



The Genocide Education Project

One Family's Key to Survival Humanizing History Through Objects

Rationale:

Using objects to humanize history is a powerful strategy for History and English Language Arts teachers. In this lesson, students will engage in artifact analysis and develop critical thinking skills as they closely examine a selected item. The activity is designed to fit within a single 50-minute class period.

Sequence:

Grades 6-12

English Language Arts and Social Studies Classes

Humanizing History Through Objects is an appropriate lesson for beginning a study of genocide, using the Armenian Genocide as a case study. Please utilize resources available on [The Genocide Education Project's website](https://www.genocideeducationproject.org/) to deepen students' understanding of the Armenian Genocide. The lesson can also introduce artifact analysis to students in any subject.



Student Outcomes:

Students will analyze an object for its intellectual, emotional, and historical meaning and importance to those who use it.

Students will interpret the story that an artifact can tell, specifically related to the Armenian Genocide.

California State Standards:

CCSS:

RH.6–8.1 / RH.9–10.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

RH.6–8.6 / RH.9–10.6: Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose.

RH.6–8.7 / RH.9–10.7: Integrate visual information (e.g., charts, photographs, videos) with other information in print and digital texts.

WHST.6–8.2 / WHST.9–10.2: Write informative/explanatory texts.

WHST.6–8.4 / WHST.9–10.4: Produce clear and coherent writing appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

WHST.6–8.9 / WHST.9–10.9: Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CA HSS 10.5.5: Discuss human rights violations and genocide, including the Ottoman government's actions against Armenian citizens. (Also see Armenian Genocide section of [CA HSS Framework, 10th grade, Chapter 15, pgs 343-365](#))

ELD.PI.6–12.1: Exchanging information and ideas with others through oral collaborative discussions.

ELD.PI.6–12.4: Adapting language choices to various tasks and audiences.

ELD.PI.6–12.10: Writing informational texts using appropriate register, style, and vocabulary.

Materials:

[Artifact from the Armenian Genocide](#)

[Analyze an Artifact](#)

[One Family's Key to Survival](#) video

[Survivor testimony: Hayastan Maghakian Terzian](#)

[Claim Evidence Reasoning Handout](#)

Optional: Sugar cubes for students to taste

Process:

For students unfamiliar with the Armenian Genocide, teachers should provide background with resources from [The Genocide Education Project's Teaching Guides webpage](#). Additionally, short readings and video options are suggested in the [Resistance, Agency, and Empowerment teaching guide, Lessons 2 & 3](#).

Step One:

Hand out the [Analyze the Artifact](#) worksheet or provide it electronically. Review the descriptors in the boxes so students know what they are looking for and should be thinking about. *Note: Any photo analysis handout works well for this activity.*

Step Two:

- Hand out photocopies of the [Artifact from the Armenian Genocide](#) or provide it to students electronically. If possible, provide larger color prints to allow for easier object analysis. Ask students to analyze the artifact independently first, using their own observation and critical thinking skills to answer the questions on the worksheet.
- Ask students to collaborate with a partner or work in small groups to compare their analyses.
- Lead a whole-group discussion with students sharing their thoughts and analyses.

Step Three:

Watch [“One Family’s Key to Survival”](#) video together as a whole group. Have students focus on watching and reading the first time through. (Ask them to turn their worksheets over before starting the film so they aren’t tempted to correct anything.)

- In pairs or small groups, have students discuss what they got right about the object. How did the information from the video help them better understand the significance and importance of this object? Show the video again so students can focus on different areas of information. Provide time for them to revisit their analysis and make any additions to it.

Step Four:

- Take time to debrief with students. This is a disconcerting story of genocide, and students may need to share their thoughts and feelings to process what they have just learned and how they feel. Simply inviting students to share their thoughts, feelings, and reactions will help them better process this.

Step Five:

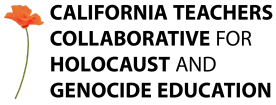
- Present students with the [Survivor testimony: Hayastan Maghakian Terzian](#). Have students first examine her photo, then read her testimony. Using the [Claim, Evidence, Reasoning Handout](#), students should answer the CER writing prompt. (*Note: For more information on how to use the Claim, Evidence, Reasoning writing strategy, please visit this [link](#).*)

Differentiation/ Enrichment:

To learn more about important Armenian artifacts, please consider these two lessons:

[Survivor Objects: The Zeytun Gospels](#)

["Bird Letters"](#)



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Artifact from the Armenian Genocide



Analyze an Artifact

Analyze an Artifact

Meet the artifact.

Material (check all that apply):

☐ Bone

☐ Pottery

☐ Metal

☐ Wood

☐ Stone

☐ Leather

☐ Glass

☐ Paper

☐ Cardboard

☐ Fabric

☐ Plastic

☐ Other

Observe its parts.

Describe it as if you were explaining it to someone who can't see it.

Think about: shape, color, texture, size, weight, age, condition, movable parts, or anything written on it.

Try to make sense of it.

Answer as best you can.

Where is it from?

When is it from?

Who used it? List reasons you think so.

What was it used for? List reasons you think so.

What does this tell you about the people who made and used it?

What does it tell you about technology at the time it was made?

What is a similar item from today?

Use it as historical evidence.

What did you find out from this artifact that you might not learn anywhere else?

What other documents or historical evidence are you going to use to help you understand the event or time in which this artifact was used?



Materials created by the National Archives and Records Administration are in the public domain.

Survivor testimony: Hayastan Maghakian Terzian



b. 1903, Kharpert

My brother-in-law was American Consul Davis' body-guard in Mezre and the Consul himself saved my father's life. There was a Turkish gendarme by the name of Shadhe who wanted to kill my father. Consul Davis came all the way to our door in Pazmashen. My father was hiding in the back, in the wood shed. He came on his horse and took my father back with him to the Consulate.

When the deportations began, I went to Mezre to say goodbye to my father. He cried. The Consul saw him and told me to stay. Later, my mother escaped from the deportation and also came to the Consulate. We were in the American Consulate during the deportations. Consul Davis saved us. Everybody else, my sisters, my maternal aunt—all of them, all of them—were deported. Our whole village was wiped out.

We lived in the Consulate until 1922. On September 7, 1922, our family left Kharpert along with 250 Armenian orphans on horses and wagons. My father was asked by the Near East Relief to oversee the transportation of these orphans from Kharpert to Aleppo.

From Aleppo we went to Beirut, then to Marseille, and then by ship we came to Providence, Rhode Island.

“One of the persons whom I took in the Consulate was an old man who lived in the village of Pazmashen, which was about two hours distant. He had lived in America for many years and I felt interested in him. Learning that the people of his village were to be deported and that many of the men already had been arrested and put in prison, I resolved to go out to look for him and try to bring him back with me. I went alone on horseback... Not a traveler was to be seen and not a living person except the gendarmes. On arriving at Pazmashen, I found the man still there but greatly frightened. He had escaped arrest the day before by hiding all day in a dark hole in the house... By means of a friendly word and a little money it was quickly arranged for the old man to leave with me... I rode on horseback and he walked alongside, trying to keep out of sight as much as possible... We came by a circular route and arrived at the Consulate toward night. The old man was Krikor Maghakian.” [Hayastan’s father]

Leslie A. Davis, American Consul General at Kharpert, February 9, 1918

US State Department Record Group 59, 867.4016/392

Claim, Evidence, Reasoning Handout

Student name: _____

Using today's sources, *One Family's Key to Survival* video, the artifact, and Hayastan Maghakian Terzina's photo and testimony, answer the following *question*:

How does exploring a variety of sources help us gain a better understanding of a historical event?

Claim: <i>(This is your answer to the question.)</i>	
Evidence: <i>(What text/media/artifact support(s) your claim?)</i>	
Detail 1:	Detail 2:
Reasoning: <i>(How does the evidence support the claim?)</i>	



References:

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