

The Harmonica

Book by Tony Johnston

Literature based unit study by Ami Brainerd and Celia Hartmann

Social Studies

Geography – Poland: The story takes place in Poland. Reading the note at the back, we know that Henryk grew up in Czeladz, Poland and he was taken to the Dyhernfurth concentration camp. Poland was just one of many countries that the Germans invaded. Help your student locate Poland on a map or globe. Point out other countries around Poland that were occupied by Nazi troops. Help your child to understand just how many countries were affected . . . and how many people.

If you want to learn more about Poland, use the mini-books found at the end of this file.

History – Holocaust (Concentration Camps): In 1933, before WWII even officially began, concentration camps were created by the Nazis. "The term *concentration camp* refers to a camp in which people are detained or confined, usually under harsh conditions and without regard to legal norms of arrest and imprisonment." By the beginning of the War, people taken to the camps were either killed or put to hard labor (work). "Those forced to work, were deliberately undernourished and mistreated" with the intent that they would be killed by the work.

Hope: Talk to your student about feelings of despair, of losing hope, of having no hope at all. Also discuss the importance of hope. Where does hope come from? You may want to introduce your older student to Emily Dickinson's poem "Hope is the thing with feathers..."

Language Arts

Simile: Compares two unlike objects using the words "like" or "as" A few examples from the story are:

"Love, warm and enfolding as a song"

"Singing was like breathing"

"Harmonica, cool as water"

"Breath panted in and out. . . like a bellows"

Finish going through the story with your student, picking out other examples.

Vocabulary:

crockery, (bellows-not in puzzle), wheezed, waltzed, kindling, jolted, reeled, spat, fumbled, faltered, enthralled, epaulets, despised, grazed

Language Arts – Writing/Narration:

Have your older student write about the "power" of music or about a time when he put his whole heart into doing something. Have your younger student tell of a time when he was sad, but a song made him happy.

Poetic Repetition:

Sometimes writers use certain sounds, words, or phrases over again to make a point...to really sink those words into our ears. Tony Johnston uses repetition in the same way one would find it in a poem. Certain phrases are emphasized and certain phrases are comforting through Johnston's use of repetition.

Some examples:

"Often, *to keep from losing hope*, I touched the harmonica..."

"Sometimes I played it *to keep from losing hope*..."

"Though he ached..."

"Though I ached..."

"*I felt sick*, black inside..."

"*I felt sick*, getting bread..."

"...the commandant spat, *night after night*."
"*Night after night* I touched the harmonica..."

If you choose to use [The Cats in Krasinski Square](#) as part of your Holocaust study, you may want to ask your student to look for Hesse's examples of poetic repetition. You may also want to discuss poetic repetition and the book of Psalms with your older student. Hebrew poetry depends on repetition in the same way that our poetry tends to depend on rhyme. There are many verses in Psalms in which it seems that the writer is saying the same thing twice-- because he is! Can your student find examples of this?

Art

Warm Color Palette / Cool Color Palette: Ask your student if he noticed anything peculiar about the pictures. Most of the pictures about his family are done in tones of reds, oranges, yellows (warm colors) to reflect the warmth of the happy times. Most of the pictures of his time as a prisoner in the concentration camp is done cool colors to reflect the cold, hard times.

The artist in this story used black as a basic color (in the concentration camp illustrations) and added bits of color for variation. You may want to ask your student to try to use black as a main color while adding other colors for variation. What colors emerge from a black base? Are the differences notable? Can your student note which colors were added in the illustrations in the story?

Symbolism (For Older Students): With your older student, re-read the part about the commandant who wore ugliness and death upon his shoulders. Then ask him to look at the picture that accompanies that text. Does he see the skull above the soldier's shoulder? This was the illustrator's way of painting the picture to go with the text. The skull symbolizes the ugliness and death, and he drew it above the one shoulder to show the reader the ugliness and death resting on the commandant.

Texture: Give your student some white paper and some crayons (crayon cookies work really well or you can just peel the wrapper off of a crayon and use it horizontally). Search through your home for different textures-- Tile floor, rock around the fire place, smooth wallpaper, bumpy slats on a basket, etc. Place the

paper on the object or area and rub the crayon on the paper. For many surfaces you will have a textured look. Artists can achieve texture by the techniques in which they paint. Many people use these kinds of techniques in their own homes for decorative walls (color washing, rag-rolling, etc.). Where does your student notice texture in the paintings in this book?

Science

Anatomy-- Fingerprints: No one has the same fingerprints (now if that isn't an argument for intelligent design, I don't know what is!) If you have a magnifying glass, get it out and observe your one-of-a-kind designed-by-God fingerprints (that were designed and formed before you were even born!). Fingerprints are the ridges in your skin that form patterns. The pattern is the same on all of your fingers, it is just sized in a different way. There are seven different basic patterns. Can you and your student determine which pattern type is on your fingers? (see pattern types in printables section)

If you have a small Sherlock Holmes on your hands, you may want to try this activity.

Items needed

1 feather (for each student)

small jar of talcum powder

scotch tape

clean, clear, plastic glasses or clean jars (baby food jars will work; you need one per student)

black construction paper, cut into 2" x 1" rectangles, plastic straw to serve as a super-small spoon for powder

Directions

Have your student rub his finger on his nose for 2 seconds to get some oil on his fingers (or run them through his hair). Tell him to hold the glass on the inside with

one hand and to carefully put one fingerprint on the outside of the glass. Can he see his fingerprint? Now dust or tap less than 1/2 cm of talcum powder on the print. Use the bottom half of the feather to spread the powder evenly over the print. Blow off any excess powder. Take a small piece of Scotch tape and put it on the fingerprint. Lift off the tape thereby lifting the print. Examine the print. Classify it using the seven different pattern pictures (found in printables section)

Music

Composers – Franz Peter Schubert:

Franz Peter Schubert was born in Austria on January 31, 1797. During his childhood, the Austrians were fighting France, so French soldiers were a common sight. Music was a diversion. His father was a cellist and provided lessons (violin and viola) for this children. It was plain to see that Franz Peter was talented, and when his father had taught him all he could it was arranged that he was receive lessons.

In 1808 (at age 11), he was accepted into The Imperial and Royal Chapel choir and admitted to Stadtkonvikt, the Imperial and Royal Court Seminary. He studied great composers like Handel, Mozart, and Beethoven.

He did very well at first. By age 12, he was playing second violin and began composing. Before long, writing music began to take up so much time that his grades suffered. And then in 1812, his mother died and his voice changed—ending his scholarship with the choir and school. He was given special permission by the Emperor himself to stay on at the Seminary. His father wanted him to become a teacher. But Franz Peter had decided that music was his life and he only wanted to compose. Between 1813 and 1816, Franz Peter composed 400 different works. And by age 20, he had also written one cantata and five symphonies.

By 1823, he had become ill and depressed. During the next few years, he battled his illness and depression but still remained quite productive with his music. He died on November 19, 1828. While he had times of recognition while he was alive, it was not until after his death that his work became truly famous.

Schubert by Ann Rachlin (Famous Children Series) is a nice biography for the younger set-- talks of Franz Peter being cold and hungry at school, but that writing music made him forget that. Also tells of a time when the French soldiers fired a cannon ball that went through the school. You could tie both incidences in with *The Harmonica*.

Bible / Character Development

Memory (or discussion) Verses

Hope deferred makes the heart sick: but when the desire comes it is a tree of life.
(Proverbs 13:12)

Therefore encourage one another and build one another up...." (1 Thessalonians 5:11).




Bible Story: Esther

You may want to do a Bible study on the life of Esther as you study the Holocaust. She made the best of a bad situation-- allowing God to use here in some tough circumstances. How can we apply this to the story? How can we apply it to our own lives?

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Double
Loop



Loop

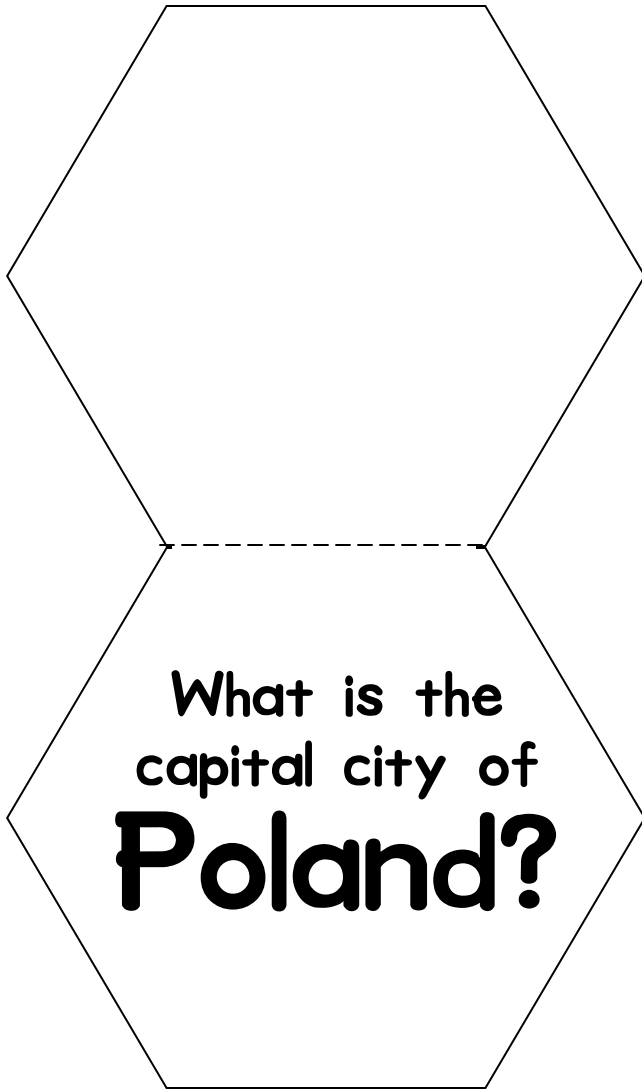


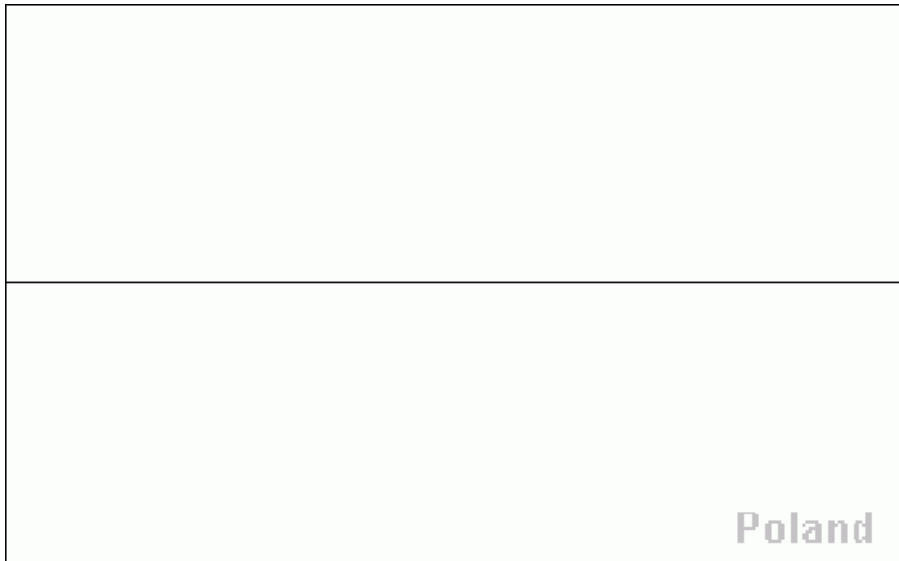
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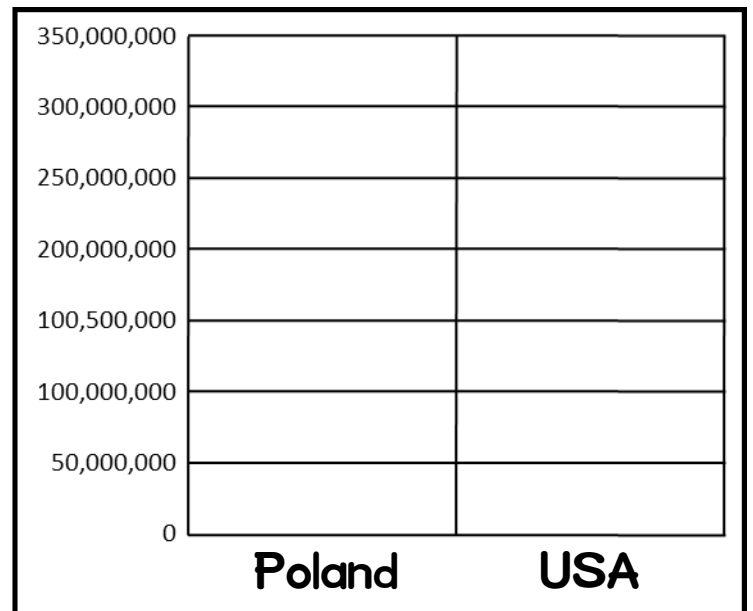
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You can find the current country populations at [this website](#).

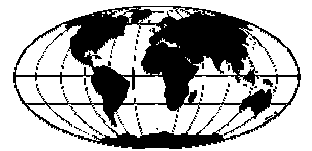




Population

Is
Poland?

Where
in
the
World. . .

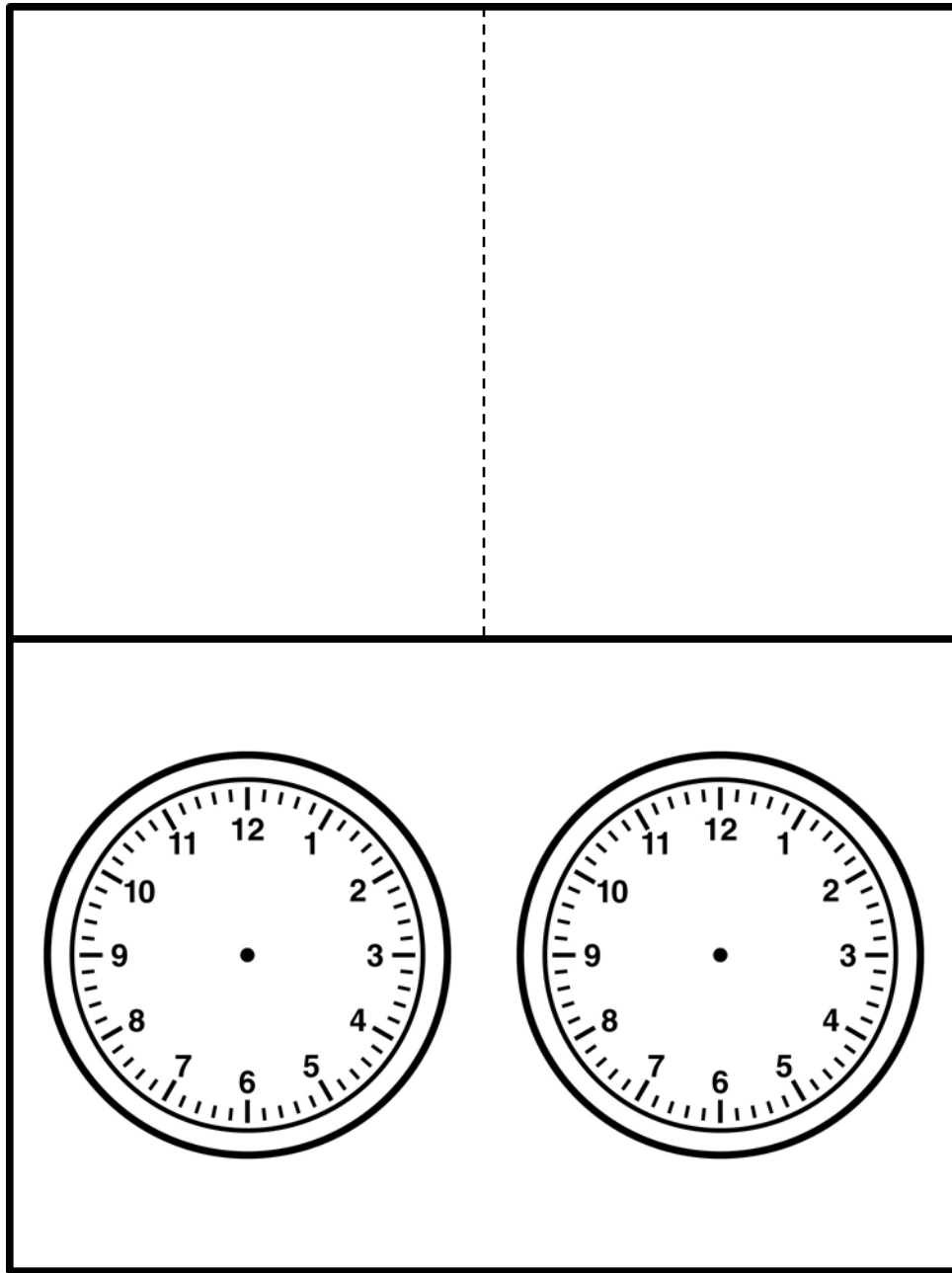


What continent is Poland on?

Find Poland on the map and color it in.

Cut out shutter book and map on solid lines.
Fold shutter book on dotted lines so that words
are on cover. Glue map into book under shutters.

Cut book out as one piece. Fold in half. Open. Cut slit to form to flaps. Cut out cover pieces and paste them to the fronts of the flaps. In the blank, write the name of your city. Complete the clocks to show the current times (corresponding to the cities on the flaps).

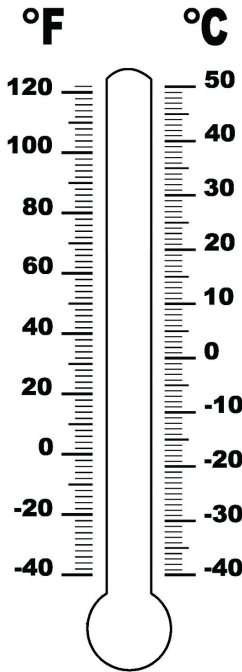


**What
time is
it in
Warsaw?**

**What
time is
it in
_____?**

Weather Comparison

My City

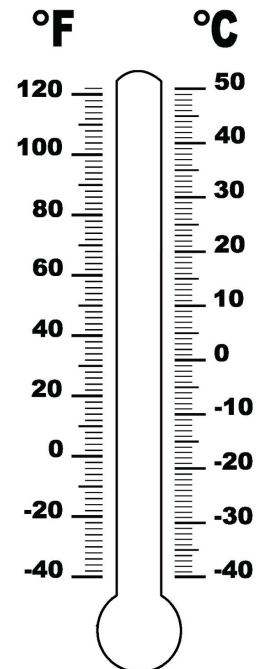


Weather Conditions

Poland



Weather Conditions



Use a [globe or map](#) to help you complete this minit book. Cut on solid lines. Fold on dotted lines, like a pamphlet.

Geography of Poland



On what continent is
Poland located?

What countries are
bordering Poland?

What mountain ranges
are found in Poland?

What body of water
borders Poland?

Name two rivers
found in Poland.