

Syrian-Armenian Archive: Individual Research Exploration

Note to Teachers: This is an assignment outline for students in a social studies, history, or research class who are interested in getting exposure to introductory archival use and research. The assignment should ideally be a long-weekend or a vacation assignment in order to give students adequate time to explore the archive and answer their chosen question thoughtfully, but the length of the written response assignment can be adjusted to fit your curriculum needs.

This assignment might be a good addition to your pre-established lessons or curriculum covering any of the following:

- Research Methods
- Primary and Secondary Sources
- Archives
- Social Awareness and Refugees
- Contemporary Middle Eastern studies
- Ottoman Empire History

Content warning: Please note that this archive contains personal descriptions of violence and disturbing events in the context of genocide, displacement, and conflict.

Primary Objective: Students will practice learning from an archive in order to write their own essays in response to introductory research questions.

Additional objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Explain a bit about Armenians and the Syrian Armenian experience

Introduction of Assignment

Duration: Approx. 10 minutes

In order to introduce the assignment, introduce the following information:

Ask: Does anyone know about Armenia, or Armenian people?

Look for answers that cover the following, or give the following information as an answer:

- Armenians are a group of people, just like Ghanaian people, German people, or Korean people, for example.

- Over 100 years ago, they were the victims of a Genocide, which means lots of them were killed because of *who* they were, in this case, it was because they were Armenians.
 - (Reference the Holocaust, Rwanda, or other Genocides your class might already be familiar with.)
- Most of the Armenians that survived had to leave their homes and spread all over the world.
- Today, lots of Armenians live in countries like in Russia, France, and Lebanon. There are also Armenians in a small country right next to Turkey called Armenia! In the United States, there are Armenian communities in cities like LA, Boston, and Philadelphia.
- There were also a lot of Armenians in Syria, but there was a war in Syria that started 2011. Since the start of that war, many of the Armenians who lived in Syria have had to leave and find new homes.

Home Assignment

Instructions: Begin to explore the archive at rerooted.org and look through the questions listed below. After exploring around in the archive a bit (maybe you read some transcripts, watch parts of some of the interview videos, or listen to recordings), select one of the questions listed below. Write a two-page response using information you gather from the archive, additional research, and your interpretations.

Research Questions:

1. What is a “homeland”? Write your answer referencing interviews from the archive for support.
2. How does a genocide continue to influence people years after that genocide happened?
3. What was the Armenian experience like in 1915, during the Armenian Genocide? What kinds of things were happening to Armenians and how did they survive?
4. What were Armenian relations like with other Syrian nationals during the time leading up to the Syrian War?
5. What has happened in Aleppo during the ongoing Syrian conflict? Why might getting information about this conflict from only one group involved (in this case, Syrian Armenians) influence your understanding of the situation?