



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

### What will I learn?

- How to work collaboratively online to create a class wiki entry.
- How to compare textual and visual representations of war.
- How to summarise a message concisely via a one minute presentation and telegram writing activity.

### Starting Point:

What do you know about Poland and Polish culture? Discuss your ideas and experiences with a partner and be prepared to feedback to the rest of the class.

### Sharing Old and New Knowledge:

We are going to create a **class wiki** about Poland. A wiki is an online space where a group of people can upload and edit information to form a collaborative piece of knowledge.

Select one of the areas below and perform your own research so that you can contribute to this shared text:

Polish food

Polish Celebrations and Traditions

Polish Art and Music

Modern Polish History (1900 to present day): more than one person needed for this topic.

Polish Literature

Polish Geography

The Polish Language

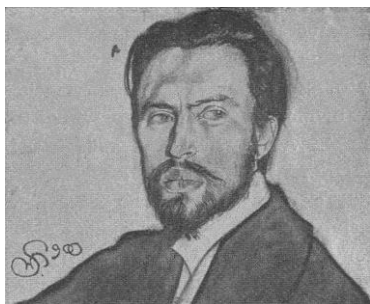
### When you add your information to the Wiki remember you should:

- Give **objective facts** rather than opinion.
- Be as **clear** as possible with your use of language and sentence structure.
- Ensure that your contribution fits in with the rest of the text so that it follows a **logical structure**.
- Include **pictures** but only where you consider their message is more powerful than what words can communicate alone; **don't forget captions!**

### The 1 Minute Sell:

As part of your research, find one place or attraction where you would like to visit in Poland if given the opportunity. Support this with a persuasive reason(s) why and a relevant photograph. You will be given one minute to share this information with the class; make those 60 seconds matter!





Jerzy Żuławski:  
Wikicommons

## Comparing Early Efforts to Encourage Men to Enlist

The independent state of Poland as we know it today did not exist in 1914. Instead Polish territory was split during partitions between the Austro-Hungary, German and Russian Empires. Its unfortunate geographical location between these rival powers meant that much fighting took place on Polish soil which led to devastating human and material losses. Such consequences could not have been predicted at the start of the war and so it can be an insightful experience to trace early attitudes within literature published in 1914 onwards.

The poem below was written by Jerzy Żuławski during his brief 1914 wartime service in Vienna and it is a famous example of patriotic literature crafted to encourage men to fight for the Polish army.

**Write a short text explaining how Żuławski uses language to try and install a sense of willingness to fight. Consider:**

- The way that he refers to family, in particular his grandfather's dream.
- The metaphorical 'shackles' around their legs.
- The repetition of 'blood' and how Żuławski suggests that none of the soldiers' efforts will be in vain (e.g. the blossom image in the second stanza).

Do moich synów	To My Sons
<p>Synkowie moi, poszedłem w bój, jako wasz dziadek, a ojciec mój, jak ojca ojciec i ojca dziad, co z Legionami przemierzył świat szukając drogi przez krew i blizny do naszej wolnej Ojczyzny!</p> <p>Synkowie moi, da nam to Bóg, że spadną wreszcie kajdany z nóg, i nim wy męskich dojdziecie sił, jawą się stanie, co dziadek śnił: szczęściem zakwitnie krwią wieków żyzny łan naszej wolnej Ojczyzny!</p> <p>Synkowie moi, lecz gdyby Pan nie dał wzejść zorzy z krwi naszych ran, to jeszcze w waszej piersi jest krew na nowy świętej Wolności siew: i wy pójdziecie pomni puścizny na bój dla naszej Ojczyzny! <sup>[1]</sup>, <sup>[2]</sup></p>	<p>I went to the battle, dear sons of mine, Like my father went, and his father went, And his father's father, the world content To cross with the legions hoping, in time, Through the blood and the wounds a path he'd see To a Poland that's ours, a Poland that's free.</p> <p>Let's pray to God, dear sons of mine, That the shackles binding our legs disappear, And before you reach your grandfather's years His dream to waking truth will incline And the ages of blood which nourished the leas Will make them blossom in a Poland that's free.</p> <p>But if the good Lord, dear sons of mine, Has not let the dew come from blood that we spilled, Then your hearts contain enough blood still To give holy freedom a new harvest time, And you will go, your birthright's trustees, To fight for a Poland that's ours, that is free.</p> <p>Translated by Jacek Laskowski Taken from Tim Cross, <i>The Lost Voices of World War 1: An International Anthology of Writers, Poets &amp; Playwrights</i> (1989)</p>

## The Influential Power of Social Status

*The Soldier* by Rupert Brooke could be viewed as an English equivalent to Jerzy Żuławski's poem *To My Sons*. In fact George Parfitt described this text as "an important document of national preparation for war".

### The Soldier

IF I should die, think only this of me:

That there's some corner of a foreign field  
That is forever England. There shall be  
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;  
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,  
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,  
A body of England's, breathing English air,  
Washed by the rivers, blest by the suns of home.

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,

A pulse in the eternal mind, no less

Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;  
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;  
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,  
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.



Rupert Brooke (1887–1915)

Image © Hulton Getty

### 1. How are the following images from *To My Sons* echoed in Brooke's poem?

'the ages of blood which nourished the leas  
Will make them blossom in a Poland that's free'.

'To give holy freedom a new harvest time'

Can you identify any further similarities between the two texts?

### 2. Conduct some online research into the war time experiences of Rupert Brooke and Jerzy Żuławski, and try to explain why you think their (positive) interpretations of war may have influenced by their occupations/ positions in society. A good starting point would be:

**The WW1 Digital Poetry Archive** (<http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/>)

**The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography** (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/>)

**Glogpedia** (<http://smls2011.edu.glogster.com/rupert-brooke/>)

**The Big Question:** Why is it important to remember to consider the social, cultural and historical profile of a writer when exploring their work(s)?

## The Fight for Polish Independence

Due to the way that Polish territory was divided among three ruling powers (Russia, Austro-Hungary and Germany), this meant that Polish soldiers were often forced to fight against and kill their fellow countrymen. The poem below was written by Edward Słonski, a soldier who joined the First Brigade of the Polish legions in 1915: an army dedicated to fighting for Polish independence. The title translates to 'That, what is not dead' which refers to the dream of a strong and united Poland and a theme that dominated much of Polish literature at the time. In this text, Słonski explores the complex relationship the soldiers possessed with their so-called rivals and tries to offer hope that their efforts will ultimately lead to a shared vision of an independent Poland.



**Take a look at the English translation of this poem and make notes on the following questions:**

How does the poet convey his affection towards his 'rival' soldier? Consider the clever use of personal pronouns for example.

What is the significance of the repeated use of ellipsis and hyphens? What effect does it have on the way the poem can be read?

The poet has a powerful message for the man he is fighting in the stanzas in section 3; can you summarise this message in the form of a telegram to your imaginary Polish 'rival'? Read the instructions and use the template provided on page 4.

**The Big Question:** How does Słonski manage to offer a source of hope in spite of seemingly terrible circumstances?

## That, what is not dead

My brother, we are divided  
by ill-fate and a guard:  
behind two hostile ramparts  
our death is our reward.

In groaning trenches we listen  
to the thunder of guns:  
I, your enemy, you, my enemy,  
we face each other once.

The forest weeps, the earth weeps,  
the whole world trembles on high.  
Behind two hostile ramparts,  
we stand, you and I.

2

As soon as the guns begin  
to roar in the dawn,  
through the whistling bullets of death  
your sign has always shone.

You throw at our low ramparts  
your whole artillery  
and you call and you speak to me:  
"Brother, it is I".

The forest weeps, the earth weeps,  
the whole world trembles on high  
and all the time you say to me:  
"Brother, it is I".

3

Don't think of me, my brother,  
as I march to my death:  
in the fire of my bullets stand bravely  
and take a deep breath.

And when you see me from afar,  
fire at me instead:  
into a Polish heart  
aim Russian lead.

For I dream of her by day  
and I see her in my dreams:  
*She who has not died*  
will rise where our blood screams.



Pułkownik Piłsudski ze swoim sztabem przed pałacem gubernialnym w Kielcach.

Postcard on page 4: By kind permission of Nicolas Berchenko.

Poem: Translation by Peterkiewicz, J., Singer, B. & Stallworthy, J

Picture: Józef Piłsudski and his staff in Kielce.  
Wikicommons





## Exploring Textual and Visual Representations of an Evolving Poland

The image of 'the Great War' offered to citizens on the Polish home front was as much influenced by politics as it was by literary works. This song was created by Andrzej Hałaciński and Tadeusz Biernacki for Józef Piłsudski, leader of the First Brigade of the Polish Legions and later dictator of Poland. Although in some ways it could be considered a form of propaganda, this song remains an important symbol of the early-20th-century struggle for Polish independence and it is the official anthem of the Polish Armed Forces.

Type the following address into your browser to listen to a recording of the song: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xxNJuy04e0k>

### ***My, Pierwsza Brygada*** **We Are the First Brigade**

Don't be left in the dark!  
Look up any unfamiliar  
words on the Oxford  
Dictionary Online.

#### ***In Polish***

Legiony to żołnierska nuta,

Legiony to ofiarny stos,

Legiony to żołnierska buta,

Legiony to straceńców los,

My Pierwsza Brygada,

Strzelecka gromada,

Na stos rzuciliśmy

Nasz życia los,

Na stos, na stos!

O, ile mąk, ile cierpienia,

O, ile krwi, wylanych łez,

#### ***In English***

The Legions are a soldiers' song,

The Legions are a forlorn hope,

The Legions are a soldier throng,

The Legions are a gallant trope.

We are the First Brigade,

We are not afraid,

We've thrown down the gauntlet,

Our fate is not yet,

We've thrown down the gauntlet!

How much suffering and toil,

How much blood and tears have flowed,

Pomimo to nie ma zwątpienia,	As we've crossed near and distant soil
Dodawał sił wędrówki kres.	In our quest after our home.
My Pierwsza Brygada...	We are the First Brigade...
Krzyczeli, żeśmy stumanieni,	They cried that we had gone stark mad
Nie wierząc nam, że chcieć - to móc!	To say that conquest means to strive.
Laliśmy krew osamotnieni,	Bereft of all, we've shed our blood
A z nami był nasz drogi Wódz!	With our dear leader at our side!
My Pierwsza Brygada...	We are the First Brigade...
Nie chcemy dziś od was uznania,	We want nothing of your acclaim,
Ni waszych mów ni waszych łez,	Nor your tears nor your words.
Już skończył się czas kołatania	We're done with making claim
Do waszych serc, do waszych kies!	To your hearts, to your purse!
My Pierwsza Brygada...	We are the First Brigade...
Umieliśmy w ogień zapalu	We've fanned the fire of zeal
Młodzieńczych wiar rozniecić skry,	From the sparks of steadfast youth,
Nieść życie swe dla ideału	Carried our lives for an ideal
I swoją krew i marzeń sny.	And, from falsehood, extracted truth.
My Pierwsza Brygada...	We are the First Brigade...
Potrafim dziś dla potomności	For the sake of posterity,
Ostatki swych poświęcić dni,	We'll devote the rest of our days,
Wśród fałszów siać siew szlachetności,	To sow honor 'mid duplicity,
Miazgą swych ciał żarem swej krwi.	Heedless both to blame and to praise.



## Exploring Textual and Visual Representations of an Evolving Poland

### Making Note of the Key Details

Annotate the English translation of the song above according to the following:

- The way that the image of strength is connoted through use of sentence structure and language.
- The way that the turmoil the First Brigade faced in their fight for freedom is powerfully conveyed.
- Reference to the listener; what is asked of them?
- The First Brigade's message for the future.

### A Picture Can Say a Thousand Words...

Look at the three visual representations of Poland on the next page. A is from 1905, B from 1916 and 1918 (after Polish Independence had been gained).

### In groups of up to 4 discuss:

What are the main similarities in how Poland is represented in all three images? Try to explain why particular choices have been made e.g. why is a female in a long white dress chosen to act as a symbol for the country?

What are the key differences between the images and how do they link to what was going on historically at the time of creation? N.B. Notice what the bird is carrying in picture C.

Feedback your ideas to the class.

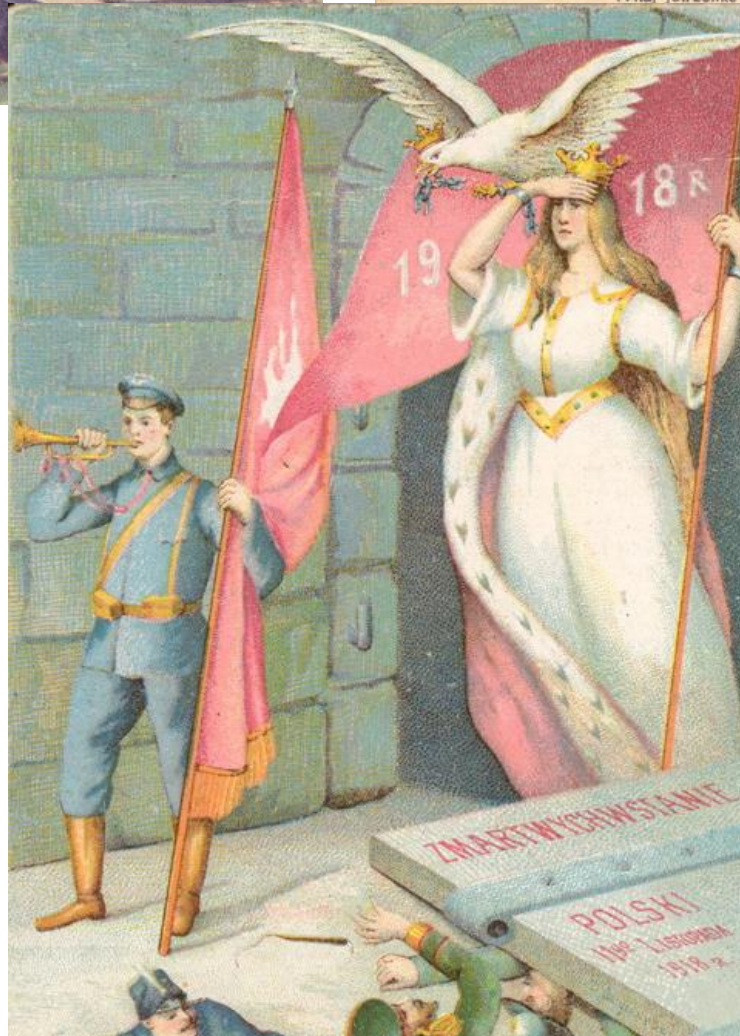
## The Changing Visual Representations of Poland



A



B



C

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