

## **History Lesson Plan**

**Topic:** The Palmiry Massacre and the Role of Historical Witnesses

**Duration:** 45 minutes

**Class:** 8th grade, age 14+

**General Objective:** To learn about the events related to the executions in Palmiry and the role of historical witnesses, including foresters and clergy, in documenting the crime.

**Before the Lesson:** The teacher prints the materials from the attachment - worksheets, materials for the task stations, a large sheet of paper/flip chart and markers for station 4.

### **Lesson Procedure**

#### **1. Introduction (10 minutes)**

The teacher begins the lesson with a short presentation of a photo and asks students to work using the critical thinking routine SEE-THINK-WONDER. Willing students share their observations in the forum. Then, the teacher introduces the students to the topic of the lesson and provides detailed information about the Palmiry Massacre, displaying an illustrative map (attachment). The Palmiry Massacre – a series of mass executions carried out by the German occupiers, near the village of Palmiry on the outskirts of the Kampinos Forest. Between December 1939 and July 1941, SS and German police officers shot about 1,700 Polish citizens, mainly of Polish and Jewish nationality, in Palmiry, usually brought from Warsaw prisons and detention centers. Among the murdered were many representatives of the Polish political, intellectual and cultural elite, who were arrested as part of the so-called AB Action. Palmiry is the most famous – next to Katyn – symbol of the martyrdom of the Polish intelligentsia during World War II [1]. (source: Wikipedia)

After the introduction, the teacher invites students to work independently with the materials waiting for them at 4 task stations. Students can work in groups, which the teacher selects using any method they prefer. The teacher monitors the working time, circulates among the groups, clarifies, and guides.

#### **Task Stations (25 minutes)**

Students work in groups, each rotating through the stations. Each station is allocated 6-7 minutes.

### **Station 1: Testimony of Forester Adam Herbański**

Task: Analysis of a fragment of Adam Herbański's account. Students answer the questions:

- What circumstances caused the forester to witness the events?
- What emotions might a person observing such events experience?
- Why do you think the forester decided to share his memories?

Additional task: Students write a short message from the forester to future generations, starting with the words: "Remember what I saw, because...".

### **Station 2: The Role of Foresters and Clergy in Documenting the Crime**

Each group receives an envelope with an encrypted message and a card with the Morse code alphabet. After decoding the title, they can read the text. (PASSWORD: MARKING MASS GRAVES)

Questions about the text:

- Why did the population and foresters decide to mark the execution sites, despite the threat?
- Why is documenting war crime sites so important?

### **Station 3: Władysław Bartoszewski on Witnesses of the Crime**

Students read a fragment of Bartoszewski's memoirs.

Task: After reading the text, come up with a short, powerful newspaper headline that could appear after the war in a newspaper describing the actions of the forester and the priest.

The headline should reflect:

- The heroism of these characters
- The significance of their actions
- The emotions associated with their choices

### **Station 4: Memory and Commemoration**

Students receive a large sheet of paper (flip chart) and in groups consider how students can preserve the memory of these events?

How can young people spread awareness of this event and the people who died there among their peers? And how can we become witnesses of history? The teacher can guide students on how to use such a difficult topic in social media, etc.

### **Lesson Summary (10 minutes)**

Students write down what they take away from this lesson on post-it notes and stick their observations on the board. The teacher discusses the task stations and summarizes the lesson.

# The Palmiry Massacre

## ANSWER SHEET

*Group members:*

### STATION 1

- Why do you think the forester decided to share his memories?
- What emotions might a person observing such events experience?
- In the field below, write a short message from Adam Herbański to future generations, starting with the words:

**Remember what I saw,**

### STATION 2

Enter the decoded password here

Questions about the text:

- Why did the population and foresters decide to mark the execution sites, despite the threat?
- Why is documenting war crime sites so important?

# The Palmiry Massacre

## STATION 3

After reading the text, come up with a short, powerful newspaper headline that could appear after the war in a newspaper describing the actions of the forester and the priest.

The headline should reflect:

- The heroism of these characters
- The significance of their actions
- The emotions associated with their choices"

## STATION 4

In this station, reflect on the following questions. Write down your ideas on the large sheet of paper on the table. Subsequent groups will add their suggestions there, and thus an idea bank will be created.

- How can young people spread awareness of this event, about the people who died there and the witnesses of history, thanks to whom this history survived, among their peers?
- How can we become witnesses of history?

# STATION 1

## ORIGINAL TEXT

Fragment of forester Adam Herbański's testimony

*"After the war, the Palmiry forester Adam Herbański recounted that he had seen young men in June 1940, dressed in khaki uniforms with red armbands bearing a swastika, digging very deep pits. 'One of them was probably an officer,' the forester recalled. 'He stood to the side and you could hear him counting down, then a shot would ring out. Two men were shooting at one person. The Germans didn't check if the person was alive or not. The person would fall into the pit, they would cover it and tamp down the earth. It was a camouflaged pit, when I went there, I don't know if it was an illusion or if fear took over me, because it seemed to me that the earth was moving,' he added."*

Źródło <https://www.lasy.gov.pl/pl/informacje/aktualnosci/palmiry-dzieki-lesnikom-wiemy-gdzie-zapalic-znicz>

# STATION 2

## INFORMATION

*Nevertheless, the local population and forestry service personnel spied on the Germans, observed the arrival of almost every transport to the execution site, and after the execution, marked the crime scene. The bark of trees growing near the 'death pits' was cut, and foresters inserted German bullet casings into the hollows. Thanks to this, after the war, exhumations of the murdered began in 24 places indicated by the foresters*

*Źródło <https://www.lasy.gov.pl/pl/informacje/aktualnosci/palmiry-dzieki-lesnikom-wiemy-gdzie-zapalic-znicz>*

# STATION 3

## ORIGINAL TEXT

*One of those foresters, Adam Herbański, a very simple man, observed what was happening. He was often ordered to stay at home and not even track poachers. He also noticed that the SS were digging pits. He wouldn't have been a Polish peasant if, on the very day he was supposed to stay home, he hadn't hidden near the place where the pits were being dug. Later, he went to the parish priest—because where else could he go?—of the Łomna parish by the Warsaw-Modlin road and told him, 'Father Parish Priest, something is happening there, they are shooting people.' At the suggestion of the parish priest, he continued his observations, tried to count the victims, marked the places of mass graves—stuck twigs into the ground, arranged stones. And he constantly brought news to the priest. Later, after the war, we found these mass graves. I participated in the exhumation in 1946, I took part in the identification of the bodies. We owe it to that forester that we found the graves and were able to identify many of them. Personally threatened with death if he were discovered, he was unable to help anyone directly, but he could preserve the traces so that nature would not erase them. (...) Father Gregorkiewicz recorded in the parish books how many people died and when. I spoke with this priest after the war; he remained in the same Łomna parish. Like that forester, tens, even hundreds of thousands of people actively cooperated with the underground."*

Władysław Bartoszewski, *Warto być przyzwoitym*, Warszawa 2005, s.80-81



# STATION 4

## INFORMATION

**In this station, reflect on the following questions. Write down your ideas on the large sheet of paper on the table. Subsequent groups will add their suggestions there, and thus an idea bank will be created.**

- **How can young people spread awareness of this event, about the people who died there and the witnesses of history, thanks to whom this history survived, among their peers?**
- **How can we become witnesses of history?**

# Adam Herbański



[www.palmirymoje.pl](http://www.palmirymoje.pl)

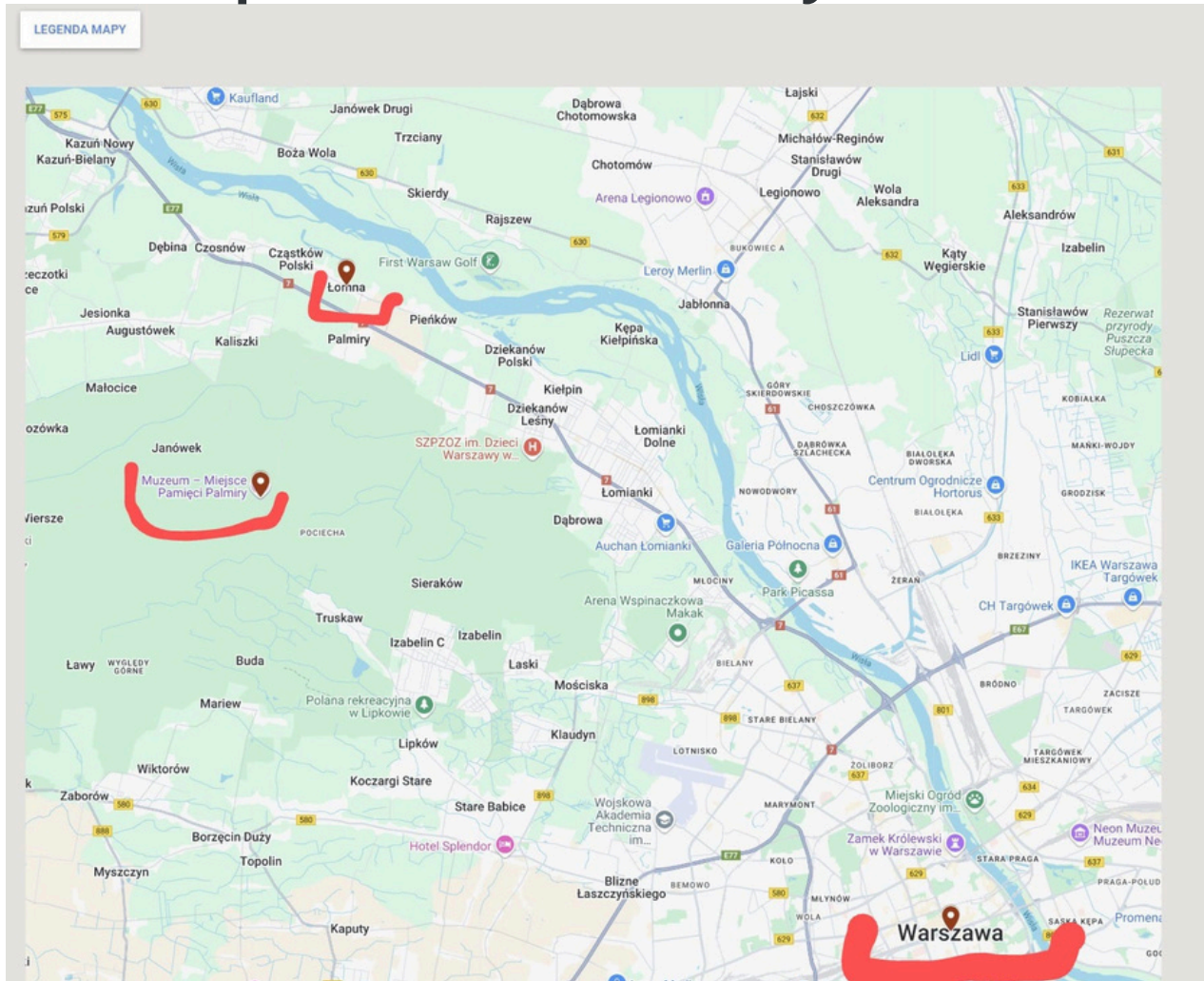
# Routine critical thinking

## SEE-THINK-WONDER





# Mapa Warszawa-Palmiry-Łomna



## ALFABET MORSE'A

A	• -	M	- -	Y	- • - -
B	- • • •	N	- •	Z	- - • •
C	- • - •	O	- - -	1	• - - - -
D	- • •	P	• - - •	2	• • - -
E	•	Q	- - • -	3	• • • - -
F	• • - •	R	• - •	4	• • • -
G	- - •	S	• • •	5	• • • • •
H	• • • •	T	-	6	- • • • •
I	• •	U	• • -	7	- - • • •
J	• - - -	V	• • • -	8	- - - • •
K	- • -	W	• - -	9	- - - - •
L	• - • •	X	- • • -	0	- - - - -

## CODED MESSAGE

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