand, good maps/visuals. Condition and delivery were as expected and very

satisfactory.

This is an excellent historical book on a world changing event. The text is crisp, clear and easy to understand.

I was expecting more of a story form, it was recommended for 10-13yr, old. It was more like a text book, and I'm afraid will go on a shelf and collect dust.

Serge is a very competent journalist, but alas, he never rises above mere reporting. The book begins on November 9, 1989. Serge is at a hotel in West Berlin. He was suddenly surprised to see Viktor, his translator from East Germany, show up at his hotel room! That is a gripping, exciting, something huge is happening right now story! Unfortunately, it's the only one in the book. I wanted to read a story from Hans who said - I work as a plumber in East Berlin. It's so hard to get the parts I need. And the Stasi are so paranoid! Every time I work in a basement, they think I'm digging a tunnel! Who has the time to dig a tunnel? And Lydia who said - My brother escaped in the trunk of a 1968 Mustang, thanks to a kind hearted diplomat. This was my first chance to see him in 5 years! And his wife and their darling baby girl! I never expected this much happiness to come in my lifetime! This is what he does cover: \* The formation of Germany as a country in 1871. \* World War One \* The hyper-inflation of the 1920s \* The horrors of World War Two, starring those ÃfÃ ber bad guys, the Nazis \* The Yalta Conference where Winston Churchill and Franklin Delano Roosevelt (who was terribly ill at the time) wimped out and gave Eastern Europe to Josef Stalin and the godless, oppressive, factory stealing communists \* The cold war and the incredibly oppressive Stasi, the East German secret police. \* And obviously the events running up to, including and just after the fall of The Berlin Wall He put this cool to know historical factoid in his book: There were 90,000 secret police working for the Stasi, plus 175,000 paid informants. With a population of 17 million people, that works out to one spy for every 64 people. They kept files on 4 million East Germans, nearly a quarter of the population. Kudos for all the splendid pictures he put in his book! There's one of a blonde, teenage girl from East Germany proudly showing her passport as she walks to West Berlin for the first time. But his writing is strangely distant from the events he witnessed. The man was right there in West Berlin on November 9th! All he had to do was talk to the people around him, East and West Berliners, and take notes, but nooooo. Except for Viktor, these personal stories that would have taken this book to a higher level, are missing, absent, vacant, not present or accounted for. I watched a documentary that showed the East Berliners gathered at one of gates on November

9th. They had heard GÃ¶nter Schabowski, one of the East German communist big wheels, say on television that travel restrictions would be lifted that night, but actually the date was three days hence. The guards had standing orders to shoot anyone who tried to escape. Hundreds, then thousands of people gathered at the checkpoints. They told the guards they had the right to go to West Berlin now! The crowd kept growing and pressing forward. The tension kept building! Something had to give! Finally the guards threw open the gates! Go ahead, have a nice walk. Thousands of East Germans walked into West Berlin for the first time in their lives! Thousands of West Berliners came out and met them. They talked, hugged and drank champagne, wine and beer. After a few hours, the East Berliners walked home. The next day Mikhail called the guards and told them, "You did right! You shouldn't shoot at Germans for wanting to speak with other Germans." Well done, Mikhail! But that's not in this book. The actual book is 72 pages. Then he added some news articles and a few interviews with various people who are knowledgeable about Germany. It's a competent book in terms of covering the main events and Serge was very thorough about the history angle, but he didn't dive into the exciting, touching or heart warming stories from people who were just outside his hotel room.

I was quite profoundly disappointed in this book. Indeed, it's hardly a book at all. Instead, it's a summary of the stunning events in Eastern Europe with a little bit of history, some accounts from the New York Times from 1989, and then a little bit of epilogue. It's a Cliff Notes version of history, essentially. If this appeared as an article in the Sunday magazine of the New York Times, you'd think it's a bit thin. To sell it as a book is galling. There is a nice scene where the author's East Berlin assistant stunningly shows up in West Berlin after the Wall has come down. I enjoyed that. But that's an article, not a book.

This is an awesome book which is written by Serge Schmemmann. This book describes the Berlin wall and all about the symbolism of the wall, and how it divided the West Berlin (democracy) from the East Berlin (Communist). This book is great for an AP student in euro history on a report, due to the famous author and easiness of the book. It provides beautiful array of pictures with little info about them and nice understandable text. Great book aided my report and enjoyed at the same time. Recommended!!!!!!

Excellent little book which helps to explain the fall of the Berlin Wall. Gives a detailed background and outline of the political events leading up to the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin

Wall. I have used this book as a successful part of the reading list for my Grade 11 Modern History class.

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