

The Berlin Airlift 1948–9
Reading
1. Before reading the text, guess 'Yes' or 'No' to these questions.

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|--|--------|
| 1. Berlin was in the French-controlled sector of Germany. | Yes/No |
| 2. One outcome was that the Soviets won a moral victory. | Yes/No |
| 3. Both East and West Germany were established in 1949. | Yes/No |
| 4. In June 1948 air links with Berlin were cut. | Yes/No |
| 5. American policy was against the spread of totalitarian rule. | Yes/No |
| 6. It needed 10,000 tons of supplies a day to meet Berlin's needs. | Yes/No |
| 7. Stalin thought the allies would leave Berlin. | Yes/No |
| 8. The Berlin Airlift led to the formation of NATO. | Yes/No |
| 9. Stalin cancelled the blockade in March 1949. | Yes/No |
| 10. Germany remained divided until 1989. | Yes/No |

2. Now read the text and check whether your guesses were right.

The Berlin Airlift: Causes and Consequences



Typical of the confrontations of the Cold War was the Berlin Airlift. Stalin decided that the 'Marshall Aid' plan to give billions of dollars of aid to Europe was a way for the USA to extend its influence in Europe, and he refused to allow the countries of Eastern Europe access to it. He was also angered by what appeared to be a move on the part of the Americans and their allies to promote a separate West German state, including Berlin, which was about 70 km inside the Soviet sector.

On 24 June 1948, all road and rail links between Berlin and the West were severed. It seems likely that Stalin thought the allies would have to leave Berlin and walk away. But this would have been contrary to America's policy of standing up to totalitarian governments.

The spectacular response of the Allies was to begin supplying the three Western sectors of Berlin by air. It was calculated that an estimated 4,000 tons of supplies would be needed per day. At the time, the largest available transport planes had a load limit of just over 10 tons and by the middle of winter, West Berlin had only one week's coal and three weeks' food stored. However, the winter crisis was overcome, and by spring, supplies were not just meeting daily requirements, but people were building stocks for the future. Realizing that he had been beaten, Stalin called off the blockade in May 1949.

The outcomes of the blockade were significant. The West had won a moral victory and it was decided to set up an organization called the 'North Atlantic Treaty Organization' (NATO), to co-ordinate Western defence. As it became clear that the unification of Germany would not be a possibility in the short term, the German Federal Republic (West Germany) and the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) were both established in 1949. This situation lasted until 1989.

3. Now complete the answers to these questions, using the information you have learnt from the text.

a) Why did Stalin decide to cut all road and rail links between Berlin and the West? When did this take place?

Stalin cut road and rail links between Berlin and the West because _____

This took place in _____

b) What did the Allies do in response?

The Allies responded by _____

c) What were the outcomes of the blockade?

The two most significant outcomes of the blockade were _____

ANSWER KEY**The Berlin Airlift 1948–9****Reading**

1. No
2. No
3. Yes
4. No
5. Yes
6. No
7. Yes
8. Yes
9. No
10. Yes

Useful websites

http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/berlin_airlift/large/index.php

Contains photographs, documents, background and lesson plans

<http://www.german-way.com/airlift.html>

Gives a useful summary of the blockade and airlift

<http://www.kroh.com/tewsp/jc/jc2.htm>

Gives background information and helpful maps on West Berlin around 1945

<http://www.konnections.com/airlift/berlin.htm>

A useful overview from the Berlin Airlift Veterans Association Web Page

<http://spiritoffreedom.org/>

The website of the Berlin Airlift Historical Foundation, dedicated to preserving the memory and legacy of the Berlin Airlift.