

# Teacher Guide: Exploring Polish Literature from 1914-18 through Old and New Technology

## What is the point?

To respect the growing population of Polish students in modern UK secondary schools and to mark the First World War (WW1) centenary, these materials encourage students to explore Polish literature from 1914-1918. The activities included in this pack also promote thinking about how different technologies shape the way that we communicate, as students will begin by creating a class wiki on Poland before moving onto summarising the main message behind a poem in the form of a telegram. The resources will provide students with the opportunity to practise a wide range of literary and language skills in line with the AQA English Language specification including the ability to:

- explore language and representation through analytical and creative work
- understand the importance of cultural sensitivity in language
- develop an understanding of how language creates meanings in written, spoken and electronic modes.
- write and present in a concise way

## Who is it for?

These resources are suitable for **A Level English Language** and **A Level English Language and Literature** students. They could also be adapted for use with a **GCSE English** group by simplifying some of the analytical questions and providing examples to prompt their responses.

## What can I find here?

- Practical suggestions as to how to fully engage and involve the Polish students within your class whilst leading the activities in this pack.
- Information about the use of computers and the internet with these materials
- A brief, accessible summary of Polish history from 1914 to 1918 and the First Brigade.

## Practical Suggestions for Use:

If you have any **Polish students** in your class try to **empower them and their knowledge throughout these activities**. For example:

- During the class wiki task encourage them to lead the discussion about their experiences of Poland. Invite them to bring photographs or particular cultural artefacts to add to the document and show the class respectively. Alternatively, if they are less confident then they can act as a verifier to check that no important information is left out of the wiki entry.

- Each of the texts included in this pack are given in Polish and English. Try to encourage the Polish students within your class to comment and evaluate the quality of the English translations offering details of Polish nuances where possible. If working in groups on an analysis task, depending on numbers, arrange it so that there is one Polish speaker per group who can act as a linguistic 'expert'.

Many of the activities are designed to **integrate the use of computers** from the creation of a class wiki through to the research task on Rupert Brooke and Jerzy Żuławski. Wikispaces (<http://www.wikispaces.com/>) or simply a Google doc is ideal for developing a wiki with your students. Though these tasks can be adapted to be completed 'offline', the students would benefit greatly from having access to the following:

- Oxford English Dictionary (<http://www.oed.com/>) to look up unfamiliar words and trace their etymologies.
- Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/public/index.html>) to research the lives of key individuals. You will need subscriber access but your local librarian will be able to help with this.
- Digital archives such as the First World War Digital Poetry Archive (<http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/>) and Europeana 1914-1918 (<http://www.europeana1914-1918.eu/en>) to explore manuscripts and further their own research interests.

### Brief History of Poland in 1914-1918

If teaching a topic which delves into Polish WW1 history is something that makes you feel apprehensive then you may benefit from reading this summary by Adkins, M. (2012). Poland, German Occupation in WW1 (1915 – 1918). Retrieved from: <http://www.dcstamps.com/?p=1640>

Although Poland has had a separate and distinct culture and identity for over a thousand years, it has mostly been under the direct control of the stronger nations and empires which surrounded it.

With the outbreak of World War 1 in 1914, Poland was quickly invaded by Germany and Austro-Hungary. Many of the significant battles on the Eastern Front during World War 1 were fought in Polish lands, resulting in staggering losses of life among the Poles. With no Polish army to fight for a national cause, approximately two million Poles were conscripted into the Russian, German or Austrian armies, forced to fight one another. With the poor performance of the Austrian Army on the Eastern Front and Emperor Karl's attempt to exit

the war, Germany quickly assumed command of the entire region, seizing Warsaw in 1915 and much of eastern Poland by 1916. While a Council of State was organized for a declared “Kingdom of Poland”, the Germans retained absolute control.

With the collapse of the Russian Empire in 1917, and the defeat of Germany and Austria in 1918, the Germans withdrew from Poland allowing Józef Piłsudski to command of Warsaw on 11 November 1918 and declared Polish sovereignty. This was confirmed by the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, where Poland was given the western part of Prussia, providing access to the Baltic Sea. The city of Gdańsk, was omitted, becoming the Free City of Danzig, and the rest of Poland’s western border was drawn up in a series of plebiscites, which resulted in Poland acquiring some significant industrial regions of Upper Silesia. The eastern boundaries were established when Polish forces defeated the Red Army during the Polish-Soviet war of 1919–20’.

### **The First Brigade of the Polish Legions**

The First Brigade was a military unit of the Austro-Hungarian Army which was led by Austrian Poles and served as part of the Polish Legions in World War I, existing from 1914 to 1917. It consisted of three infantry regiments (the 1st, 5th and 7th), a cavalry regiment (the 1st), artillery battalions, and support units. It was formed of mostly young soldiers of intelligentsia origin from Congress Poland. Uniquely, the relations between the First Brigade soldiers and officers were collegial and free from the traditions of military drill. Inspired by Napoleonic-era ideas and the Polish uprisings, and devoted to their commander Józef Piłsudski, the First Brigade fought many battles all with the collective ambition of gaining a free and independent Poland.

Picture: Józef Piłsudski with some of his men in Otwock on August 1915

(Wikicommons)



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