

RESISTANCE, AGENCY, AND EMPOWERMENT

The Armenians

Standards:

CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy: WHST 9–10.9 Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research

CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy: WHST 11–12.9 Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy: RH.9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in text, including vocabulary using political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

Lesson Objectives / Student Outcomes

- Students will research who the Armenians are from ancient times to 1914.
- Students will apply the concepts of resistance, agency, and empowerment to Armenians through 1909.

Materials


- Student handouts of *A Brief History of the Armenian Genocide*
- *A Road Less Traveled: The Handjian Story*

Differentiation

Excerpt from *A Brief History of the Armenian Genocide* can be read as a whole group, in pairs, or independently as needed.

Lesson Plan: 50 minutes

Review concepts from Day 2, specifically the terms resistance, agency, and empowerment.

Watch:  A Road Less Traveled: The Handjian Story *

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ue_NB2mcEbg

*Note: The first two minutes are the same as the *Life Before Genocide*, featured in Day 2.

Hand out copies of *A Brief History of the Armenian Genocide*. Students should read the selection and annotate examples of Armenian resistance, agency, and empowerment. They should add these examples to their handouts.

Ask students to retrieve their Project Save photo from Day 2. Based on what they have learned today, how has their understanding of the people in their picture changed?

Formative and/or Summative Assessment

Ask students to find examples of resistance, agency, and empowerment in their own lives and reflect on how their experiences are similar and different from the Armenians.

Glossary:

Diaspora: The part of a national population that has been dispersed from its ancestral home or lands

Ottoman Empire: An empire which lasted from 1453-1922 ruled by Seljuk Turks in Southwest Asia. At its height, the Empire stretched from Eastern Europe to North Africa. The Empire ended with the formation of modern Turkey.

Nationalism: Loyalty and devotion to a nation, especially a sense of national consciousness exalting one nation above all others and placing primary emphasis on promotion of its culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations or supranational groups.

Turkification: The process of destroying cultures of non-Turkic origin within the Ottoman Empire during the final years of the Ottoman Empire and the early years of modern Turkey.

A Brief History of the Armenian Genocide (Excerpt*) **.by Sara Cohan, The Genocide Education Project**

Who Are the Armenians?

The Armenians are an ancient people who have existed since before the first century C.E. Armenia has gained and lost a tremendous amount of territory throughout its long and turbulent history. Boundaries of the past have extended from that of the present-day Republic of Armenia and through most of modern day Turkey. The name “Armenia” was actually given to the country by its neighbors; inhabitants of Armenia refer to it as “Hayastan” derived from the name Haik, a descendent of Noah (from the Bible), and “stan” which means “land” in Persian. The Armenian language is unique from other IndoEuropean languages, with its own distinct letters and grammar.

Christianity is a deeply rooted aspect of Armenian history and culture. Armenia was the first nation to adopt Christianity as a state religion, in 301 C.E. This early Christian identity has greatly influenced Armenian culture, setting it apart from most of its neighboring peoples. The majority of Armenians belong to the Eastern or Western dioceses of the Armenian Apostolic Church, an orthodox form of Christianity.

Although Armenia was at times a kingdom, in modern times, Armenia has been an independent country for only a few years. It first gained independence in 1918, after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, but this ended when Armenia was invaded by the Red Army and became a Soviet state in 1920. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Armenia was the first state to declare its independence, and remains an independent republic today. Armenia is a democracy and its borders only include a very small portion of the land that was historic Armenia.



King Tigranes II. 95-96 C.E.

Early Massacres

The Seljuk Turks began to inhabit Anatolia as early as the eleventh century and by 1453 their descendants, the Ottoman Turks, had captured Constantinople (now Istanbul), firmly establishing the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire was a multinational state that incorporated several ethnic groups including the Armenians. The Armenians were second-class citizens of the Ottoman Empire and while they were granted some freedoms, including the ability to practice Christianity, they were faced with extra taxes and discriminatory laws extending to their participation in the justice system, government, and their civil and property rights.



By the mid-1800s, as the idea of constitutionalism swept through Europe, some Armenians began to demand more rights, such as protection from corrupt government officials and biased taxation.

While most Armenians saw themselves as members of the Ottoman Empire, organized groups of intellectuals protested the discriminatory laws, seeking reform from the government, though not an independent sovereign state.

During the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire experienced a period of decline, during which it lost territories to Russia, Great Britain, and new states created by nationalities that had once been part of the Ottoman Empire, such as Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania. Early in the century, Russia had gained some of the eastern Armenian provinces, including Tiflis, which became a cultural center for Russian Armenians. Russian Armenians became increasingly interested in supporting Armenians within the Ottoman Empire in their quest for human rights.

The newly created Ottoman Armenian political organizations received some support from Russian Armenians and Russia in their quest to gain equal rights under Ottoman law. The Treaty of Berlin (1878) included a clause that would provide more rights for Ottoman Armenians, including fair taxation practices, protections from tribal attacks, and the right to give evidence in Ottoman courts of law.

Unfortunately these rights were never granted as the Sultan was empowered by the treaty to serve as the protector of the Armenians. This was in contrast to the terms of the earlier Treaty of San Stefano, which the Treaty of Berlin replaced, and which had assigned the Russians the responsibility of ensuring that the Armenians in Ottoman territory would gain more rights. The reason for the change was that the presence of Russian troops in the region was of concern to Great Britain and the other “Great Powers” of Europe who wanted to deter the expansion of Russia.

After the Treaty of Berlin, Ottoman Armenians continued to protest discriminatory laws and eventually the Sultan responded to these protests with massacres. Massacres of the Armenians began in the late nineteenth century under Abdul-Hamid II, the last of the Ottoman Sultans actually to rule the empire. The worst massacres during this time occurred from 1894-1896 after a tax protest by Armenians. They are now known as the Hamidian Massacres and some believe represented a foreshadowing of the Genocide to come.

During the Hamidian Massacres, 100,000 to 300,000 Armenians were killed in towns and villages throughout areas of the Ottoman Empire.

Thousands of Armenians fled and found refuge in Europe and the United States. Some who stayed converted to Islam in order to save their own lives.

The massacres caught the world’s attention because of their unique nature. Armenians were unarmed and adhered to the perimeters set forth by the Ottoman government. The massacres were publicized in newspapers throughout the world. The U.S. media paid particular attention to the events. The New York Times as well as other news sources regularly published articles about the brutal killings, coverage that would continue through the Armenian Genocide.

Many American missionaries and diplomats who worked throughout the Ottoman Empire witnessed the atrocities firsthand and helped mobilize relief efforts. Aid for Armenian victims became the first international mission of the American Red Cross.

Later during the genocide, a society known as the Near East Relief would raise more than \$100 million in assistance to Armenians; the funds collected saved countless Armenian lives in the 1890s and during the Genocide, which at the time represented more money than all the aid raised to help tsunami victims in 2005. While the funds collected saved countless victims' lives, it was the only aid Armenians would see.

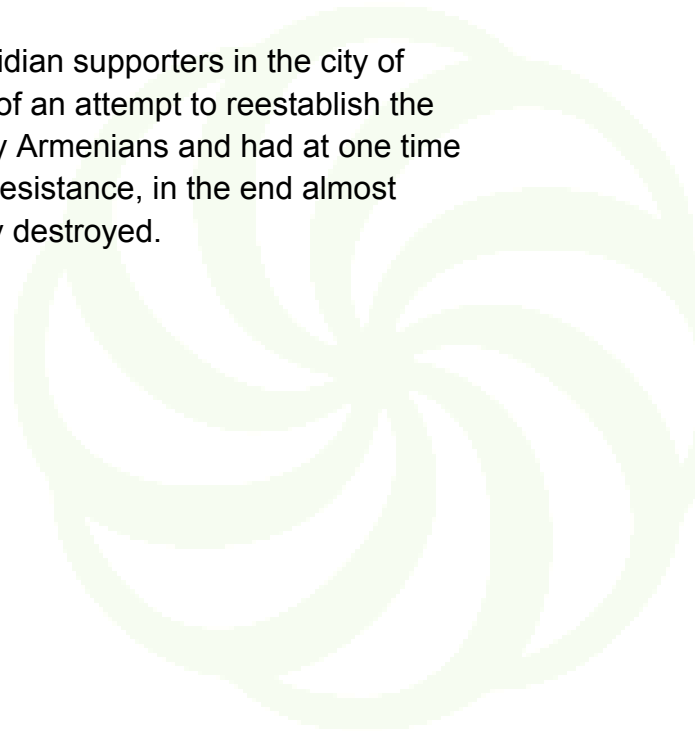
Hope to Despair

In 1908, Armenians and other minorities of the Ottoman Empire began to rejoice in what promised to be a new era of tolerance and the establishment of a participatory government in the Ottoman Empire.

Armenians, Arabs, Greeks, Jews, and Kurds had begun working with a group of Turks to challenge the authority of the Sultan. This group was known as the Ottoman Liberals and the Turkish coalition of the group adopted the name "Young Turks." They wanted to create a modern state that represented inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire more equally and render the Sultan politically powerless. In 1908, one of the Young Turk groups, the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), marched on Constantinople, and overthrew Sultan Abdul-Hamid.

Over the next year, the Ottoman Empire developed a constitutional government providing equal rights for all of its citizens. Ottoman Armenians hoped that the new constitution would protect them from the violence they endured under the Sultan. However, as time passed, advocates of liberalism in the government lost out to a group promoting authoritarian rule and a radical policy of Turkification.

In April 1909, Armenian hopes were dashed as Hamidian supporters in the city of Adana carried out a massacre of Armenians as part of an attempt to reestablish the power of the Sultan. Adana was heavily populated by Armenians and had at one time been part of Armenian territory. Despite attempts at resistance, in the end almost 30,000 Armenians were killed and nearly half the city destroyed.



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