

Lesson Plan: “A Box on the Ear”: The Armenian Genocide

Grades: 9-12

Subjects: World History & Geography, Contemporary Issues, English Language Arts

Time required: 3 days

Author: Ethan Holden, Teaching With Primary Sources—MTSU

OVERVIEW

The Armenian Genocide, which took place in the Ottoman Empire, now modern Turkey, is estimated to have killed between 500,000 and 1.5 million Armenians in the years 1915-1917. The Turkish government under the leadership of the Young Turks organized the killings and deportations of most of the Armenian population in Turkey. Armenians were forced on death marches or killed with crude instruments such as picks, knives, and shovels. All of this took place during World War I, in which the Ottomans fought on the side of the Central Powers. After the war the Ottoman Empire was dismembered, and what remained became the Turkish nation.

The legacies of the genocide reverberate throughout the 21st century. Adolf Hitler, in his Obersalzberg Speech, when talking about the viability of the extermination of the Poles during the invasion of Poland, reassured his *Wehrmacht* commanders by saying “Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?” The very acknowledgement of the genocide is controversial; Turkey denies that it happened, and countries like the United States also refuse to acknowledge the genocide. The group the genocide had the largest impact on were the survivors and their families. Armenians were scattered across the globe, and the genocide figures heavily into their culture, music, and memory.

UNDERSTANDING GOAL

Students will understand the causes and effects of the Armenian Genocide on Armenian, Turkish, and World History.

The INVESTIGATIVE QUESTION

How has the Armenian Genocide affected Armenia and what is its legacy on world history?



[Palestine, Jerusalem, Armenian Patriarch](#) [1900-1910]

CURRICULUM STANDARDS

English Language Arts:

- Key Ideas and Details 11-12.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
- Writing: Text Types and Purposes 11-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

Contemporary Issues:

- CI. 14 Recognize the impact of traumatic effects of destructive events on human history
- CI. 15 Describe the relationships between historical events and contemporary issues

World History:

- W.27 Argue human rights violations and genocide, including the Armenian Genocide in Turkey, through collaborative discussions
- W.30: Describe the effects of the war and resulting peace treaties a population movement, environmental changes resulting from trench warfare, the international economy, and shifts in the geographic & political borders of Europe and the Middle East
- W.33 Explain how the outcome of World War I contributed to nationalist movements in the Middle East, India, Africa, and Southeast Asia

OBJECTIVES

- The student will understand the events leading up to the Armenian Genocide.
- The student will define the term genocide.
- The student will recognize the different causes of the Armenian Genocide.
- The student will create an exhibit piece that analyzes and presents a primary source dealing with the Armenian Genocide.
- The student will recognize the “Hamidian Massacre.”
- The student will analyze primary sources to uncover details of the Armenian Genocide.
- The student will learn about the legacies of the Armenian Genocide, including genocide denial.

Resources

(* = Sources graphic in nature)

LESSON PLAN

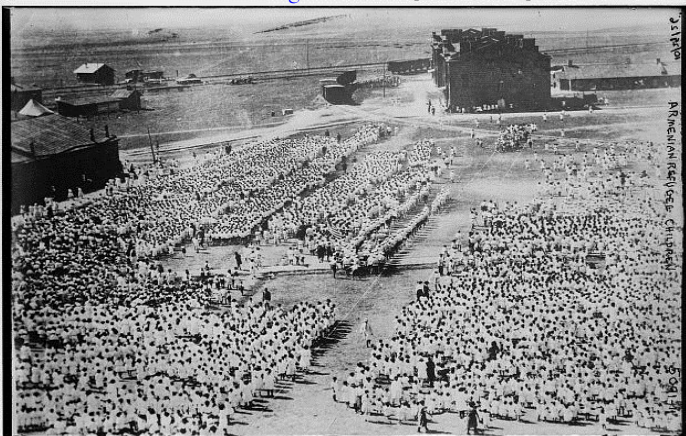
- [The Camp Kitchen. Armenian Camp](#) [1918]
- [Hunger knows no armistice--Near East Relief / M. Leone Bracker 1919 ; Alco-Gravure Inc., New York-Baltimore.](#) [1919]
- [And all those dead of Belgium and all that mighty procession of the slain in Armenia--how if all these hosts still live?](#) [1917]
- [Women living in the streets](#) [n.d.] *
- [Armenian refugee children](#) [1919-1930]
- [They shall not perish ... American Committee for relief in the Near East / Douglas Volk.](#) [1918]
- [Letter from Charles V. Vickrey to John D. Whiting](#) [1917]
- [This image was titled 'Abandoned and murdered small children of the \(Armenian\) deportees' by Wegner and was taken in 1915 -1916](#) [1915-1916] *
- [Orphans under care of American Near East Relief](#) [1921-1922]
- [Lest we perish Campaign for \\$30,000,000.](#) [1918(?)]
- [Our nation song](#) [1917]
- [A group digs up remains of Armenian victims in Der Zor in 1938.](#) [1938] *

- [At historic Marathon--A group of orphans in care of Near East Relief brought out of Asia Minor to safety in Greece](#) [1915-1916]
- [Lest they perish Campaign for \\$30,000,000.](#) [1917]
- [Western Union. Anglo-American direct United States cablegram ... Jan 14, 1921.](#) [1921]
- [This picture from 1915 shows soldier standing over skulls of victims from the Armenian villages of Sheyaxlan in the Mush valley during the First World War](#) [1915] *
- [Near East relief](#) [1915-1916]
- [Give or we perish American Committee for Relief in the Near East--Armenia-Greece-Syria-Persia--Campaign for \\$30,000,000 / / W.T. Benda ; Alco-Gravure Inc., N.Y.](#) [1917]
- [The proclamation of the President of the United States of America to the American people and The message of the Federal council to the churches and Christians of America.](#) [New York, 1916]. [1916]
- [A crowd looks on as Armenians are hanged in the street in Constantinople before their forced removal to the desert had begun after April 1915](#) [1915] *

Materials

- [Primary Source Analysis Tool](#) & [Teacher's Guide](#)
- [Armenian Genocide PowerPoint](#)
- [Armenian Genocide essay](#)
- Printed Sources

[Armenian refugee children](#) [1919-1930]



[The Camp Kitchen. Armenian Camp](#) [1918]



DAY 1

The first day of the lesson plan is designed to give your students background knowledge of the events leading up to the genocide. Because this lesson plan requires a good deal of teacher background knowledge, we have developed an essay on the Armenian Genocide for the teacher to read. This essay was developed in conjunction with MTSU faculty member Dr. Sean Foley and represents leading academic thought on the Genocide. The structure of the essay roughly follows the three days of the lesson plan, and though it is designed for teachers you can distribute it to your students if you so desire.

Special Note This lesson plan tells the story of a government who enacted deadly pogroms against one of its minority groups, the Armenians. Though this story deserves to be told in its entirety, special care should be taken by the teacher to not reinforce or introduce anti-Muslim sentiment. The events of 1915-1917, while horrific, have been repeated on larger and smaller scales in the 20th and 21st century across the globe by a multitude of different nations, ethnicities, and religious groups.

Step 1 Begin "A Box On the Ear": The Roots of the Armenian Genocide" PowerPoint.
As mentioned elsewhere, the PowerPoint and the essay were developed hand in hand. You can use the essay and the PowerPoint in conjunction with one another to give the lecture of the roots of the Genocide. If you would like to read more about the Armenian Genocide, a resource list will be provided at the end of the lesson plan.

DAY 2

Special Note Today your students will look at primary sources to learn more about the Armenian Genocide. Your students will be divided up into groups and each will be handed a primary source analysis tool. Before you start your group work, you will be required to give one last bit of background information. Those slides will be explained in detail in the following steps.

Step 1 This bell-ringer is meant to get your students thinking about what a primary source is and how it can be used to uncover the past. Spend about 5-7 minutes on discussion at the beginning of class, though keep in mind that you have a lot of ground to cover today.
Slides 16-17

Step 2 The Battle of Sarikamish is an important event to cover because the Armenian Genocide did not happen in a vacuum. This was a catastrophic loss for the Ottoman Army against their archenemy Russia. Instead of accepting the loss as caused by terrible planning and generalship, leading officials of the Ottoman government blamed the Armenians for the loss. Thus the genocide of the Armenians was considered a measure of "national defense," and on day three your students will see that the Turkish government to this day maintains that it was not a genocide because of "national defense."
Slide # 18

Step 3 This slide details the process of who assigned blame, how they did so, and why they did it. If you have any questions about slides 18 and 19, the Armenian Genocide essay provides great background information. For further reading, see the end of this lesson plan for more information on the Armenian Genocide.
Slide # 19

Step 4 Now begins the group portion of the lesson plan. Divide your students up into five groups. Each member of the group will receive a [Primary Source Analysis Sheet](#) and will be expected to complete and turn it in at the end of class. The sources for each group are located at the end of the lesson plan. **Note:** each group will have a primary source in their packets that is graphic by nature. Though high school students should be able to handle these images, it is recommended that the teacher preview the images and assess their viabilities for their respective classes.
Slide # 20

Step 5 Depending on how many students are in your class, each student in each group should receive one source. A total of thirty sources are provided for this lesson plan. As your students are analyzing the sources, circulate around the room and answer any questions that they might have.

The guiding question for the analysis is, "What effects did the genocide have on the Armenian community?"

Step 6 Have each of your groups present their sources to the class. There is some leeway here to the presentation method. You can have each group member comment on their source, or you can have the group appoint a spokesperson. It might also be helpful to pull up each source on your projector for the class to see.

Step 7 Slide # 21	This slide gives the details of the Armenian Genocide. Emphasize the effects that the genocide had on the Armenian community. The accompanying essay provides some useful information on the fate of the Armenian populace. The goal is that by the end of the lesson, your students will be prepared to talk about the legacies and controversies of the Armenian Genocide.
DAY 3	
<i>Special Note</i>	This last day has the potential to be the most controversial and perhaps the most useful to your student. Recognition of the Armenian Genocide is still a very sensitive and controversial topic, some of which is partisan in nature and some is religious in nature. By having your students examine the different arguments associated with its recognition, you can encourage your students to become better critical thinkers and engaged global citizens.
Step 1 Slide # 23	This bell-ringer is designed to be a reflective piece. As this is a relatively unknown genocide (in the U.S.), receiving very little media attention or being mentioned in the U.S. History curriculum, it should be common that your students have not heard of it. Spend about 5-7 minutes talking about why it did or did not surprise them.
Step 2 Slide # 24	This slide is fairly self explanatory. It is a way to draw the students in because of World War II's popularity and the fact that Hitler is easily recognizable. Ask them how they thought Hitler viewed the Armenian Genocide based on this quote. What do they think he meant?
Step 3 Slide # 25	<p>Have your students get out a sheet of paper. Have them number the front and back from one to six. Inform them that they will be working with their elbow partners. Alternatively, if the teacher wishes to have them in formal groups this exercise could work, or if you would rather them work alone and report out that is fine as well.</p> <p>Each of these questions tackle some of the major issues of the recognition of the Armenian Genocide. As you ask each question, give your students a few minutes to discuss amongst themselves and write what they come up with on their paper. Reconvene the class after each question and have your students report out. Be sure to press the students during this step. For example, if a student responds to the question "Why do you think Turkey denies the Genocide?" with "because they do not want to be seen as terrible people," point out that Germany officially recognizes the Holocaust. Point out that maybe Turkey will not accept responsibility because it was technically the Ottoman Empire that enacted the genocide. Playing devil's advocate will encourage deeper thinking and retention.</p> <p>It might also be useful to provide time for others to respond. If you choose to do this, make sure you set appropriate guidelines for discussion to ensure a positive learning environment.</p>
Step 4 Slide # 26	This picture shows billboards that contain both pro-Armenian and pro-Turkish messages. Ask your students what the messages of each of the billboards are. What kind of symbolism is used? Where are they located? What language are they in? Do they effectively convey their messages? Why or why not? Have you had any experiences with social issues being displayed in such a way? Does this surprise you? Why or why not?
Step 5 Slide #27	For more information on this slide, please see the attached essay.
Step 6 Slide # 28	Wrap up with the quote on this slide and have each student turn in their notes from the discussion.

The Final Project—Virtual Museum Project and Presentation

<i>Note</i>	This virtual museum project is a great way to cap off the Armenian Genocide in your class as well as providing an opportunity to involve the rest of the school. This is not a mandatory project and is included as a final project/extension suggestion. The idea for this project came from Dr. Jae Turner’s History 2020: U.S. History from 1865 syllabus at Middle Tennessee State University and has been adapted for high school use. Please note the teacher will have to develop the Prezi from the student contributions.
Goal	The class will collaborate to build a “virtual museum” that explores the different topics, themes, and events of the Armenian Genocide through artifacts and material culture. You will research and contribute one historic artifact to the collaborative class Prezi which will contain the museum collection.
The Artifacts	You will identify and research one artifact or material culture piece. To ensure that there are no repeats within each class, you will be required to complete a sign-up sheet with your name, artifact, and the artifact’s location. It is a purely first-come, first-serve basis. An artifact must be selected within two class periods.
The Report	The formatting of your report will be in 12 point Times New Roman font, double spaced, with 1 inch margins. It will include the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Name, date, and class 2. The title and type of the object you are presenting 3. The source of your object. Please note: if an online source, include the URL 4. Summary of the description of your object 5. Explanation of how your object is related to the big picture of the Armenian Genocide 6. Picture of your object <p>Your report will be submitted by email to your teacher.</p>
The Presentation	You will be required to share your findings to the rest of the class in a 3-5 minute presentation to the rest of the class. This presentation will be a summary of your findings on the report. Create a short PowerPoint for your presentation.
Grading Criteria	To receive credit for your assignment, you must complete the report and the presentation. The percentages break down as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report: 70% • Presentation: 30%
Available Resources	The following lists online collections and resources that students could use to find their chosen artifact or material culture: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library of Congress • Tennessee State Library and Archives • Armenian-Genocide.org • The Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute • Armenian Genocide Museum.org <p>Please note that while Google Images is a very helpful search engine when looking for images, artifacts, and material culture, the student MUST be able to identify the object as a genuine artifact from the Armenian Genocide. Failure to do so will result in an incomplete grade being assigned to the student.</p>

GROUP SOURCES

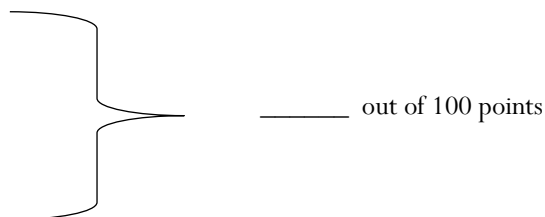
Group I	Group II	Group III	Group IV	Group V
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Near East relief [1915-1916] • Give or we perish [1917] • Proclamation of the President (pg.2)[1916] • Armenians are hanged in the street [1915] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At historic Marathon [1915-1916] • Lest they perish [1917] • Western Union [1921] • Soldier standing over skulls of victims [1915] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temple of Jupiter [1921-1922] • Lest we perish [1918] • Our nation song [1917] • Remains of Armenian victims [1938] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Armenian refugee children [1919-1930] • They shall not perish [1918] • Letter from Charles V. Vickersey [1917] • Murdered small children [1915- 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Camp Kitchen [1918] • Hunger knows no armistice [1919] • Dead of Belgium [1917] • Women living in the streets [n.d.]

EVALUATION

Day 1: Notes _____ out of 25 points

Day 2: Primary Source Analysis Sheet _____ out of 50 points

Day 3: Question Sheet _____ out of 25 points



Virtual Museum Project

REPORT

- (30%) How much does your artifact contribute to the understanding of the Armenian Genocide? Does your report feature original critical thought?
- (30%) Does your report include all required elements?
- (20%) Is your artifact relevant and or pertain to the Armenian Genocide?
- (10%) Is your source credible?
- (10%) Does your report follow the formatting instructions?

PRESENTATION

- (60%) Is your presentation organized?
- (20%) Do you cover all the points of your report in your presentation?
- (20%) Do you meet the time requirements?

EXTRA READING/MATERIALS FOR THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

- [The Armenian Past of Taksim Square](#) (*New Yorker*)
- [Songs and Music of Refugees of the First World War](#) (Library of Congress)
- [Sweden: Parliament Approves Resolution on Armenian Genocide](#) (Library of Congress)
- [H.Res.106—110th Congress \(2007-2008\)](#) (Library of Congress)
- [Near East Museum.com](#)
- [The Armenian Genocide: Genocide and Mass Violence](#) (Facing History and Ourselves)
- [Teaching the Armenian Genocide With Primary Sources: From the New York Times](#) (*New York Times*)
- *Armenian Golgotha: A Memoir of the Armenian Genocide, 1915-1918*, Grigoris Balakian
- *Not Even My Name: A True Story*, Thea Halo
- [The Armenian Genocide: THE GREAT WAR-Week 37](#) (YouTube)
- [WWI The Complete Series part 4 of 10 \(Jihad\)](#) (YouTube)

EXTENSION IDEAS

This lesson plan lends itself to cross-curricular instruction. The Armenian Genocide affected everything from art to music to literature in Armenian culture. This can be applied to other subjects in the following ways:

- Art teachers can have their students analyze Armenian artwork for influences of the Armenian Genocide. How does the Armenian Genocide show up in these pieces? What type of symbolism is used? What do you think the artist is trying to communicate? You could then have your students create a piece of art with themes/symbolism present from something important/significant in the student's life.
- English teachers have a unique opportunity to expose their kids to the rich literature that surrounds the Armenian Genocide. *Not Even My Name: A True Story* by Thea Halo is a poignant recollection of the Armenian Genocide and what it did to her and her family. Have your students examine the major themes and symbolism present in the selected literature and list them. You can then have your students compare those major themes and symbols with other survivor accounts from tragic events, like the Holocaust or the more modern conflicts in Africa and Syria.
- Political science teachers could use this as an opportunity to talk about the United States and its role on the global stage. During the Armenian Genocide, an American relief group called [The Near East Relief](#) sent supplies and medical care to Armenian and Greek refugees immediately following World War I. Woodrow Wilson backed these efforts. Have your students debate what the role of the United States should play in the world. Why should we help/not help other nations? Furthermore, you can discuss the politics that surround the denial of the Armenian Genocide. Should we recognize it? Is it any of our business? Why or why not?
- Music teachers can use this as an opportunity to expose students to Armenian [folk music](#). In fact, the famous singer Cher is of Armenian descent. Much like English and Art, they can examine the lyrics and the way that the music is composed and determine what the composer is trying to convey.