

I.G.17

The Other Side of Modernity

Monuments that spark controversy – Discussing representations of remembrance

Nach einer Idee von Jens-Peter Green



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In dieser Einheit begegnen die Lernenden Debatten um verschiedene Denkmäler in den USA, Großbritannien und Deutschland. Sie untersuchen an diesen Beispielen, welche Wertvorstellungen mit Denkmälern in Verbindung gebracht werden können und welche Emotionen und gesellschaftlichen Konflikte sie auslösen können. Sie diskutieren Strategien zum Umgang mit polarisierenden Denkmälern und üben den interkulturellen Dialog über besonders sensible historische Themen und umstrittene Personen der (nationalen) Geschichte.

KOMPETENZPROFIL

Klassenstufe: 10–12

Dauer: 5–6 Unterrichtsstunden

Kompetenzen: Denkmäler in ihrem historischen und soziokulturellen Kontext verstehen; Wertewandel und Wertkonflikte diskutieren; mit Komplexität und Ambiguitäten umgehen

Thematische Bereiche: Erinnerungskultur im Wandel, Symbole, *Black Lives Matter*, Kolonialismus, Antisemitismus

Medien: Texte, Fotos

Auf einen Blick

1./2. Stunde

Thema: Controversial monuments in the USA and the United Kingdom

M 1a The Robert E. Lee Monument in Charlottesville, Virginia

M 1b Reactions to the Robert E. Lee controversy

M 2a The Cecil Rhodes Statue, Oxford

M 2b The controversy over the Cecil Rhodes Statue

ZM 1 Useful links and literature

Inhalt: Die Schülerinnen und Schüler setzen sich mit verschiedenen Kontroversen um Denkmäler in den USA und Großbritannien auseinander.

Benötigt: Beamer/Whiteboard. bzw. OHP

3./4. Stunde

Thema: Controversial monuments in Germany

M 3 An Anti-Semitic carving in Wittenberg

M 4 Bremen's „Elefant“ – Decolonising a Memorial

ZM 2 Monuments that spark controversy – Vocabulary

Inhalt: Die Schülerinnen und Schüler setzen sich mit verschiedenen Kontroversen um Denkmäler in Deutschland auseinander.

5./6. Stunde

Thema: Reviewing the unit – Discussing controversial monuments

M 5 How do we want to remember? - Discussing controversial monuments

ZM 3 Worthy of memorials?

ZM 4 Useful phrases for discussing monuments

Inhalt: Die Schülerinnen und Schüler reflektieren und erweitern ihren Lernzuwachs.

Lernerfolgskontrolle

M 6 A "National Garden of American Heroes"? – Analysing a speech by former President Trump

The Robert E. Lee Monument in Charlottesville, Virginia

M 1a

Some monuments bring people together, others divide them – like the Lee statue in Charlottesville, Virginia (USA). Robert E. Lee (1807–1870) was the Confederate commander of the Army of Northern Virginia and later “of all Southern armies” during the American Civil War (1861–1865). After the defeat of the South, Lee accepted the end of slavery but opposed equality for African Americans. In July 2021, the Lee monument was taken down.

Task

Match the captions below to the photos and write down any questions you may have. Share your results with a partner first and then with the whole class (think-pair-share).



Photo 1: Evan Nesterak/Wikimedia/cc by sa 2.0; Photo 2: Agnostic Preachers Kid/Wikimedia cc by sa 4.0; Photo 3: AgnosticPreachersKid/Wikimedia/cc by sa 4.0; Photo 4: picture alliance / REUTERS | BRIAN SNYDER

Captions

- 2018: Police in riot gear protect the Lee monument ahead of the first anniversary of the Charlottesville “Unite the Right” rally.
- 2017: makeshift memorial to Heather Heyer (32), who was killed when a 20-year-old man smashed his car into counter-protesters in Charlottesville (the text in the centre, *If you're not outraged, you're not paying attention*, was Heyer's last post published on Facebook)
- 2017: White supremacists clash with police at “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville.
- 2017: Lee sculpture covered in black tarp following Heather Heyer's death

M 3

An Anti-Semitic carving in Wittenberg

The Town Church in Wittenberg is the place where Martin Luther used to preach. High up on its facade is a 13th century "Jews' sow" carving. It shows a rabbi looking under a sow's tail and other Jews drinking from its teats. The anti-Jewish relief predates Luther, but the inscription from 1570, "Rabini Schem HaMphoras", is taken from one of his anti-Semitic writings. It refers to the name of God, which in the Jewish tradition is considered too holy to say.



Tasks

In small groups, prepare and practise the following role play, mediating the information you have gathered from the material below: a German tourist guide shows a group of American tourists the anti-Semitic carving on the facade of Wittenberg Town Church. The group includes Jews and Lutherans.

1. Study the photos and passages below and make notes on the anti-Jewish relief, its history and the controversy surrounding it.
You may also want to watch <https://raabe.click/en/LaenderspiegelWittenberg> [2 minutes]
2. Indicate which one of these strategies (identified by Bob Beattie, founder of a community consulting firm) has been applied to deal with the controversial monument in Wittenberg:

- a) Do nothing.
- b) Remove it.
- c) Move it to a less prominent public space.
- d) Add markers to explain the complex history surrounding it.
- e) Redesign the monument in a way that changes its meaning.
- f) Add monuments that honour other stories and people. (M 5, task 4)



3. Now decide who plays the role of the tourist guide and the American tourists. Prepare and practise your conversation.
 - The **tourist guide** should comment on the "Jews' sow" controversy and the symbolism of the cedar tree and the memorial plaque in the pavement.
 - The **tourists** should ask at least one question or make one comment each.



"Jews' sow" carving

Photo: © Posi66/Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0

M 5

How do we want to remember? Discussing controversial monuments

Choose at least one of these tasks. Present your findings to the class (**tasks 1 or 2**), or perform your conversation (**task 3**) or debate (**task 4**) before the class.

Task 1

Think – Pair – Share: Say what you have learnt about:

- Monuments in changing societies,
- Symbols,
- Heroes past and present.

Task 2

Think – Pair – Share: In 1992, American author Paul Auster wrote about the Statue of Liberty:

“For the past hundred years, it has transcended¹ politics and ideology, standing at the threshold² of our country as an emblem of all that is good within us”.

Source: Auster, Paul Auster: *Leviathan*. Faber & Faber, London / Boston 1992, pp. 215/216.

1 (to) **transcend**: (to) go beyond – 2 **threshold**: here: entry point

Explain why, unlike the Robert E. Lee statues, the Statue of Liberty does not divide Americans.

Task 3

An American/British friend tells you about a controversial monument in his/her hometown.

- On your own or with a partner: How do you respond? Choose a culturally safe strategy.
 - Do you criticise the statue as a symbol of hate, bigotry, and division?
 - Do you suggest a solution to the conflict?
 - Do you ask questions to learn more about the controversy surrounding the monument?
 - Do you tell your friend how the German media cover the controversies about racist monuments in the USA/UK and ask for a comment?
 - Do you tell your friend about a controversial monument in Germany?
 - Do you discuss with your friend what kind of statues should be taken down and what kind of statues should remain?
 - Do you suggest that it is more important to “right present wrongs” than to fight about symbols of the past?
- With a partner: Write a conversation and act it out.

Task 4

Debate the following motion: This House believes that monuments to historical figures should remain.

Note: There is a guide to this topic at:

https://raabe.click/en_DebatingMonuments

