

Recognizing the Armenian Genocide

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Date: May 11, 2018

Lesson Plan

Unit Topic: The Armenian Genocide

Lesson: Recognizing the Armenian Genocide

Rationale for the Lesson:

The Armenian Genocide, known as the first genocide of the 20th century, was the systematic annihilation of the Christian Armenians of the Ottoman Empire, present day Turkey, during World War I. The Armenian Genocide is a human rights violation because it is an act committed with an intent to destroy an ethnic and religious group. Today, after 103 years, Turkey still denies the Armenian Genocide. The Armenian Genocide is only recognized by 28 countries and the United States of America is not one of them. This lesson plan will provide an overview of what happened, why the Armenian Genocide is not well known, and what can be done to memorialize it.

Standards:

- 6.1.4.D. 16 – Describe how stereotyping and prejudice can lead to conflict, using examples from the past and present.
- 6.1.4.D.19 – Explain how experiences and events may be interpreted differently by people with different cultural or individual perspectives.

Essential Question/Guiding Question:

What was the Armenian Genocide? Who was responsible for the Armenian Genocide? Why is this history not well known? How can the United States play a role in memorializing the Armenian Genocide?

Objectives:

- Students will be introduced to the history of the Armenian Genocide.
- Students will be able to understand that today, scholars recognize the Armenian Genocide as a stark violation of human rights according to the United Nations.
- Students will be able to understand why the United States has failed to recognize this historical event as a “genocide” to date.
- Students will be able to understand the importance of recognizing and memorializing the Armenian Genocide.

Lesson Opener/Anticipatory Set/Lead-In/Do Now:

Instructor asks students to take out a piece of paper and write down their best guess to the question: What is genocide? (2 minutes)

Instructor calls on volunteers to share their answers, and then leads a discussion of the definition of genocide according to UN.

According to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948), Genocide: is any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to the members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within group; and forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.”

Step-By-Step Procedures with Time Allocations:

Step 1: Opening activity: After handing out paper and pencil, students will answer the question written on the board “What is genocide?” and discuss it together as a class. (5 minutes)

Step 2: PowerPoint presentation on the Armenian Genocide focusing on the following: What was the Armenian Genocide? Why did the Armenian Genocide happen? Who was responsible for it?

Step 3: Introduce Arshile Gorky to the students. Ask the students to write down why they think he changed his name to Arshile Gorky? Then show his famous painting “The Artist and His Mother”. Ask students to analyze the painting and write down what they think. Then discuss it together as a class. (5 minutes)

Step 4: After analyzing the painting, the audience will watch the video clip “Arshile Gorky: Ararat (Excerpts)” where they will see Arshile Gorky, a survivor of the Armenian Genocide, paints “The Artist and His Mother” and how he struggles emotionally. They will watch how that picture was taken in Gorky’s hometown. (7 minutes).

Step 5: Ask students to compare the original picture taken at Gorky’s hometown with the painting Gorky painted at his studio in NYC. Then, discuss it as a class. (10 minutes).

Step 6: Read an article published by CNN about how Obama broke his promise to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide on his 7th year of presidency.

Ask students why Americans refuse to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide?

Step 7: Watch an Armenian Genocide survivors’ testimony. Then, ask the students to think of what can be done to memorialize the Armenian Genocide internationally and a reason or two of what impact the U.S. will have in memorializing the Armenian Genocide? We will have a discussion together. Then, I will share the reasons why U.S. is not recognizing the Armenian Genocide on the PowerPoint presentation.

Lesson Closure:

Discussion: Do you think Americans should acknowledge the Armenian Genocide? Why? How should we memorialize this event?

Materials and Equipment Needed:

Paper, pencil, marker, white board, projector, projector screen, Wi-Fi.

Assignment:

Students will do activities to understand the trauma survivors have left with after the Armenian Genocide. There will be a lot of discussions throughout the presentation.

Assessment: (how will I evaluate student learning?)

I will ask students to write down three things they’ve learned about the Armenian Genocide.

Modifications for diverse learners (how does this lesson make accommodations?)

Students can raise their hands at any time to ask questions if any given information is not clear. I will also walk around the classroom throughout the presentation to make sure every student is doing good.

Teaching Kit

The Armenian Genocide movie, directed and produced by Andrew Goldberg.

https://www.amazon.com/Armenian-Genocide-Andrew-Goldberg/dp/B000FIFHZ0/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1522039668&sr=8-1&keywords=armenian+genocide+dvd

A book called "They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else": A History of the Armenian Genocide (Human Rights and Crimes against Humanity) by Ronald Grigor Suny.

https://www.amazon.com/They-Live-Desert-Nowhere-Else/dp/0691175969/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1522039847&sr=8-1&keywords=armenian+genocide

The Promise 2017 movie.

https://www.amazon.com/dp/B071ZMK6KF/ref=sxbs_sxwds-stvpv2_1?pf_rd_m=ATVPDKIKX0DER&pf_rd_p=3524794302&pd_rd_wg=JCt5p&pf_rd_r=MH23HF9XACXS8Z5ZY8GM&pf_rd_s=desktop-sx-bottom-slot&pf_rd_t=301&pd_rd_i=B071ZMK6KF&pd_rd_w=90lrm&pf_rd_i=armenian+genocide&pd_rd_r=541dc719-30b5-4ae6-aeb7-66a80fd58e9e&ie=UTF8&qid=1522039847&sr=1

For 7th year in a row, Obama breaks promise to acknowledge Armenian genocide

By Jake Tapper, CNN

Updated 1:56 PM ET, Fri April 24, 2015

Washington (CNN) This week is the 100th anniversary of what many historians acknowledge as the Armenian genocide -- the Turkish massacre of an estimated 1.5 million Armenians

And it's also the seventh year in a row President Barack Obama has broken his promise to use the word "genocide" to describe the atrocity.

It's a moral position taken by Pope Francis, actor George Clooney and even by the Kardashians.

On the 2008 campaign trail, Obama promised to use the word "genocide" to describe the 1915 massacre by Turks of Armenians -- a pledge he made when seeking Armenian-American votes.

Back then, he held up his willingness to call it a "genocide" as an example of why he was the kind of truth-telling candidate the nation needed.

In 2006, after the U.S. Ambassador to Armenia was asked to resign for using the term Armenian genocide, then-Sen. Obama hammered the Bush administration for not taking a stand.

"The Armenian genocide is not an allegation, a personal opinion, or a point of view, but rather a widely documented fact supported by an overwhelming body of historical evidence," he said.

But that was then.

And now, as was the case with Bush, Obama regards Turkey -- the only Muslim majority country in NATO -- as a more crucial ally than Armenia. Turkey has the second-largest military in NATO, behind only the U.S., and is a crucial ally when it comes to Syria, ISIS, Iran and other Middle East issues.

And Turkey denies this history.

"We cannot define what happened in 1915 as a genocide," Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu told CNN on Tuesday.

In her Pulitzer Prize-winning book about genocide, Obama's current Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power hammered U.S. policy makers for not acknowledging or acting to stop such atrocities.

"No U.S. president has ever made genocide prevention a priority, and no U.S. president has ever suffered politically for his indifference to its occurrence. It is thus no coincidence that genocide rages on," she wrote.

Annotated Bibliography

Akçam, Taner. *A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility*. Metropolitan Books, 2006. Print.

Taner Akcam is a Turkish historian who acknowledges the Armenian Genocide and has been studying the Armenian Genocide for a long time. Currently, he is expelled from Turkey. In this book, Akcam provides background information on how Young Turks come to conclusion to annihilate the Armenians from Ottoman Empire. The main leaders of the Young Turks were Talaat Pasha who was the Minister of Interior and Grand Vizier, Enver Pasha who was the Minister of War, Djemal Pasha who was the Marine Minister and Governor of Syria, and Dr. Nazim and Dr. Shakir.

The decision to annihilate the Ottoman Armenians was made during the winter of 1914. The Young Turks wanted to put an end to the Armenian Question. Ottoman Armenians demanding to be treated fairly and not as a second-class citizen where they had to pay higher taxes. The Young Turks desired to have a homogenous state with no ethnic minority groups residing in the Ottoman Empire. The breaking of World War I helped the Young Turks to begin their plans for the Turkification of Anatolia.

Arango, Tim. “‘Sherlock Holmes of Armenian Genocide’ Uncovers Lost Evidence.” *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 22 Apr. 2017. Web. 12 Feb. 2018.

This article by Tim Arango is about Taner Akcam, a Turkish historian at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, who uncovers the lost evidence of the Armenian Genocide. After World War I, the original documents of the military tribunals that sentenced the genocide’s planners were gone missing. The original documents and sworn testimonies had vanished. As a Turkish historian, Akcam who is banned to enter Turkey has been studying the Armenian Genocide for decades through documents that been spread around the world. Recently, he finds an original telegram from the trials in an archive held by the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem and he hopes it would remove “the last brick in the denialist

wall.” But he has a little hope that his new finding would immediately change things in Turkey given the fact that the current president of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has turned more nationalist.

For decades, Turkey has been resisting to use the word genocide. They claim the suffering of the Armenians had nothing to do with them. At the same time, Turkey also claims the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire were traitors. They had been planning to join with Russia, then an enemy of the Ottoman Empire.

Countries such as France, Germany, and Greece have recognized the Armenian genocide and their political relationship with Turkey have been affected. When Pope Francis recognized the mass killing of the Armenians as genocide, he faced a lot of criticism from Turkey. Unfortunately, the United States still did not refer to what happened to Armenians as genocide.

“Arshile Gorky: Ararat (Excerpts).” *YouTube*, uploaded by National Gallery of Art, 30 May 2014.

This short video clip is from the movie *Ararat*. Arshile Gorky, an Armenian-American painter who survived the Armenian Genocide, paints an existing picture of him and his mother. The picture was taken in Ottoman Armenia before the Armenian Genocide. Gorky names it “*The Artist and His Mother*” which becomes his most famous art work.

However, there was a difference between the actual picture and the painting. Because Gorky witnessed his mother’s death, he painted her as a spirit and not as a living being. In the painting, he and his mother looked very sad.

While painting, Gorky experiences emotional challenges because he recalls the difficulties and challenges they went through during the deportation.

Arshile Gorky was born as Vosdanig Adoian but after the Armenian Genocide he immigrated to the United States, changed his name to Arshile Gorky, in honor of the famed Russian writer Maxim Gorky. Thus, he invented a new life for himself trying to his best to forget what he went through.

Crimes against Humanity and Civilization: The Genocide of the Armenians. Brookline, MA: Facing History and Ourselves, 2004. Print.

This is a great resource book that provides useful information about the Armenian Genocide. Chapter one covers the topic of identity and history. One's identity plays an important role to understand who they are from their families, values, history, and traditions. One's name has a deep meaning because it connects them to their ancestor's history and impacts on their identity. The importance of one's name increases especially among individuals who live outside their traditional homeland.

Peter Balakian, an Armenian prominent writer, mentions in his memoir *Black Dog of Fate*, how his mother's name, Arax, had caused trouble for non-Armenians to pronounce but Arax is a name of eastern Anatolia and the southern Caucasus, where the Araxes River flows from the Ararat plateau eastward and makes a border uniting Armenia, Turkey, and Iran. Arax is a name that means turbulence, synonymous with the river.

Those who are born and live their life outside their traditional homeland have multiple identities. Diana Der-Hovanessian is an Armenian-American writer born in the United States but her grandparents came to the United States from Ottoman Armenia. In her poem "Two Voices," she reflects on how her family history influences who she is as a person. "Two Voices" begins with a question from the British writer D.M. Thomas; "Do you think of yourself as an Armenian? Or an American? Or hyphenated American?".

Morgenthau, Robert M. "Will Trump Tell the Truth About the Armenian Genocide?" *The Wall Street Journal*. Dow Jones & Company, 25 Jan. 2018. Web. 20 Feb. 2018.

This article by Robert M. Morgenthau is about the likelihood that the president of the United States, Donald Trump, might also recognize the Armenian Genocide as he recognized Jerusalem the capital of Israel at the beginning of 2018. Former presidents such as Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama had promised during their candidacy to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and move the embassy to Jerusalem. However, none of them kept their promise once they become the president of the United States.

Turkey has been an American ally for a long time and they have been pressuring the American administrations to not acknowledge the Armenian Genocide. So far, they have been successful because every April, the president of the United States issues a proclamation recognizing the crime that was inflicted on the Armenians but that proclamation has never contained the word "genocide".

Henry Morgenthau, the author's parental grandfather, was a witness to the Armenian Genocide. He was the president Wilson's ambassador to the Ottoman Empire. When he protested to Turkish leaders for their brutal actions against Christian Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, they responded that the Armenians were not American citizens, therefore, it is not your concern.

When Henry Morgenthau returned to the United States, he spent his days helping the survivors of the Armenian Genocide therefore, he was known as "Uncle Henry" at Ellis Island where many survivors arrived at. He didn't stop there. He taught his children and his grandchildren the history he had witnessed.

Suny, Ronald G. *"They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else": A History of the Armenian Genocide.*, Princeton University Press, 2015. Print.

This book by Ronald G. Suny is an excellent source to gain knowledge about the Armenian Genocide. Around 2 million Armenians were living in the Ottoman Empire and the majority were peasants and townspeople in the six provinces of eastern Anatolia. The number of Armenians had resided in eastern Anatolia outnumbered the number of Muslims in most locations. The most influential and prosperous Armenians lived in the imperial capital, Istanbul where they had been targeted to official and popular hatred from many Muslims.

The Armenian Genocide, the first genocide of the twentieth century, was organized by the Ottoman politicians associated with the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), known as the Young Turks. The Young Turk government gradually weakened the Armenian communities in the Anatolia. They first demobilized Armenian soldieries and then systematically killed them. Subsequently, the Armenian intellectuals and politicians in Istanbul were killed. Thus, the Young Turks removed the brain of the Ottoman Armenian people. Hence, the deportation of women, children, and old men had begun. They were marched through the valleys and mountains of eastern Anatolia. Many of them starved to death, got kidnapped, raped, and shot. Those who survived the death marches reached the deserts of Syria where they languished in concentration camps and continued to suffer.

By the end of the World War I, 90 percent of the Ottoman Armenians were gone, a culture and civilization wiped out never to return.