

Polish British Connections: **BEYOND BORDERS**



Introduction

This pack contains materials for a Polish themed week in schools and the materials can also be used more flexibly. Links are also provided to further materials online.

Irena Sendler and Janusz Korczak were ordinary Polish people who did extraordinary things. They had values we can admire. They lived in the 20th century and stories from their lives provide windows into Polish life, history, scientific achievement and culture. This pack explores what we can learn from their lives and values, from Polish and British alliances against oppression, and how we should remember the past to build the future.

There are about 800,000 Polish people living in Britain today and many more British people have Polish heritage. This pack will help teachers to teach about Poland and some of the past and present of Polish and British connections. **This is important so that Polish children feel that they belong in the school community and other children learn more about the many people who call Britain 'home'.**

The materials are designed for upper primary and secondary school age children. This pack complements the pack for primary aged children: 'Polish Language and Culture' and the resources available online at <https://instytutpolski.pl/london/education/>.



Contents

In this pack you will find the following materials to help you make shared values and aspects of Polish culture and heritage the focus of a week in school:

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Everything in this pack is also available online at <https://instytutpolski.pl/london/education/> where you will also find more resources, including resources for careers, a set of display posters, a sequence of history lessons on the topic of Polish migration, resources for STEM, resources for music and the complementary 'Polish Language and Culture' pack.

Assemblies

Here are resources for three assemblies. Fewer can be used, or the order changed, with just minor adaptations. They use Polish topics and relate them to SMSC education themes.

ASSEMBLY 1

The values we live by reach beyond borders

This assembly takes the theme of human values. Using the story of the Polish woman Irena Sendler (1910-2008) it asks students to think about why her story has touched people across borders. Irena was someone who was prepared to take a stand against the prejudice she found around her and then to risk her life for others. She worked with other like-minded people. She was determined, courageous and had a firm belief in our shared humanity. Her story reaches beyond borders as an example of bravery and kindness that is not bound by the divisions that can be created by hatred and intolerance.

i **Teacher note:** Use the Powerpoint called 'Assembly values beyond borders' – you can find it here: <https://instytutpolski.pl/london/education/>

Slide 1 – a question and two pictures as students enter

Slide 1 click – this is a picture of a woman called Irena Sendler. She was born in Poland in 1910 and lived there all her long life. In 1965 this tree was planted to remember her in Jerusalem and in 2021 this statue was created to remember her in Newark. As you listen to Irena's story, think why people from many places might want to remember Irena?

Slide 2 – show the question while reading Irena's story

Irena was 29 years old and working in the Polish capital Warsaw when Poland was invaded by Germany and the USSR in September 1939. Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party ruled Germany and they thought Polish people were lesser humans than Germans. Millions of Polish people were Roman Catholic and they were to be made to serve Germans, they were treated brutally and were often murdered just for being Polish. Millions of Polish people were Jewish and the Germans treated them with the most extreme cruelty. By 1942 the Nazi German government ordered that all Jews should be murdered simply because they were Jewish.

Irena had completely different values and beliefs. She valued every human being, no matter who they were, or where they came from. She was the daughter of a doctor who had died when she was seven years old. Her father had caught a deadly infectious disease while trying to help people most in need. As he was dying, he told Irena, "If you see someone drowning you must try to rescue them, even if you cannot swim." When she was at university in Warsaw before 1939, Irena had made a public protest. She protested against the university rule that made Jewish students sit on separate benches. She was suspended from the university for three years for her protest.



Irena Sendler

When Warsaw was taken over by Germany, Irena used her position as a social worker to give food and shelter to Jewish people. But by November 1940, the German authorities had forced nearly 400,000 Jewish people into one small part of town, called the ghetto. It was closed off, there was not enough food and it was very overcrowded and unhealthy to live in. Irena managed to get a permit to go in and out of the ghetto as a social worker. Once inside, she made contact with Polish and Jewish organisations and began to help them. She helped smuggle Jewish people most at risk out of the ghetto into hiding places.

Irena did not work alone. As well as working with people in the ghetto, from 1942 she was part of Żegota. Żegota was a secret Polish organisation set up to help Jewish people. Working as part of Żegota, Irena took care of Jewish people in hiding, helped more people to hide and tried to get money to pay for their food and medical care. She used her contacts to place Jewish children in Polish families, orphanages and Roman Catholic convents. Her secret codename was Jolanta.

Irena developed ingenious methods to smuggle children out of the ghetto. Some were taken out hidden under stretchers in ambulances, others escaped through a tunnel in the ghetto courthouse, by using the sewer pipes or other secret underground passages. Some were hidden in sacks or suitcases and wheeled out on trolleys and others pretended to be very sick to leave by ambulance.

The exact number of people who owed their lives to Irena by the time the war ended in 1945 is unknown. She nearly lost her own life. In October 1943, she was arrested. Before she was taken, she managed to hide the coded addresses of the children in the care of Żegota and large sums of money in her garden. The Nazis tortured her and she was sentenced to death. Her friends in Żegota bribed

officials to release her. She went into hiding and saw her own death announced on notices in Warsaw. Despite being watched she continued to try to help.

After the war ended, the Soviet Union imposed a communist government in Poland. It was not possible to speak freely and Polish people and Polish culture were repressed. Throughout that time Irena Sendler's story was virtually unknown. It was not until 1999 that people began to learn about her life. Some school students from Kansas in the USA began a school project, discovered her story and began to make it famous. They wrote to Irena, who was still living in Warsaw. By that time Poland was already a free country again and was about to join the European Union, after becoming independent from the Soviet Union in June 1989.



Irena's story has inspired people around the world since then – why do you think the memory of Irena reaches across borders?



Take answers from the students



Slide 3 – some of the values and characteristics that can be seen in Irena Sendler's actions are on the slide. These are admirable qualities in any human anywhere and is one reason why Irena's statue was put up in Newark in 2021.

Closing remarks

Irena's example is now one admired across the world. Her values and her choices are ones we can all choose to make. What will you choose to do to show the same values as Irena?



Batik silk scarf, 1913 by Norbert Okołowicz

ASSEMBLY 2

Remembering can inspire us!

This assembly takes the theme of remembering to take inspiration from people in the past. It starts with the statue of Irena Sendler put up in Newark in 2021. Statues are put up in public places. One role of statues is to honour people who society wants to admire and remember. If statues are to be a useful part of remembering, then we need to know their historical context so that there can be continued thinking about what we admire and want to remember about the people they represent. Irena's story has many elements that are inspiring and are important context to her statue.

At the Polish Cultural Institute website <https://instytutpolski.pl/london/education/> you can find a short interviews with Andrew Lilley, sculptor of the Irena statue. You may want to include this in the assembly.

i **Teacher note:** Use the Powerpoint called 'Remembering can inspire us!' – you can find it here: <https://instytutpolski.pl/london/education/>

Slide 1 – a question and a picture as students enter

Slide 1 (click) – this statue is in Newark and was put up to remember the Polish woman Irena Sendler. Polish pilots were stationed around Newark in World War Two and many are buried in the Newark war cemetery. Irena never went to Newark, but her story is inspiring and is remembered with a statue in a public space. Irena Sendler was a Polish Catholic woman who risked death to save Polish Jewish children from the Nazi German government which wanted to kill all Jewish people. This killing is known as the Holocaust.

i **Teacher note:** You can add more information from the Assembly 1 story of Irena.

The sculptor of the statue, Andrew Lilley, said: "Irena Sendler is with two children whom she is in the act of rescuing from the Warsaw Ghetto. The younger one is a little baby clinging to Irena as she carries him. He is looking behind with tears in his eyes as he leaves his family and home behind. He is holding a small teddy bear which is upside down with one eye missing, symbolic of his entire world having been turned upside down. To Irena's side is a girl of five or six-years-old, who is tightly gripping Irena's free hand. She is also in tears and carries a doll."

The historian David Olusoga says that "statues don't tell us history". That's because statues can't speak and tell us that people and events are rarely simple. They are complex. Knowing the context can make them much more interesting. What should we know when we look at Irena's statue?

i **Teacher note:** you could ask students to read each of these 'Look at the statue...' sections.

Look at the statue and remember Irena did not work alone...

Irena was a very brave and good person who worked with other brave and good people. She was part of the Żegota organisation. Żegota was a secret organisation to help Jewish people in German-occupied Poland. It was supported by members of the Polish government in exile. It is thought Żegota saved 1000s of Jewish people from being murdered by the orders of Nazi Germany which occupied Poland from 1939-1945. Irena was the leader of the Żegota children's section.

Irena Sendler was part of a network of very brave people who risked their lives to save Jewish people.



Look at the statue and remember that people are complex...

The story of Irena Sendler and Żegota is on one level a simple story of good against evil. But the story is more complex. One of the people who founded Żegota was Zofia Kossak-Szczucka. Even though she had her own prejudices, Zofia would not stand by while Jewish people were murdered. Germans arrested her and she had to be rescued by Polish resistance. In 1982 she was declared one of the Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem, the Jewish organisation for remembering the Holocaust. Zofia risked death herself rather than stand by and see Polish Jewish people killed.

Irena Sendler and her colleagues were ordinary people who made the decision to be brave and good.

Look at the statue and remember that Irena Sendler was not popular...

In occupied Poland, Irena and her colleagues in Żegota were in danger from the Nazi German occupiers, as well as from others who did not agree with what they were doing. In 1945 Poland was freed from Nazi German control but it instead became controlled by the Soviet Union. The Nazi German policy to hunt down and kill all European Jews was stopped. But there were still problems for Jewish people, as many people across Europe were still anti-Semitic. Indeed, anti-Semitism still remains a problem across Europe today. Irena lived a quiet life and did not speak about her wartime actions. After the 1989 peaceful revolutions in Central Europe and the collapse of Soviet controlled communist governments, there was a rise in interest in the Holocaust and Irena Sendler's story was rediscovered. Irena quickly became a national hero in Poland. The Jewish Institute Yad Vashem has recognised Poland as the country with the most



Lacework by Karol Kłosowski

individual people honoured as Righteous Among the Nations for helping Jewish people during the Holocaust.

Irena Sendler did the right thing for her fellow humans and yet it was many years before she was hailed as a hero.

Look at the statue and remember Irena Sendler was shaped by her background...

Irena chose to take lessons for life from her background that led her to be brave and good. She listened to her father's advice to always serve people even at a cost to herself. After her father died, the Jewish community he had served offered to support Irena's widowed mother and her children – perhaps Irena remembered this offer. Irena's great-grandfather was a Polish fighter against the Russians from 1863-4, when Polish people fought against the Russians who controlled part of Poland. Irena's great-grandfather lost his property and was sent to a prison camp in Russia, where he died. Irena learnt about his courage and resistance as a child. Then when she was at Warsaw University she was taught by professors who believed the ideas and education worth having were not limited by national borders.

Irena Sendler is an example of someone who took examples from her own background to inform her own thoughts and actions.

Closing teacher remarks

When we know the background to a statue we can think more deeply about it. Irena's statue exists to inspire people. She was an ordinary person who made choices for herself. She did not choose to be popular, she did not choose to be safe, instead she chose to live to help her fellow humans. How will remembering Irena inspire you to choose to live well?

ASSEMBLY 3

Working together we can do good!

This assembly takes the theme of working together to overcome evil and do good. It starts with the team who saved Irena Sendler from execution; a link to the previous assemblies, and then gives examples of Polish people working with other Europeans to defeat Nazi Germany in World War Two. The examples are code-breakers, spies and pilots. These examples are to inspire pupils to think about working together for a good cause.



Teacher note: Use the Powerpoint called 'Working together we can do good' – you can find it here: <https://instytutpolski.pl/london/education/>

When Irena Sendler was arrested on October 20th 1943 she was questioned and tortured so badly that her legs and feet fractured, but she did not reveal information. She was told who had informed on her and she was sentenced to be shot. But her colleagues had bribed her executioner to help her escape. On the following day posters were put up all over the city with the news that she had been shot. Irena read the posters herself and went into hiding to continue her work.

Polish Battle of Britain pilots – Summer 1939



Saving Irena and work to resist the Nazi German occupation needed people to work together. Poland had been invaded by Nazi Germany in 1939 and many Polish people joined the long fight to free Europe from their rule. Poland was not free and so the Polish government moved to London and this government in exile became a focus for Polish hopes. Many Polish people worked alongside other Europeans and made so many contributions.

i **Teacher note:** *Pupils could read each example*

Slide 1 – Jerzy Różycki, Henryk Zygalski and Marian Rejewski were mathematicians who worked in decoding in Warsaw. All military forces use codes to keep their messages secret. Breaking the German military codes was a very important breakthrough in winning the war. It was these three Polish code-breakers who started the process and gave their work to British intelligence services in 1939. This head-start was vital in the work of breaking and reading the codes. The secret code-breaking work that took place at Bletchley Park outside London, shortened the war and saved many lives.

Slide 2 – The Polish Home Army was made up of 1000s of Polish people working secretly to resist German occupation of Poland. In the north of Poland the Nazi German army had a military base. It was used for launching missile attacks on the UK. Two Poles working at the military base smuggled out sketches and reports to the Polish Home Army. These were then passed to British military intelligence. As a result, the RAF bombed the site in August 1943. Members of the Polish Home Army also managed to smuggle a whole V2 rocket to London so that its mechanism could be examined.

Slide 3 – Krystyna Skarbek was born in Poland in 1908. She loved freedom for herself and her country. In 1939 she travelled to Britain and soon became Britain's first female spy. Leading a wild and dangerous life, she skied into Poland, was parachuted into France and smuggled to Britain the first film evidence of the German army preparing to invade the Soviet Union. She worked with the French and Italian resistance, with fellow spies, and helped to capture a whole garrison of German soldiers in the Alps.

Slide 4 – By the summer of 1940 Nazi Germany had occupied most of continental Europe. The German leader, Adolf Hitler ordered the invasion of the British Isles. Before boats could be sent with invading troops, the German airforce had to get control of the skies over the English Channel and southern England. A furious battle started. It is known as the Battle of Britain. 145 of the nearly 3000 pilots were experienced Polish fighters. The famous Polish 303 Squadron RAF claimed the largest number of enemy aircraft shot down during the Battle of Britain. 31 of the 145 Polish pilots were killed and are remembered on the Battle of Britain memorial by the Thames. They included Flying Officer Zdzislaw Henneberg and Flying officer Marian Pisarek who are on the left and right of the photo.

Closing teacher remarks

It took a tremendous and costly effort to free Europe from the terror of Nazi rule. How will you work together with other people with courage and imagination to make the world a better place?

i **Teacher note:** *you could ask pupils to identify some of the skills and qualities that have been revealed by these stories. You could also ask them if they know of other examples from the World War Two period.*

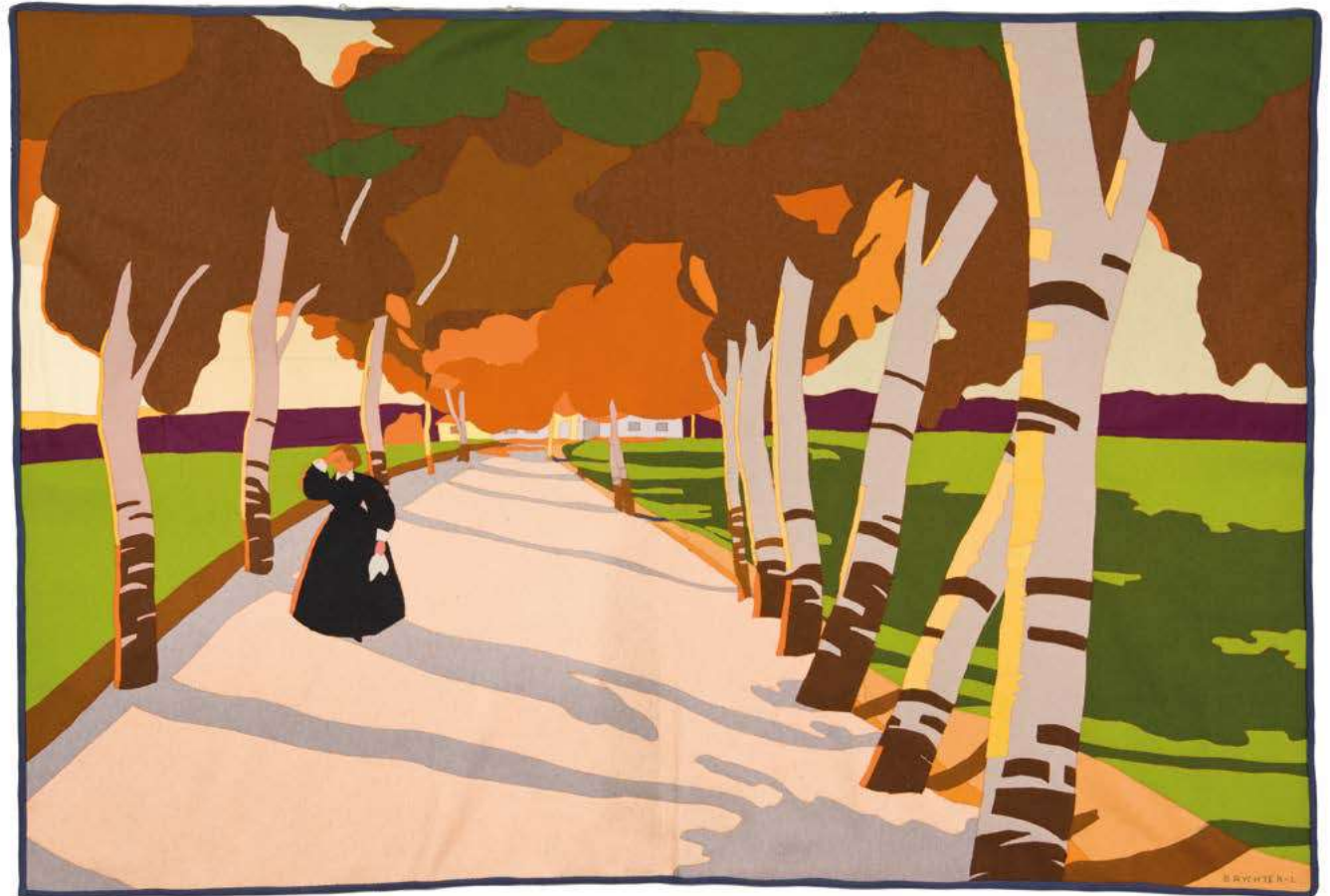


Saint Michael, 1901 design for a wall painting by Józef Mehoffer

SMSC classroom activities

In this section you will find topics for form time work. They could also be combined and adapted for a PSHE lesson or for work with an upper primary school class. The topics are:

- ▶ A conversation with Janusz Korczak
- ▶ Irena's Poland 1910-2008
- ▶ Visit Poland!
- ▶ Polish-British connections
- ▶ Here and there!
- ▶ Life-saving Polish-British maths
- ▶ Wojtek the border-crossing bear



*'Avenue of Birches' a 1910 wall hanging
by Bronisława Rychter-Janowska*

A CONVERSATION WITH JANUSZ KORCZAK

Irena Sendler was suspended from her studies at Warsaw University because she protested against the 'bench system' that separated Jewish people from everyone else. This separation prevented the adventure of meeting other people, exchanging ideas and learning from each other. By sitting on the same bench as other people we can communicate, understand and build friendships. We learn less if we only mix with people just like us.

ACTIVITY: Janusz Korczak was a famous Polish children's doctor, writer and teacher. As you read his story, imagine you are sat on a bench talking to him. You want to share ideas about life. Make a list of:

- questions you would like to ask him, and
- things that would interest him about children today.

Janusz Korczak's story

Janusz Korczak's real name was Henryk Goldszmit and he was born in 1878 or 1879 in Warsaw. His family were Jewish. When he was 11 years old his father became mentally ill and was no longer able to work as a lawyer. This meant that the family did not have enough money to live on. Despite this hardship, Janusz studied medicine at Warsaw University. Russia ruled part of Poland at the time and Janusz had to serve a few years in the Russian army as a doctor in East Asia.

Back in Poland he did his best to help the poor and those who suffered the most. He also began to write books about children. He worked in a Jewish children's hospital and took groups of children to summer camps. In 1908 he began to work with orphans. By 1912 he was the director of a new Jewish orphanage in Warsaw. Janusz and

his colleague Stefania Wilczynska dedicated their lives to working with orphaned children.

At the time, there was not much interest in children's needs. Janusz developed ideas about the emotional life of children and argued that children should be respected, appreciated and listened to. His idea that every child was an individual with their own hopes and dreams seems obvious to us now, but at the time it was a ground-breaking idea. In his books Janusz argued that education should be reformed to meet children's needs.

In 1918 Poland became independent and Janusz was asked to run a second orphanage. He spent the 1920s working hard for children and spreading his ideas as a lecturer at universities. He set up a newspaper written by children and for children.



Janusz Korczak



The former Korczak orphanage in Jaktorowska Street, Warsaw

In the 1930s there was growing anti-semitic (anti-Jewish) feeling across Europe and Janusz suffered from this prejudice also in Poland. When the Germans occupied Warsaw in 1939, Janusz at first refused to obey laws against Jewish people. For example, he refused to wear a yellow star and was put in prison for a time. He was now an old man and he decided to devote his remaining life to the children in his Jewish orphanages, and to making their lives as good and comfortable as possible. The orphanage had to move into the Jewish ghetto set up by the German occupying forces and Janusz refused to save himself and leave the children.

On Thursday 6th August 1942, Janusz, Stefania, the other staff and two hundred children were ordered to leave the orphanage to be deported by train. An eye-witness described their three mile march to the station: "This was not a march to the railway cars – this was an

organised, wordless protest against the murder." The children marched in rows of four, with Janusz leading them, looking straight ahead, and holding a child's hand on each side.

They were put on a train and sent to the death camp of Treblinka, where they were all murdered in the gas chambers on arrival.

Yet, Janusz's work lives on. His ideas persuaded others. Books, plays and films have been made about his life and his work.



Orphanage orchestra conducted by Janusz Korczak in 1923



Monument to Korczak in Warsaw

IRENA'S POLAND 1910-2008

Irena Sendler lived from 1910-2008. In her long life, Poland went through much change. This page introduces some of these changes.



ACTIVITY: create your own timeline of Polish history. Put dark times on the left and better times on the right. What words come to your mind to describe Poland in the 20th Century? Write these words around your timeline. If you have time you could do some research and add more detail and images.



Irena Sendler 1942



Irena Sendler 2005

1910

Irena was born. Poland was not independent. Polish people were divided and ruled by Russia, Austria-Hungary and Germany. They wanted freedom. During 1863-1864 Polish people rose up, including Irena's great grandfather, Karol Grzybowski. He was exiled to Siberia in Russia where he died after one year.

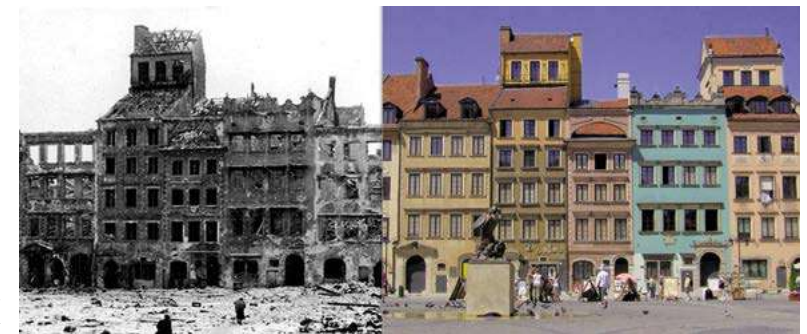
1918

World War One ended. It destroyed the Russian, Austrian and German empires. Poland became an independent republic. The Polish Army defeated the Soviet Red Army at Warsaw in 1920 and this freedom was confirmed. Men and women could vote, there was one currency and new railways, roads and industries.



September 1939

Poland was invaded by Nazi Germany from the west and the Soviet Union from the east. Over six million Polish people died during over five years of murderous occupation. The German Nazis set up death camps in Poland in which they murdered millions of Jewish people and people of other groups they hated: Poles, Roma, Sinti and others. Free Polish people fought with the Allies to defeat Nazi Germany and their allies.



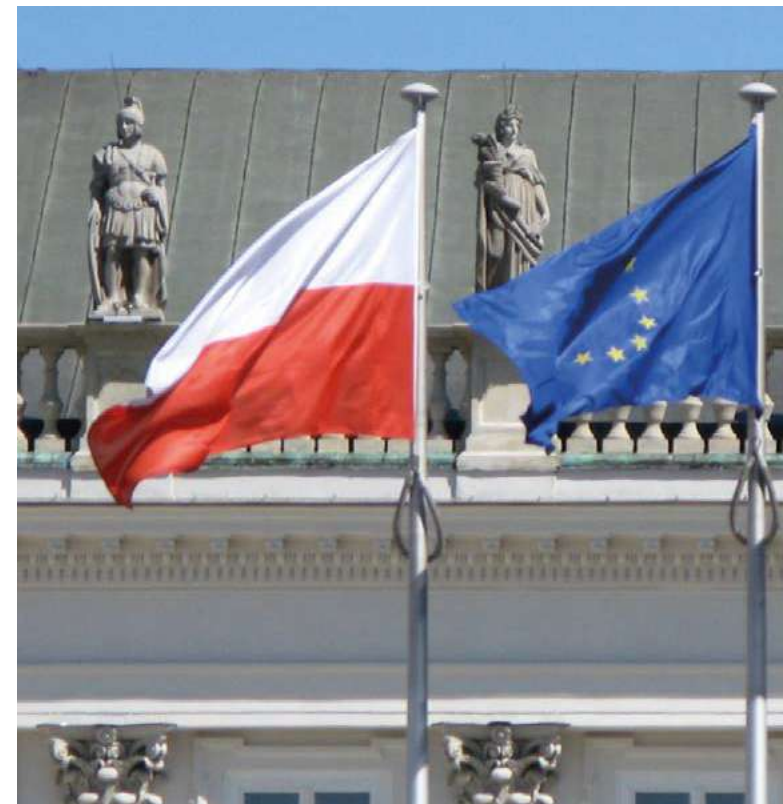
Warsaw Old Town Market Place 1945 and today

1945

The Nazis were driven out of Poland by the advancing Soviet army. World War Two ended and the Soviet government in Moscow set up a government in Warsaw that it could control. Poland lost land in the east to the Soviet Union and gained land in the west from Germany. Many people lost their homes. Many Polish people stayed in the UK as they could not go home.

1980s

Millions of Polish people joined the trade union 'Solidarity', led by Lech Walesa, to demand a better economy and more freedom. Discussions, protests, the influence of the first Polish pope and a change of leadership in Moscow led to the end of the Soviet influenced communist government in 1989. Poland became a democracy again.



1990s

The change from a planned communist economic system to a free-market economy was not easy. But the economy began to grow again, people travelled, and in 2004 Poland became a member of the European Union.

VISIT POLAND!

Irena Sendler and Janusz Korczak were both Polish. How much do you know about Poland? Let's make a virtual visit! Why not use the information on pages 15–18 to teach and test each other so that everyone learns and remembers interesting things about this wonderful European country?



ACTIVITY IDEA: Take a topic from these next four pages. You could think of a fun way to teach each other the information. You could then have a quiz to find out what everyone remembers about Poland.

ACTIVITY IDEA: You could turn your class noticeboard into a 'Celebrating Poland' display. You could plot the places onto a map of Poland. What images and text will you choose? Why not create QR codes to direct people to really good websites for more information?

- Poland has 23 National Parks. Special laws protect them as areas of outstanding environmental, scientific, social, cultural and educational value.
- Poland is home to the żubr (Polish bison), the biggest European mammal, saved from total extinction and now to be seen and admired in Białowieża Forest.

You can find out more about Polish nature here: <https://overhere.eu/blog/most-beautiful-natural-wonders-poland/>

Teacher note: small groups of pupils could each work with a topic from pages 15-18

Natural Poland

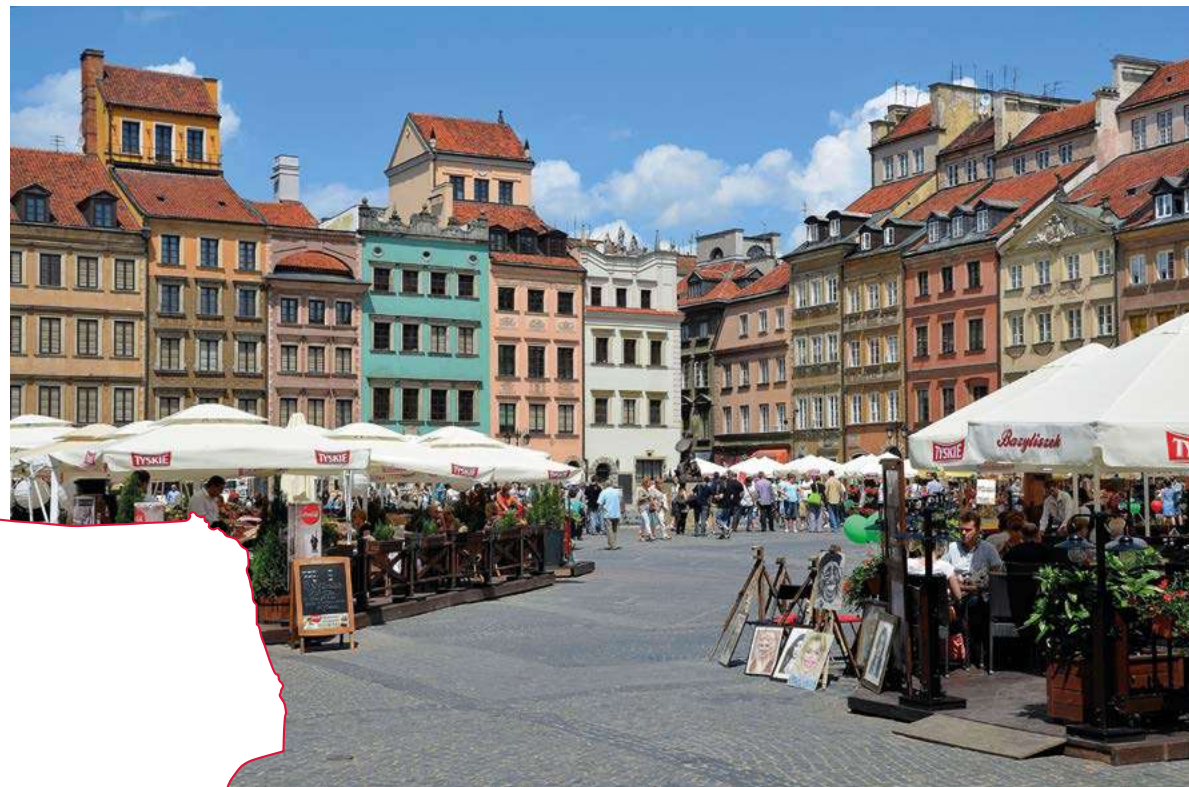
- Poland has 773km of Baltic Sea coastline in the north. There are sandy beaches, stunning cliffs and beach resorts. Many tourists like to buy Baltic amber jewellery. Amber is ancient tree resin. It's hard and sometimes you'll find ancient insects caught in it.
- Poland has about 10,000 lakes. The largest is Śniardwy in the Masurian Lakeland. There are also many rivers. The largest rivers are the Vistula and the Oder; they flow into the Baltic Sea.
- Forests are very important in Poland. About 30% of the country is covered in forest.
- Most of Poland's mountains are in the south of the country. The largest range is the Tatra range, where you will find Rysy peak. It's the highest point in Poland and stands at 2,499m.

The Tatra Mountains in Poland



Polish statistics

- Population: about 38 million people
- Land area: 312,679 km²
- Time zone: Central European Time (same as France and Germany)
- Capital city: Warsaw
- Official language: Polish
- UNESCO listed sites of world heritage: 16



Old Town Square, Warsaw

Q Lots more vital statistics about Poland can be found here:
<https://data.oecd.org/poland.htm>

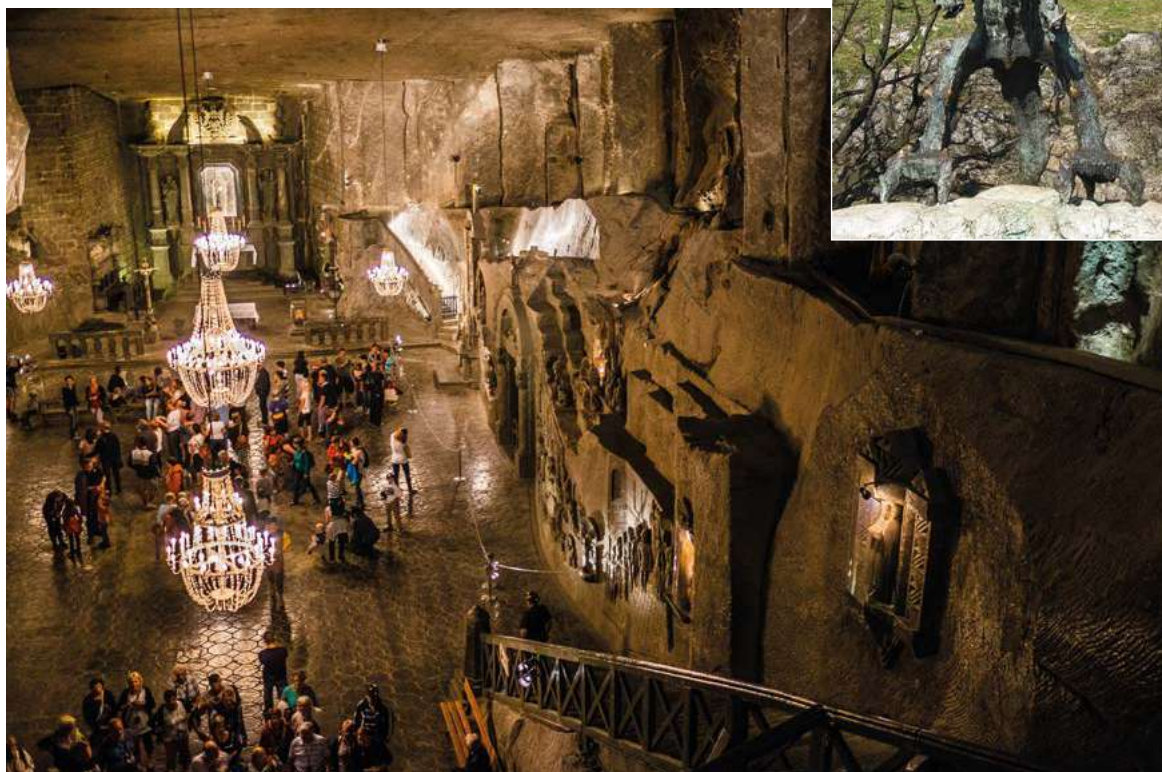


BOOK **FUN FACT!** Red and white officially became the national colours of Poland in 1831. But red and white have been Polish colours since the Middle Ages.

Cultural Poland

- Polish is the official language and the recognised minority languages are: Kashubian, German, Belarusian, Ukrainian, Romany, Rusyn, Lithuanian, Armenian, Hungarian, Slovak, Czech, Yiddish, Hebrew, Karaim and Tartar.
- Warsaw was almost totally destroyed in World War Two. The old town was completely reconstructed and the capital is once again one of Europe's great cities.

below: Wieliczka Salt Mine, right: the Wawel Dragon



- The Wawel castle in the southern city of Kraków is where the Polish kings and queens were buried. There is a famous Polish legend about the Wawel Dragon that guards the castle.
- Close to Kraków is the famous Wieliczka Salt Mine. Salt was mined for hundreds of years and you can visit the underground corridors, rooms, lakes and even chapels.
- Malbork Castle was built by the Teutonic knights in the 13th century. It is the largest castle in the world by land area and a UNESCO world heritage site.
- Malbork is close to the northern coastal city called Gdańsk. This ancient port city has a famous shipyard. It was here that the Solidarity trade union began that helped to create a newly democratic and independent Poland in 1989.
- Poland is famous for its glassware, pottery, amber, woodworking and textiles. It has great writers such as Wisława Szymborska, great musicians such as Frédéric Chopin and great artists such as Jan Matejko.
- Famous Polish food includes pierogi dumplings, rosół soup, gołąbki cabbage roll and pączki donuts.



FUN FACT: If you visit Kraków you can go to the Wawel Dragon's Cave under the castle!




This is a great website for finding out more about Polish culture: <https://culture.pl/en>


Learn some Polish


About half a million people in the UK speak Polish. About 50 million people speak Polish around the world and it is an official language of the European Union. Why not learn some phrases?

- ▶ **A może by nauczyć się polskiego?...**
Why not learn some Polish?
- ▶ **Cześć, mam na imię...**
Hello, my name is...
- ▶ **Mieszkam w miejscu zwanym...**
I live in a place called...
- ▶ **Byłem w Polsce / Nigdy nie byłam w Polsce...**
I have been / I have never been to Poland...

Find out more

 You could read this article about why learning Polish is a good idea.
<https://culture.pl/en/article/why-you-should-learn-polish>

 You could take this further and learn more Polish at
<https://www.duolingo.com/>

 Or you could learn some of the international language Esperanto created by Ludwik Zamenhof and spoken by 8 million people worldwide.



Above and below: 'Quarks, Elephants & Pierogi: Poland in 100 Words' is a book by Matthew Davies and Mikołaj Gliński to introduce Polish culture.



POLISH-BRITISH CONNECTIONS

There have long been connections between Polish and British people. People have traded, fought together, lived alongside each other, made friendships and shared experiences. But what about connections today?

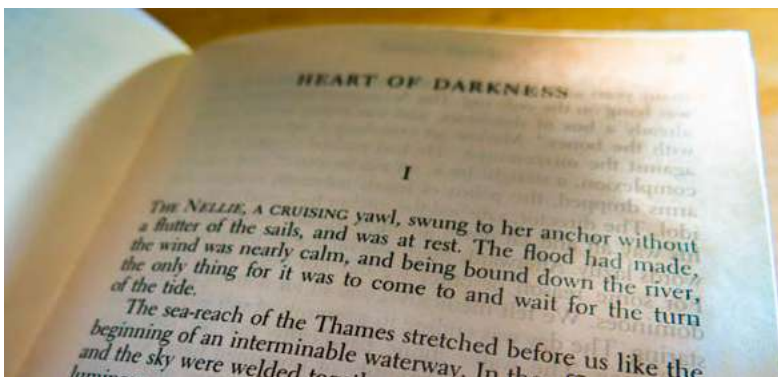
ACTIVITY IDEA: Create a Polish-British connections guide for young people. How will you make it exciting? Use the information on this page and add to it by starting at this website: <https://culture.pl/en>

Music

Look down any classical music concert list in the UK and the music of Polish composer Frédéric Chopin will appear. Today Roxanna Panufnik is a British classical composer with Polish origins. Take a look at British-Polish artists such as Katy Carr and you will see they have fans in both countries. Whatever your musical tastes you'll find fellow fans in Manchester, UK or Wrocław, Poland.



Frédéric Chopin



Poetry, plays and prose

A few examples! The plays of William Shakespeare were translated into Polish at the start of the 19th century. Joseph Conrad wrote a famous book called 'Heart of Darkness' and he was born Józef Korzeniowski. The 1994 Polish fantasy novel Blood of the Elves has inspired the Witcher gaming series and film. The 1990s Harry Potter books are very popular in Poland. Both countries have Nobel Prize winners for literature, including the poet Wisława Szymborska and the novelist Doris Lessing.

Business

Famous businesses such as Tesco and Marks and Spencer were founded by people born in Poland. Today a few 1000 British people live and work in Poland and nearly a million Polish people live and work in the UK. Both countries encourage 'start-up' businesses. Look out for brainly.com the social learning network for students from Kraków and Oxford Nanopore Technologies which specialises in the sequencing of DNA and RNA.





Polish war memorial in West London

Remembering

The Polish war memorial in West London is one of many in the UK. It remembers airmen from Poland who fought in World War Two. There are three British and Commonwealth war grave cemeteries in Poland with over 1000 burials. Many families in the UK are rooted in both countries due to the numbers of Polish people who made Britain their home in 1945 when their parts of Poland were lost.

Science

Great science happens internationally and the Polish-British Science Forum exists to bring the top scientists of both countries together. Today's new scientists are inspired by people such as Maria Skłodowska Curie and Jocelyn Bell Burnell.

Sport

Sport crosses national boundaries! You may know Robert Lewandowski, the most famous Polish footballer. But Poland also has players in British teams, like Łukasz Fabiański for West Ham or Mateusz Klich for Leeds United. Volleyball is popular in Poland and London IBB Polonia London VC team have made the sport more popular in London. Meanwhile, some of the British people who live in Poland go along to the Polish cricket clubs to enjoy a match.



ACTIVITY IDEA: Why not interview people at school who know Poland and include what they say in your guide?



Warsaw Hussars cricket team

FAIRY TALE LESSONS

Janusz Korczak wrote books for children and books about children's development over 100 years ago. Korczak believed that a child should not be shaped and trained to suit adults. He believed a child was someone whose own soul was rich with thoughts and ideas. This led Korczak to think something that many people in his time thought was a strange idea – that children should be listened to and respected.

A Korczak fairytale

Janusz Korczak wrote the stories of King Matt the First...

Matt is a child prince who suddenly becomes king when his father dies. Matt wants to improve the lives of his people, especially children. But some of his changes do not turn out as he had planned. Matt wants to do good, but he cannot cope with all the work. He gets angry with his ministers, but then learns the hard way that he cannot and should not rule alone. He needs help. He also learns through his mistakes that he cannot be an ordinary soldier in the war and that he must get his news from more than one place. He tries to organise the children of the world to protest for their rights. But by doing this he upsets other kings. By the end of the first book, Matt has lost his kingdom and has been sent to a desert island. In the second book he thinks a lot and learns to be more responsible. Once he has decided to change, Matt is able to return to his kingdom, bring back freedom and be a good king.



Janusz Korczak



Left: Wawel Castle, Kraków, Poland



Above: Niedzica Castle, Poland



READ this extract from page 60 of *King Matt the First*. As you read it notice...

- How does Korczak show Matt as a small boy with lots to learn?
- What does the old king advise Matt to do and not to do?
- What does this extract reveal about Korczak's own views about children?

Matt liked the sad king, but he didn't trust him. Because kings soon learn not to trust.

Matt wanted to fall asleep quickly and began to hum a sad song to himself, when suddenly he heard footsteps in the next room.

Maybe they're going to kill me, flashed through Matt's mind. He had heard about kings lured into ambush and murdered treacherously. All his thoughts and the sad king's mournful song had made Matt edgy.

Matt quickly pressed the button on the electric lamp. Then he slid his hand under his pillow, where he kept his revolver.

"Not sleeping, Matt?"

It was the king.

"I can't fall asleep."

"So dark thoughts are even driving sleep from the eyes of little kings?" said the king with a smile, sitting down by the bed.

He said no more but only looked at Matt. Matt remembered that his own father had often looked at him like that and that he hadn't liked it when his father looked at him like that. But now it felt nice.

"Yes, yes, Matt, you were very surprised when I told you that I didn't want a war with you but that I went to war anyway. Because you still think kings can do what they want to."

"That's not so. I know we have to follow etiquette and obey many laws."

"Oh, so you do know. Yes, we make bad laws ourselves, and then we have to obey them."

"But can't we make good laws?"

"We can, and we have to. You are young, Matt. You must study and learn to make good, wise laws."


The king took Matt's hand and placed it on his as if comparing his own large hand to Matt's little one; then he stroked it very tenderly, bent forward, and kissed it.


Matt felt terribly embarrassed, but the king began to speak quickly and softly: "Listen, Matt. My grandfather gave his people freedom, but it didn't turn out well. He was assassinated. And people ended up even more unhappy than before. My father built a great monument to freedom. You'll see it tomorrow. It's beautiful, but what does that matter when there are still wars, still poor people, still unhappy people? I ordered that great parliament building built. And nothing changed. Everything's still the same."

The king seemed suddenly to remember something. "You know, Matt, we always did the wrong thing by making reforms for adults. Try doing it with the children, maybe you'll succeed... Sleep now, dear child. You came to enjoy yourself, and I've been keeping you up late. Good night."



Cover for the 1948 first edition of Korczak's book 'King Matt the First'

 **PUPIL ACTIVITY:** Korczak often used fairy tales to prepare his young readers for the challenges and difficulties of adult life. He wanted children to learn to make responsible decisions. Think about another fairy tale that you know well. What are the lessons for life you can learn from that fairy tale?

 **PUPIL ACTIVITY:** Think and write...

- What is the purpose of a fairy tale? What are the ingredients of a good fairy tale?
- Write your own fairy tale using what you have learnt.

Find out more!


Children everywhere love stories! Janusz Korczak knew how important it was for children to have their own world of stories.

- ▶ Why not ask a Polish friend about what books they had read to them in Polish and talk together about books you read in English? Or find Polish children's books translated into English using this link: <https://culture.pl/en/article/polish-books-for-kids-in-translation>
- ▶ Why not ask some parents about their favourite cartoons and children's programmes on TV when they were small? You can find some Polish favourites here: <https://culture.pl/en/article/10-lifelessons-for-little-ones-an-introduction-to-polish-cartoon-characters>



'Nature and Art', 1901 watercolour by Józef Mehoffer

HERE AND THERE!

 Pair up things from Poland and the UK



Sterling

Zloty



Buckingham Palace

Polish Kozioł

Pierogi


English muffins

UK Coat of Arms

Polish Coat of Arms

Scots Bagpipes

Royal Castle Warsaw

 Why not find some more Polish-British pairs?

LIFE-SAVING POLISH-BRITISH MATHS

You might not usually link maths with saving lives. But here is a story about how the work of Polish and British mathematicians shortened World War Two and so saved many lives. It is all about code-breaking.

Enigma

This machine that looks a bit like an old typewriter is an Enigma machine. It was used to send messages in code. Code is used in many places and by many people to keep messages secret. In World War Two the opposing sides used code. The Germans created code using the Enigma machine. The Enigma code settings changed to create a new code every day. What the Germans did not know was that the Allies against them could read their codes. How did this happen?



Marian Rejewski

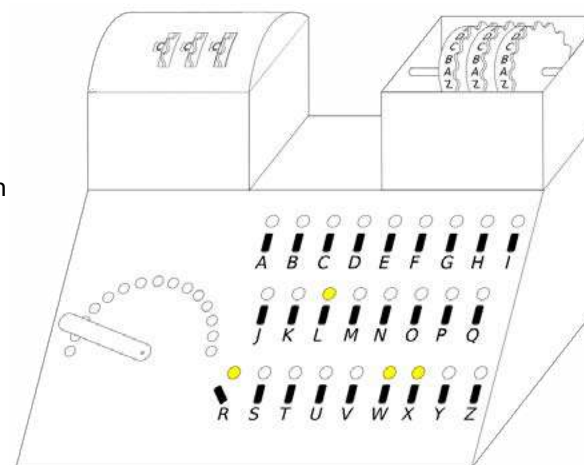
This is a picture of Marian Rejewski. He was a brilliant Polish mathematician. By 1931 French spies had obtained information about the workings of the German Enigma machine. They gave the information to their Polish allies. Marian Rejewski got to work. Every day the sender of messages via Enigma had to send the machine's settings for the day. The receiver of messages sent these back to confirm reception. This was a weakness. By 1933 it had enabled Rejewski to work out all the combinations that were used to create messages.



Marian Rejewski

The Cyclometer

This is a picture of the cyclometer that Rejewski made to help calculate the combination of each day's Enigma code. In 1938 the Germans changed the way they sent codes and so Rejewski had to get to work again.



The Bomba

Rajewski worked with two other Polish mathematicians called Jerzy Różycki and Henryk Zygalski. They created six Bomba, which were electrically powered machines that could code break at the speed of 100 skilled workers. The picture is of a Zygalski sheet that was used with the Bomba.

Linking to Britain

Early in 1939 the Germans made their coding more complex. Rajewski and his colleagues could not build enough Bomba to crack the code. When Poland was invaded by Germany and the Soviet Union in September 1939, Rajewski, Różycki and Zygalski fled to France and then to Britain. Their work was passed to the Bletchley Park code-breaking centre. By using the Polish work, Alan Turing and his team were able to build a 'bombe' able to crack all German military codes. This highly secret work is thought to have shortened the war by several months. The picture shows a memorial to the Polish code-breaking work.

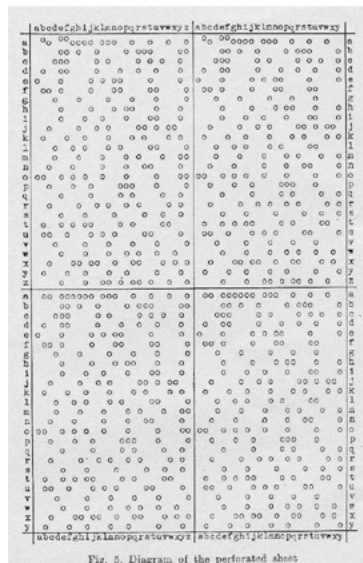


Fig. 5. Diagram of the perforated sheet



WRITE a short paragraph to explain the story behind the memorial to the Polish code-breakers at Bletchley Park.

Are you ready to follow Rajewski?

Rajewski studied the Enigma machine and worked out that with three scramblers, there are six ways of putting them into the machine. There are also 17,576 ways to start the rotation of the disks. Total 105,456. On top of that there are a hundred thousand million ways of setting the plugboard. Rejewski's genius enabled him to see that he could split the tasks and work only on the 105,456. Each day, the German military issued a day setting for how the disks were put in, say 2-3-1 and at what letter each disk was to start say Q-C-W. On top of that, six letters were swapped on the plug board. If that was all, all messages that day would be coded Q-C-W. However, the German military had a cunning plan. Each message would have its own setting chosen on the spot by the operator. The operator would use Q-C-W to send his three letters: say P-G-H. For safety, this would then be repeated P-G-H. He then reset the disks to P-G-H and encrypted the message. Rejewski had this instruction to hand and realised that it gave a huge clue. If the beginning of a message was LOKRGM he knew this was the coding of the message settings. Whatever letter came out as L at first came out as R after three rotations of the disks. Similarly O to G and K to M. Rejewski and his team set about cataloguing all 105,456 settings.



READ this several times, talk about it and make some notes until you have worked out what Rajewski did.

WOJTEK THE BORDER-CROSSING BEAR

This statue of Wojtek the bear was unveiled in Duns, Scotland in 2016. Through Wojtek's story we can learn about Polish and British people in World War Two.

Where did Wojtek meet Polish soldiers?

Wojtek the bear was born in Iran. He was orphaned when his mother was shot by hunters. He first met Polish soldiers in 1941. These soldiers had been made prisoners by the Soviets when the Soviet Union invaded Poland from the east in 1939. In 1941 the Nazi German army invaded the Soviet Union. So the Soviet leader Stalin allowed Polish soldiers to be released to form an army to fight against Germany. Polish soldiers and refugees made their way to the part of Iran that was controlled by Britain. It was there they met and bought the orphaned bear.

Wojtek goes to war



Badge of the 22nd Artillery Support Company of the 2nd Polish Corps

At first the bear lived in the Polish refugee camp and he was looked after by a Polish girl called Inka Bokiewicz. Then he was given to the Polish 2nd Transport Company. The soldiers named him Wojtek. He became a mascot and travelled with them from Iran, to Iraq, through Syria, Palestine and Egypt. He marched with the men, drank coffee and beer, ate cigarettes and enjoyed wrestling. To travel to Italy on a British army ship he had to be made an official Polish soldier. By



the time the Company reached Monte Cassino, Wojtek was fully grown and weighed 200 pounds.

Wojtek in battle

For the first five months of 1944 there was a fierce battle in Italy at Monte Cassino. During the battle Wojtek is said to have helped by carrying heavy crates of dangerous bombs for the big guns. He was promoted to the rank of corporal and was very popular.



Wojtek and a soldier play-wrestling

So why is there a statue of Wojtek in Duns?

World War Two ended in 1945 and Wojtek and the rest of the 22nd Company were sent to a military camp near Duns. Wojtek became an honorary member of the Polish-Scottish Association. In 1947 he went to live in Edinburgh Zoo. He often had visits from Polish soldiers and he lived there until he died in 1973.

? Which part of Wojtek's story is remembered in the Duns statue?

? How can you tell from the picture of Wojtek's statue that he is still popular?

Take this further!

Q Search for other places that have a statue of Wojtek the bear.

P Write Wojtek's story in his own words.

P Find out about the Monte Cassino Polish war cemetery



Wojtek at home in Edinburgh Zoo



Find out more about Poland, Polish people and connections with the UK

This booklet has been produced by the Polish Cultural Institute in the UK. **If you would like more materials and ideas for teaching and learning about Poland and Polish people go to <https://instytutpolski.pl/london/education/>.**

Here you will find more resources, including resources for science, maths, history, music and careers. You will also find the assembly powerpoints and links to other resources to help pupils to learn about Poland and Polish people.

