

RATIONALE:

In its curriculum guide for grades 9-12, the N. J. Commission on Holocaust and Genocide Education asks, "What does the mandate require?" The answers direct us to teach tolerance, encourage a depth of conscience in our pupils, and provide a focus on personal responsibility against prejudice. The Commission also asks us to assure that students grasp the consequences of ignoring those who hate. The sum of those ideals leads us to prepare a response to those who would question the authenticity of facts that document the Armenian Genocide.

This guide for dealing with questions surrounding the occurrence of the Armenian Genocide is intended to add to the classroom teacher's approach to applying the lessons of 20th century genocides while meeting the New Jersey core curriculum standards for social studies. It should hopefully promote discussion as to how the Ottoman Empire victimized their Armenian populace in 1915. Folded into lessons designed to teach tolerance, recognize prejudice, or preclude bigotry, it should help students synthesize historical facts and interpretations to reach personal conclusions about significant historical events (6.3.13).

HELPFUL SOURCES/SITES:

Museum/Research Center:

http://genocide-museum.am/eng/armenian_genocide.php

Online Exhibition: http://genocide-museum.am/eng/online_exhibition.php

Armenian National Institute:

<http://www.armenian-genocide.org/>

The Armenian Research Center:

<http://www.umd.umich.edu/dept/armenian/>

Text: The Armenian Genocide 1915-1923: a handbook for students and teachers / Zetlian, Garine.

Library Resource:

<http://www.teachgenocide.org/>

Zoryan Institute Bibliography of Genocide Denial:

http://www.zoryaninstitute.org/Genocide/genocide_biblio_denial.htm

New Jersey Commission on Holocaust and Genocide Education;
<http://www.state.nj.us/education/holocaust/>

A RESPONSE RESOURCE FOR CLASSROOM TEACHERS:

FIELDING COMMON
QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE
HISTORY THAT DOCUMENTS
THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE



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QUESTIONS SURROUNDING DENIAL OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE:

Q: Who were the Armenians in the days of the Ottoman Empire?

A: The Armenians were a Christian people living in the predominantly Muslim Ottoman Empire on land that was part of their home for almost 3,000 years.

Q: Is there any evidence to prove that the Armenian Genocide took place?

A: Yes. Independent reports to the U.S. Ambassador, Ottoman government documents, telegrams confirming orders, and photographs depicting forced evacuation and torture are all accessible for research.

Q: How do we know that the Ottoman government of 1915 was behind the oppression of Armenians living under its control?

A: In May of 1915, Ottoman government leaders legalized the deportations on paper and justified for the record their plan to exterminate Armenians under their domain. The Prime Minister kept daily tallies of those deportations.

Q: Were there any eyewitnesses to the events comprising the Armenian Genocide?

A: Yes, there were many. One of them, a man serving with the German Army in Anatolia, photographed both massacred Armenians and those being deported. His photos are available online.

Q: How did the Ottoman government rationalize violence against minorities in their own territory in 1915?

A: Excuses included the prior Armenian self-defense effort when attacked by Ottoman forces, the risk of Ottoman Armenians siding with enemy armies in World War I, and the purported disloyalty of Armenians to Ottoman governance.

Q: Did the U.S. government attempt to help the Armenian victims in 1915?

A: Not by force. Despite first hand reports of atrocities and pleas from the U.S. Ambassador, President Wilson clung to the protocols of his era & his hope to remain neutral in WW I. American citizens were not directly involved and no U.S. government facilities were threatened. Those facts limited formal U.S. participation to requests & inquiries, leaving any true aid for the victims to come from private citizens and charitable entities. That response was generous.

Q: Do we know how many people were killed in the Armenian Genocide?

A: Generally, but not exactly. Most scholars estimate 1.5 million (90% of Anatolian Armenians), but official Turkish government figures are as low as 600,000.

Q: Was anyone ever brought to trial as a perpetrator in the Armenian Genocide?

A: Yes. The Ottoman government held War Crime trials to prosecute those responsible for the massacres. Although the highest-ranking officials had fled, they were convicted in absentia. The victorious Allies held similar trials, but political considerations brought the process to an end in 1921. The evidence verified the identities of the perpetrators and the extent of their crimes.

Q: Why should we study the Armenian Genocide?

A: To make certain that there is not even a minor debate over whether or not it occurred. A genocide denied is a successful genocide, which the world cannot allow.
