

### Summary Description

This is the fifth in a series of eleven lessons that introduces the student to European American history.

### Learning Objectives

To have the student learn a few key facts about Polish American history and culture.

### Approximate Time for Lesson

40 minutes

### Suggested Maturity Level for Instruction

Student should be able to read simple words and perform simple addition and subtraction. Also, student should be able to sit still and engage in one-on-one conversation.

### References:

Concise History of Poland, Polish American Heritage Database - <http://info-poland.buffalo.edu/classroom/children/history.html>

The Nation of Polonia, Immigration - <http://memory.loc.gov/learn/features/immig/alt/polish4.html>

### Materials Needed

1. Internet Access - Pull up the following:
  - a. Europe Map (go to <http://www.sitesatlas.com/Maps/Maps/Europe.htm>)
  - b. United States Map (go to <http://maps.google.com/maps>)

### Preparation

Make sure you have materials open, printed and/or available prior to beginning the lesson.

### Script

#### Introduction (5 minutes)

1. Teacher: Last week, we learned about the Italian Americans and the tough times they had starting out in the United States. Today, we will learn about the Polish Americans. The Polish Americans come from the country of Poland [[point to Poland on the Europe Map](#)].
2. Teacher: The story of the Polish Americans is very interesting and it has very much to do with where they are located in Europe.
3. Teacher: So are you ready to learn about the Polish? [[Get positive response from Student and begin lesson](#)].

#### Lesson (30 minutes)

1. Teacher: Great. Now, the Polish first came to the United States to escape from other very strong countries taking over their lands and this is because where Poland is located in Europe. By the way, Poland means "people of the fields", which gives you a clue that Poland was covered by very large flat fields.

2. Teacher: [Showing the Europe map] Now, this is where Poland is [point to Poland on the Europe map], which happens to be right in the middle of three very strong countries: Russia [point to Russia], Austria [point to Austria] and Germany [point to Germany], which was known as Prussia back then. These countries were once great empires and Poland sat right in the middle of them while the three were fighting against each other.
3. Teacher: So let's pretend that you are Poland. Stand up [have the Student stand]. Now, imagine if you had three big people surrounding you, all facing you, one from the front, one from the side and one from behind.
4. Teacher: Can you picture that in your mind? Great. Now, if these three people started to fight against each other, trying to swing their fists and legs at each other to try to hurt one another, what do you think would happen to you? [Engage the Student in conversation but come to the point that the Student would probably get hurt as all the fists and legs are flying towards her].
5. Teacher: That's right. Even though the three people aren't trying to hurt you, they're trying to hurt each other. But since you're in the way, they will probably hit you accidentally. If the three people keep trying to punch and kick each other with you in their way, how do you think they will feel? [Engage the Student in conversation that the three people would eventually get mad since you're in the way].
6. Teacher: After some time, these three people will probably figure out that they first need to get rid of you first before they can then fight each other more easily because if you are gone, then you won't be in their way anymore. And that is exactly what happened to Poland. [Have the Student sit back down].
7. Teacher: In fact, the three countries of Russia, Austria, and Germany one day just made a promise that since Poland always seem to get in the way of their battles, that the three countries should just divide Poland up for themselves. And so, Poland was divided into three, one part for each of the three strong countries. Now this made it much easier for all three countries to fight against each other since now, they were all next to each other.
8. Teacher: The wild thing about all this was, that Poland was actually divided into three parts not only one time, but three times, each time in different ways by Russia, Germany, and Austria. But once Poland was divided up all those times, do you think the fighting stopped among the three countries? No way - it kept going and going and going. Well, it happens that Poland was struggling against this fighting situation for around 150 years! Can you imagine having to live in this country while there are three neighbors fighting each other and taking over your lands for 150 years? [Engage the Student in conversation].
9. Teacher: Well, during this time, most of the Polish people whose families now live in the United States moved out of Poland and came to this country. Although the Polish loved their

homes and their country, it was just too dangerous and difficult to stay. And so, the Polish moved to the United States - they first moved to the northeast region of the United States [point to the northeast area on the United States map], then moved west to the Great Lakes area [draw a line with your finger from the Northeast to the Great Lakes region on the United States Map] and many of them still live in this area today (although there are Polish Americans in just about any big city of the United States).

10. Teacher: Well, although at first the Americans made fun of the Polish Americans, a few Polish Americans who had fought to save their homeland back in Poland quickly became respected, which then made it easier for other Polish Americans to become accepted into American life. Why do you think these Polish Americans were respected by the Americans? Because when the first group of Polish Americans were moving to the United States, the United States themselves began fighting a war against the world's strongest country during that time, England. Since some of the Polish Americans already knew so much about war and fighting in their homelands trying to fight off the stronger countries, these Polish Americans were taken in by the Americans to help fight on their team.
11. Teacher: So, what do you think happened to Poland after all that fighting? Do you think that the Polish got their lands back from Germany, Russia, and Austria? [Engage the Student in conversation].
12. Teacher: The answer is that the Polish determination and fighting spirit won and now the Polish have their own country today.
13. Teacher: The Polish Americans are now a big part of American life today. Kazimierz Pulaski was one of the most important Polish Americans that helped the United States beat England in the war that made the United States an official country. Many cities, tollways, and bridges today are named after him (for example, the Pulaski Skyway in New Jersey). Elijah Wood, the actor that played Frodo Baggins in the Lord of the Rings movies is part Polish. Also, Reuben and Rose Mattus, the ones who created Haagen-Dazs ice cream, were Polish.
14. Teacher: OK - time for review. Get in front of the class. [Have the Student stand in front of you (consider inviting other members of the family also to set the stage) and ask her the following:
  - a. Why did the Polish move to the United States? To escape the occupation of Germany, Austria, and Russia
  - b. Where did the first Polish Americans arrive in the United States? In Northeastern United States, where they then head towards the Great Lakes area
  - c. So, did the Polish ever get their lands back? Yes - it is called Poland

Teacher reviews any questions that the Student missed].

Wrap Up (5 minutes)

Teacher: [\[Clapping\]](#) You did GREAT! Wonderful job! Are there any questions that you have regarding the Polish Americans? [\[Engage in conversation with the Student and resolve further questions by researching the Internet\]](#).