

Answer Key

Witold Pilecki – The Unsung Hero of WWII Intelligence

Lesson Plan 3: Youth

CREATE THE CONTEXT

[for homework or in class the previous day]

B | Have students read and answer (or think about) the following questions.

Background Information: Pilecki monograph pp. 11–52.

1. What was the significance of the breakout of World War I for the Poles?

As a result of the war, the balance of power, which kept the partitioned country in check, disappeared. The German and Russian Empires collapsed, and a new factor in European affairs emerged: the United States. Owing to the personal support of American President Woodrow Wilson, the idea of the reemergence of a free Poland was introduced first into the public debate and then into the peace negotiations in Paris. Two Polish politicians, Józef Pilsudski and Roman Dmowski, worked on their respective ends to bring about the restoration of an independent Poland. Pilsudski did so through military action; Dmowski worked through multiple avenues, such as military and political lobbying in Great Britain and France during the war, and participation in the peace conference in Paris. Another important factor was the creation of General Haller's Blue Army. The Blue Army was originally conceived in the United States because of Ignacy Paderewski's advocacy. Paderewski, a famous pianist and patriotic Pole, was a personal friend of President Wilson. He lobbied for the creation of a Polish army, on American soil, composed of Polish-Americans. In the end, however, such a military opportunity appeared first in France when the French Prime Minister Raymond Poincaré announced the formation of a Polish Legion in France. Nevertheless, the nucleus of that army had been formed in Canada by approximately 23,000 Polish-Americans who had trained secretly for that purpose in various paramilitary organizations in America when it had still been a neutral country. Ultimately, already in France, this army grew to almost 100,000 Poles and became a major military force which helped secure the borders of the reborn Poland in a number of border confrontations, border wars, and the Polish-Bolshevik War in the years 1919–1921.

2. Why did Poles consider 1918 the year of the rebirth of Poland?

In 1918, their country reappeared on the map of Europe, and the Polish nation regained their own state. Poles of the three partitions rejoiced at regaining the independence they had awaited for 123 years. After a century of partitions and the Great War, they set out to rebuild their country with enthusiasm and zeal. Nevertheless, they would face a number of internal and external problems. The internal ones were related to wartime destruction

of the Polish lands, unequal economic and industrial development of the three parts formerly belonging to different partitions, large ethnic diversity of its constituent parts, and considerable fragmentation of its political scene. On the international arena the problems were related to German irredentism, Communist subversion of the eastern regions of Poland—oftentimes based on fueling nationalism among ethnic minorities—and the drive for appeasement in Europe after WWI. This drive resulted in Poland's location between Germany and the USSR becoming increasingly precarious.

3. What were key features of the traditional Polish upbringing as exemplified by Witold Pilecki's youth?

As exemplified by Witold Pilecki's upbringing, the traditional upbringing focused on preserving Polish identity in the epoch of non-state national existence of the Poles. This identity was shaped by transmitting to children a love of Poland, its culture and history combined with admiration for heroic deeds of Poles from the past, the Catholic religion, as well as readiness to fight for the independence of Poland, for which teenagers prepared in clandestine youth organizations (Polish Boy Scout movement).

4. In what ways was Pilecki involved in World War I and the ensuing border wars in the East of Poland?

He took part in the Polish–Bolshevik War and the struggles for the City of Wilno.

5. What did he consider his patriotic duty in everyday life?

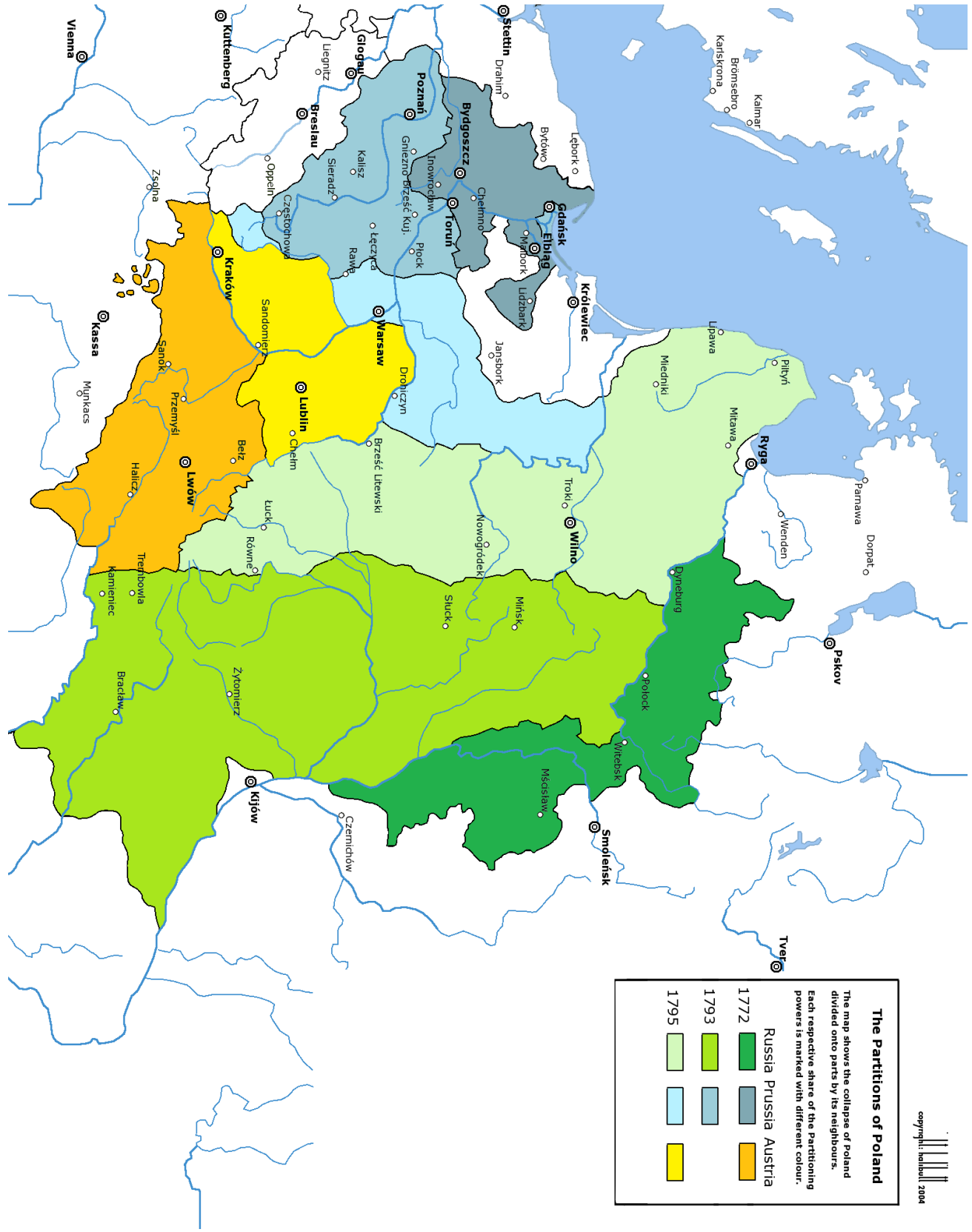
In everyday life he was deeply involved first in dutiful, honest work—he took pride in being a model administration functionary immune to corruption and then in hard work on the restoration of his estate and work for the local community. He started a farming circle aimed at increasing the level of farming culture in the area and taught in the circle himself, and he started a successful dairy cooperative to offer better prices to local farmers for their produce than other middlemen. He introduced innovations in his estate that subsequently spread in the area. He also founded a voluntary fire brigade and a mounted militia unit, which he commanded, trained, and equipped with his own money.

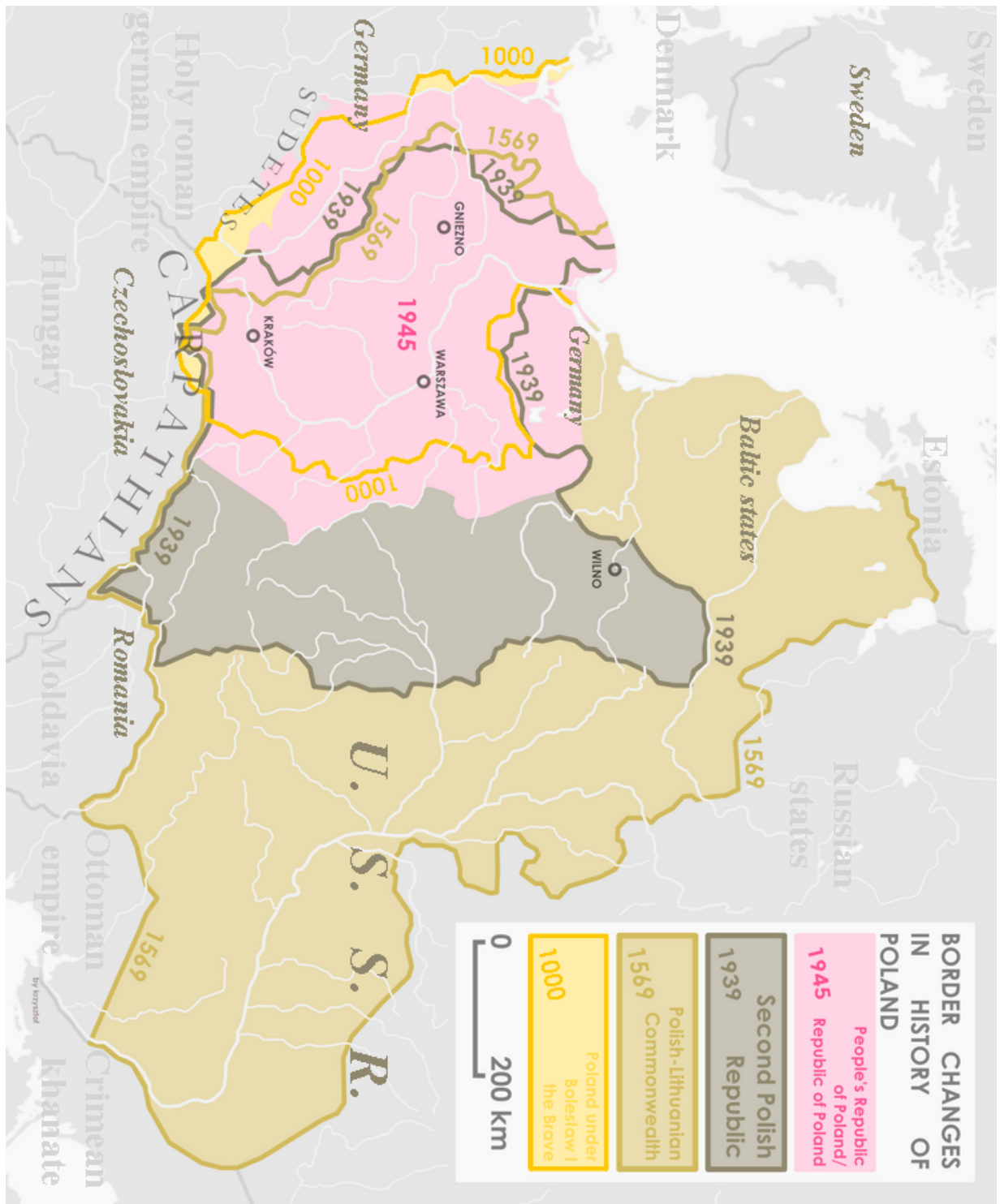
6. Was he a successful real estate owner?

Yes, he was. Restoration of his family estate was his dream. He invested a lot of time and effort to work on the estate in order to not only restore the house to its former glory but also to become a source of inspiration and innovation in the area's farming culture.


ACTIVITY A *[15 minutes]*

A | Distribute the maps of Poland under the partitions and of Poland in the years 1918–1921. Analyze the changes along the eastern border in the years following World War I.





By Krzysztoflew, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2394054>

 **B |** Distribute the copies of propaganda posters from the Polish–Bolshevik War (see the posters on the following pages). Discuss with students the significance of the Polish–Bolshevik War for the interwar political order in Europe. Why was it a formative event for the generation of Witold Pilecki?

Poster 1: To arms! Join the volunteer army!

Poster 2: Only your own army shall defend the nation!

Poster 3: Do you want to let this happen to your women and girls? Defend yourself from bolshevism with all your might!

Poster 4: Away with the Bolshevik!

Poster 5: Bolshevik freedom

Poster 6: Defend your family from the enemy!

Poster1



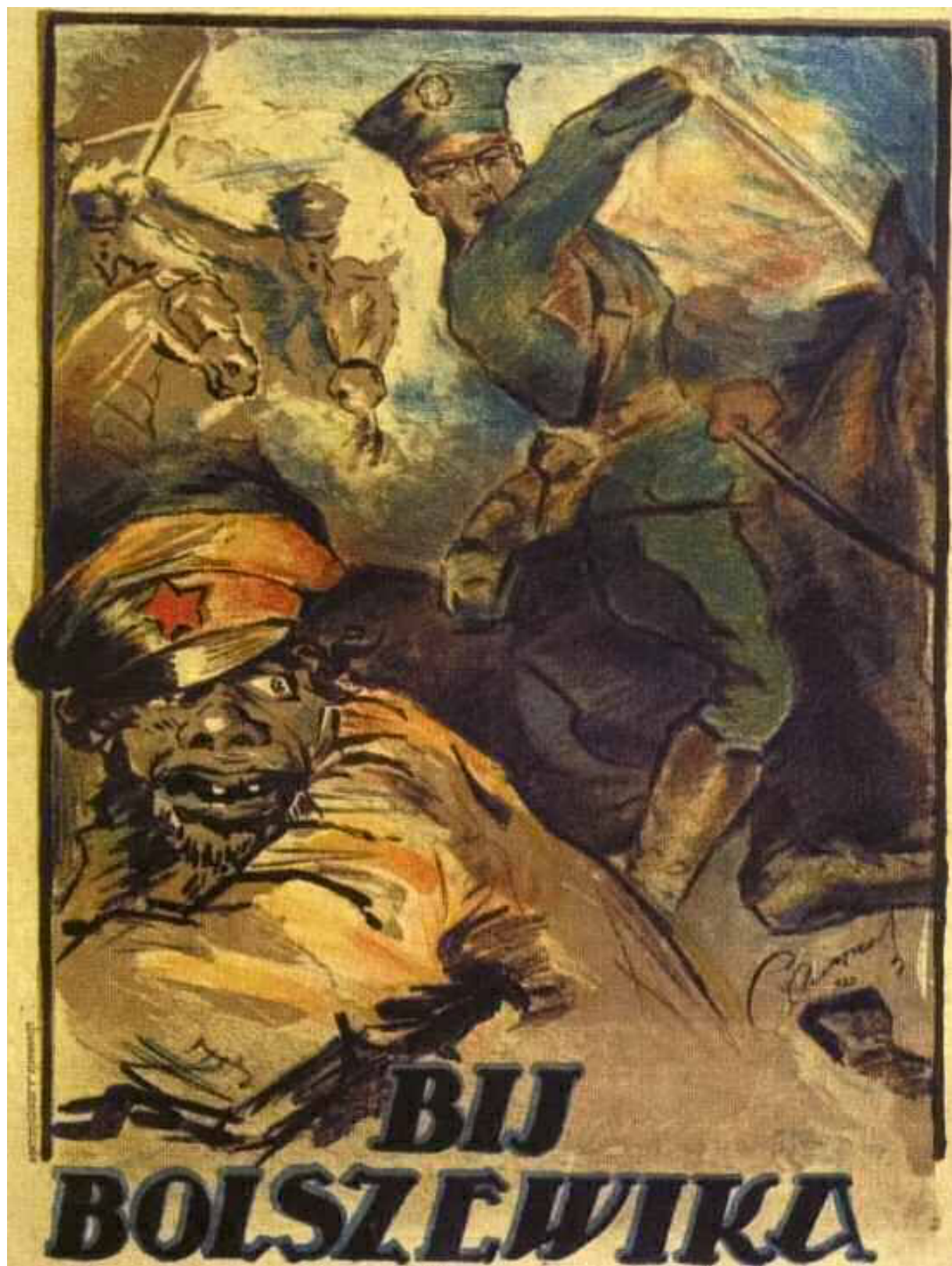
Poster 2



Poster 3



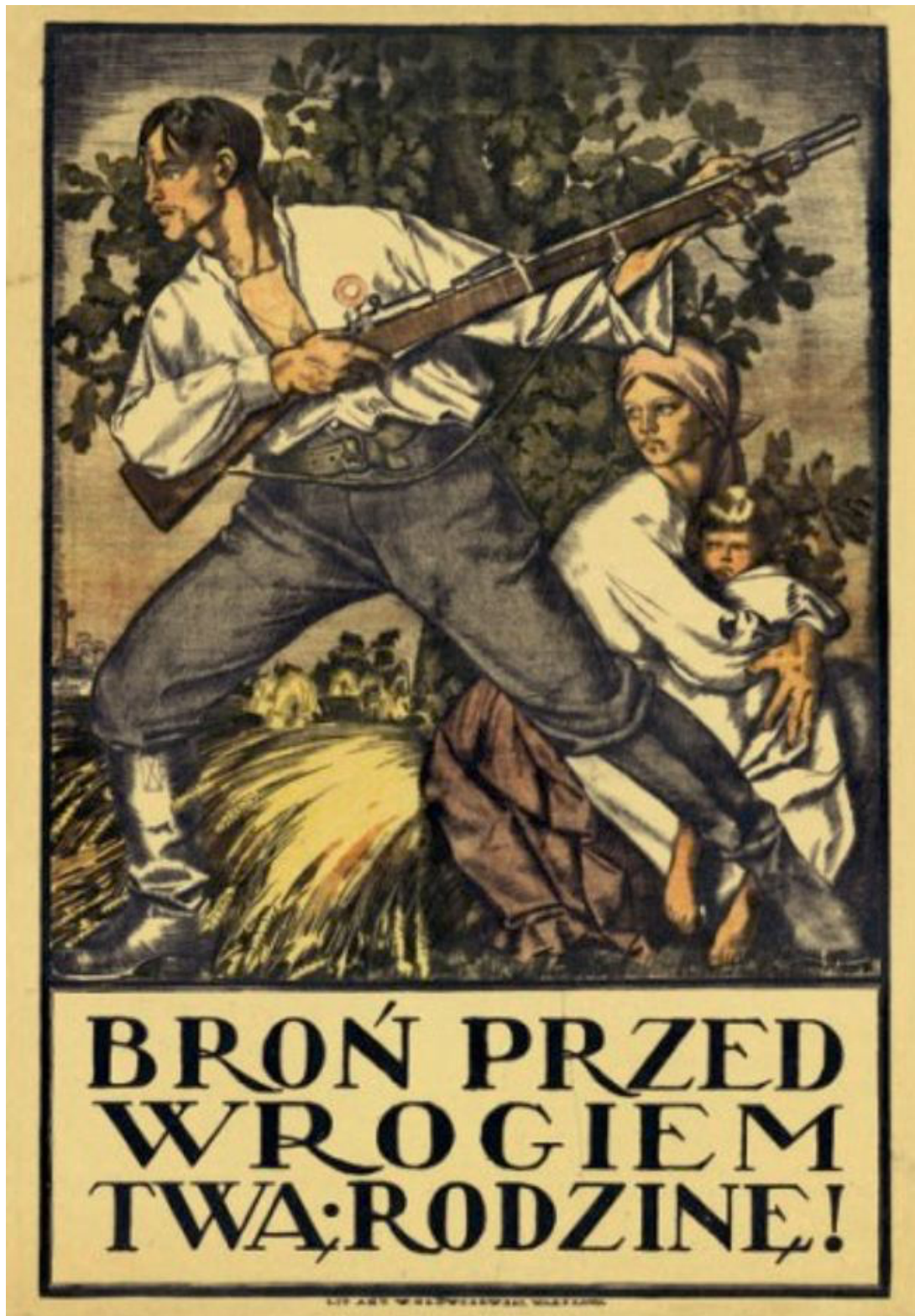
Poster 4



Poster 5



Poster 6



ACTIVITY B *[15 minutes]*

A | Prior to class, duplicate **photographs of Witold Pilecki and his family and separate subtitles.** Divide students into pairs. Provide a set of pictures and subtitles for every pair. Ask the students to match pictures with descriptions.

1.



2

3



4



5



6



7



8



9



10



11



1	WITH HIS WIFE MARIA
2	HIS CHILDREN, SOPHIA AND ANDREW
3	WITH HIS WIFE AND SON ANDREW
4	WITH FRIENDS IN FRONT OF THE SUKURCZE MANOR
5	WITH A FRIEND IN SUKURCZE
6	THE SUKURCZE ESTATE
7	WITH HIS DOG, NERON
8	AT THE PARADE WITH HIS MOUNTED MILITIA UNIT
9	LIDA REGION YOUTH MEETING
10	FARMING LECTURE FOR THE LOCAL COMMUNITY
11	HORSE RIDING COMPETITION

ACTIVITY C *[10 minutes]*

C | Take a look at the collection of photographic portraits of Witold. In what ways does his appearance change? Why do you think the changes occurred?

WITOLD PILECKI
F O T O B I O G R A F I A
P H O T O B I O G R A P H Y



1902



1917



1922



1905



1919



1923



1910



1921



1928

WITOLD PILECKI
F O T O B I O G R A F I A
P H O T O B I O G R A P H Y



1932



1940



1945



1934



1940



1947



1938



1943



1948