

# Armenian Genocide

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How can personal testimonies from Armenian survivors and foreign witnesses inform our understanding and perspective on international intervention during episodes of political and civil unrest, acts of violence, or genocide?
- What role do governments and non-governmental humanitarian organizations play during international conflicts?

## Overview

In this activity, students will consider factors that can lead governments or non-governmental humanitarian organizations to choose to get involved in international conflicts or genocide abroad, as well as the factors that can constrain these responses. To gain a deeper understanding of this concept, they will view eyewitness testimonies that describe the U.S. response during and after the Armenian Genocide. They will then read secondary sources to explore the role that U.S. diplomats, missionaries, and U.S. citizens played in publicizing the Armenian Genocide and providing relief. Students will then investigate current examples of U.S. involvement in other countries that are experiencing crisis, conflict and/or genocide. Students will conclude the activity with an opportunity to evaluate the extent of American intervention in international events taking place today.

## Target Audience

High school World History, U.S. History, and Government

## Activity Duration

Two 45 to 60-minute class periods

## Enduring Understandings

- Eyewitness accounts are critical to provide a thorough understanding of historical events.
- A government's response to international conflict or genocide abroad involves a balance between the government's views on foreign policy and ethics.
- Non-governmental humanitarian organizations can play a critical role in providing relief during international conflicts or genocide abroad.

## MATERIALS

- Computer with Internet connection and a projector
- If available, devices with Internet access, one per student or student pair
- Handouts, one copy per student:
  - *Survivor and Scholar Biographies*
  - *Accounts of the Armenian Genocide*
  - *U.S. Response to the Armenian Genocide*
  - *U.S. Response to Contemporary Global Conflicts*
- Ideally, the teacher will have placed the clips in a location accessible to students prior to the lesson.

## Background Information/Links

### U.S. Responses to the Armenian Genocide

#### Ambassador Henry Morgenthau and the Near East Relief

As the Armenian Genocide began in 1915, US Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Henry Morgenthau (1914–1916), led efforts to halt Ottoman orders of mass violence and deportations of Armenians, by arranging meetings with officials in Ottoman government. When these efforts failed, Ambassador Morgenthau sent a telegram to the United States State Department, on September 3, 1915, pleading for aid. Though, the U.S. government did not directly intervene, the Ambassador's request was passed along to individuals of the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions, who were interested in providing philanthropic aid to the Armenians. Their efforts lead to the creation of the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief in the Near East (1915), later named the Near East Relief (1919). Individuals such as James L. Barton and Cleveland H. Dodge, led the initial efforts of this Committee.

#### Role of US Officials and Non-Governmental Workers in the Ottoman Empire

The Ambassador as well as other American diplomats like Consul Leslie Davis, Consul Jesse Jackson extensively documented and shared first-hand accounts of what they witnessed. Davis' book *The Slaughterhouse Province: An American Diplomat's Report on the Armenian Genocide, 1915–1917*, published in 1989, provides graphic details about the genocide and his experiences during this time, in the Ottoman Empire. Despite warnings from the Turkish government not to intervene, Davis allowed 80 Armenians to take refuge in the U.S. consulate and organized an underground railroad to get Armenians safely across the Euphrates River and into Russia.

Missionaries, doctors, and other non-governmental workers on the ground also helped to save Armenian lives and to document the atrocities they witnessed. The majority of their reports were sent to Ambassador Morgenthau who shared them with the U.S. news media. In 1915 alone, the *New York Times* published 145 articles about the genocide, describing the actions against the Armenians as “systematic,” “authorized,” and “organized by the government.” *The*



*Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and other prominent media sources also reported frequently about the events taking place in the Ottoman Empire.

### The Aftermath of Genocide and Near East Relief Efforts

In 1923, the new Republic of Turkey was founded and violent atrocities against Armenians ceased. Non-governmental organizations such as the Near East Relief were forced to move, and so the NER moved its headquarters from Turkey to Athens, Greece. Despite this change, the NER's emergency response to help Armenian orphans and refugees continued until 1930, when the NER is renamed to the Near East Relief Foundation and adopted a new broader mission. During the Armenian Genocide and shortly in period of the aftermath, the NER is credited for media accounts of the genocide, along with public rallies, church collections, and the assistance of charitable organizations and foundations. These mass efforts helped the NER collect and distribute \$117,000,000 in assistance between 1915 and 1930. Thousands of Armenian lives were saved and the funds were used to set up refugee camps, clinics, hospitals, orphanages, and centers for vocational training. In the words of American historian Howard M. Sachar, NER "quite literally kept an entire nation alive."

Sources:

- <https://www.armenian-genocide.org/her.html>
- <https://neareastmuseum.com/chapters/taking-action>

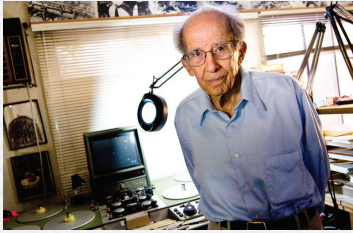
## Procedure

### Ask

- 1 Before students enter class, post the term "foreign policy" on the board for students to see as they enter.
- 2 Encourage students to provide their thoughts on what "foreign policy" is and means. Students could use modern day or historical examples to help build their definition if need be.
- 3 As a group, lead the class to create a shared definition of the term (e.g., how a government interacts with other nations). You may also encourage students to list out their examples of what they think foreign policy looks like from the past and the present.

# Teaching with Testimony

## High School Activity | Responding to Injustice



- 4 Explain to students that foreign policy often involves U.S. intervention in another country to provide military, financial, or humanitarian aid. To help make connections, ask students to link their examples listed previously to these categories. Invite students to suggest new examples now that they have the definition.
- 5 Ask students what they know about the Armenian Genocide. Explain that, this is one of the lesser-known genocides, despite the fact that it was well-documented when it was happening.
- 6 Provide students with an overview of the activity by explaining that they will explore the Armenian genocide and the roles that U.S. eyewitnesses, diplomats, and humanitarian organizations played to document the atrocities and provide relief.

### Analyze

- 1 Distribute copies of a [Brief Histories: The Armenian Genocide, 1915–1923](#). Explain to students they will be using this brief reading to build understanding of the Armenian Genocide. Divide students into pairs for small reading groups and provide the following discussion questions.
  - *Why were the Armenians targeted by the Young Turk government?*
  - *What tactics did the government use to subjugate and murder Armenians?*
  - *What brought about the end of the Young Turk government and the Ottoman Empire?*
  - *What happened in the aftermath of the Armenian genocide?*
- 2 As students finish answering their questions, provide students the opportunity to share questions that they may have about the events before, during, and after the genocide.
- 3 Distribute copies of the *Accounts of the Armenian Genocide handout* and *Survivor and Scholar Biographies*, explain that students will use both of these handouts as they watch four video clips of testimony.



# Teaching with Testimony

## High School Activity | Responding to Injustice

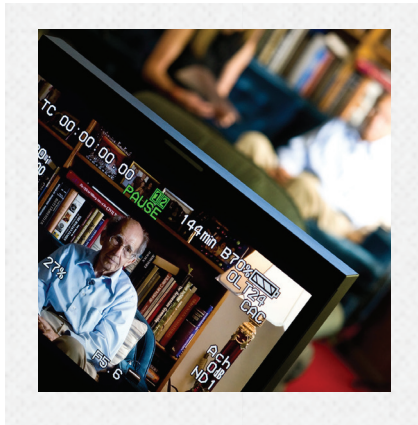


- 4** After discussing the background questions, introduce to students that they are going to view eyewitness testimony from survivors and scholars of the Armenian Genocide to better understand the complexity of U.S. foreign policy and the Armenian Genocide. Highlight that these testimonies are primary and secondary accounts of how the Armenian Genocide led to a tremendous loss of life and impacted millions. To help students use the testimonies to build understanding, ask students to keep the following considerations in mind.

  - *Pay attention to speaker's tone of voice and body language*
  - *Consider the context and perspective of the witness*
  - *Focus on the personal story of the testimony as opposed to facts and figures*
  - *Contemplate possible connections to their own lives and personal experiences.*
- 5** As you prepare to show the testimonies, ensure that each student has a copy of the *Survivor and Scholar Biographies* handout. Work with students to understand that reading the biography of the speaker can help make connections and build empathy.
- 6** Begin by introducing the biography and testimony of Henry Morgenthau III and explain that students will watch and use their handout to investigate the role of U.S. foreign policy in response to the Armenian genocide.

  - **Henry Morgenthau III on American Intervention:** Henry is the grandson of Henry Morgenthau, Sr., American ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, who served between 1914-1916, during the Armenian Genocide. Here, he reflects on his grandfather's actions and the lack of direct support from the U.S. government.
- 7** To check for understanding, ask student volunteers to share their answers to the questions on the handout. Students should make connections between the testimony and the role of American foreign policy.
- 8** Next, introduce the testimonies of Haiastan Terzian, Dr. Albert Dewey, and Arshag Dickranian and explain that they will help students understand the effects of diplomacy and humanitarian aid during the Armenian genocide. As students read each

# Teaching with Testimony



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biography and view the testimony, they should use the *Accounts of the Armenian Genocide* handout to capture their thoughts while/after watching.

### Clips of Testimony

- **Dr. Albert W. Dewey on Medical Aid:** Albert talks about being the only doctor for civilians after WWI, serving Armenian orphans in Izmit, Turkey and then being sent to Talas, Turkey where he helped 2,700 Christian orphans leave the area.
  - **Arshag Dickranian on Medical Aid:** Arshag recalls how doctors at an American hospital saved many Armenians by giving them medication and food.
  - **Haiastan Terzian on American Aid:** Haiastan shares how Leslie Davis, US Consul to Harput, hid many Armenians from the Harput province in the American Consulate during the time of the Armenian Genocide.
- 9 It will important to highlight that American diplomats as well as private citizens and non-governmental organizations played key roles in bringing the Armenian Genocide to light and providing aid.
- 10 To deepen students understanding of the different roles, organize students into small groups and assign each group a role to study: diplomats or non-governmental humanitarian organizations. You may choose to create several diplomats' groups and several NGO groups and divide the readings among them.

#### *Diplomats*

- <https://www.armenian-genocide.org/morgenthau.html>
- [https://www.armenian-genocide.org/Education.16/current\\_category.120/resourceguide\\_detail.html](https://www.armenian-genocide.org/Education.16/current_category.120/resourceguide_detail.html)
- <https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2017/02/03/the-great-crime/>
- <https://neareastmuseum.com/chapters/taking-action/>

#### *Non-Governmental Organizations*

- <https://www.armenian-genocide.org/ner.html>
- <https://neareastmuseum.com/chapters/relief-begins/>

# Teaching with Testimony



## High School Activity | Responding to Injustice

- <https://neareastmuseum.com/chapters/citizen-philanthropy/>
- <https://www.armenian-genocide.org/missionaries.html>

- 11 Distribute copies of the U.S. Responses to the Armenian Genocide handout and review the directions prior before allowing time for students to complete their inquiry into U.S. intervention.
- 12 After students have completed their inquiry, ask students to present their summaries to the full class. Provide time for students to ask questions and encourage students to make connections between testimonies, readings, and research.

### Apply

- 1 Introduce the inquiry project to students by explaining that they will research how the U.S. government or non-governmental organizations are taking action in another country to provide military, financial, humanitarian aid, or intervene in situations of political and/or civil unrest.
- 2 The teacher will organize students into small groups and distribute copies of the U.S. Responses to Contemporary Global Conflicts handout, which is designed to guide students through the inquiry project.
- 3 The teacher will provide time for students to conduct their inquiry and prepare a brief presentation of their findings.
- 4 After students have completed their inquiries, they will share their findings with the class.

### Act

- 1 The teacher will lead a discussion based on the second essential question: “Based on your inquiries, what role do governments and non-governmental humanitarian organizations play during international conflicts?”
- 2 The teacher will introduce the final writing assignment which requires students to use evidence drawn from their inquiry projects to evaluate the extent to which the U.S. government or non-government humanitarian organizations have intervened during international conflicts or genocide abroad.

# Teaching with Testimony

## High School Activity | Responding to Injustice



- After students have completed their pieces, the teacher may encourage them to share their research with others in the class and/or community.

### Extend

Using films can be an important way to help students make connections to the past. *The Promise* is a historical fiction film that conveys a multi-perspective history of the Armenian Genocide. As the plot of *The Promise* unfolds in the Ottoman Empire during 1914, on the brink of its entrance into the First World War and the Armenian

Genocide, viewers discover the symbolic love between friends, family and one's national identity. *The Promise* shares the story of Ottoman Armenian people and the brave men and women who risked their lives to help save them from complete annihilation.

*The Promise* can help students further investigate the role that U.S. diplomats, journalists, and missionaries played during the Armenian genocide. Note: It is important to explain to students that Chris Myers' character is symbolic of American media that was published in the U.S. based on first-hand accounts from U.S. diplomats and other eyewitnesses. Clips are available at <https://iwatch.usc.edu/sfi/Sites/Promise/Clips.aspx>. "Deportation of Konya" (3:04) highlights the cruelty and devastation eyewitnesses observed and the danger they faced in capturing the truth about what was happening to Armenians. "A Meeting with Talaat" (1:40) shows U.S. Ambassador Henry Morgenthau's confrontation with Talaat Pasha, Minister of the Interior to the Ottoman Empire, over the proposed execution of an American eyewitness and the systematic deportation and extermination of the Armenian people. The full film is available to rent or buy on various streaming services.

### Connections

Connection to Student Lives	Connect to Contemporary Events	Connect to the Future
Students will understand the role that citizens can play in addressing conflicts around the world.	Students will examine U.S. government or non-governmental responses to a contemporary global conflict.	Students will consider the role that the U.S. can and should play in its relations with other countries in the future.



# Survivor and Scholar Biographies



STUDENT HANDOUT

**Dr. Albert W. Dewey** was born on December 5, 1891, in Georgetown, Colorado. During World War I, he served as a captain in the Army Medical Reserve Corps. After the war was over, in 1919, he set sail to Turkey for missionary medical work, where he served at a Near East Relief Christian missionary hospital in Merzifon, Turkey. There, he was co-director with Dr. Jesse K. Marden of the orphanage health program that took care of refugees, orphans, and their caretakers. Five months later the new Turkish government ordered them to leave. They were ordered to go back to America, but instead Dr. Dewey continued to pursue medical relief work in other parts of Turkey. In 1923, Dr. Dewey left for Greece, and implemented a similar health program to that of Merzifon in Syria. He moved back to Turkey with his family in 1929 to work at the American Mission Hospital in Gaziantep, where he worked until 1958. He was interviewed in Los Angeles, California on March 22, 1975.

**Arshag Dickranian** was born on January 26, 1905, in Izmit (Kocaeli, Turkey). The city was diverse, albeit segregated; Armenians, Greeks, Jews and Turks all lived there. In 1915, his family and 20,000 other Armenians were transported from Adaparazi, Turkey to Eskişehir, Turkey via cow dung-laden wagons. Arshag and the other targeted Armenians remained in Eskişehir for approximately three days without any shelter and were then transported by wagons to Konya, Turkey, where they lived in a camp. The family was continually able to evade deportation through bribery. Eventually, they were able to move out of the camp and into the village. Arshag and his family frequently changed houses to evade capture. They lived in Konya for four years. Arshag was able to attend school, illegally, in an attic schoolhouse in the Armenian community. For safety reasons, Arshag's father sent him to Istanbul when he was 13 years old. The family immigrated to the United States in 1923. Arshag was interviewed on November 29, 1984, in Beverly Hills, California.

**Henry Morgenthau III** is the grandson of Henry Morgenthau, Sr., who served as the US Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, between 1914–1916, during the early period of the Armenian Genocide. Morgenthau, Sr. became the primary American witness to the genocide, and his reports ultimately led to an outpouring of American support for Armenian victims. He also advocated for Armenians in negotiation with the perpetrators of the genocide, including the Ottoman Minister of the Interior, Talaat Pasha. Henry was interviewed on March 1, 1975, in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

**Haiastan Terzian** was born on October 25, 1905, in Harput (Elâziğ, Turkey). Her brother-in-law was American Consul Davis' bodyguard, who aided her and her family's survival of the Armenian Genocide. When the deportations began, Consul Davis hid Haiastan, her father, mother and two sisters in the Consulate, until 1922. In 1922, they left Harput for Aleppo. From there they went to Beirut, then Marseille, and then by ship they went to Providence, Rhode Island. Haiastan was interviewed on October 11, 1991, in Altadena, California.

# Accounts of the Armenian Genocide



**Directions:** Take notes while watching the clips of testimony and use them to answer the questions and complete the table below.

## Henry Morgenthau III

1. According to his grandson, how might Ambassador Henry Morgenthau's background have made him particularly sensitive to the plight of the Armenians?
2. How did the events of WWI contribute to the Young Turk's attitude and actions toward the Armenian minority?
3. Why was it risky for Morgenthau to intervene directly in the Turkish government's policy of exterminating the Armenians?

<b>Eyewitness</b>	What did the eyewitness see and experience?	What does this testimony reveal about the role of diplomats and/or non-governmental relief organizations during the Armenian genocide?
<b>Dr. Albert W. Dewey</b>		
<b>Arshag Dickranian</b>		
<b>Haiastan Terzian</b>		

# U.S. Responses to the Armenian Genocide



STUDENT HANDOUT

**Directions:** Use the questions below to organize your ideas about the role your assigned group played in providing support and/or relief to the Armenian people.

**Assigned Group:**

**Sources:**

**Notable Individuals:**

**What role did members of this group play in responding to the Armenian genocide?** Be sure to cite specific evidence from the text in support of your answer.

**What motivated the involvement of these individuals and groups?** Be sure to cite specific evidence from the text in support of your answer.

# U.S. Responses to Contemporary Global Conflicts



STUDENT HANDOUT

**Directions:** Identify a current international conflict and three or more information sources about the conflict. Use the sources to investigate how the U.S. government or a non-governmental organization is intervening to provide support and/or relief.

**Description of Conflict:**

**Sources:**

**What are the causes of the conflict?**

**What are the consequences of the conflict?**

**Why is the U.S. government/non-governmental organization intervening in the conflict?**

**What type(s) of support is being provided?**

**What is the impact of the intervention?**

## National Standards

### College, Career & Civic Life C3 Framework for Social Studies Standards

- D1.5.9-12 Determine the kinds of sources that will be helpful in answering compelling and supporting questions, taking into consideration multiple points of view represented in the sources, the types of sources available, and the potential uses of the sources.
- D2.Civ.3.9-12 Critique relationships among governments, civil societies, and economic markets.
- D2.Civ.7.9-12 Apply civic virtues and democratic principles when working with others.
- D2.Civ.10.9-12 Analyze the impact and the appropriate roles of personal interests and perspectives on the application of civic virtues, democratic principles, constitutional rights, and human rights.
- D2.Civ.12.9-12 Analyze how people use and challenge local, state, national, and international laws to address a variety of public issues.
- D2.Civ.14.9-12 Analyze historical, contemporary, and emerging means of changing societies, promoting the common good, and protecting rights.
- D2.Geo.5.9-12 Evaluate how political and economic decisions throughout time have influenced cultural and environmental characteristics of various places and regions. D2.His.3.9-12. Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of their actions changes over time and is shaped by the historical context.
- D3.1.9-12. Gather relevant information from multiple sources representing a wide range of views while using the origin, authority, structure, context, and corroborative value of the sources to guide the selection.
- D4.2.9-12. Construct explanations using sound reasoning, correct sequence (linear or non-linear), examples, and details with significant and pertinent information and data, while acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of the explanation given its purpose (e.g., cause and effect, chronological, procedural, technical).
- D4.6.9-12. Use disciplinary and interdisciplinary lenses to understand the characteristics and causes of local, regional, and global problems; instances of such problems in multiple contexts; and challenges and opportunities faced by those trying to address these problems over time and place.
- D4.7.9-12. Assess options for individual and collective action to address local, regional, and global problems by engaging in self-reflection, strategy identification, and complex causal reasoning.

### Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts

- RI.11-12.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain



- RI.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.
- W.11-12.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
- W.11-12.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
- W.11-12.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
- SL.11-12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.