

SLOVAKIA DEEP DIVE



**An educational ecology
and history project in Banská Bystrica**

INTRODUCTION

This teachers pack is part of a wider EU-funded project, which involves many different activities and outcomes by a consortium of international partners including ESJF (European Jewish Cemeteries Foundation), Centropa and the Foundation for Jewish Heritage. Part of the outreach side of this project is the ‘Deep Dive’ programme, which has involved a range of different creative and educational activities at seven Jewish cemeteries across Europe. The lead partner for this activity is the Foundation for Jewish Heritage. The Deep Dives aim to explore the potential of different historic Jewish cemetery sites for interpretation, local community engagement, developing heritage skills, and for general educational, cultural, artistic and touristic purposes, and trialling the application of new types of activity including the use of digital technologies. Further information on the Deep Dives: <https://www.jewishcemeteries.eu/deep-dives/>

The range of Deep Dive activities include a digital audio guide, a photographic exhibition, heritage trails, a writer-in-residence programme, a digital mapping project, a documentary film and in Slovakia this education pack for schools, which explores the Jewish history and the bio-diversity of the Jewish cemetery in Banská Bystrica in the Radvaň district.



A BRIEF SKETCH OF THE NATURAL CONDITIONS OF THE BANSKÁ BYSTRICA TOWN

Banská Bystrica is a regional town, located only about 20 km west of the geometric centre of Slovakia. It is the hill Hrb (1,255 m) above the village of Strelníky. Banská Bystrica is situated in the northern part of the Zvolenská basin from the geographical point of view. This town is surrounded by National parks «Veľká Fatra» and «Low Tatras» with pristine forests occurring somewhere. This area is characterized by a variety of natural conditions alongside many plant and animal species, including both thermophilic and submountain ones, which meet and intermingle here. Thermophilic societies of plants and animals are prevailing on southern and SW limestone slopes especially. In the region of Banská Bystrica, there are important protected areas including: Nature Reserve (NR) Urpínska lesostep, NR Baranovo and Protected Area Jakub. Remarkable sites also include the dead arm of the Hron river and the City Park, where a lot of rare and protected species of animals have been found.

Flora of the suburban area is rich and variegated, in the littoral zone we can see narrow-leaved cattail (*Typha angustifolia*), flowering rush (*Butomus umbellatus*), celery-leaved buttercup (*Ranunculus sceleratus*) and yellow iris (*Iris pseudacorus*). In open forest and meadows occur lesser periwinkle (*Vinca minor*), 'yellow star-of-Bethlehem' (*Gagea lutea*), pale-flowered orchid (*Orchis pallens*), lady orchid (*Orchis purpurea*), fly orchid (*Ophrys insectifera*), sword-leaved helleborine (*Cephalanthera longifolia*), old man's beard (*Clematis vitalba*), etc.

Invertebrates: Protected and (or) rare species include Moravian ladybird spider (*Eresus moravicus*), jumping spider *Pellenes nigrociliatus*, and gnaphosid-spiders *Poecilochroa variana* and *Kishidaia conspicua*. Protected and (or) rare species of butterflies include clouded apollo (*Parnassius mnemosyne*), Glanville fritillary (*Melitaea cinxia*), dusky meadow brown (*Hyponphele lycaon*), dryad (*Minois dryas*), large blue (*Phengaris arion*), Meleager's blue (*Poyommatus daphnis*), large copper (*Lycaena dispar*), Jersey Tiger (*Euplagia quadripunctaria*), etc. Neuropterans represent two rare and protected thermophilic species: variegated owlfly (*Libelloides macaronius*) and long-necked mantidfly (*Mantispa styriaca*). The yellow-and-black mud-dauber wasp *Sceliphron destillatorium* hunts spiders as food for its larvae. Orthopterans include the saddle-backed bush cricket (*Ephippiger ephippiger*), Italian grasshopper (*Calliptamus italicus*) and blue-winged grasshopper (*Oedipoda coerulescens*). Large order of beetles represents more than 1,000 species; the protected and remarkable ones include the red flat bark beetle (*Cucujus cinnaberinus*), the false click beetle *Hylis cariniceps*, the silver-fir jewel beetle (*Eurythyrea austriaca*), the oil beetles *Meloe*

violaceus and *Meloe rugosus*, the stag beetle (*Lucanus cervus*), the Alpine longhorn beetle (*Rosalia alpina*), rare darkling beetle *Platydemus dejeani*, rare wingless weevils *Leucosomus pedestris* and *Minyops variolosus*, etc.

Vertebrates: Reptiles include the grass snake (*Natrix natrix*), the smooth snake (*Coronella austriaca*) and the sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*), the amphibians are represented by the spotted salamander (*Salamandra salamandra*) and the green toad (*Bufo viridis*). Birds are living near or directly in the town, including magpie (*Pica pica*), the Eurasian collared dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*), wood nuthatch (*Sitta europaea*), goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*), common swift (*Apus apus*), common kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*), the blackbird (*Turdus merula*), etc. The same concerns mammals, including the mole (*Talpa europaea*), squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*), hedgehog (*Erinaceus concolor*), the European edible dormouse (*Glis glis*) and several bats living in under-roof habitats, including noctule bat (*Nyctalus noctula*), parti-coloured bat (*Vespertilio murinus*) and pipistrelle bat (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*).



JEWISH CEMETERY IN RADVAN

The Diocese of Banská Bystrica in 1856 recorded 30 Jewish people living in Radvan, for comparison in the entire Zvolen County, there were only 58 in that same year. The reasons there were so few Jewish people in that region during that period was because of medieval discrimination laws, which for many centuries excluded Jews from public life. From 1570, on the basis of Maximilian's mining order, Jews were also not allowed to settle in mining towns and their surroundings. This ruling did not change even after the issue of the Toleration Patent (a document that guaranteed religious freedom) by Emperor Joseph II. in 1781.



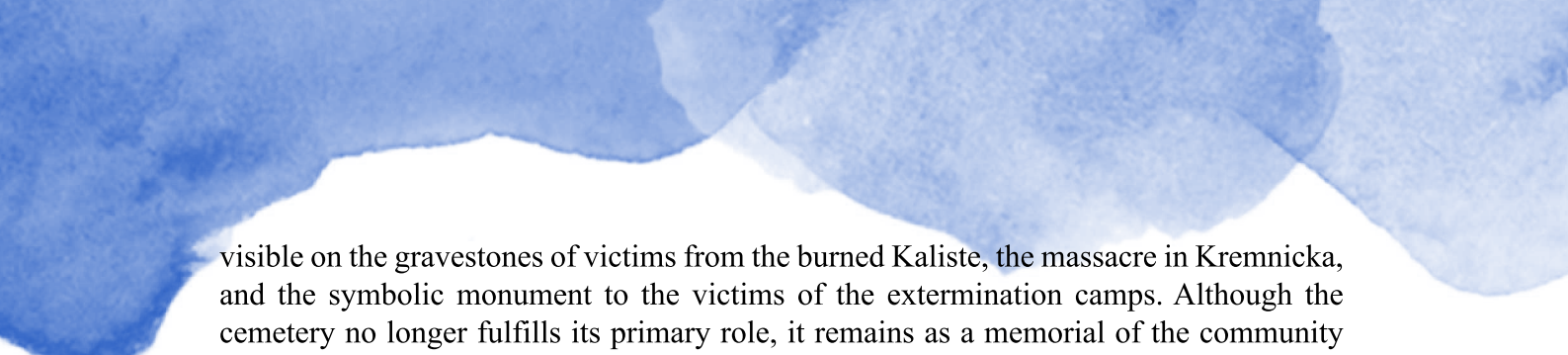
The progressive modernization and liberalization of public life in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in the second half of the 19th century brought about the gradual abolition of such restrictive measures. From 1860 onwards, the ban on Jews settling in mining towns ceased to apply, which triggered a wave of internal migration, with many from the Jewish population moving from the countryside to cities. The Jews from Radvan (at that time, a location near the town of Banská Bystrica) were among the first to settle in Banská Bystrica. In 1867 full equality was granted to Jews by the Emancipation Act, who were then guaranteed the same civil, economic and political rights as other citizens. The following decades were a time of flourishing and prosperity for the Jews. The population census from 1869 recorded 1133 Jewish inhabitants in the Zvolen County. In addition to this population growth, the quality of life of the Jewish community also changed significantly. Many moved to developing cities, where they could freely pursue their professions, become educated, practice their religion, and engage in all aspects of cultural and social life. Many Jewish people rose to the top of the social elite of these cities soon after settling there, and this included the Jewish community of Banská Bystrica. Jews quickly established themselves in Banská Bystrica as successful entrepreneurs, traders, bankers, doctors, pharmacists,

lawyers and other officials. After the creation of the Jewish religious community in 1865, a rabbinate was established in the town, a synagogue was built, alongside a Jewish folk school and a cemetery.

At the beginning of the 20th century, according to the population census from 1910, there were 1,260 Jews living in Banska Bystrica and 3,080 in the entire Zvolen County. The expansion in the development of the Jewish population was only partially disrupted by the First World War and the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The Czechoslovak Republic, as one of the few democratic countries in Europe at the time, consistently respected the minority policy, and during its existence the Jews prospered in terms of population and economy. The years of Second World War were the darkest period in the entire history of the Jewish people. The Slovak martial law, under the rule of Nazi Germany, deprived its Jewish citizens of their property, all civil rights, and in 1942 began their mass deportations to extermination camps on the territory of Poland. Decimated by the Holocaust in the post-war period, the Banska Bystrica Jewish community was not able to resume its activities. However the significant contribution of the Jewish community, to the city is still visible in the tangible heritage that remains there today in preserved monuments which include: the rabbinate building, the Jewish folk school, "Porges palota" (a unique art nouveau building, which had the first elevator in the city, and was financed by the Jewish businessman Samuel Porges), the villa of the Jewish painter Dominik Skutecky, who painted the most famous Banska Bystrica painting "The Market in Banska Bystrica", the Jewish cemetery on Rudlovska road, as well as the garden and the monument to Chaviva Reikova, an important anti-fascist fighter, involved in the Slovak National Uprising.


The Jewish community in Radvan, was the earliest community in the Zvolen County, although it developed in the shadow of the neighboring city of Banska Bystrica. Between 1856 and 1942 there were only 30 and 85 Jewish people living there at any one time. This small community established a small Orthodox synagogue and a mikveh ritual bath on Radvanska Street. The only remaining remnant of the Jews of Radvan is the cemetery, which has approximately 40 graves, and is located in the neighborhood of the old Evangelical cemetery. The Jewish community of Radvan were orthodox, which is why Hebrew or a combination of Hebrew with another language (German, Hungarian, Slovak) can be seen on the tombstone inscriptions there. Traditional symbols of the Jewish faith have been preserved on three tombstones - the symbol of the "Kohen's blessing", which identifies the deceased as belonging to the priestly tribe of kohenim, descendants of the first high priest Aaron. The willow symbol – expressing sadness, which is seen on two tombstones. The identifiable surnames on the gravestones in the Radvan Jewish cemetery include: Weisz, Grosz, Lang, Popper, Krausz, Tandlich and Stern.

The Jewish Orthodox cemetery in Radvani shows that even a "small cemetery" can hold "great history". Hebrew inscriptions and symbols tell us about the ancient history of the Jewish people, the monarchist period is represented by inscriptions in German and Hungarian, the terrible period of Second World War and the Slovak National Uprising are



visible on the gravestones of victims from the burned Kaliste, the massacre in Kremnicka, and the symbolic monument to the victims of the extermination camps. Although the cemetery no longer fulfills its primary role, it remains as a memorial of the community that once added to the landscape and culture of old Radvan. For the rest of us, this should be a warning so that the times of violence and lawlessness never repeat themselves.

Literature:

1. BÁRKÁNY, Eduard – DOJČ, Ľudovít. Židovské náboženské obce na Slovensku. Bratislava 1991.
 2. KRUPOVÁ, Zuzana. K demografickému vývoju na území Zvolenskej župy v rokoch 1787 – 1921. Banská Bystrica 2015.
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 4. SKLENKA, Vladimír. Radvaň. Banská Bystrica 2014.
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GUIDANCE LETTER FOR TEACHERS

The worksheet (*Let's explore nature together*) is intended for elementary school pupils, for activities connected with the Jewish cemetery, which is located in Banská Bystrica in the Radvaň district. It contains several tasks with a biological and historical theme. The characters Adam, Ivan, Klára and Noah will accompany the pupils through the entire worksheet, who will guide the pupils' work.

In the first part, pupils get to know Adam, who wants to explore the local fauna at the Jewish cemetery. The pupils have the task of going through the cemetery and finding some invertebrates and vertebrates. After exploring the surroundings, pupils will write down what they found in Adam's notebook. They also have the opportunity to draw an animal and describe where they found it.

In the second part, pupils will get to know the character Ivan, who will accompany them in exploring the flora of the Jewish cemetery. The pupils' task will be to download the PlantNet application to their phone (available in the Play Store and is free). The application must be installed in advance. It has simple controls. Just take a photo of the plant, confirm the photo by clicking "OK" and click on the character (leaf, flower, fruit, bark, habitus) according to which we want the application to determine the type of plant. And that's done. The pupils will then write the name of the plant in the worksheet, they will have the task of drawing one of the plants and describing its structure (stem, leaf, flower, fruit...).

The third part is the identification of lichens in the Jewish cemetery. In this part, the character Klára will accompany the pupils. In the text bubble there is space to add the term we use to denote lichens (answer: bioindicators). Next, the pupils will have to write down the names of the lichens they found in the cemetery, draw their structure, write where they were located and what quality of the environment the given lichens determine (for example: map lichen, bubble lichen, wall lichen, etc.). They will have a key to identify lichens. In this part, pupils will have the opportunity to watch videos about slow-moving animals that live in mosses using QR codes.

In the fourth part, we come to the character of Noah, who first explains the meaning of his Jewish name and then guides the pupils through the topic: Jewish symbols. The pupils have the task of looking around the cemetery and finding the Jewish symbol (Star of David) and then writing down the place where they found it. Subsequently, Noah tells them about the connection of Jewish symbols with birds. Here the pupils have a task in which they have to match the correct sentence with a picture of a bird (eagle, rooster, dove). Correct answer (First statement - dove, second statement - eagle, third statement - rooster).

The last task is to match the name of the Jewish symbol to the pictures. If the pupils cannot help themselves, they have the opportunity to help themselves on the Internet. (correct answers for this task: 1E, 2B, 3C, 4A, 5D)

After determining the symbols, the pupils are waiting for 2 QR codes with the sounds of birds. Their task is to first scan the code and listen to the recording and then they have to listen to the sounds in the cemetery and find out if any of the birds are also in the cemetery. The last task is the crossword puzzle solution. That's how the students will look for individual clue words of the crossword in the cemetery. They will also have QR codes with pictures in the crossword legend. The crossword puzzle secretary contains **the Jewish expression TIKKUN OLAM**, which means **protection or restoration**. It applies to the whole project as well, the goal of which is to save this Jewish cemetery.

Secretarial solution for pupils

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ENTERING TASKS IN THE SECRETARY

1.

What does this symbol mean?



2.

What do we call fungi that grow on trees and live in symbiosis with algae or cyanobacteria?

3.

The lower part of the moss that is underground is called?

4.

One of the segmented worms who lives in the soil and having a belt (clitellum) is

5.

What is the name of a phylum that was once classified among plants but today forms a separate group?

6.

What do you see in the picture?



7.

What are the animals that live in mosses and you saw them on the video called?

8.

It walks slowly barefoot; it carries the cottage with him. It never does it any other way. You guessed it! It is ...

9.

They don't have
a stem, leaves,
roots and yet they can
carry out photosynthesis,
what is it?

10.

Which lichen
is in the picture?





Let's explore nature together!

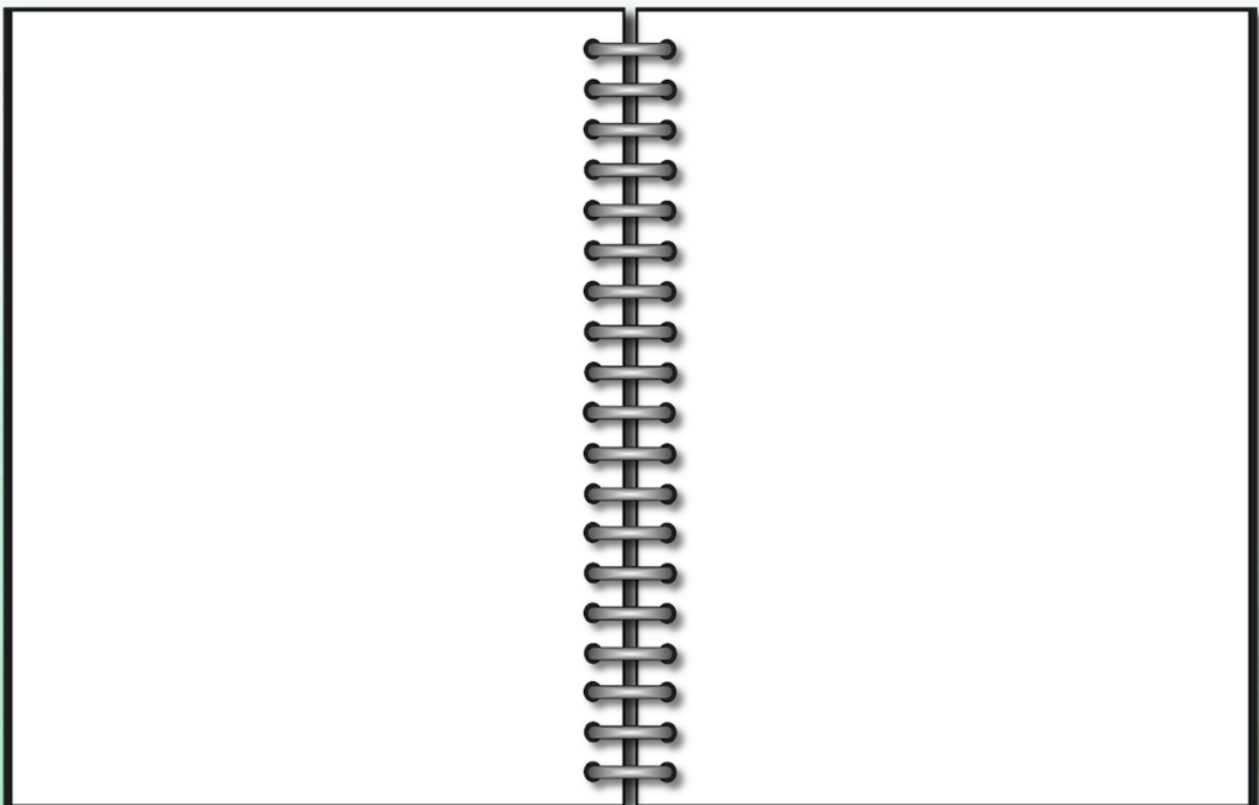


Hi! My name is Adam. I would like to investigate if anything lives in this cemetery. Can you help me?

Let's try to look at some **molluscs** (snails), **arthropods** (spiders, insects), **segmented worms**, **birds** (thrush, dove, pigeon), **mammals** (squirrel).

If you find other species, please write them down in my notebook. If you want, you can also draw an animal. Thank you for your help!

Adam is still exploring the area. Write in his notebook what animals you observed and where you found them. Try to draw one.

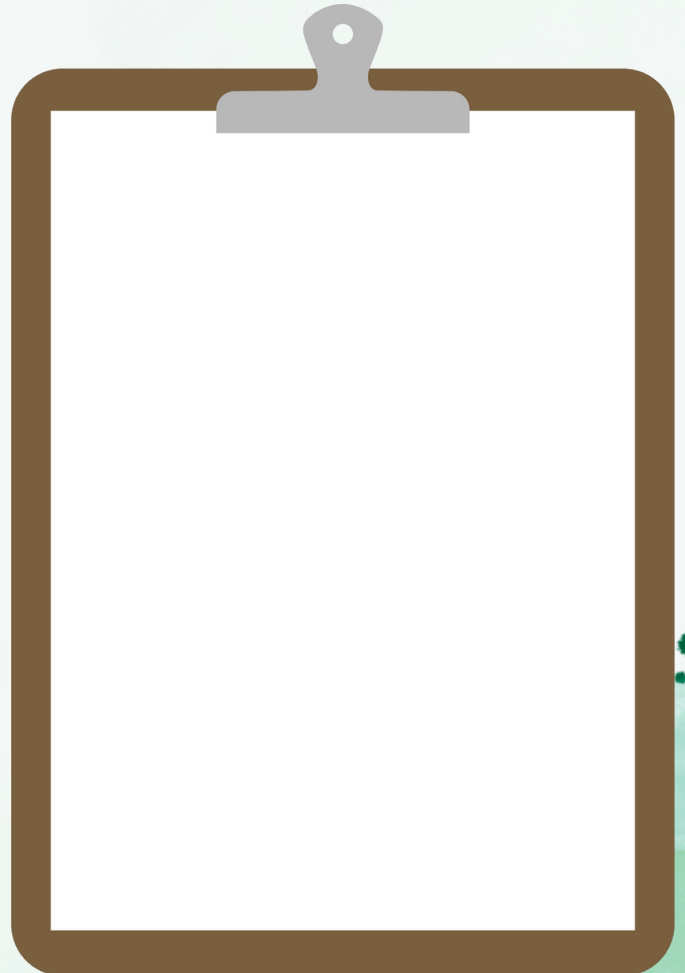
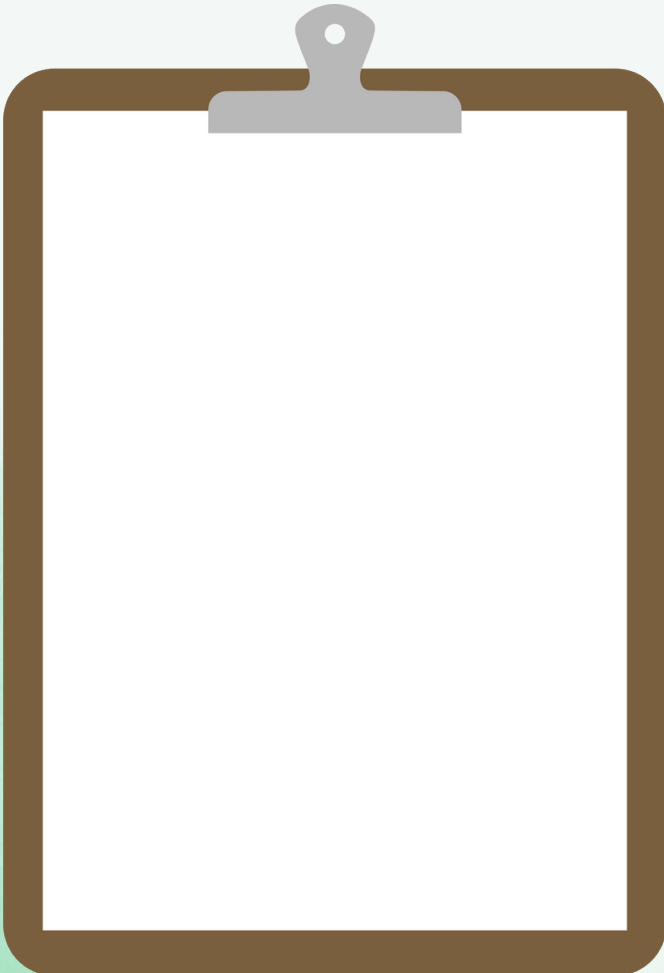




Hi! My name is Ivan. I would like to know what plants grow here. I have the PlantNet application on my phone. All you have to do is take a picture of a plant in it and it will tell you its name. Here is her logo. Shall we look at it together?



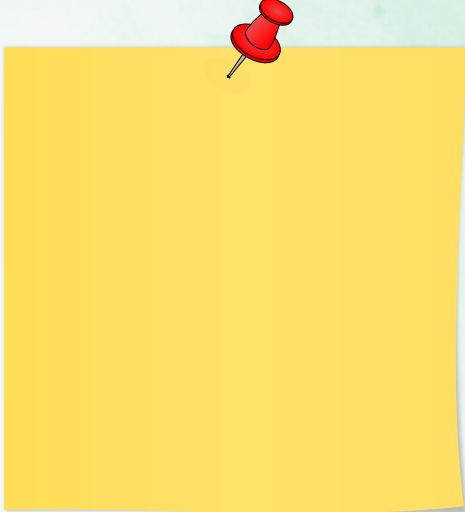
**Write what plants you and Ivan found using the PlantNet application.
Draw one of them and describe its structure (stem, leaves, flower, fruit).**



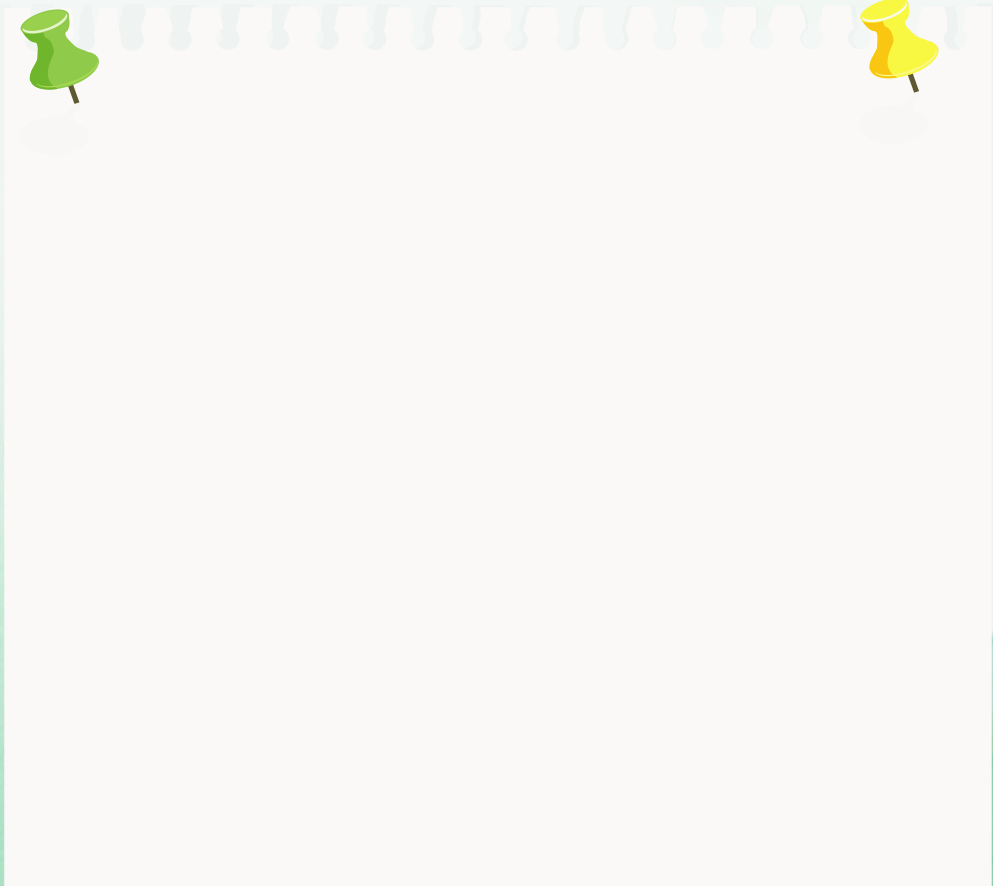


Hi, I'm Klara. I heard that you observed lichens at the last meeting. They can tell us something about the quality of the environment, that's why they are called BIO..... When you find some lichens, we'll look at the mosses. Write what kinds of lichens you saw in the cemetery.

Write what species of lichens you saw in the cemetery..



Here is a place to sketch the lichen you discovered in the cemetery. Write the place where you discovered him. Was it on a tombstone or a tree? According to him, can you determine the quality of the cemetery's environment?



We can find various interesting animals in the mosses, have you heard of Tardigrades ('water bears')? You can see them here:



Did you know such an animal exists?



Hello, I'm Noah. Yes, my name is Jewish origin. It means peace. I am an expert on Jewish symbols. Would you like to meet some?

The most famous symbol is, for example, David's star, you definitely know that one. You can see it on my jug. Do you see her somewhere in this cemetery? Where?



The Jews have among their symbols also those related to biology. It may not have occurred to you that history can be connected to biology. For example, such birds.

For example, for Jews, an eagle symbolizes strength and freedom, a rooster represents a call to prayer, and a dove is a symbol of peace and hope. Let's see if there isn't one here.

**Try to solve the problem based on the information you got from Noah.
Match these sentences with the picture of the bird.**

I am a bird that symbolizes hope and peace. In Judaism, I connect with the story of Noah's Ark.



Representing strength and freedom, I am considered a symbol of God's power and majesty in Jewish texts.



It represents the dawn and the call to prayer, I announce the beginning of the day and wake people up for prayer.





I will also show you other symbols. Maybe you know some of them, since you are interested in this cemetery. Try to assign a name to the symbol. If you are not sure, help yourself on the Internet.



A. Shabbat / Sabbath candles (♀)



B. Kohen's hands (priestly blessing (♂))



C. Menorah



D. Bird (♀)



E. Levit's jug (♂)

Circle the symbol you saw in this cemetery.



I heard you talking about birds. Try using these QR codes and find out if there is one nearby by the sound of birdsong.





And we are nearing the end! Your last task will be solving the crossword puzzle. I just have to find the legend to the crossword.

Oh no! The legend to the crossword was lost while I was walking around the cemetery. Can you help me find it in order to solve out the crossword together?

The solution to the crossword puzzle is a Jewish term that symbolizes protection or repair. Since we want to save this cemetery, this is an important concept for us. Try to find out what the term is.

Crossword puzzle solution

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