

Should France preserve Hitler's Atlantic Wall?

Sections of Hitler's Atlantic Wall in France are being restored by enthusiasts. But should it be preserved? Should the Nazi fortification be fully embraced as part of the country's image? The so-called Atlantic Wall – Hitler's defensive system against an expected Allied attack – stretched all the way from the Spanish border to Scandinavia. It was in France where the most extensive building took place. In fact 1,287km (800 miles) of French coast have substantial and evocative vestiges of war-time Europe. However, in France up till now there has been no effort to preserve this extraordinary historical landmark. The French, have it seems, been quite happy to see the German defences rust away and crumble over time. But now it appears a new mood has emerged. Recently, several local associations dedicated to safeguarding portions of the Wall have been set up in France. Times have moved on, memories of the war have lapsed, and a new generation no longer feels pain or guilt, but curiosity.

Marc Mentel, founder of the Gramasa (Archaeological Research Group for the Atlantic Wall: Arcachon Sector): "It really has been very rapid. In just the last three to four years, there has been a radical change." He added, "Today, people are constantly coming up to us at our sites and wanting to know more about the Wall. In the past, the whole issue was too painful; it brought back too many bad memories." Members of the association spend their weekends clearing and restoring German bunkers around the bay of Arcachon, a beautiful area of oyster beds, pine woods and tourist beaches to the west of Bordeaux. The sector was too far south to be a likely contender for Allied landings. Nonetheless, the Germans had a complex of emplacements defending the narrow entrance to the bay and the port of Arcachon. Some of the defences were on the beaches, where they are now gradually falling victim to the tides and shifting sands. Others – mainly gun batteries – were on higher ground, and are relatively intact.

Rene-Georges Lubat, 91 is one of the few Frenchmen who worked on the Wall who is still alive. In 1942 he was 'volunteered' by his village mayor and sent to work on the defences around Arcachon. Today he thinks the Wall should be preserved: "People should remember what happened, the ignominy of it all, the cataclysm that we had to endure."

Category: History / France / Hitler's Atlantic Wall
Level: Intermediate / Upper Intermediate

EXERCISES

1. Hitler's Atlantic Wall: Briefly, what three things do you know about Hitler's Atlantic Wall? Go round the room swapping details.

2. Dictation: The teacher will read four to six lines of the article slowly and clearly. Students will write down what they hear. The teacher will repeat the passage slowly again. Self-correct your work from page one - filling in spaces and correcting mistakes. Be honest with yourself on the number of errors. Advise the teacher of your total number of errors. Less than five is very good. Ten is acceptable. Any more is room for improvement! More than twenty - you need to do some work!

3. Reading: The students should now read the article aloud, swapping readers every paragraph.

4. Vocabulary: Students should now look through the article and underline any vocabulary they do not know. Look in dictionaries. Discuss and help each other out. The teacher will go through and explain any unknown words or phrases.

5. The article: Students should look through the article with the teacher.

- a) What is the article about?
- b) What do you think about the article?
- c) Do you think France should preserve parts of Hitler's Atlantic Wall?

6. Geography: Hitler's Atlantic Wall: Draw a map on the board to show where Hitler's Atlantic Wall was built. What seas lay off it? **See links map on page 8** to help you.

7. Hitler's Atlantic Wall: In pairs think of five things you might have seen along the Atlantic Wall. Then add five reasons why it should be kept in places. Write them below.

Atlantic Wall	Why it should be kept in places
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

8. Other walls around the world: In pairs, think of four other famous historical walls that have been constructed. Write them below. Discuss them together. What was their purpose? When were they built?

1	3
2	4

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

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9. **Let's roleplay 1: France 24:** In pairs/groups. One of you is the interviewer. The others are one of the following people. You are in the *France 24* English TV studio in Paris. Today's interview is about: *Should France preserve Hitler's Atlantic Wall?* 5-10 minutes.

1	The Mayor of Arcachon	3	Yourself
2	Rene-Georges Lubat	4	A French historian

The teacher will choose some pairs/groups to roleplay their interview in front of the class.

10. **Let's roleplay 2: History:** In pairs/groups. *Imagine it is 1943.* The Atlantic Wall is being constructed along the French coastline. You are one of the following people who have dealings associated with it. I.e. you are building it, guarding it, the difficulties of building it, forced labour, feelings, the French view, the Nazi view etc. Briefly describe a typical day during this period. (Imagine) 5-10 minutes.

1	The Mayor of Arcachon	3	A Nazi soldier on lookout duty at the Wall
2	Rene-Georges Lubat	4	A Nazi bunker architect

The teacher will choose some pairs/groups to roleplay their parts in front of the class.

11. **Let's think!** In pairs. On the board write as many words as you can to do with **Hitler's Atlantic Wall**. *One-two minutes.* Compare with other teams. Using your words compile a short dialogue together.

12. **Presentation:** In pairs, groups or individually: Prepare in class or at home a two minute presentation on: **Hitler's Atlantic Wall**. Stand at the front of the class to give your presentation to the class. The class can vote on the best presentation.

13. **Let's do 'The Article Quiz':** Have the students quiz each other in pairs. They score a point for each correct answer and half a point each time they have to look at the article for help. See who can get the highest score!

Student A

- 1) Name the wall.
- 2) Who is Rene-Georges Lubat?
- 3) Who 'volunteered' Mr Lubat?
- 4) What does Mr Lubat suggest?
- 5) Who is Marc Mentel?

Student B

- 1) What was the purpose of the wall?
- 2) How long was the Wall?
- 3) Why have the French been against preserving it?
- 4) What is happening in Arcachon today?
- 5) Where is Arcachon?

14. **Let's write an e-mail:** Write and send a 200 word e-mail to your teacher about: **'Hitler's Atlantic Wall?'**

15. **Sentence starters:** Finish these sentence starters. Correct your mistakes. Compare what other people have written.

- a) The Atlantic Wall _____
- b) The French _____

DISCUSSION

Student A questions

- 1) Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- 2) What do you think about the Atlantic Wall?
- 3) Why has so much of the Wall been lost in France?
- 4) Would you like to visit the Atlantic Wall? Why? Why not?
- 5) Would you like to help preserve the Wall?
- 6) Do you think the Atlantic Wall is a tourist attraction?
- 7) Are the gun batteries worth preserving along the Atlantic Wall?
- 8) Have you ever visited a fort or other gun battery?
- 9) Do you know of any other walls that are being preserved in places?
- 10) Have you ever been on holiday in France?

Student B questions

- 1) What do you think about what you've read?
- 2) Should the French preserve parts of the Atlantic Wall? Why? Why not?
- 3) Why was the Wall built?
- 4) What difficulties might there have been building the Wall?
- 5) What advantages did the Nazis gain from building the Wall?
- 6) What disadvantages were there for the local people building the Wall?
- 7) Why did the Wall fall into disrepair?
- 8) Should the French government help with the restoration of the Wall?
- 9) Why has there been a sudden change of heart by the people of France about the Wall?
- 10) Did you like this discussion?

SPEAKING

Let's discuss! 20 things about Hitler's Atlantic Wall

Allow 10-15 minutes – As a class / small groups / pairs / 1 to 1

Discuss the following:

20 things about Hitler's Atlantic Wall

The teacher can moderate the session.

GAP FILL: READING:

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Should France preserve Hitler's Atlantic Wall?

Sections of Hitler's (1)_____ Wall in France are being restored by (2)_____. But should it be preserved? Should the Nazi (3)_____ be fully embraced as part of the country's image? The so-called Atlantic Wall – Hitler's defensive system against an expected Allied attack – stretched all the way from the Spanish border to Scandinavia. It was in France where the most (4)_____ building took place. In fact 1,287km (800 miles) of French coast have substantial and evocative vestiges of war-time Europe. However, in France up till now there has been no effort to preserve this extraordinary historical landmark. The French, have it seems, been quite happy to see the German (5)_____ rust away and crumble over time. But now it appears a new mood has emerged. Recently, several local associations dedicated to safeguarding (6)_____ of the Wall have been set up in France. Times have moved on, memories of the war have lapsed, and a new generation no longer feels (7)_____ or guilt, but (8)_____.

defences

portions

pain

fortification

Atlantic

curiosity

extensive

enthusiasts

Marc Mentel, founder of the Gramasa (Archaeological Research Group for the Atlantic Wall: Arcachon Sector): "It really has been very rapid. In just the last three to four years, there has been a radical change." He added, "Today, people are constantly coming up to us at our sites and wanting to know more about the Wall. In the past, the whole issue was too painful; it brought back too many bad memories." (1)_____ of the (2)_____ spend their weekends clearing and restoring German (3)_____ around the bay of Arcachon, a beautiful area of oyster beds, pine woods and tourist beaches to the west of Bordeaux. The (4)_____ was too far south to be a likely contender for Allied landings. Nonetheless, the Germans had a complex of emplacements defending the narrow entrance to the (5)_____ and the port of Arcachon. Some of the defences were on the (6)_____, where they are now gradually falling victim to the (7)_____ and shifting sands. Others – mainly gun batteries – were on higher ground, and are relatively (8)_____.

bay

members

beaches

tides

bunkers

sector

intact

association

GAP FILL: LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Should France preserve Hitler's Atlantic Wall?

Sections of _____ in France are being restored by enthusiasts. But should it be preserved? Should the Nazi fortification be fully embraced as part of the country's image? The so-called Atlantic Wall – Hitler's defensive system against an _____ – stretched all the way from the Spanish border to Scandinavia. It was in France where the most extensive building took place. In fact 1,287km (800 miles) of French coast have substantial and _____ of war-time Europe. However, in France up till now there has been no effort to preserve this extraordinary historical landmark. The French, have it seems, been quite happy to see the German defences _____ over time. But now it appears a new mood has emerged. Recently, several local associations dedicated to safeguarding portions of the Wall have been set up in France. Times have moved on, _____ have lapsed, and a new generation no longer _____, but curiosity.

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GRAMMAR

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

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Sections of Hitler's Atlantic Wall in France are being restored by enthusiasts. But (1)___ it be preserved? Should the Nazi fortification be fully embraced as part of the country's image? The so-called Atlantic Wall – Hitler's defensive system against an expected Allied attack – stretched all the way (2)___ the Spanish border to Scandinavia. It was in France where the (3)___ extensive building took place. In fact 1,287km (800 miles) of French coast have substantial and evocative vestiges of war-time Europe. (4)___, in France up till now (5)___ has been no effort to preserve (6)___ extraordinary historical landmark. The French, have it seems, been quite happy to see the German defences rust away and crumble (7)___ time. But now it appears a new mood has emerged. Recently, several local associations dedicated to safeguarding portions of the Wall have been set up in France. Times have moved on, memories of the war have lapsed, and a new generation no longer feels pain or guilt, (8)___ curiosity.

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SPELLING TEST

The teacher will ask the class individually to spell the following words that are in the article. Afterwards, check your answers with your teacher, using the following ratings: **Pass = 12, Good = 15, Very good = 18, Excellent = 20**

1	fortification	11	crumble
2	landmark	12	associations
3	enthusiasts	13	safeguarding
4	Atlantic	14	portions
5	defensive	15	curiosity
6	Scandinavia	16	archaeological
7	substantial	17	nonetheless
8	evocative	18	emplacements
9	vestiges	19	cataclysm
10	extraordinary	20	ignominy

LINKS

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-10632543>

http://www.fotopedia.com/wiki/Atlantic_Wall

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlantic_Wall

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Atlantikwall.gif> – page 1 – map of Atlantic Wall

Ignominy = disgrace; dishonour; public contempt or shameful or dishonourable quality or conduct or an instance of this.

Cataclysm = any violent upheaval, especially one of a social or political nature. Physical geography = a sudden and violent physical action producing changes in the earth's surface.

Vestiges = a mark, trace, or visible evidence of something that is no longer present or in existence: A few columns were the last vestiges of a Greek temple.

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