

Lesson Plan: The Green Dress

Duration: 45 minutes

Target Group: Primary/Secondary School Students

Materials: Text *The Green Dress*, archival photos from the Dulag 121 Museum collection, map of Warsaw and Pruszków, excerpts from the testimony of witness Teresa Gozdyra

Main Objectives:

- Understanding World War II history through the perspective of an individual and their family.
 - Recognizing the importance of historical witnesses and their role in preserving the memory of the past.
 - Encouraging empathy and reflection on the impact of war on civilians.
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Lesson Outline:

1. Introduction (10 min) – Entering the Topic Through a Personal Perspective

a) Opening Discussion:

- Question for students: *"What objects in your home have a special history?"*
- The educator emphasizes that objects can tell stories just like people – introducing the story *The Green Dress*.

b) Retelling the Story of *The Green Dress*

- Students listen and then share their initial impressions: *"What emotions does the story of the dress evoke in you?"*
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2. Development (20 min) – Local and Family History

a) Text Analysis and Historical Context

- The educator shows Warsaw and Pruszków on a map, discussing the Warsaw Uprising and the Dulag 121 transit camp.
- Discussion: *What were the fates of civilians during the war? What were their daily struggles?*

b) The Role of Objects in Survival and Memory

- Discussion on the significance of the dress – how it became a symbol of survival and human solidarity.

- Reference to the scout who gave the dress to the Witness of History – conversation about the role of solidarity and help during the war.

c) Witnesses of History – Their Role in Preserving Memory

- *Who was Teresa Gozdyra, and why is her story important?*
 - Students reflect on whether their families include people who remember wartime experiences.
 - Watching a short recording from the Dulag 121 Museum's archives featuring a witness's testimony about the Warsaw Uprising.
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3. Conclusion and Reflection (15 min) – The Personal Dimension of History

a) Group Activity:

- Students create short social media posts (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok) about *The Green Dress* of witness Teresa Gozdyra, imagining how the object could "tell" the story of World War II.

b) Final Discussion:

- *What can we do to ensure that the memory of history does not fade?*
 - *What lessons can we learn from Tereska's story and her dress?*
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Additional Assignment (Optional):

- Students interview a family member about wartime memories or a family story related to World War II.
 - They describe an object that holds special significance for them or their family.
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This lesson plan connects global history with a local and personal perspective. It helps students understand the emotional dimension of war and its impact on individuals.

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The Green Dress - story

I am a dress, I have stripes and a small hole. If you put your ear close to me, you will hear a unique story.

I was born in a shop where the pre-war elite used to come. My mother was fine fabric. A masterful tailor's hand contributed to my creation. I was the most beautiful blouse, proudly admiring my reflection in the shop window.

A beautiful young woman took me home from the shop. I lived with her in Warsaw's Żoliborz district, in a magnificent mahogany wardrobe with ornate decorations, among other elegant outfits for every occasion and every kind of weather. I was happiest when we went to a café together. I felt everyone's eyes on me. My golden buttons caught the attention of all: young and old, boys in polished shoes, and gentlemen with rakishly curled mustaches. Even today, I can still recall the scent of freshly ground coffee, sweet perfume, and the delicate touch of a man's hand.

Then the war came, for which neither my owner nor anyone else was prepared. Bombs fell, bullets flew. I will never forget the moment when the mahogany wardrobe doors were flung open and a frantic hand carelessly threw me into a leather suitcase. I didn't understand why I was among sugar cubes, piles of papers, small cast-iron pots, and spilled groats. The café was gone. There were only ever-changing addresses, beds, and basements.

My Warsaw was engulfed in flames. My sleeves were rolled up, and I was put to work. I absorbed the sweat, tears, and blood of those in need of help. They were men, women, and children. The elderly and the young. No one paid attention to me, but I felt more needed than ever before.

Then came a terrible day. I didn't know where I was. I felt my sleeves being cut off. My golden buttons were torn away. My dignity was taken from me. I no longer remembered my name. I asked myself who I was. I didn't want to admit to myself that I had become a child's apron. I covered a fragile four-year-old body. I was constantly dirty and sticky. How was it possible that I had ended up in such a place? I saw no further purpose.

I don't know where I am. It is unbearably crowded and cramped. Thousands of other bodies surround me. The air is thick with the smell of sweat and dust, and fresh air is scarce. I can only feel the rhythmic beating of a tiny heart. I am wrapped in the warmth of a small body...

From now on, I am a child's apron.

I am a nightshirt.

I am armor.

I am a princess's ball gown.

I am a magician's enchanted cape.

I am a quilt.

I am a coat.

I am a shelter.

I am the keeper of all secrets.

I am a green striped dress, belonging to four-year-old Tereska, who, along with her parents, was expelled from Uprising Warsaw. My previous owner gave me to Tereska's mother to protect her from the cold and to ensure a good ending to this story.

Maybe one day, I will tell you how I left the transit camp in Pruszków and traveled to the General Government, how I found shelter with kind people.

The dress that Teresa Gozdyra wore during her expulsion from Warsaw and her stay in the Pruszków transit camp was made from a blouse donated by girl scouts during the Warsaw Uprising. When a series of fires destroyed the family's apartment building, Teresa's family lost all their belongings, including the clothes of the four-year-old girl. The dress is visible in a photograph taken at the Dulag 121 camp and published in a German propaganda newspaper.

Collection of the Dulag 121 Museum / Gift of Teresa Gozdyra