

Christine

Interkulturelles

Video Chat

The sections in this worksheet will ask you to summarize and reflect on Christine's chat responses on various idiosyncrasies of German culture(s). Your own intercultural perspective may be based on places where you currently live or have lived, or on your experience with cultures that you may have come in contact with.

To ask Christine about specific topics from this worksheet include in your questions those terms highlighted in **(red)**.

It is important to remember that while cultural perspectives are often shared by people living in close proximity, they may differ greatly from person to person based on various factors, including social upbringing, class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and political creed (!)

MITEINANDER LEBEN

LIVING TOGETHER

A. Harte Schale, rauher Kern.*¹ Germans are frequently thought of as a bit rough around the edges. Ask Christine how she would describe the typical outward demeanor of people living in Berlin (**Berliner**). Summarize her observation.

Now think about the people in the place(s) where you live or have lived. Would you describe them similarly as Christine does the Berliners or as completely different? Briefly reflect on whether you believe that people living in the same area share a similar demeanor and why that might be. In your opinion, are such generalizations useful to know before interacting with the population in that area?

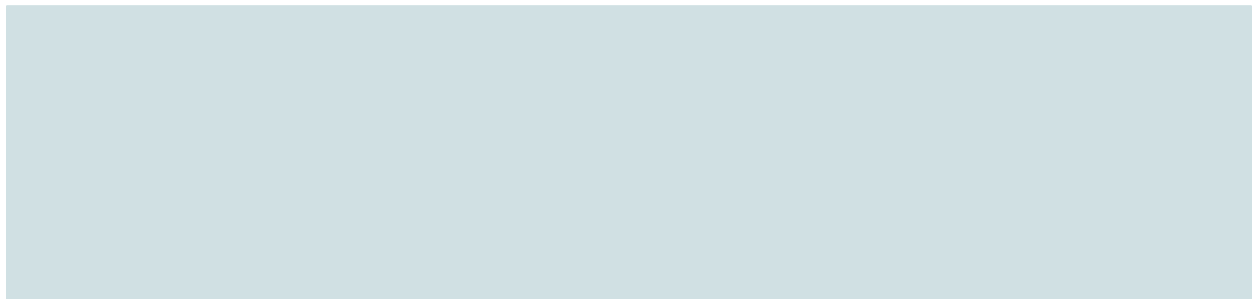
Now think about people from your own neighborhood, city or place where you grew up or have lived. How would you describe them? What factors do you believe have the greatest impact on

¹ The original German metaphor is “harte Schale, *weicher* Kern.” (weich = soft) Why do you think Christine has altered it? Was it intentional or a slip of the tongue? What may be a reason for this?

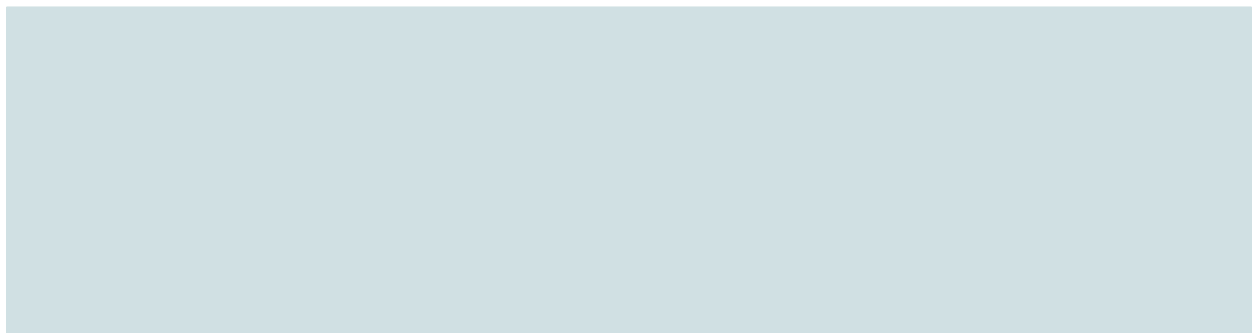
the way they talk, dress and interact? What other factors influence their outlook on life, their beliefs and political opinions?



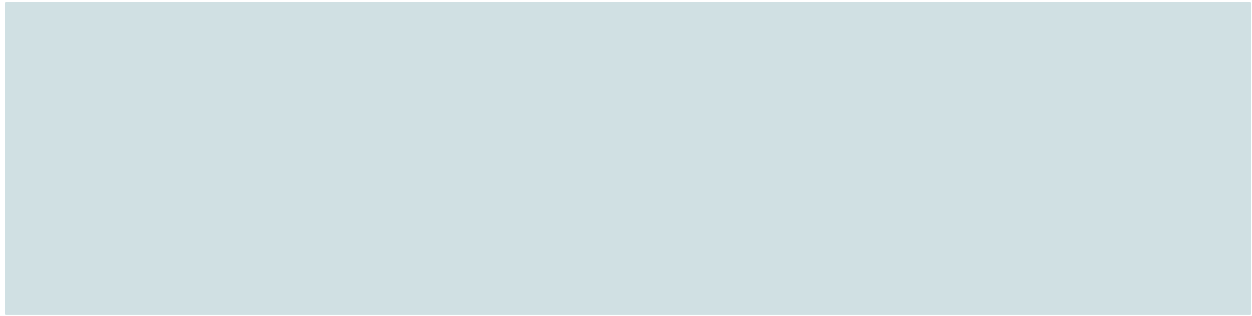
B. Meine Nachbarschaft. Ask Christine about the Berlin city district (**Nachbarschaft**) or “Kiez” where she grew up and still lives today. Summarize the features she names to describe her neighborhood.



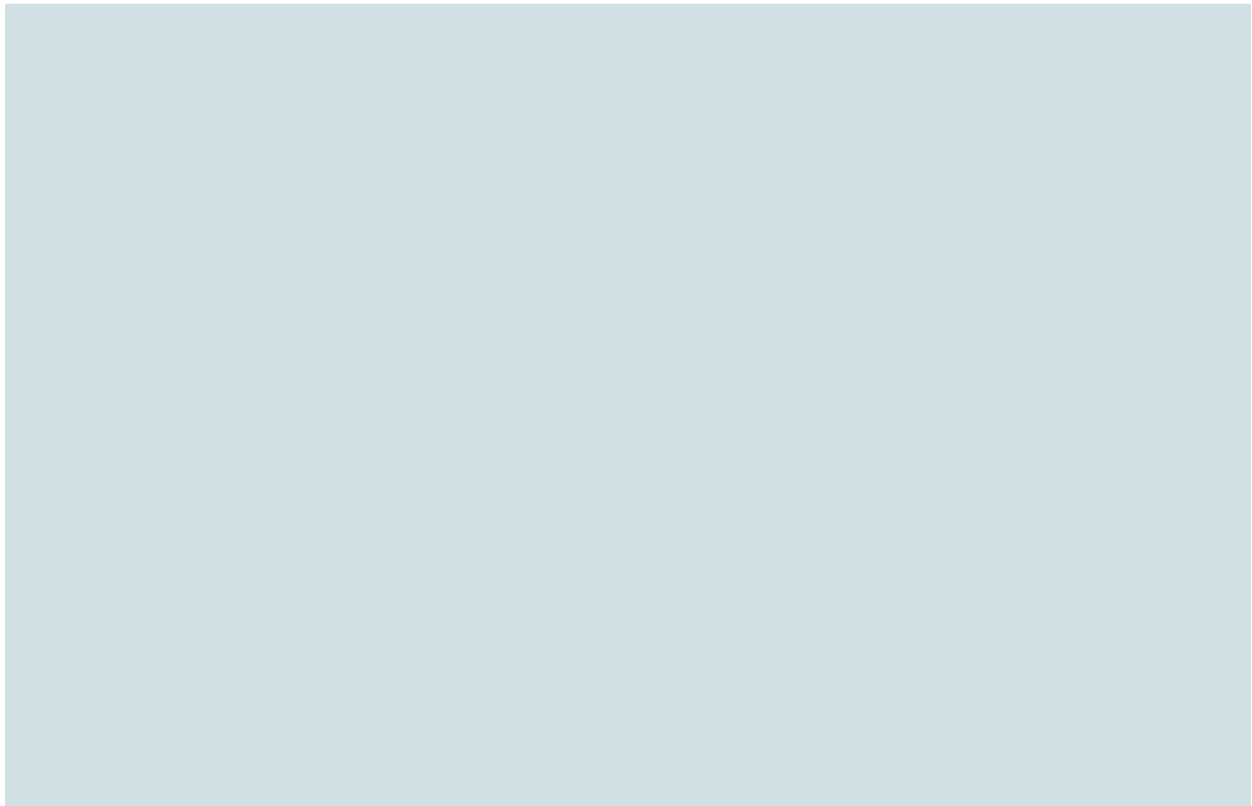
Now think about one specific neighborhood district where you live or have lived. How would you describe it? What features would be important to know for someone not familiar with the area to get an idea of what that area is like? In what ways does it differ from other districts in town? What are the points of interaction between people living in the same geographical area? What might limit their interaction? What specific features of a neighborhood shape the self-identity of its inhabitants?



C. Soziale Gerechtigkeit. Ask Christine about her opinion on Germany’s social justice system (**soziale Gerechtigkeit**). Is Germany a socially just country? What are basic human needs that she thinks must be met to call a society “just?” Jot down the examples she mentions.



Now think about your own idea of human **Grundbedürfnisse**. What does social justice mean to you? In your own opinion, what are the basic needs of a just society that a state should meet? Do your answers differ from Christine’s? Why? Then reflect on whether you believe that these basic human needs are being met in the culture you currently live or have lived in the past.




DEUTSCHE STEREOTYPEN

GERMAN STEREOTYPES

A. **Typisch Deutsch?** Ask Christine what she thinks makes a prototypical German (**typisch Deutsch**).

A. **Deutsche Gründlichkeit.** Many think of Germany as an orderly society. Ask Christine about the stereotype of German thoroughness (**Gründlichkeit**). Summarize the way she compares the German attitude towards attention to detail in German culture with that of US-Americans and the French. Consider why she might use a joke to illustrate her observations.

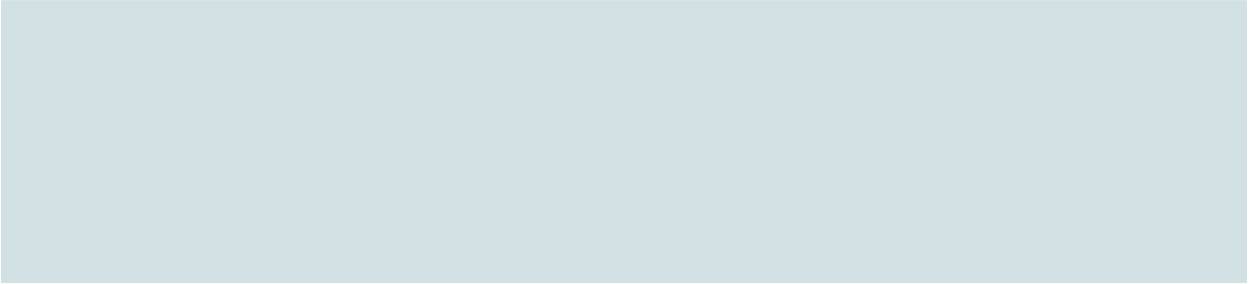
Now think about your own behavior when it comes to paying attention to details. In what situations do you thoroughly and methodically consider every single detail before you act? When, on the other hand, do you find it more important to take immediate action and get a job done quickly and efficiently? What about others you know? What are advantages and disadvantages to this approach?



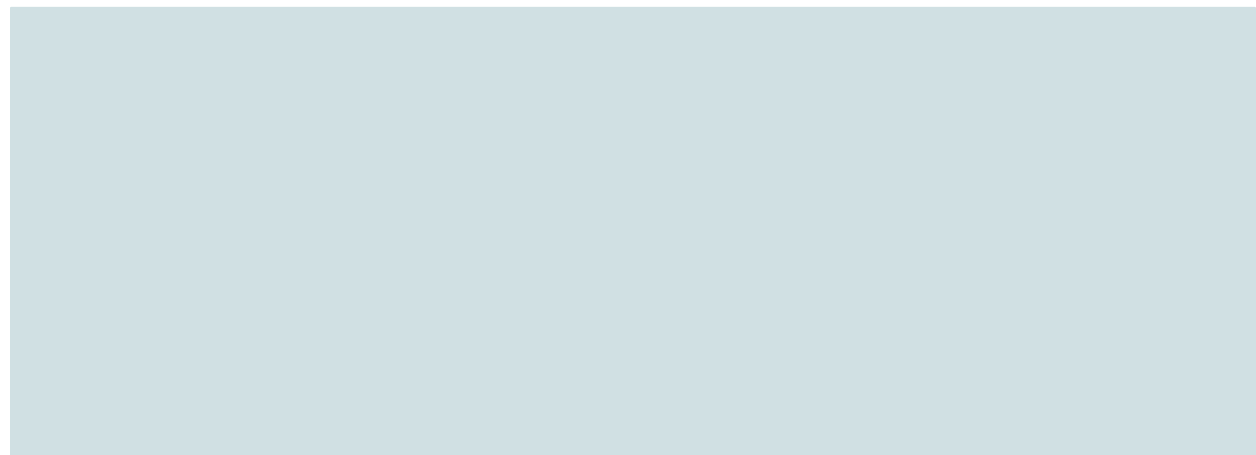
B. German Angst. Anxiety is frequently thought of as a stereotypical German trait. Ask Christine about the stereotype of German **Angst**. Summarize her definition of the concept and the example she gives.



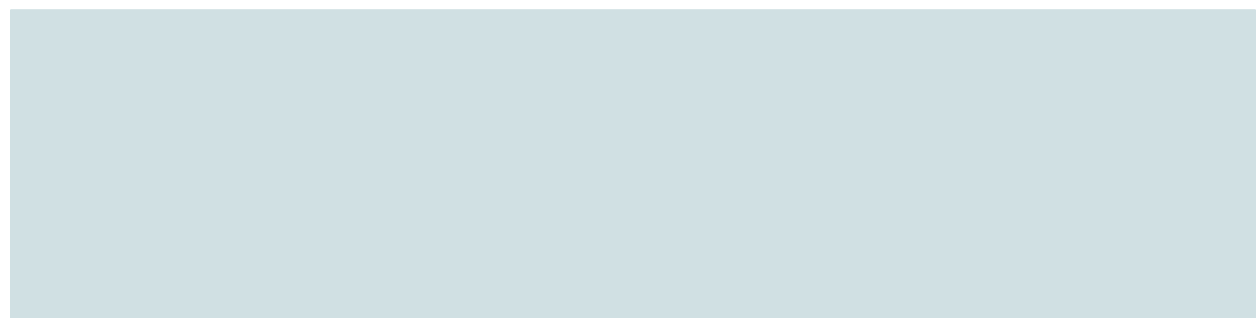
Now ask her what she thinks is the origin of German Angst. (**der Ursprung**)




Now think about yourself and people in place(s) you live or have lived in. Do you personally lean towards excessive worry or catastrophizing? In what situations? How does this feeling influence how you look at and interact with the world around you? What deep seated worries do you observe in the culture(s) that surround you? Can you think of any historical, social or personal explanations for such fears?




C. Pessimismus. Ask Christine whether she thinks of herself as a **Pessimist** or an **Optimist**.



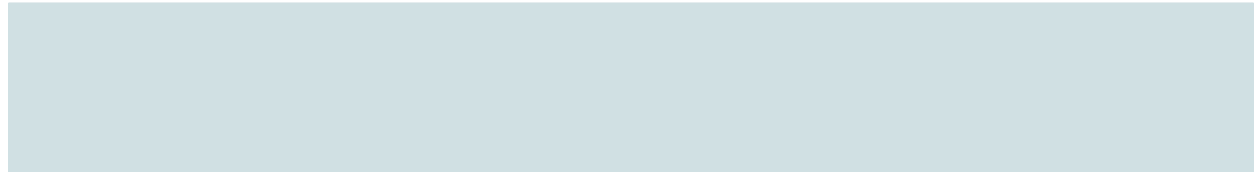
C. Alkohol. Germany is certainly known for its beer. Ask Christine about the first time she has tried Alcohol (**Alkohol**). Summarize how old she was and who she was with. Does she view her experience with alcohol as positive, negative or both?



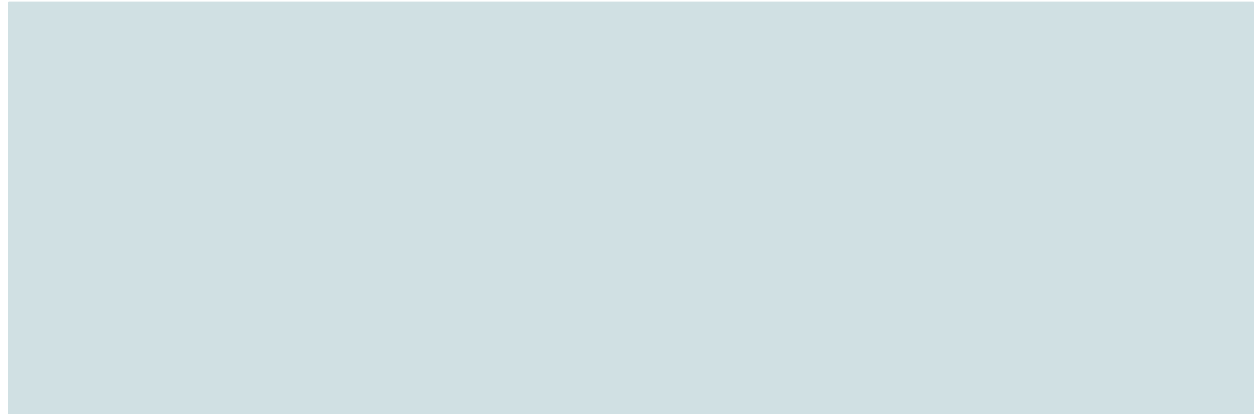
Now reflect on the attitude toward alcohol of the place(s) you live or have lived in. Does the country have similar minimum drinking age laws as Germany, where beer can be legally consumed from age 16 and hard liquor from age 18? If you were a German lawmaker would you advocate lowering or raising that minimum drinking age? Toward the end of her response, Christine mentions “das gehört aber dazu” (“that’s just a normal part of the game”). Do you agree?



D. Freizeitsheriff. What images come to mind when you hear a person being called a “Freizeitsheriff?”

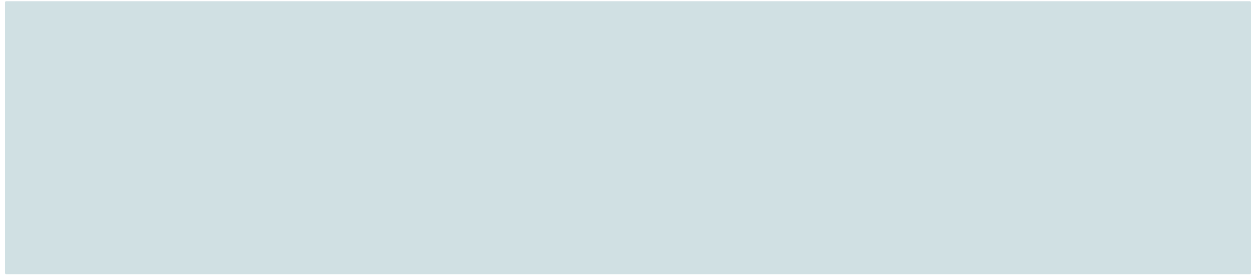


Now ask Christine what she thinks a German **Freizeitsheriff** is. Note down the example she gives for what a typical “Freizeitsheriff may” do and what she thinks about it.

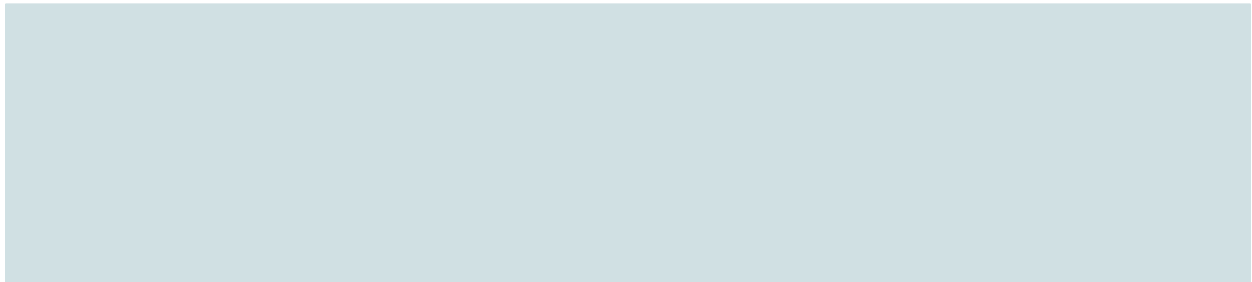


Now think about the place where you live. Have you ever met any “Freizeitsheriffs?” Did they deserve the title in your opinion? Why or why not?

E. Regelkonformität. Germans are known for playing by strict social rules. Ask Christine about examples (**Regelkonformität**).



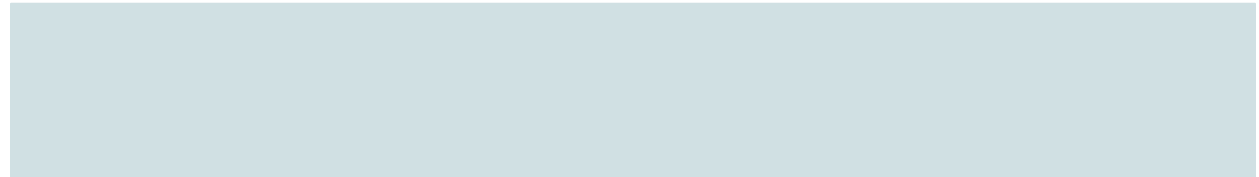
Do you think it is important that everyone is playing by the same rules? Are there some rules more important to follow than others? Give one or two examples.



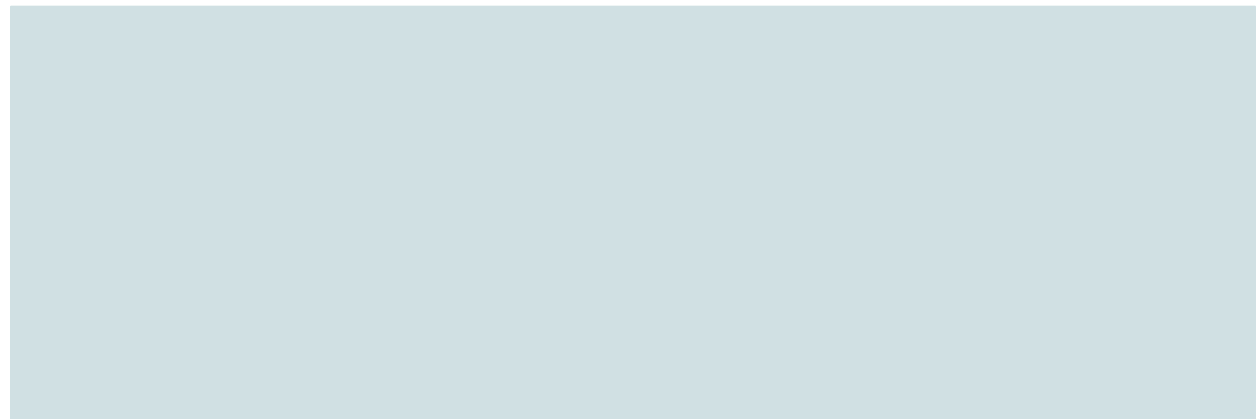
DEUTSCHE SPRACHE, SCHÖNE SPRACHE

THE BEAUTIFUL GERMAN LANGUAGE

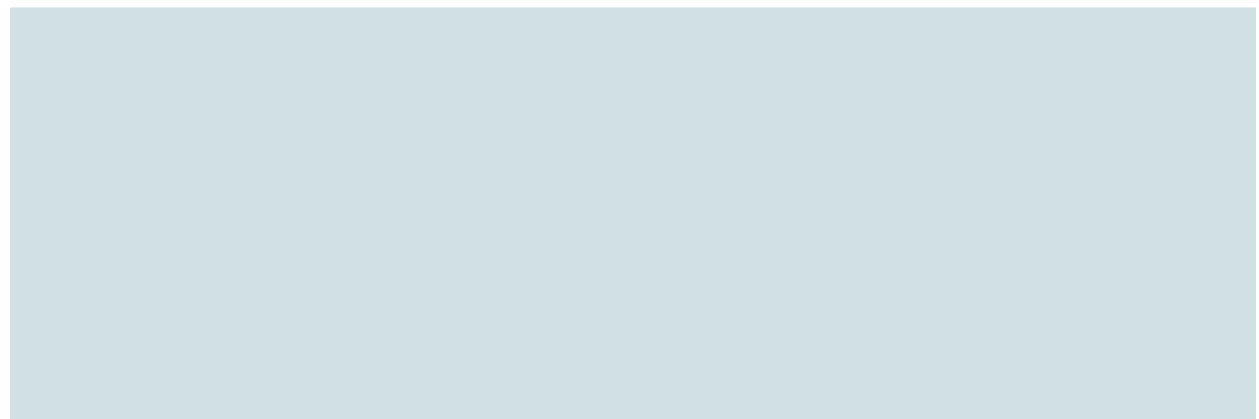
A. Hochdeutsch. Ask Christine whether she speaks one of the German dialects or standard German (**Hochdeutsch oder Dialekt**).



B. Synchronisation. Ask Christine about the dubbing (**Synchronisation**) of foreign films into German. Does she prefer to watch movies in the original language or dubbed over? Why? Is this true for all German audiences?



In your opinion, what are the advantages or drawbacks of watching foreign language films in their original language versus dubbed over? Would you personally prefer to watch them in the original, dubbed or with subtitles?

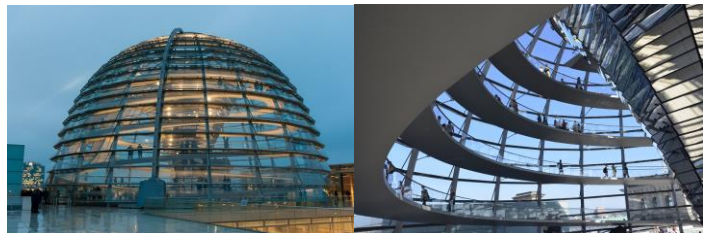


POLITISCHES

POLITICS

A. Föderalismus. Start out by asking Christine about Germany's political makeup (**die deutsche Staatsform**). How is Germany organized?

A. Der transparente Staat. Look at the photographs of the German Parliamentary building (**Reichstag**) and ask Christine what she thinks about its peculiar architecture. Then ask her about the symbolic significance of the Reichstag's transparent glass cupola (**Glaskuppel**).

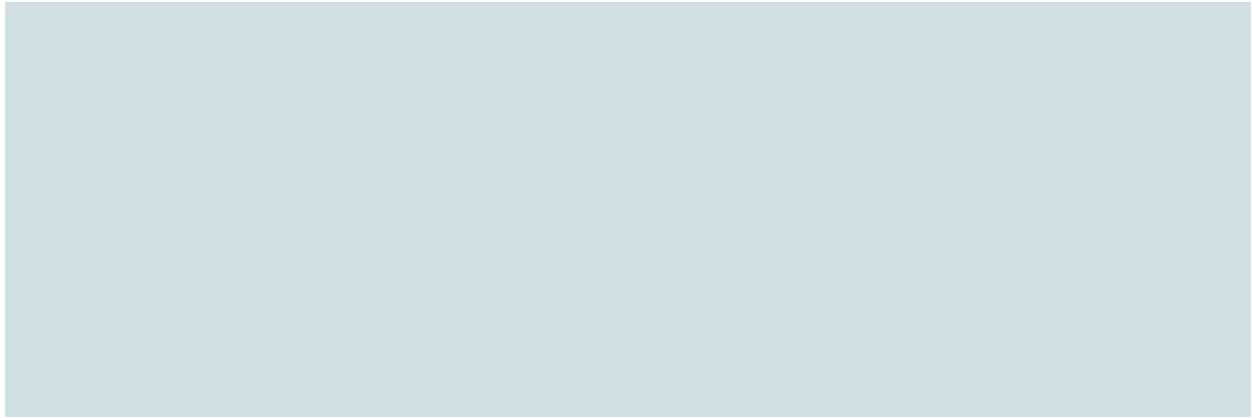


Now think about the government either in your own country or more generally. Is political transparency important to you? What kind of governmental information should citizens and residents in a country have access to? What not?

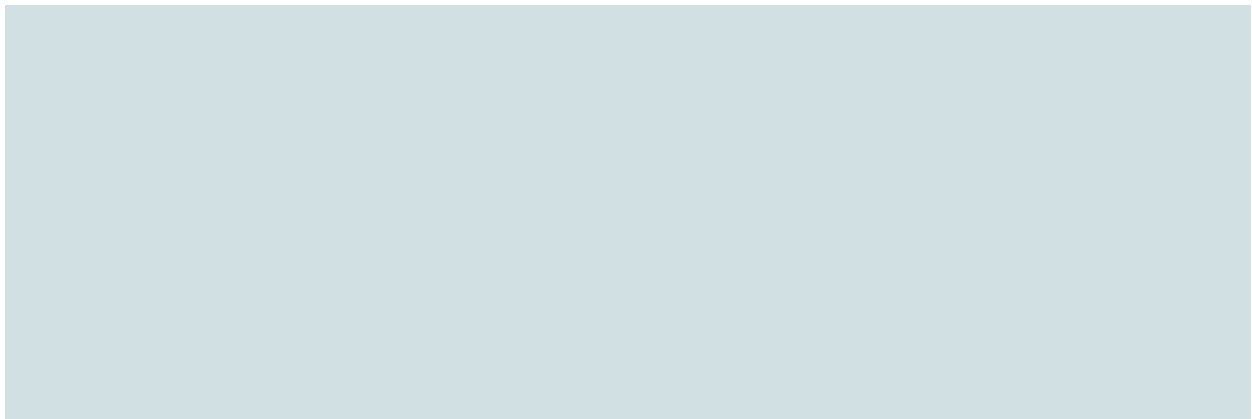
MEDIENKONSUM

MEDIA USE

A. Soziale Medien. Ask Christine about her social media (**soziale Medien**) use. Summarize her reasons for being mostly online or offline.



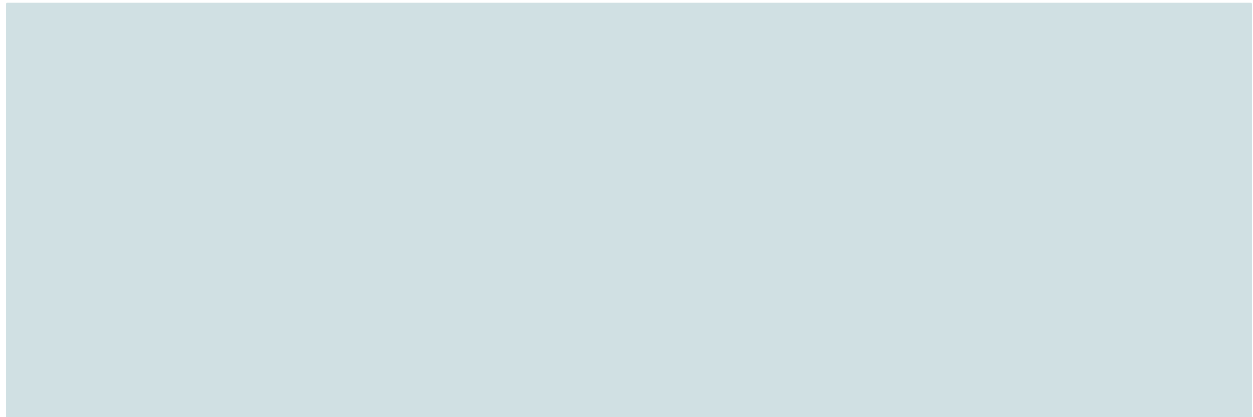
Now think about your own social media use and compare it to Christine's. In what situations do you find it most important to stay informed about political and social events either in your city, region, country or the world?



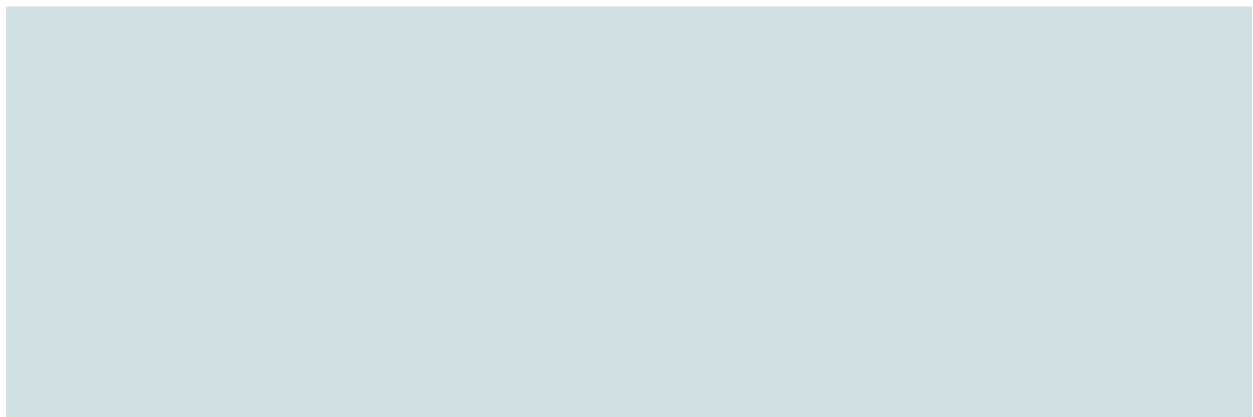
VERGANGENHEITSBEWÄLTIGUNG

DEALING WITH THE PAST


A. Vergangenheitsbewältigung. Even though Germans are known to be great innovators that look to the future (from the car industry to alternative energy concepts) they continue to engage with their country's often troublesome past. An important concept in German memory culture is the term "**Vergangenheitsbewältigung**." Its meaning encompasses all of the following: *to deal with the past, to overcome the past, to reflect on the past, to reckon with the past, to work through the past, to learn from the past* and many more. How does Christine describe the term? What example of Vergangenheitsbewältigung does she mention?



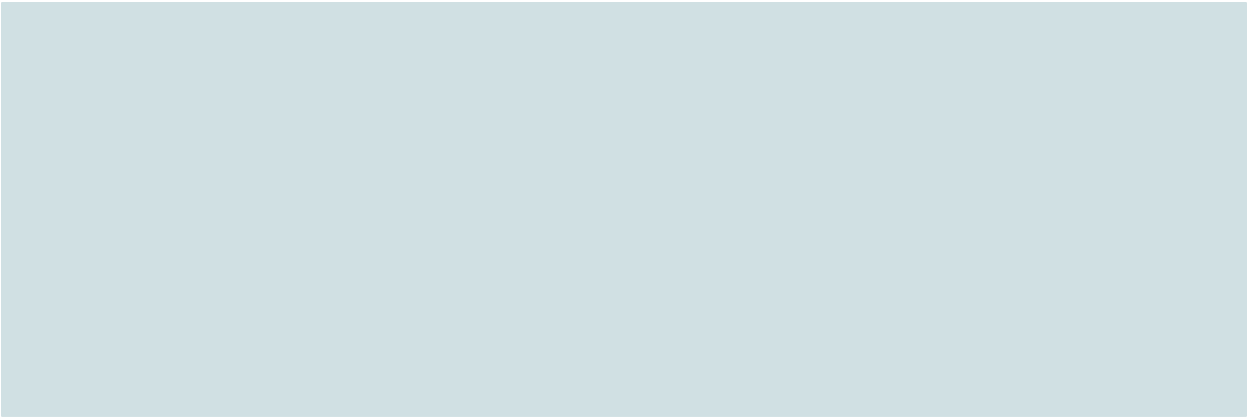
Do you believe that it is important for a nation to work through their past? Why or why not?



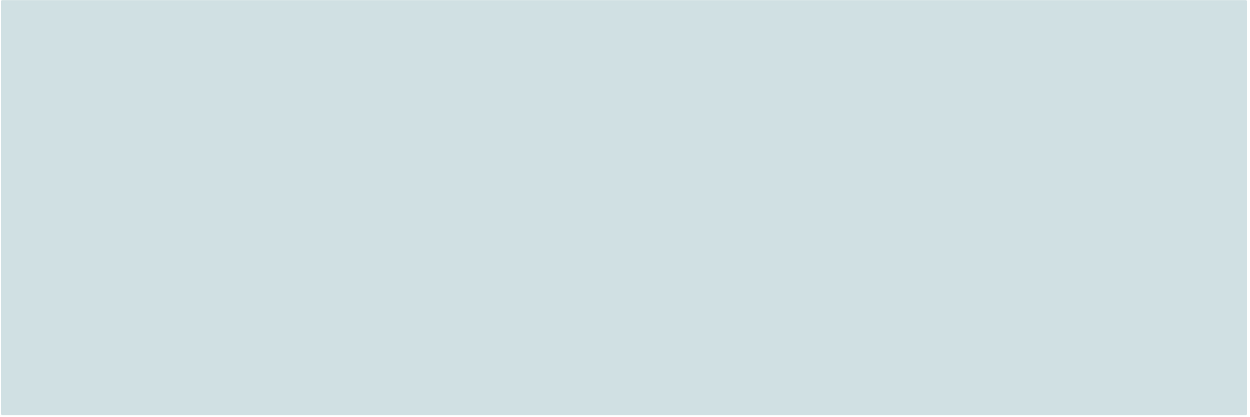
How is the country you currently live in or where you have lived in the past dealing with their past? Could they do more? Should they do things differently? Give a reason for your opinion.




B. Nazitrauma. Ask Christine about her family's traumatic experience during the National Socialist past (**Nazitrauma**).



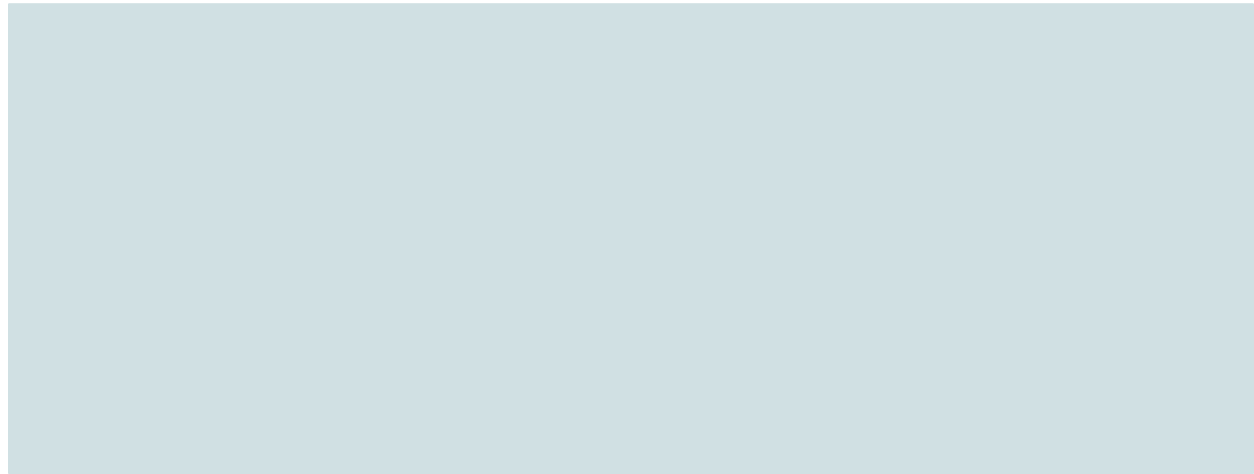
C. Familiengeschichte. Ask Christine what she knows about her family's history (**Familiengeschichte im NS**) during the Nazi era.



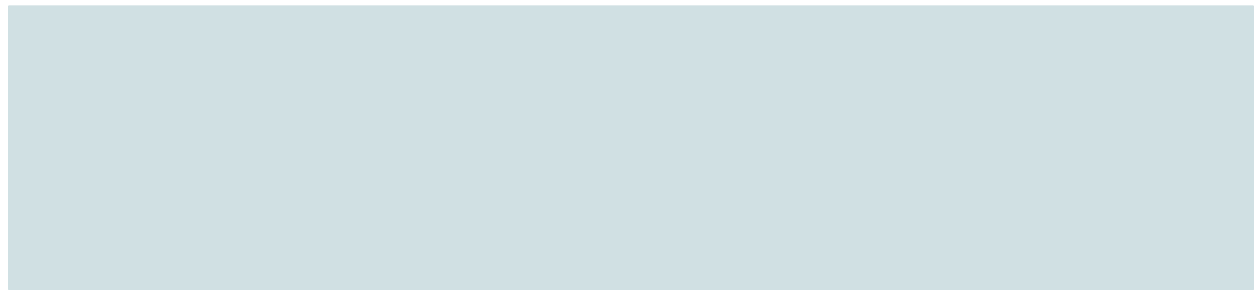
D. Bomben über Berlin. Ask Christine in what ways the WWII Allied air raids (**Luftangriffe auf Berlin**) reshaped the cityscape of Berlin. Summarize their significance for the city to this day.



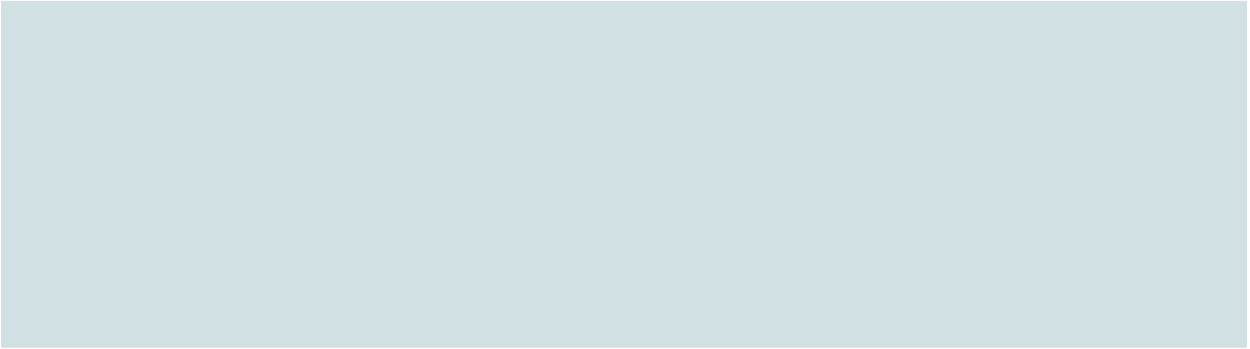
Now think about a city, town or village where you live or have lived in the past. What changes has it undergone in the past 100 years? What caused those changes? Were they sudden or progressive changes? In what way did those changes affect the landscape and inhabitants of that place?




E. Erinnerungsorte. Ask Christine about memorial sites (**Erinnerungsorte**) in Berlin that commemorate the victims of the Nazi regime (1933-1945).




Have you visited any memorial sites where you live or where you have travelled? What event(s) or group(s) did it commemorate? What impression did the site have on you? How has it changed your perspective on what is to be remembered?



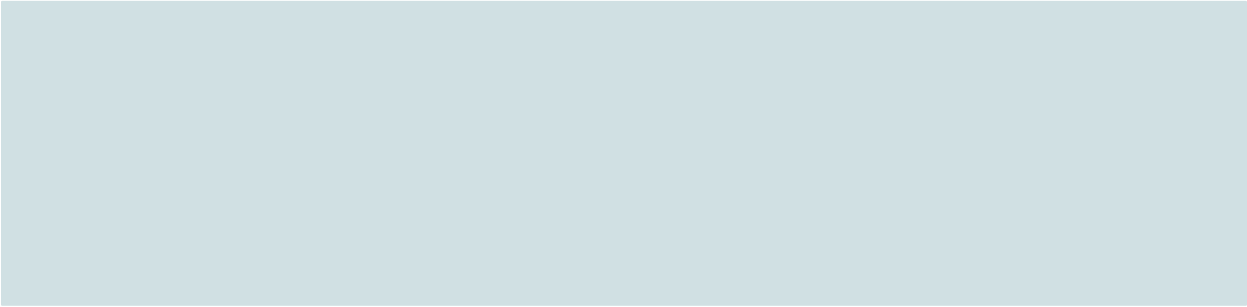
F. Stolpersteine. Stolpersteine or *stumbling blocks* are part of German memory culture and serve to keep Vergangenheitsbewältigung alive. You will likely see them all over Germany. What associations come to your mind when you hear the word *Stolperstein*?



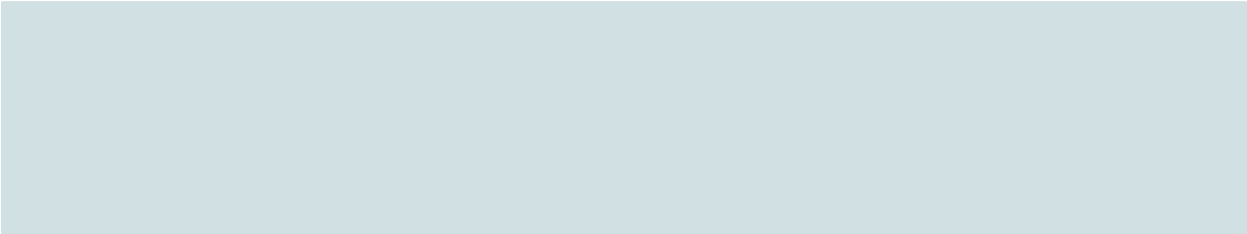
Now ask Christine what a Stolperstein represents (**Was ist ein Stolperstein?**). Summarize the concept below.



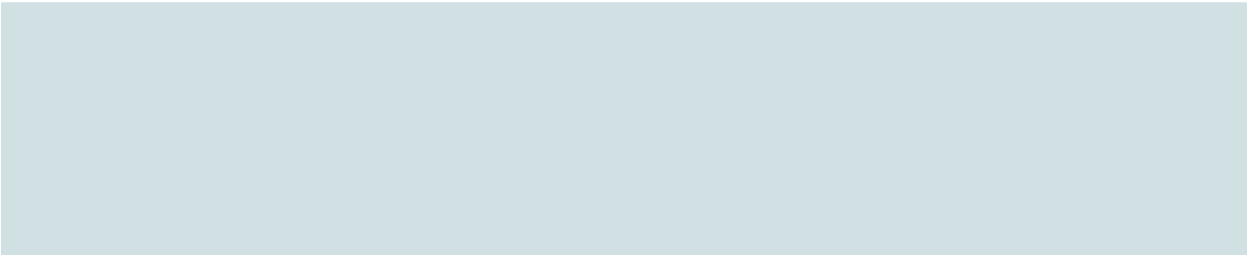
Find out whether there is a Stolperstein in front of Christine's apartment (**Wohnung**):



H. Ost- und Westberlin. Berlin was once divided by a Border Wall (1961-1989) with the Eastern part belonging to the Socialist German Democratic Republic (DDR) and the Western Part belonging to the Capitalist Federal Republic of Germany (BRD). Ask Christine about her impression as a child (**DDR als Kind**) of travelling from Berlin's Western to it's Eastern part.

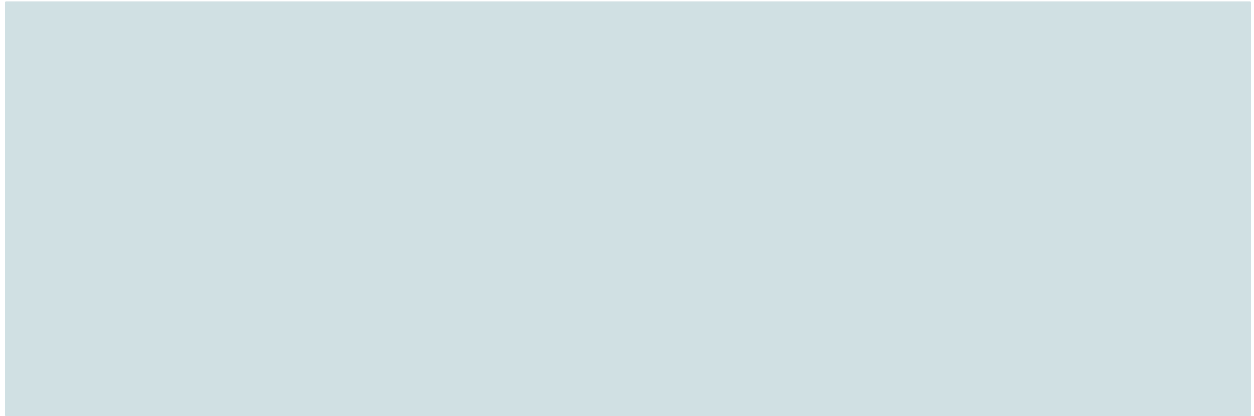


I. Deutsch-deutsche Grenze. If you wanted to travel from West to East Berlin you had to cross the German-German border (**Deutsch-Deutsche Grenze**). Ask Christine what it felt like as a child to cross that heavily guarded line.

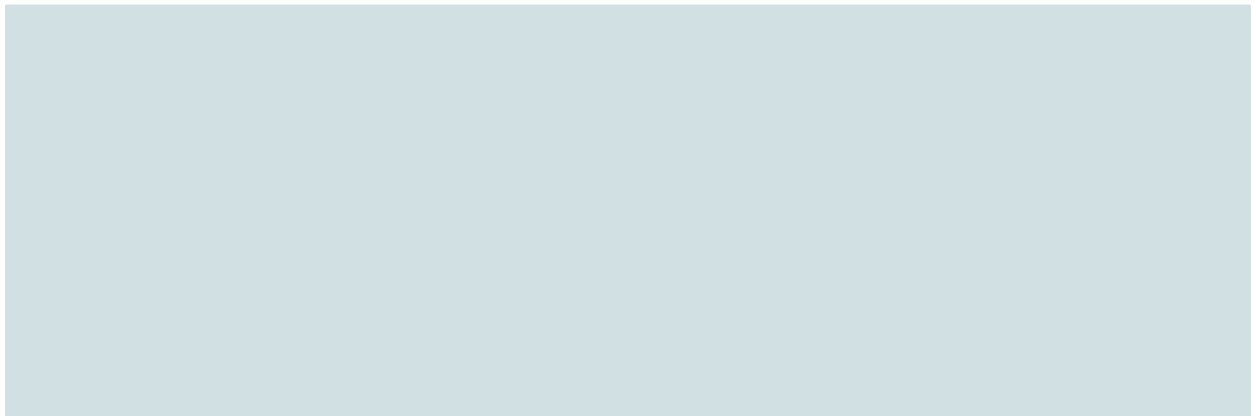


AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL

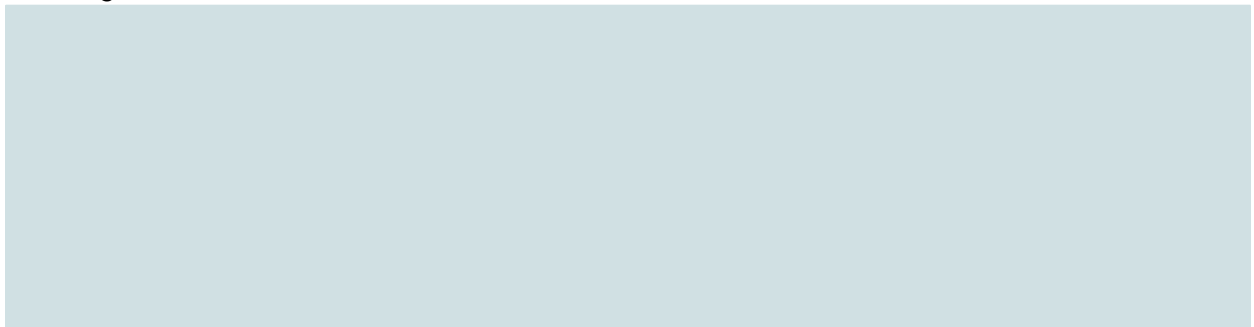
A. Amerikanisches Englisch. Ask Christine about her experience with American English (**Amerikanisches Englisch**) on her visit to the United States. Did she have any problems understanding the people she met?



B. Einreise. Ask Christine about her experience at the U.S. border (**US-Grenze**) during her first visit (**Einreise**) to the United States.

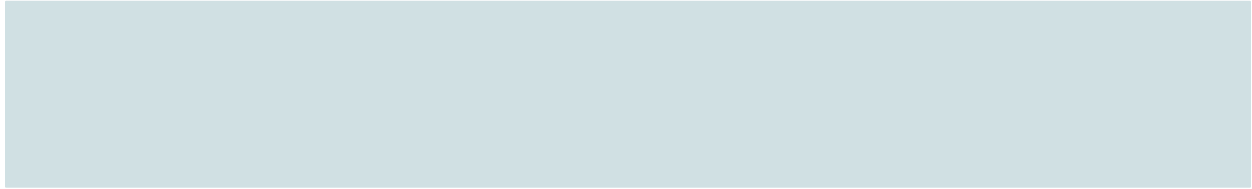


Now think about a time when you, a relative or friend have crossed a national or international border. Was that experience the same as Christine's? How did you feel before, during and after crossing the border?



C. Kulturelle Unterschiede. Christine noticed several cultural differences between the U.S. American and German culture during her first visit to the United States. Ask her about some of the major differences she perceives (i.e.: **Was ist ein Unterschied im Blickkontakt?**) and summarize.

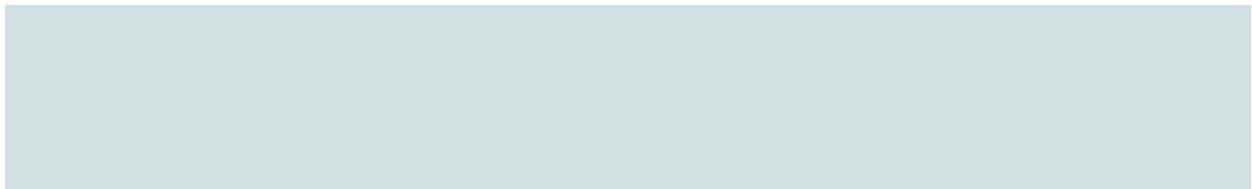
Blickkontakt



Individualdistanz



Geographie



Privatsphäre

