Eyewitness to the Fall of the Berlin Wall
November 9, 1989

A classroom play by Team HOPE

Cast List

Tim Weber (WEB) .................................. BBC Journalist
David Kreikmeier (DAVID) ...................... eyewitness at the Berlin Wall
Michael Nicholson (NICH) ...................... eyewitness at the Berlin Wall
Richard Price (PRICE) .......................... eyewitness at the Berlin Wall
Jeff Ashman (ASH) .............................. eyewitness at the Berlin Wall
Elijah Lovejoy (ANCH) .......................... anchor of “The History News Report”
Margaret Fuller (R1) ............................ reporter for “The History News Report”
Nellie Bly (R2) ................................. reporter for “The History News Report”
Ernie Pyle (R3) ............................... reporter for “The History News Report”
TEACHER NOTES

SETTING: A contemporary classroom. It is advised to set up the anchor in the front of the room facing the class, in front of some sort of background with “The History New Report.” You may choose to set up the different reporters conducting the interviews around the classroom and have the historical figures come to them. This way it gives the appearance of different locations. A name plate in front of each cast member is highly recommended. A 5x8 index card folded in half works great for this purpose.

COSTUMES: Although not necessary, any period costumes for the historical figures are a great addition. Even a simple hat or wig is excellent.

MASKS: Masks are an easy addition that will add to the drama and make the entire event more fun for the students. First, go to www.google.com and click on “image search.” Type in the historical figure’s name and find an image of the person. Copy and paste the picture in a Word document. You may need to crop and then enlarge the photo so you get a picture large enough to be used as a mask. Portraits obviously work best for this use. Print out the picture and paste it onto a cardboard backing. You can tape a plastic spoon or popsicle stick to be used as a handle. You may decide to make masks for the student correspondents as well, using pictures of television news personalities for the masks.

Note: If there is a historical person you cannot find a picture for, don’t despair! Almost any random “period” person’s picture (as long as it not someone easily recognizable) would work as a mask.

ROLES: Encourage students to act out the roles with as much energy as possible. Do not be too terribly concerned that the sex of the historical figure matching with the sex of the student.

The teacher may decide to take a part in the play, role-modeling one of the historical figures. It is recommended that five copies of the scripts are specifically set aside for each character in the play. For each character, highlight all their lines in order to facilitate a faster pace of dialogue. All other students should receive an unmarked copy of the play to read as the play is performed.

ANCHOR AND REPORTERS: In order to facilitate the historical discussions that exist in the plays, actual famous journalist names have been used in the plays. Teachers should point out that these journalists come from different times in American history and do not necessarily reflect the period they report on. It is as if they can travel in time to deliver “The History News Report.” A teacher may also decide to substitute the names given in the script for student names if desired. A brief description of the journalists is as follows:

- **Elijah Lovejoy** (1802-1837) A minister and journalist for the *St. Louis Observer* and later editor of the abolitionist newspaper the *Alton Observer* of Alton, Illinois. In 1837, pro-slavery forces attacked his warehouse in order to destroy his printing press and he was murdered on the scene.

- **Margaret Fuller** (1810-1850) An early woman rights activist, Margaret was the first female journalist to work on the staff of a major American newspaper, *The New York Tribune*. She was a widely read literary critic who was also sent on overseas assignments to Europe.

- **Nellie Bly** (1864-1922) After writing a fiery rebuttal to a sexist column in the *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, Nellie was hired by a very impressed editor at the newspaper. She went on to become a famous investigative journalist on the plight of working women, and gained further fame for having faked insanity in order to investigate the treatment of the mentally ill.

- **Ernie Pyle** (1900-1945) An American journalist who was a roving correspondent for Scripps Howard newspaper chain. His articles were read in over 200 newspapers. He is most famous for having been a war correspondent during World War II. He led the charge for Congress to give soldiers “battle pay” while in combat. He died under heavy fire from a Japanese machine gun nest in the Pacific on April 18, 1945.

DISCUSSION: Use the attached worksheets to facilitate discussion before and after the play. Students who are not directly involved in the play can attempt to write preliminary answers as the play is performed. The audience should be told that they will be the primarily responsible for the discussion questions at the end of the lesson.
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NOTE: All responses by historical figures reflect actual events and beliefs as closely as possible.

CAST ABBREVIATIONS

Tim Weber…………………………………..WEB
David Kreikmeier……………………………DAVID
Michael Nicholson…………………………..NICH
Richard Price………………………………..PRICE
Jeff Ashman…………………………………ASH
Elijah Lovejoy ……………………………... ANCH
Margaret Fuller…………………………….. R1
Nellie Bly…………………………………....R2
Ernie Pyle……………………………………R3

ANCH Welcome to History News Report, I am your anchor Elijah Lovejoy. We have breaking news out of Berlin, Germany! Apparently the Berlin Wall has been opened and East and West Berliners are pouring through the checkpoints. HNR News has reporters on the scene. We first check in with BBC Journalist Tim Weber who reports from somewhere in Berlin. Tim?

WEB Yes, Elijah! I am here near the famous border crossing “Checkpoint Charlie” and what an atmosphere it is! To my right is a mass of revelers, dancing, singing, drinking champagne and having the time of their lives. To my left – a thin line of armed men, nervously holding their Kalashnikov (Russian) assault rifles, shifting uneasily from foot to foot.

ANCH Tim, we hear reports of people climbing on the wall!

WEB We are! Here at the Brandenburg Gate, for a short stretch, the Wall is lower, broad and flat. Stepping onto a box pushed up against it, a helping hand from above, a shove from below, that's all it now takes to get on top. We hold on to each other, try not to fall off the wall, and watch, ignoring the bitter cold. It is an amazing scene!

ANCH Tim, why the sudden change in policy by the East German police?

WEB I think Hungary opening up its borders really started to push pressure on the East German communists. Now East Germans could access West Germany over the Hungarian border.

ANCH But there were also protests, right?

WEB Right! Every Monday there have been mass protests against the closed border and
the number of protestors has continued to grow. The communist government has really feared losing control. This is so unexpected.

ANCH It seems like this would have never happened just a few years ago.

WEB No way! The Soviets would have crushed this type of protesting and thousands would have died. They did that in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in ‘68. However, President Reagan’s pressure on Premier Gorbachev seems to have worked! Freedom is on the rise!

ANCH Is there any talk of uniting Germany?

WEB Oh, yes, I have already heard that talk. Wait! Elijah, I hear noise. A pick, pick, pick and chuck, chuck, chuck! It’s growing louder and louder! Yes, I can see it now! People have brought hammers and chisels and are now attacking the wall, taking it down chip by chip!

ANCH Amazing! What are the border guards doing?

WEB Nothing! Just watching! This is just incredible! People are laughing and crying. Laughing and crying at the same time!

ANCH What a report Tim. We are going to cut to HNR’s Ernie Pyle, who is standing by with an eyewitness. Ernie?

R3 Elijah, I’m here with David Kreikmeier, a British citizen. David, describe the night for you.

DAVID I was at the Eddinger Café where I met up with my parents for dinner. As we got to the main course a woman was wandering up and down outside shouting: "Die Mauer ist gefallt! Die Mauer ist gefallt!" (The Wall is falling! The Wall is falling!) Everyone thought she was mad or having a mental breakdown – then suddenly the kitchen staff burst out of the kitchen and started saying the same thing!

R3 How did people react?

DAVID Everyone scrambled to get to a TV or radio or even down to the checkpoints to see what was happening. I will always remember this raw emotion, the crowds, the chaos! I can’t believe it!

R3 (to Elijah) I’m hearing that a lot down here Elijah, “I can’t believe it!”

ANCH We now turn to HNR’s Nellie Bly who has another eyewitness.

R2 Elijah, I have with me an American citizen, Michael Nicholson. Michael, can you tell us what you have been doing?
When we got there, with the help of other people, we were able to climb up on to the wall and watch Vopos (East German Police) standing about 10 yards apart being engaged in dialog by some intellectuals on the wall. Suddenly, there was some enormous sound, which turned out to be some construction laborers hammering at the wall with some heavy equipment, which I could not see.

But you didn’t remain on the wall?

We were a little afraid at what the reaction might be from the East German army, so we decided to get down and return home and watch the proceedings from the television.

Margaret Fuller has another eyewitness. Margaret?

Elijah, I have a great story here and it is in the form of this student, Richard Price, whose father is stationed at the Royal Air Force Base in West Berlin. Richard, what happened today at school?

I was in school on the day that it was announced that the borders were open, and everyone in the school was put on a bus, and taken to a nearby border crossing point. There we handed out flowers, provided by the RAF Base commander, to all people crossing from the East.

Where were all the people going?

The vast majority of people crossing were not actually going anywhere, they just wanted to cross to see if it was really true, and most stopped just after the border on the west side, which is where we handed them flowers.

Did any of the people speak to you?

I remember one woman, crying her eyes out and hugging us all, saying something in German. When our German teacher translated, we understood why she was crying. Her son had been killed trying to escape East Germany just a year previously.

Back to Ernie with another fascinating story!

I have with me Jeff Ashman, a U.S. citizen living in Berlin. Jeff, what do you make of this night!

That is an event that will always be with me! One of those monumental times in history that we usually only read about in history books!

What do you think will stay with you the most?

The entire city shut down as people park their cars to join in what has to be one of the largest block parties ever held! The Berlin U-Bahn looks more like the Tokyo
Subway at rush hour, with people packed in like sardines. At Checkpoint Charlie, people are giving bottles of champagne to the "ossis" (East Germans) as they came across. There are a lot of tears of joy flowing, and no one could help but feel the emotions that fill the air.

ANCH Well, what a momentous evening! The Berlin Wall has fallen! Almost nobody predicted that it would happen so soon. Many believed it would never happen in their lifetime. HNR will keep you up to date with the latest developments. For History News Report, I am Elijah Lovejoy.

"Eyewitness: The night the Wall came down," BBC online, 1999 [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/509643.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/509643.stm)