



Teacher material

Preserve the Remembrance

Activity Plan

1. Step: Introduction

The students are introduced to the history of the Buchenwald concentration camp and analyse informations about several memorials in Buchenwald. (Annex 1)
Extension of the introduction: Analysis of cartoon. (Annex 2).

2. Step: Group work

Student will be divided in four groups (A - D). Each group will get images of one monument with a list of questions. Pictures of the monument are given to students without the context, only reduced, necessary information. (Annex 3)

3. Step: Plenary work

Students sort the monuments according to their age or size. In order to fulfill this task they need to share their knowledge from the previous step with the others.

4. Step: Group work

Now they receive more informations to understand better the context of their memorials (Annex 4) and discuss the question: How did the additional information change the way you see the memorial?

5. Step: Presentation and panel debate

Students present their work in the plenary and discuss then these questions:

- ✓ Who do we remember or commemorate with the help of the memorial?
- ✓ Who is missing in this image?
- ✓ When was the memorial erected? For whom is it made for?
- ✓ Are these memorials inclusive or exclusive?
- ✓ Key question: What do we want to be preserved?

6. Step: Group work – sketch a new memorial

Students should sketch (in small groups) an inclusive memorial for KL Buchenwald.

What should it look like? And why?

7. Step: Presentation of results in the plenary

Students will present their work and discuss, now in a broader perspective:
What do we want to preserve, for whom, and why?



Background information for the teacher

Buchenwald Memorial

Buchenwald was a German Nazi concentration camp established near Weimar (Germany), in July 1937. It was one of the largest concentration camps on German soil. From 1945 to 1950, the camp was used by the Soviet occupation authorities to intern suspected German in the so called “Special Camp No 2”. In 1958, the area was transformed into a national memorial supporting the self interpretation of the GDR as an antifascist, anticapitalist and socialist state with a specific aim: To use the legacy of the communist resistance in the camp to led the next generations fall in line with the governing Socialist Unity Party (SED). Consequently, the resistance struggle of the Communist inmates was overemphasized and the existence of other inmate groups marginalized – the history of the Soviet Special Camp in Buchenwald was largely tabooed. After 1989, and based on widely extended research, all periods since the Thirties were presented in new exhibits and in visitor’s oriented programs. Both, the Nazi concentration camp and the Soviet Special Camp No. 2 are remembered today, as well as all their victims. Within the Memorial exists a multitude of commemorative monuments, plates, places of remembrance, old and new ones. Some examples from Buchenwald shall help to discuss the following questions: Who or what is presented with the help of these memorials? For whom and why would we build memorials? What kind of memory do we want to preserve? Are these memorials inclusive or exclusive? Which (power) interests are connected with these memorial places?

Further information: www.buchenwald.de

All four memorials (A – D) are easily to be found on the following map:
<https://www.google.de/maps/@51.0216456,11.2489584,110m/data=!3m1!1e3!5m1!1e1>

On the former camp ground:

- B Memorial stone for victims of the pogroms 1938 (left side, just above the former “prisoner’s canteen”)
- C Memorial plaque (Ernst Thälmann) in the right courtyard of the former Crematorium
- D Memorial plate on the former musterin ground (left from former main gate, the metal quadrat is visible and even the four corners of the former platform)

And right from the former campground the Memorial of 1958 with tower and graves:

- A The figural group by Fritz Cremer
 Again, the shadows make it easy to identify the figures on the square below the bell tower.

If possible, this picture of the camp site should be used via internet connection to show the students the actual geographic situation. It is also an excellent possibility to illustrate the multiperspectivity presented by the used photos.



Background information for the teacher in addition to Annex 2: Cartoon analysis

As early as April 24, 1945, just 13 days after the liberation of Buchenwald, the author and journalist Victor Gollancz published his brochure to question the raising wave of collective guilt accusations against "the Germans". In his text he argues that the first victims of German Nazis were Germans themselves, since 1933 segregated and hunted as real or suspected opponents of the Nazi dictatorship or threatened and later systematically killed for racist reasons. Gollancz reminds the British public of the government's reluctance to accept Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany, who tried to escape into the UK.

Further reading brochure: <http://library.fes.de/fulltext/sozmit/1945-073-1.htm>
Vita Victor Gollancz: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victor_Gollancz

Sources:

Buchenwald and Mittelbau-Dora

Gollancz, Victor. "What Buchenwald Really Means"
(<http://library.fes.de/fulltext/sozmit/1945-073-1.htm>)

Photographs by Daniel Gaede



Annex 1 “Buchenwald Memorial

Buchenwald Concentration Camp was built in 1937 in the direct vicinity of Weimar, the city of German Classicism. It was to this concentration camp on Ettersberg mountain that the SS deported men, teenagers and children – political opponents to the Nazi regime, so-called asocials and criminals, homosexuals, Jehovah’s witnesses, Jews, Sinti and Roma – who had no place in the National Socialist “people’s community”. Following the outbreak of World War II, the National Socialists sent people from nearly every country in Europe to Buchenwald. At the time of the camp’s liberation, ninety-five percent of its inmates were from countries outside the German Reich. Between 1937 and 1945, altogether more than 250,000 persons from more than fifty different nations were imprisoned here.

The inmates in the Buchenwald “parent camp” and its total of 136 subcamps were ruthlessly exploited. In 1944 the SS administration of Buchenwald took charge of camps in which women and girls were forced to work for the German armament industry. Some 56,000 human beings met their deaths in Buchenwald and its subcamps; they were killed deliberately, they starved to death, they died of illnesses or as victims of medical experiments. Many inmates, among them more than 8,000 Soviet prisoners of war, were systematically murdered by the SS.

Buchenwald Concentration Camp was involved in the NS killing policies through the practise of inmate selection and deportation to NS extermination camps: Buchenwald was the point of departure for extermination transports of children and sick inmates to Auschwitz, and when the SS cleared the camps in the east in early 1945, many mass transports went to Buchenwald. Shortly before the end of the war, the SS attempted to “evacuate” Buchenwald Concentration Camp as well, and forced 28,000 inmates to set out on “death marches”. When the Third U.S. Army reached Buchenwald on 11 April 1945, the SS fled, and inmates of the secret resistance organization opened the camp. Approximately 21,000 inmates, including more than 900 children and teenagers, were liberated.

In July 1945, when the American troops withdrew from Thuringia, Red Army units quickly took their place. The Soviet Secret Police set up Special Camp No. 2 in the former Buchenwald Concentration Camp. From 1945 to 1950, some 28,500 persons were interned in Buchenwald, among them 1,000 women, without trials and for indefinite terms. The majority of the inmates were men between forty and sixty years of age. Most of them had belonged to the NSDAP or held offices in the party and its subdivisions, primarily on the local level, or served in the NS administration, police or judiciary.

The living conditions in Buchenwald Special Camp were extremely inhumane. Altogether, more than 7,100 persons died there. The dead were buried in mass graves to the north of the camp and in the vicinity of the Buchenwald railway station.

In 1950, after the dissolution of the special camp, large parts of the camp were disassembled as per resolution of the SED (Socialist Unity Party) Politburo, and until 1958 a memorial was erected on the southern slope of the Ettersberg. The “Nationale Mahn- und Gedenkstätte Buchenwald” became the largest concentration camp memorial in Germany.

Following reorganization in the early 1990s, the memorial is now part of the Buchenwald and Mittelbau-Dora Memorials Foundation, which is financed by the Federal Republic of Germany and the Free State of Thuringia.

With the aid of four permanent exhibitions and a wide range of information material memorial visitors can explore Buchenwald’s history in a variety of ways. Information plaques on the grounds call attention to buildings and what remains of the camps.”

source: A visitor’s guide to Buchenwald Memorial. Published by the Buchenwald and Mittelbau-Dora Memorials foundation. 3rd edition, Weimar 2012, page 5-7