

Lesson Plan: The Assyrian Genocide

CCSS-Aligned Social Studies / ELA

Teacher Name: _____

School / District: _____

Course / Grade Level: High School World History / Genocide Studies / ELA

Date: _____

Lesson Duration: ~1 class period (can be extended to 2)

1. Lesson Title & Overview

Lesson Title:

Understanding the Assyrian Genocide: History, Evidence, and Memory

Overview:

Students explore the Assyrian genocide of 1914–1918 (also called “Sayfo”), analyzing its causes, structure, and consequences. Through testimonies and archival documents, they assess how this atrocity aligns with the modern definition of genocide and discuss its continuing legacy for Assyrian communities.

Importance:

Studying the Assyrian genocide expands students’ understanding of WWI-era violence, sharpens their ability to interpret evidence, and underscores the importance of memory, recognition, and justice for minority communities.

2. Essential Questions

Compelling Questions:

- What was the Assyrian genocide, and what were its root causes and main phases?
- How does the Assyrian genocide satisfy the definition of genocide, even though the term was not in use at the time?
- What long-term effects did the genocide have on the Assyrian people and their diaspora?

Supporting Questions:

- What kinds of experiences are revealed in personal testimonies and archival sources?
 - How do these sources reflect the elements of genocide (intent, targeting, destruction)?
 - Why might the Assyrian genocide be less well-known compared to other genocides?
 - How do descendants remember and advocate for the recognition of the genocide today?
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3. Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Define “genocide” and explain how the Assyrian genocide fits this definition.
 - Describe specific Ottoman-era policies/actions that targeted Assyrians between 1914–1918.
 - Analyze personal testimonies and/or documents to trace individual and communal impact.
 - Reflect on the challenges of memory, documentation, and recognition of genocide.
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4. Standards Alignment

CCSS — English Language Arts / Literacy

- RH.9–10.1 — Cite textual evidence from primary/secondary sources
- RH.11–12.2 — Determine central ideas of historical texts
- W.11–12.2 — Write explanatory texts using evidence
- SL.9–10.1 — Participate in collaborative discussions

C3 Framework — Social Studies

- **D1:** Developing Questions & Planning Inquiries
- **D2.His.1.9–12:** Evaluate how historical events and contexts shape perspectives
- **D3:** Evaluating Sources & Using Evidence
- **D4:** Communicating Conclusions & Taking Informed Action

Connection to Literacy & Inquiry:

Students will read, annotate, and analyze primary testimonies and archival documents (D3, RH), then explain their conclusions in writing (W) and discussion (SL).

5. Materials & Resources

- [Seyfo Center – “The Assyrian Genocide: Historical Overview and Analysis”](#) — video / lecture
- [Seyfo Center – PDF: “ASSYRIAN GENOCIDE 1915 – Genocide, Denial and the Right of Recognition”](#) — historical and legal analysis [SEYFO CENTER](#)

- [Seyfo Center – “Forgotten and Concealed: Assyrian Genocide” \(Genocide Studies article\) SEYFO CENTER](#)
- [Arizona HCR 2044 \(2023\) – Assyrian Genocide Recognition Resolution](#)
- [Seyfo Center website: Assyrian Genocide Research Center](#)
- [Assyrian Genocide Studies](#)
- **Map of Historic Assyrian Regions** — teacher-prepared (or embed from reliable atlas)
- **Document analysis organizer** (teacher handout)
- **Exit ticket slips**

6. Lesson Procedure

Ti	Instructional Step	Teacher Actions / Prompts	Student Engagement / Activities
5	Opening / Hook	Ask: “ <i>What genocides or mass atrocities do you know from the WWI era?</i> ” Display a map of historic Assyrian regions in the Ottoman Empire and Persia. Give a brief contextual framing of Assyrian presence in WWI.	Students share existing knowledge, locate regions, and begin building historical context.
15	Testimony or Document Analysis	Distribute excerpts (or link) from survivor testimonies or archival newspaper articles. Provide guiding questions: <i>What happened? Who was targeted? What evidence supports these claims?</i>	In pairs or small groups, students read, annotate, and discuss the evidence and personal experiences.
1	Defining Genocide & Historical Context	Present the UN definition of genocide; ask: <i>Which elements do you see in the sources?</i> Use timeline/key-term handouts to explain massacres, forced marches, village destruction, and targeting in Persia.	Students mark evidence in their notes, connect to the genocide definition, and take structured notes.

1	Reflection & Discussion	Invite students to write: <i>“How did these sources deepen your understanding of genocide?”</i> Then lead a discussion: <i>Why is it hard to document genocides like this? Why does later recognition matter?</i>	Students write reflections, share in small groups or whole class.
5	Application: Recognition & Legacy	Distribute or project the text of Arizona HCR 2044. Ask: <i>“What evidence does the resolution cite? Why is recognition important now?”</i>	Groups analyze the resolution and discuss its meaning for memory and justice.
2	Closing / Exit Ticket	Prompt: <i>“Why is it important to teach and remember the Assyrian genocide today?”</i>	Students write and submit a one-sentence exit response summarizing their thinking.

7. Differentiation & Supports

- **Scaffolds:** Provide guided notes, sentence starters, a genocide-definition organizer, and structured analysis prompts.
- **Visuals:** Use maps, timelines, and archival photos to contextualize the genocide.
- **Language Supports:** Glossary of terms (e.g., “deportation,” “Sayfo,” “diaspora”), paragraph frames, simplified excerpts.
- **Flexible Grouping:** Use small groups, partner reading, peer mentors.
- **Enrichment:** Compare the Assyrian genocide to Armenian or Greek genocides; have students build a digital memorial; research diaspora activism.
- **Accommodations:** Give extra time, use audio sources, allow oral responses instead of written.

8. Assessment & Evidence of Learning

Formative Assessments:

- Annotated testimonies or archival documents

- Group discussion responses
- Teacher observation
- Written reflection

Summative Assessment (Choose One):

- Explanatory paragraph: *How does the Assyrian genocide satisfy the UN definition of genocide?*
- Mini-presentation: Students present evidence from one testimony or newspaper article.
- Comparative reflection: Compare the Assyrian genocide to another WWI-era atrocity (e.g., Armenian genocide).

Success Criteria:

- Students cite **specific evidence** from sources
 - Students clearly explain at least **two components** of the genocide definition (e.g., intent, targeting)
 - Demonstrated understanding of historical context and human impact
 - Clear, logical, and evidence-based communication in writing or discussion
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9. Teacher Reflection / Notes

After teaching, reflect on:

- Which testimonies or sources resonated most with students?
 - Did students effectively connect evidence to the genocide framework?
 - Was the time sufficient for document analysis or testimony discussion?
 - Were scaffolds and supports effective?
 - What revisions or pacing changes would improve the lesson next time?
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10. Extensions & Cross-Curricular Links

- **History:** Compare the Assyrian genocide with the Armenian and Greek genocides within the Ottoman Empire.

- **Civics:** Examine how state-level recognition works (e.g., Arizona’s HCR 2044), and have students draft their own resolution.
 - **ELA / Creative Writing:** Ask students to write a first-person narrative based on a survivor testimony.
 - **Media Studies:** Analyze how modern political contexts influence genocide recognition and memory.
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11. Homework / Continued Practice

Option A: Annotate another testimony or archival article, identifying three pieces of genocide evidence.

Option B: Respond in writing: “*Why does recognition of the Assyrian genocide remain contested today?*”

Option C (Enrichment): Research how Assyrian diaspora communities maintain memory (e.g., through church, community, museum, memorials).

Materials & Resources (for Google Docs)

- [Seyfo Center – Historical Overview & Analysis](#)
- [Seyfo Center – “ASSYRIAN GENOCIDE 1915: Genocide, Denial & Right of Recognition” PDF](#)
- [Seyfo Center – “Forgotten and Concealed” \(Genocide Studies article\)](#)
- [Arizona House Concurrent Resolution 2044 \(2023\) – text](#)
- [Seyfo Center – Homepage / Research Center](#)
- [Assyrian Genocide Studies – About page](#)