The Armenian genocide, 1915

Lesson series
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Introduction

This lesson series addresses the Armenian genocide and has been developed by NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide studies. The lessons aim to give pupils a wider historical perspective on the concept of genocide in general, and on the Armenian genocide in particular.

It is a subject that will intrigue pupils, may cause emotions and also deep astonishment: how is it possible that this happened at this scale? And why do we know so little about it?

Pupils learn what genocide means exactly, that the Holocaust is not the only genocide, and that the genocidal process has a huge impact in a society. The Armenian genocide, which took place a century ago, still has an impact today.

The lessons can be offered within the framework of WWI or the Middle East and address the topics genocide and rising nationalism. Pupils will work with primary sources in all three lessons.

The lesson series ‘The case 1915’ has the following set-up:

Lesson 1 The Armenian genocide, 1915. What happened to the Armenians?
In the first lesson pupils investigate the historical background of the genocide. They write a statement of facts and reconstruct, using primary sources, the events that led to the genocide.

Lesson 2 The Armenian genocide, 1915. How could this happen?
In lesson 2 pupils look at how the process of genocide can be explained and are introduced to two theoretical frameworks which help clarify genocide. Again, this is done on the basis of primary sources.

Lesson 3 The Armenian genocide, 1915. Forgetting the past?
Lesson 3 provides guidelines to discuss the denial of the genocide by the Turkish state.

The lessons have been developed as a unit, but can also be offered separately. If, for example, you have already addressed the background of the Armenian genocide in a previous lesson, then you can offer lesson 2 and/or 3. To provide more context, however, we advise you to start with lesson 1.

Please note: pupils with a Turkish background may have a very strong opinion about this topic. Some may question the view, supported by scholars, that the Armenian genocide is rightfully a genocide. If this is the case, the discussion almost always focuses on the question whether the Turkish government at the time had the deliberate intention to massacre the group and can degenerate into a useless yes/no discussion. We advise you to focus instead on the course of the genocidal process and the facts (eyewitness statements of outsiders, newspaper articles, photographs and government documents; please also refer to the source index). More than one million Armenians were murdered during WWI and the rulers at the time played an active role in it. The label you attach to this crime is, in this context, of a lesser importance. At the same time, however, it is important that pupils are introduced to the concept of genocide and the problems surrounding the exact definition of this concept.

Lesson 1 - What happened to the Armenians?

Lesson description

Summary
This lesson introduces the theme of the Armenian genocide. Pupils learn about/are introduced to the massacre of the Armenians during WW1 and can determine at the end of the lesson why this
was genocide. The statement of fact the pupils write can also be used as context for lesson 2 'The Armenian genocide, 1915. How could this happen?' and lesson 3 'The Armenian genocide, 1915. Forgetting the past?'

**Learning goals**

**Pupils**
- examine the historical background of the Armenian genocide.
- examine the historical background of the rising Turkish nationalism before and after WW1.
- discover that the Holocaust was not the first genocide.
- are introduced to the concept of genocide and the 1948 definition. Can this concept also be used to interpret the events in the Ottoman Empire?

**Activities**

**Pupils**
- discuss with the teacher, in a 'Socratic' dialogue, the associations triggered in them by the photograph with the people in cattle wagons and relate them to events in the Ottoman Empire during WW1.
- watch the section indicated in the PowerPoint about the documentary by the American CBS documentary 'Battle Over History - A Genocide' (1m00s - 7m49s).
- write a statement of facts based on primary sources providing insight into the events that led to the genocide on the Armenians in 1915.
- are introduced to the definition of the concept of genocide and the characteristics of the genocidal process.

**Duration**

At least 50 minutes.

**Level and method**

The lessons are suitable for higher secondary school pupils, but you may have to adapt the material depending on their level.

**Preparation**

- Print the pupil work sheets. Pupils work in pairs.
- Give each pupil a source index (on paper or digital).
- Study the lesson contents and possibly additional information on this site.
- Ask pupils to bring a pair of scissors and glue (see assignment 1).
- Arrange big sheets of paper that the pupils can use to glue assignment 1 on (optional)

**Overview lesson plan**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Introduction theme and film fragment</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>plenary</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 1</td>
<td>- Statement of facts part A: the Turkish Empire circa 1900</td>
<td>25 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>in pairs</strong></td>
<td>- Statement of facts part B: what is the most reliable source? Why?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Assess / discuss</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 2</td>
<td>Do plenary assignment 2</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>plenary</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>Summarise the conclusion of the lesson</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Lesson plan - contents and background

Introduction

Slide 1

Introduce the theme based on the first slide of the PowerPoint.
Possible questions:
- What do you see on the photograph?
- What are your feelings looking at this photograph?
- What do you think this photograph is about?

Pupils will probably refer to WWII – the photograph reminds them of the deportation of Jews to extermination camps. Explain that the photo is about events that took place in the Ottoman Empire during WWI. This can be deducted from the Turkish crescent on one of the wagons.

This photograph was sent by the German railway director Franz J. Günther to bank director Arthur von Gwinner. In the accompanying note he sarcastically wrote: ‘enclosed a small photograph showing that the Anatolian railways are the protector of Turkish culture. These cattle wagons transport 880 people in 10 compartments.’

Slide 2

Watch the indicated section of the documentary ‘60 minutes’.
[Please note: the quality of this YouTube video is not very good. A much better-quality version is available on the official CBS video channel at http://www.cbsnews.com/videos/battle-over-history/ ]
Explain that professional researchers (e.g. police officers, politicians, lawyers) often write a statement of facts before they start interpreting information: what actually happened? Explain pupils that they, as researchers and scholars, have received an assignment to make a detailed description of what exactly happened to the Armenians and how to describe this event. So they have to prepare a statement of facts (compare police office wall in case of a homicide). Distribute the material. Ask pupils to work in pairs on their own statement of facts.

**Discussion assignment**

**Assignment 1A Statement of facts: The Ottoman Empire circa 1900**

**Please note:** The Ottoman Empire headed by the Sultan existed from circa 1300 to the collapse after WWI. Atatürk founded modern Turkey in 1923.

**Answer model**
The Ottoman Empire flourished circa 1900.

**Explanation:** on the contrary, the empire was in extreme decline

- Circa 1900 the Ottoman Empire was a multi-ethnic state.

**Explanation:**

- Most of the inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire were Islamic.

**Explanation:**

- Armenians were the largest minority in the Ottoman Empire circa 1900.

**Explanation:** The Greek were the largest minority

- Armenians were discriminated and oppressed in the Ottoman Empire. They had fewer rights than Islamic inhabitants of the empire.

**Explanation:**

- The socio-economic position of Armenians was very weak.

**Explanation:** They were part of all layers of the population but overrepresented in the business sector.

- Armenians are religiously Jewish.

**Explanation:** They were Christian.

**Explanation** (possibly using PowerPoint slides 5 to 8)
Circa 1900 the Armenians were a clearly recognisable minority because:
1. they were, unlike most other inhabitants of the Turkish Empire, Christian and not Islamic.

Circa 1900 the Armenians were a clearly recognisable minority in Turkey because: 2. they had, unlike most other inhabitants of the Turkish Empire their own language and script.

Most Armenians lived near the border with Russia.

The Armenian state did not exist yet in circa 1900. The Turkish Empire directly bordered Russia.

Throughout the 19th century the Turkish Empire (sultanate) is in serious decline. It fails to modernise and stand up against rising nationalism in the Balkans. The empire is known as ‘the sick man of Europe’.
The socio-economic position of Armenians was a little bit stronger than that of the average inhabitant of the Turkish Empire. There were plenty of poor Armenians, but there was a well-developed middle class. The political position of Armenians in the Turkish Empire was weak. They had fewer rights than the Islamic inhabitants of the Turkish Empire. They were politically repressed and persecuted.

Between 1894 and 1896 200,000 Armenians had already been killed during the so-called Hamidian massacres. The massacres followed on increasing national awareness among Armenians (compare with Zionism) and their demand to the sultan for equal rights.

Armenians were not the largest minority in the Ottoman Empire, but the Greek. In WW1 many Greek were also killed. Many Greek, however, lived in an area that the Empire had already lost before WWI. The statistical figures show that their numbers also significantly drop between 1906 and 1914 due to the lost Balkan wars.

**Assignment 1B Statement of fact: what happened to the Armenians?**
You can possibly start by explaining the information from the timeline; it contains causes which have led to the massacre of the Armenians:
- The Ottoman Empire is in decline. The once so powerful sultan sees his empire getting smaller and smaller.
- Turkish nationalism is fuelled by territorial losses, by the new military rulers who dream of an ethnic Turkish Anatolia and by Russian defeats during WWI.
- In 1915 a violent, organised campaign is unleashed against the Armenians, reaching much further than fighting against the (alleged) sympathies of the Armenians for the Russians.
- More than 50% of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire find death during WWI, many are ousted. The three men primarily responsible are convicted, but flee the country.
Discuss the source-fact combinations. Possibly use the PowerPoint for this discussion. The first slide after the time indication is always the most obvious source. In some cases there are also some other images and texts. These answers are not wrong, but they are less clear or less reliable illustrations. This focus of this assignment is on consideration, comparison and interactive discussion.

In general, sources of well-informed outsiders (e.g. Henry Morgenthau) are the most reliable. In this case, Armin Wegner’s photographs are also considered reliable. Wegner fought on the German side so the fact that he wanted to record the genocide against orders from his superiors, makes him credible. Stories of/by victims are, in principle, also reliable, taking into account that they sometimes tell their stories only years later (like Fetiye Cetin’s grandmother). The combination of different sources produces a reliable picture: eye witnesses, victims, official bystanders, the press and official documents all confirming the same story.

**Right source combination**

19th century

The once so powerful Ottoman Empire goes into serious decline.

**Slide 12**
1911-1912
Turkey fights two big wars in the Balkan and, again, loses a lot of territory.

Slide 14
(source 7 also provides information about the war and the refugees, but source 1 better illustrates this fact.)

During the Balkan wars before WW1 the Serbians, Bulgarians and Greeks fight together against the Turks. They achieve a great victory and drive out the Turks who live there. The influx of Turkish refugees in Anatolia fuels the hatred in Turkey against Christians. In addition, these refugees need houses and jobs.

1913
There is a lot of discontent about the weakness of the Ottoman Empire and the defeats in the Balkan wars. The so-called Young Turks stage a coup. The new rulers have a military background and pursue an extremely nationalistic policy.
Slide 17

In place of a democratically constitutional state they re-instituted the idea of a purely Turkish. In place of equal treatment of all Ottoman, they decided to establish a country exclusively for Turks. ... Their determination to ostracize Christians, or at least to transform them into Turkish institutions, was merely another facet in the same racist progress. Similarly, they attempted to make all foreign business associations only Turkish, thinking that they should be dominated by Greeks, Armenians, and Jewish denizens, workers, and other employees. They collected all foreignwriters to expel their books in Turkish, they wanted to furnish employment for Turks, and enable them to acquire modern business methods. The Ottoman government even refused to have dealings with the representatives of the largest Austrian military mission unless he submitted Turkey as a partner. They developed a movement for suppressing all other languages except Turkish. For decades French had been the accepted language of foreigners in Constantinople. Posters and street signs were printed in both French and Turkish. One morning the authorized foreign residents discovered that all the French signs had been removed and that the names of streets, the direction of streets, and other public notices, appeared only in Turkish characters, which very few of them understood. Great confusion resulted from this change, but the ruling powers refused to restore the deleted foreign language signs. Henry Morgenthau, Jr. wrote: ‘I normally avoid history books, because genocide history is often accurate and very painful.’

Slide 18

The Young Turks (officers in the Turkish army) want to turn Turkey into a modern, national state. In 1913 they seize full power pursuing an extremely nationalistic policy. The ideal of the multi-ethnic state under Islamic command is replaced by an ideal of an ethnic Turkish unitary state. The sultan remains nominally in power, behind the scenes ‘the three Pashas’ pull the strings.

Source 9 is also valid, but only provides factual information about the coup.

1914
The start of WWI. Turkey joins Germany in the fight against Russia, Great Britain and France.

Slide 20

Turkey enters the war alongside the Germans and Austrians. Their opponents are Russia, France and Great Britain.

Winter - spring 1915
The Turks suffer heavy defeats in the Caucasus in their campaign against the Russians. A number of Armenians join the Russian army. Meanwhile, the British are fighting at sea against the Turks and are preparing their invasion at Gallipoli.
The war against the Russians is disastrous for the Ottoman Empire. It suffers heavy defeats against the Russians in the Caucasus in the spring of 1915. The rulers fear that Armenians may consider joining the Russians. And some Armenians do.

But the war, and the defeats against the Russians, arouse a desire in the rulers to drastically intervene against the, by now, much-hated Armenians.

Meanwhile, early 1915 it is announced that the British are preparing an invasion.

The responsible ruler Talaat entrusts the German consul that the Ottoman government 'will use WW1 to settle the score once and for all with its internal enemies, the Turkish Christians... without being disturbed by diplomatic interventions.' Talaat wants to use the war to 'turkify' Anatolia.

24 April 1915
On 24 April the Turkish minister of Internal Affairs order the arrest and deportation of more than 250 Armenian intellectuals. Almost none of them survive the war.
Slide 25

source 15 (not the most reliable source, but the most factual and additional.)

The anti-Armenian campaign starts with the arrest of several hundred prominent Armenian intellectuals in Istanbul on 24 April. Hence, this is the day on which Armenia commemorates the genocide. Most of those arrested will not survive the war.

Spring 1915 onwards
Forced deportation of Armenian mothers and children to the Syrian desert where no shelter has been arranged. Almost everybody dies. A large number of Armenian men are murdered.

Slide 27

Source 11 (also supportive are: source 13, 14, 21, 23, 24 or 25).
The massacres take place in the following stages: first, men are removed from their homes, imprisoned or killed outside of their villages (for example by tying them together, lining them up on a cliff above the river Euphrates and then shooting the first in line so that he takes the others with him in his fall; and many people are drowned in the Black Sea).

The photograph in question was taken by an unknown photographer from the window of the American consulate in Kharpert.

Public executions were also part of the campaign. The photograph was taken by lieutenant Armin Wegner, who, against the orders of the German military leadership, took photographs of the genocide. Up until today these photographs act as important evidence.
Next, mother and children are taken out of their homes and ‘deported’ to the Syrian desert. Usually they have to do this journey on foot. No food is offered, no accommodation and no shelter against the sun. The armed escorts abuse the women and children in all possible manners. Some children are kidnapped and end up as ‘maid’ in Turkish families. Some survive thanks to help from (Turkish) neighbours or soldiers.
1918 Turkey loses WWI.
The three rulers primarily responsible are sentenced to death in absentia by the allies.

1923
The hero of Gallipoli, Mustafa Kemal (= Atatürk), becomes Turkey's new leader after WWI. From now on, the Turkish government will deny the deliberate massacre of the Armenians.
1991
De Soviet Union falls apart and Armenia becomes an independent republic. 24 April is declared the country’s national Remembrance Day.

**Assignment 2 (plenary): The Armenian genocide, 1915: genocide?**
Introduce the term ‘genocide’ to the pupils. Explain that in 1915 there was no word yet for this event. Only after the massacre of the Jews the need arises for a legal term to interpret this murder. The jurist Ralph Lemkin coined the term ‘genocide’. In 1948 the UN adopts the term and its definition. This definition is given on the worksheet of the pupils. Discuss with the pupils if they think that what has happened to the Armenians can be interpreted as genocide.
Most pupils will probably reach the conclusion that this is indeed the case. Pupils who are not convinced will point to the fact that it is not certain whether it is a \textit{deliberate} government campaign. Was there an \textit{intention} to destroy the Armenians? Avoid an academic yes/no discussion. Do indicate that today almost everybody who looks into the case believes that this is indeed a case of genocide. Even if you don’t want to label this as genocide it still remains a big, demonstrable and well-documented crime.

It may be that pupils appeal to the fact that the definition of genocide dates back to 1948 based on the murder of the Jews. Is it possible to apply this term in retrospect to something that happened earlier in history?

Finally, once more draw up the balance with the pupils: what are the important findings of this lesson? You can use the schema on the pupil sheet on which the pupils can copy the findings. This is not essential. Clearly name the most important information one more time. This information is important for lessons 2 + 3.

Possible follow-up assignments for after the lesson

- Ask the pupils to watch, in pairs (at home), one of the documentaries or films from the list ‘Armenian genocide in beeld’ and write a review about it. This list can be found on the website. As them to include the definition of the word genocide in their review.
- Ask the pupils to prepare, using the index, a sort of police crime board, including a timeline, their own insights and the lists they worked with during the lesson. So they will make a Mind Map-style poster presentation for which they may want to conduct additional research into the background of the perpetrators involved, or other additional source material (using NIOD’s website). You can grade the posters, if you wish.
Lesson 2 How could this happen?

Lesson description

Summary

In this lesson the theme of the Armenian genocide is further explored and linked to the theoretical development around the concept of ‘genocide’. Pupils learn that Hitler probably used the Armenian genocide as a model and are introduced to two theories which enable us to explain genocides. They conduct independent source research into the question whether the required conditions for genocide were present in the Turkish Empire during WW1, and have a plenary look at the eight stages of the genocide process as identified by the American scholar Gregory Stanton (jurist and expert in the field of genocide studies).

Learning goals

Pupils

- learn that Hitler (probably) used the Armenian genocide as a model.
- investigate the required factors that made the Armenian genocide possible.
- look if the eight stages in genocides identified by Stanton also occurred in Turkey before and after WW1.

Activities

Pupils

- discover that Hitler thought the Armenian genocide was an admirable performance.
- optional: listen to a story from a victim?
- conduct a research in pairs into the required factors that make genocide possible.
- have a plenary look into this ‘case 1915’ and the phases in genocide identified by Stanton.

Duration

At least 50 minutes.

Level and method

The lessons are particularly suitable for higher secondary school pupils, but you may have to adapt them depending on their level.

Preparations

- Print out the pupils' worksheets. The pupils work in pairs.
- If you don’t work digitally, print out a source index for each pupil.
- Study the lesson contents and additional information on this website.

Overview lesson plan

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Introduction theme based on PowerPoint slide and possibly (optional): reading out a story of a victim.</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 1</td>
<td>The case 1915: How could this happen? Source research into required factors for a genocide.</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 2</td>
<td>The case 1915 and Stanton’s theory</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>independently</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>independently and/or</td>
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<tr>
<td>plenary</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Lesson plan - contents and background

Introduction
Slide 1

Explain that Hitler was (probably) inspired by what happened to the Armenians in WW1 when he invaded Poland and perhaps also for the murder of the Jews.

Hitler was particularly pleased with the fact that afterwards there had been so little mention about the genocide on the Armenians. This strengthened his conviction that it would be possible to occupy Poland with a lot of murder and manslaughter without too many repercussions. Explain that after the murder of the Jews many people are looking for the answer to the question of how something like that can happen. Why do people kill other people, only because they belong to a certain group?

Slide 2

If you want, you can read the pupils the story of Zakar Berberian from The first holocaust by Robert Fisk (page 16 +17)

Establish that the killing of the Armenians was a black page in history and that the question always arises how this could happen. This lesson tried to give an answer to that question.

Hand out the worksheets.
If the pupils have also done lesson 1, they can use the statement of facts and the index of that lesson. If not, also hand out the index.
Pupils do assignment 1.
Establish in the follow-up discussion that all the required conditions for genocide were present in the Turkish Empire during WW1.

Identifying the right sources is optional. This assignment is not so much about right or wrong, but more about discussion among the pupils. It is an encouragement to actively use the index.

Introduce the pupils to Gregory Stanton’s model. This is another approach to genocide as a process. According to Stanton, a genocide has eight stages. Go through and explain the phases together with your pupils and ask them if they can find information in the index which illustrates the different phases.

Alternatively, give your pupils a number from 1 to 8 and ask them to look for a source which matches ‘their’ stage and then discuss centrally.

Please note: all steps can be identified using the index, but not entirely schematic in time: expropriation, for example, does not precede deportation, but coincides with it.

Follow-up discussion

Answer model:

- **Classification**: categorisation of ‘groups’ of people, we and them, ethnically, racially, culturally, religiously or nationalistically.
  - Source 2, 3, 4 and source 8
  - In the first instance, the categorisation of the Armenians was religiously. The Turkish Empire had an administration focused on religion-based organisation. Armenians had their own millet: they were officially second-class citizens and had to pay more tax, in return for which they did get very limited self-governance. So it was clear who was Muslim and Turkish and who wasn’t.
  - (Source 7: Instead of a religious divide, the Young Turks introduce an ethnic divide. They are extremely nationalistic and make a distinction between Turks and non-Turks. They want Anatolia to be for the Turks. Especially after the influx of many Turkish refugees following the Balkan Wars.)
• Symbolisation: naming and describing 'physical' and ethnical differences or making the other group recognisable by using symbols.
  o Source 2 (but not clear)
  o This was not so strongly present in the Turkish Empire even though, historically, there have been many dress codes for the various religious groups.

• Dehumanisation: denial of the humanity of the other group, for example by using medical jargon (germs) or animal names (rats, cockroaches). Destruction of identity.
  o Source 6

• Organisation: genocide stems from collective action which requires preparation: troops and weapons are required, and a certain social organisation (hierarchy, bureaucracy).
  o Source 9 (coup leads to rulers with weapons - army - and ideology), source 11 (even though genocide is already in full operation, source does indicate that it is clearly organised by the state) and source 12 (the same applies here), source 22 (state decides to replace street signs).

• Polarisation: extremist groups face a standoff in which any nuance or moderation becomes a threat. Those with a moderate view are the biggest threat to the group of perpetrators.
  o Source 19: the corporal was punished for the fact that he did not want to kill children.

• Preparation: this includes identification, expropriation of possessions, concentration or collection and transport.
  o Source 12

• Destruction: killing members of the group, including children, ‘cleansing’. Also material destruction, material culture, possession.
  o Source 13, 14, 15, 21, 23, 24

• Denial: the final stage of each genocide is denial, graves are hidden, evidence is destroyed, 'the story' is adapted, casualty figures are downsized, mitigating circumstances are presented ('it was war') and there is a discussion about whether the act falls within the precise legal definition of genocide.
  o Source 20

Conclusions
Establish that up until today there is no satisfying answer yet to the question of why people deliberately massacre a group, but that it is clear that the process of genocide is always related to social problems exploited by rulers in a certain way. That way, it becomes a process that can be analysed and perhaps help us, if we recognise those factors are stages in time, spot the possible risk of genocide. Genocide is not a natural disaster, but can be avoided. Classification and symbolisation do not necessarily lead to genocide, but contain the risk.

Possible follow-up assignments for after the lesson
• Ask the pupils to watch, in pairs (at home), one of the documentaries or films from the source list and write a review about it. Ask them to include the definition of the word genocide in their review.
• Use both theoretical approaches again to analyse the Holocaust.
Lesson 3 Forgetting the past?

Lesson description

Summary

This lesson provides suggestions to think about the question of how to deal with an emotionally charged (national) past.

Pupils learn about the ongoing influence of the Armenian genocide on foreign relations between Turkey and Armenia. They become aware of the fact that victims commemorate and process things in a different way than perpetrators. That is true on both the individual and the collective and national level. Pupils take notice of the official and at the same time dissident position of the Turkish government regarding the ‘Armenian question’.

In small groups the pupils try to discover the background behind the official Turkish position, and study the question of why Armenia does not want to accept the request of the Turkish authorities to conduct joint historical research into the background of the ‘Armenian question’. The question why the US prefers not to use the word genocide during a Turkish state visit is also addressed.

Please note: Pupils with a Turkish background may have a very strong opinion about this topic which exactly matches that of the Turkish authorities. In that case, stress the fact that within Turkey there are also several opinions about the topic. Beware of stigmatising the Turks in general. Repeatedly stress that it is about the position of the government, not of ‘the Turks’, but also beware of excessive qualification or justification of the proven crimes. Point out that other countries also struggle with a tainted or infected past. Think, for example, about slavery in the Dutch or American history, or the colonial past and wars. You can mention Germany with its big Holocaust moment in the centre of Berlin, as an example of a country that faces and deals with its own past.

It is also important that the discussion does not only focus on the question whether the acts of cruelty against the Armenians should or shouldn’t be labelled as genocide. Even if there wasn’t a deliberate intention to massacre the Armenians, then it is still a case of a chequered past. Is it appropriate or legitimate to sue or silence people who want to talk about that?

Learning goals

Pupils

- learn about the official position of the Turkish government and the background behind this approach.
- consider differences and similarities between the way in which perpetrators and victims process or deny the past.
- consider differences and similarities between processing and denying a chequered past at the individual and collective level.
- become aware of the importance of an attentive processing of a collective past.

Activities

Pupils

- learn about the lasting influence of the Armenian genocide on current relations between Turkey and Armenia based on photographs and films.
- think about differences and similarities between processing the past at the individual and collective level and the differences between how the past is processed by perpetrators and victims.
- think about the possible background behind the positions of the Turkish government, Armenia and the international community.
**Duration**
At least 50 minutes

**Preparation**
- Study the lesson contents and listen to the audio fragment and watch the video fragments.
- Print out the worksheets.

**Level and method**
The lessons are suitable for higher secondary school pupils, but you have to adapt the material depending on the level.

**Overview lesson plan**

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<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td>Current relations between Turkey and Armenia based on photographs and film fragments.</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Socratic' dialogue</td>
<td>'Socratic' dialogue about processing the past. Pupils learn about two Turkish views on the genocide.</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment</td>
<td>Explain the position of actors involved (i.e. the Turkish government, Armenia and the international community.)</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(and possibly epilogue)</td>
<td>Feedback and follow-up discussion</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(if you want to include the epilogue allow for extra time. Suitable for lessons longer than 50 minutes.)

**Lesson plan - contents and background**

**Introduction**

**Slide 1**

Show the photograph of the Armenian-Turkish border. What is happening here? Explain that the border has been closed since 1993 and that the bad relationship is related to the Armenian genocide.
Explain that this lesson is about the question if and how you can process a traumatic past, as perpetrator, victim and bystander.

Explain that you can distinguish several roles regarding the processing of a chequered past.
- Which roles?
- What are the differences and similarities?
- What is the purpose of commemoration in processing the past? Is that equally important for all groups?

Outcome of the discussion is focused on the fact that what is true for individuals is also valid for groups or (national) states.
In the first instance, individuals usually want to suppress their memories of the horrors. Often, that does not work in the long term (e.g. nightmares, PTSD). In that case therapy may offer a solution or also rituals in which they commemorate (with support provided) other victims.

Expressing grief and fear is important in the processing of traumas. Many victims are ashamed because they did survive.
What is true for the victims is also true for the perpetrators: they too often carry the burden of their acts (note: this is not the same but the past cannot be pushed aside). Bystanders who have not done anything also prefer to forget the past. Or deny what they have seen. Sometimes they also feel the need to join ritual commemorations (e.g. Holocaust Memorial Day on 27 January).
Introduction of assignment

Slide 4

Distribute the worksheets and divide the class into groups of four. Tell the pupils to find out why the different parties (Turkey, Armenia, outsiders) have adopted the viewpoint they have. Start by showing the official viewpoint of the Turkish government.

Slide 5

Show the pupils how Armenia deals with the genocide. (The hyperlink goes to a story in Elsevier about an argument between Armenians and Turks in the Netherlands about a commemorative monument - you may want to use this article)

Slide 6

Show pupils the position of other countries with regard to the Armenian genocide. Ask pupils to work in small groups on the assignment.

Follow-up discussion

Slide 7
Go through the answers with the pupils. Clearly explain the background and refer to the annex, where possible.

**Slide 8**

**Why does Turkey deny?**

- It’s not easy to admit a crime and take responsibility for it.
- Possible damages.
- Highly placed officials in the Turkish government after WWI were involved in genocide.
- The genocide was committed by the co-founders of the modern Turkey.
- Acknowledgment of genocide erodes the basis of the Turkish state.

**Slide 9**

**Why does Armenia not want to conduct joint research?**

- Armenia believes there are enough historical facts which prove the genocide (compare with the Holocaust).

If needed, adapt this information to current developments and affairs.

**Optional (for lessons of more than 50 minutes for example): Epilogue**

**Slide 12**

Photograph and painting by the artist Arshil Gorky form, together with the film fragment, an impressive illustration of individual trauma processing.

Introduce the epilogue by telling the pupils that at the end of this series there is room for individual trauma processing.

Show pupils the photograph of Arshil Gorky (his original Armenian name was: Vosdanik Adoian) together with his mother. Possible questions:

- What is the relationship between the
boy and the woman in the photograph? *Mother and son*

- How long ago was this photograph taken? *More than a hundred years ago, in 1912.*

Explain that it is a photograph of an artist taken in Turkey before WWI. It was made for his father who lived in the US. The artist has used this photograph to make a famous series of paintings.

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**Slide 13**

Show the film fragment of the National Gallery of Art. The seven-minute fragment is a moving illustration of the background behind the painting that was inspired by the photograph. If you think the fragment will take up too much lesson time, you can also give the information to the pupils yourself skipping the film fragment.

Please note: the hyperlink opens a page where the film fragment is available, but the fragment does not start automatically.

*Source:* [http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/highlights/highlight56935.html](http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/highlights/highlight56935.html)

*National Gallery of Art, Washington*

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**Slide 14**

Look at the painting. Establish that it contains many details which do not show up in the first instance:

- the flowers of the photograph are not in the painting. What is the meaning of that?
- the mother has no hands. It also seems as if she does not have a voice. Her senses have been taken away from her.
- there is a kind of unbridgeable distance between mother and son.

It is a painting that speaks and does more if you know the background behind the story. It is an attempt by Arshil Gorky to process his past (who did not use his Armenian name in the US).

Please note: the title of this PowerPoint is a hyperlink to an audio fragment which explains the background behind the painting. You do not have to play the fragment, but it gives the teacher clarifying background information.
Possible assignments

- Design a commemoration memorial or ritual for the Turkish government. How can the killing of the Armenians be commemorated in Turkey? Prepare a display of the results.
- Mehmet Talaat Pasha, the ruler who was primarily responsible for the Armenian genocide, managed to evade prosecution by fleeing to Germany. There he is killed by the Armenian Soghomon Tehlirian in 1921. The killer has lost almost his entire family during the genocide and is subsequently cleared by a German court due to alleged trauma-induced diminished responsibility. What do the pupils think about this verdict? Ask them to write an essay about it or organise a debate or ‘Socratic’ discussion.
- The Armenian genocide in the Netherlands: address the developments in 2014 surrounding the monument in Almelo to commemorate the Armenian genocide and the outcry it caused. Read the article in Elsevier Turkse-gemeenschap-verzet-zich-tegen-genocidemonument-Almelo. Ask pupils to imagine themselves in the role as mayor of Almelo: how would you handle this question in a city with a large group of Armenians and a big Turkish community?