

“World War I and the Middle East” Weekend Workshop

Oct 24-25, 2015

Lesson Plan: Shifting Identities during the Demise of the Ottoman Empire

LESSON TITLE:	The Search for New Identities in the Demise of the Ottoman Empire
AUTHOR:	Joan Brodsky Schur
GRADE LEVEL:	10 th Grade NYS AP World History
OVERVIEW OF LESSON:	<p>This lesson draws on excerpts from the diary of Ihsan Salih Turjman (1893-1917) to illuminate the complex and shifting identities of Ottoman Arab citizens during World War I.</p> <p>Students study a map and document from 1906 to understand administrative divisions within the empire, after which they analyze four secondary sources that describe the evolving relation of Turk to Arab in the Ottoman Empire. Students read excerpts from Turjman’s diary with a focus on how his identity as an Ottoman citizen was tested during the war.</p>
SUBJECT AREA:	History
COUNTRY/REGIONAL FOCUS:	The Ottoman Levant
TIME REQUIRED:	3 class periods, including homework.
MATERIALS REQUIRED:	Handouts to accompany this lesson, including extracts from Salim Tamari’s <i>Year of the Locust: A Soldier’s Diary and the Erasure of Palestine’s Ottoman Past</i> .

BACKGROUND:

Shortly before World War I began the Ottoman Empire lost its remaining territories in Europe — save for a sliver — in the disastrous Balkan Wars of 1912-1913. By 1914 the Empire had also lost its territory in North Africa to France (Tunisia and Algeria) and Italy (Libya). Egypt, nominally Ottoman, was controlled by Britain. Thus the once-vast Empire was reduced to Istanbul, the Anatolian heartland and the Arab Middle East: including the Levant, Mesopotamia, and some of

“World War I and the Middle East” Weekend Workshop

Oct 24-25, 2015

Lesson Plan: Shifting Identities during the Demise of the Ottoman Empire

the Arabian Peninsula. The Arab lands, the subject of this lesson, had been ruled by the Ottomans for centuries.

The relationship of the Porte to the diverse people it ruled evolved over the course of the 19th century. As ethnic minorities pled their cause of greater autonomy if not statehood, (egged on by various European powers) the Ottomans tried to offset these demands by granting minorities greater rights through the Tanzimat reforms beginning in 1839. In 1908 the Young Turks forced the sultan to reinstate a constitutional form of government, adopted briefly before in 1876-78. Subjects were now citizens and the Ottomans promised that all male citizens, regardless of ethnicity or religion, would be treated equally.

However, after winning parliamentary elections, the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), did not fulfill its promises. It waged World War I on the side of the Germans under the banner of Islam, hoping that for Muslims everywhere, being Muslim would trump all other identities. Hopeful that all citizens, Muslim or not, would stay loyal to the Empire, it was fearful (and not without cause) that some would become turncoat. The ruling triumvirate of the CUP, Paşas Enver, Talaat and Cemal, not only reneged on their promises of greater autonomy for Arab lands but increasingly tried to unite the Empire under the banner of Turkification: “We are all Turks.” Those opposed were treated ruthlessly.

How did residents of the Arab Middle East, which included a wide array of religious and ethnic groups, identify themselves through this difficult period of time? The majority did in fact stay loyal to the Empire. In fact Arabs were an important component of Ottoman armies; one-third of the conscripts serving in the Ottoman military in 1914 were Arabs.

Others found their loyalty tested, requiring new definitions of political affiliation, personal identity and hopes for independent nationhood. The diary of Ihsan Turjman illuminates some of the inner conflicts faced by those living under Ottoman rule during this time.

CURRICULUM CONNECTION:

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- How did World War I (and the Turkification policies of the Young Turks in preceding years) hasten the transfer of loyalty from empire (the Ottoman Empire) to other forms of national identity?
- Why did World War I test the loyalty of some Arab Ottoman residents of the Levant, leading to the formation/solidification of other identities?
- Of what historical value is a primary source document of one “ordinary” person?

“World War I and the Middle East” Weekend Workshop
Oct 24-25, 2015
Lesson Plan: Shifting Identities during the Demise of the Ottoman Empire

LEARNING GOALS:

- To analyze the changing relationship between Turks and Arabs in the Ottoman Empire.
- To understand what impact World War I had on the evolution of Arab and Turkish nationalisms.
- To utilize one primary source document as a means to illuminate larger issues of the time period.

STANDARDS:

- CCR Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively. CCR pg. 48, 6-12.
- CCR Anchor Standards for Reading: Key ideas and details & integration of knowledge and ideas: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words. CCR p. 60, 6-12.
- National Council for the Social Studies C3 Framework for Social Studies and State Standards D2.His.1.9-12. Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts. D2.His.4.9-12. Analyze complex and interacting factors that influenced people during different historical eras.
- National Standards for History, National Center for History in the Schools. Standard 2. The causes and global consequences of World War I. 2B. Assess the short-term demographic, social, economic, and environmental consequences of World War I ...

PRE-ASSESSMENT:

Ask students what they think are important components of their identities. Make a list on the board as students suggest categories such as the following: nationality, ethnicity, race, religion, political party affiliation, school affiliation, sports or after school team membership, gender, family, and so forth. [Be careful not to ask that any student identify themselves publically in these categories.]

Now ask: Is each of these ways of identifying “who you are” equally important at all times? Recreate the following two diagrams on the board. At a birthday, family members are likely to be

“World War I and the Middle East” Weekend Workshop

Oct 24-25, 2015

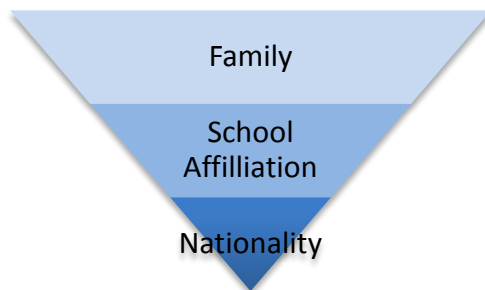
Lesson Plan: Shifting Identities during the Demise of the Ottoman Empire

the most relevant to your self-identity; your friends might come from your school and/or your school might acknowledge your birthday. Your nationality would probably not be very important to your identity on that day. But if you traveled to another country among the first question people ask is “What country are you from?” Nationality would move from the bottom to the top of the inverted pyramid. Ask students to choose three categories from the list they generated and create two inverted pyramids. Over each pyramid they should complete the sentence “At X who am I?” Examples: At a religious holiday who am I? At a sports event, a political rally, and so forth.

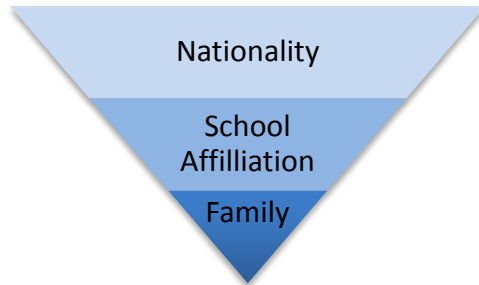
After doing this exercise explain to students that how we define ourselves can shift given the circumstances. Historical events can also slowly or suddenly change how we define ourselves or how others define us.

Finally ask students what they know about what happened in Arab Ottoman lands after the Ottomans fell. Do they associate Arab nationalism as being anti-Western, anti-colonialist, anti-Turk? Point out that defining who is an Arab is not so simple. One definition is “A person who speaks Arabic and defines themselves as an Arab.” Make certain that students do not equate Arab with Muslim; Christian Arabs played a large role in the formation of Arab national identity. Explain that this lesson will investigate one man’s struggle with defining his identify during World War I when his homeland was still under the governance of the Ottoman Empire, as it had been for centuries.

At my birthday what most identifies me?



On a trip to another country what most identifies me?



PROCEDURE:

Activity 1. In-class work.

Ask students how citizens of the Ottoman Empire defined themselves. Were they all “Turks”? Were some defined primarily by their village, family lineage, religion or ethnicity? In order to gain insight into these questions of identity project Map A on Handout 1. (If you project Map A from the linked Website it can be enlarged.)

- Ask students what Map A shows: Turkey “in Asia” in 1903 eleven years before World War I. This map represents close to what remained of the Ottoman Empire as it entered World War I. (Almost all remaining Ottoman territory in the European Balkans was lost in the Balkan Wars (1912-1913).
- Is this a Turkish map or an Ottoman map or neither? (Turks at this time used Ottoman script. This map is in Roman letters and in English.)
- Ask students to describe the territories ruled by the Ottomans in 1903. What bodies of water surround it? How extensive is it?
- Are we looking at a nation-state or an empire? Ask students for definitions of these terms. Refine their definitions by using definitions from Merriam-Webster online:
 - Nation-state: *a form of political organization under which a relatively homogeneous people inhabits a sovereign state; especially: a state containing one as opposed to several nationalities.*
 - Empire: *a major political unit having a territory of great extent or a number of territories or peoples under a single sovereign authority; especially: one having an emperor as chief of state.*
- Explain that we are looking at an empire, what remained of a once-vaster Ottoman Empire, ruled by the Sultan and his government from Istanbul. (In 1908 the Young Turks succeeded in reinstating a parliamentary form of government but the Sultan remained.) Explain that the Ottoman Empire contained among others Kurds, Greeks, Armenians, Jews, and Christians and Muslims of multiple sects.

“World War I and the Middle East” Weekend Workshop

Oct 24-25, 2015

Lesson Plan: Shifting Identities during the Demise of the Ottoman Empire

- How is this land divided up? What might be the purpose of these divisions? Ask students to read out loud some of the names of the *vilayets* or provinces. Tell students that in 1872 the Ottomans created the *vilayets* to help govern the Empire. How do the ones in Mesopotamia correspond, or not, to political entities we know today (ex: Mosul now part of Iraq is its own *vilayet*; there is no “Iraq.”) Is there a visible difference in the ways that Turkish-speaking Anatolia and the Arabic lands of the Arabian Peninsula and Levant are divided up? (Apparently not: they are roughly equivalent in size, occasionally smaller.)
- Where is Jerusalem? Is there a vilayet of “Palestine” on the map? (Evidently not)

Now distribute or project Handout 1. Chart A.

- In what language is this document and when was it published? (French, 1906). If students pronounce the names on the map phonetically they will recognize that Souriya is Syria, and so forth.
- Is Palestine listed as a *vilayet*? Is it listed in the subdivisions of the provinces, or *sandjaks*? Point out that *administratively* the Ottomans divided what we know as Palestine into a *département indépendant* (independent department) of Jerusalem. The rest of what we know as Palestine was separate and incorporated into “Beyrout.”
 - Now tell students that they are going to read excerpts from the diary of a young man living in Jerusalem in the early years of the 20th century. The Ottomans had ruled Jerusalem since the early 1500s when they conquered Syria, Palestine, Egypt and most of the Arabian Peninsula. How would you define your identity had you lived there and then? Muslims were the vast majority but Jews and Christians were protected minorities that were organized into *millets* and able to apply their own religious laws to a large extent. They continued to inhabit Ottoman lands throughout four hundred years.
 - Would you identify yourself as a citizen of the Ottoman Empire ?
 - Would you identify primarily by your religious affiliation ?
 - Would you identify by ethnicity or language as an Arab? As a Greek?
 - Would you be a *Jerusalemite* or inhabitant of another city above all ?
 - Would you adopt your *vilayet* as a means to identify yourself ?
 - In what circumstances might you use one or the other of these identifiers ?
- Discuss all of these possibilities and point out that there is no ‘right’ answer. In different contexts the same person might identify him or herself in different ways.

Activity 2. Distribute. Handout 2. Ottoman Identities are Tested in World War I for homework.

Activity 3. In-class work. Distribute handouts 3. 4. and 5.

Divide the students into groups of four. Assign each group to answer one set of questions, either question set A, B, C, or D but make sure that all question sets are covered. Create more

“World War I and the Middle East” Weekend Workshop

Oct 24-25, 2015

Lesson Plan: Shifting Identities during the Demise of the Ottoman Empire

groups of four until all class members are in a group. (Depending on class size, there might be two groups of four students to answer question sets A, B, and so forth.)

Direct every group to read the diary entries you assign to them. Work students cannot complete in one class period should be completed for homework.

Differentiated Learning:

Assign less advanced groups to read only those excerpts that pertain to their questions.

Advanced students should read through all diary excerpts, looking for those that shed light on the questions they have been assigned. In addition, each member of a group should tackle a different research question. Explain that research is not meant to be extensive but rather to further illuminate parts of the diary.

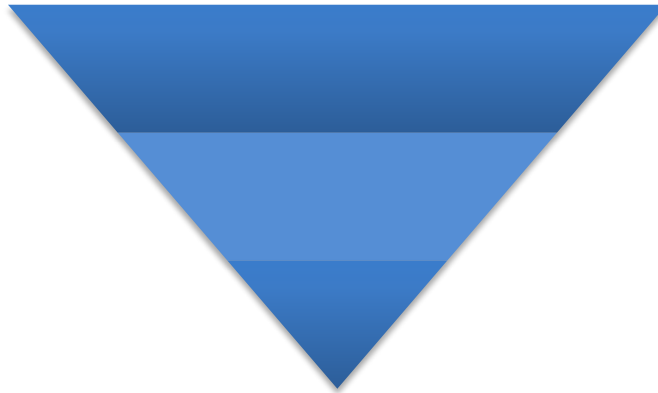
Activity 4: Debriefing Whole Group Discussion

1. Ask each Group A through D to report back to the whole class with their answer to their Assessment Question and their reasons for their answer.

- A. Did the famine, disease and locust invasion weaken Turjman’s allegiance to the Ottoman Empire? If so, why?
- B. Did you feel that Turjman’s self-identification as a Muslim changed? Did it make him identify more or less with the Sultan’s government? If so, why or why not?
- C. Do you feel that Turjman’s self-identification as an Ottoman citizen changed in response to Ottoman policies and governance?
- D. Did Turjman’s self-identification as an Arab change over the course of 1915 and if so, why? Why did he or did he not identify primarily as a Palestinian?

2. Draw the following diagram on the board and ask each student to rank the top three components of Turjman’s identity: Ottoman, Muslim, Arab, Palestinian, Jerusalemite. Share answers and try to reach a consensus about which of these identities became foremost.

“World War I and the Middle East” Weekend Workshop
Oct 24-25, 2015
Lesson Plan: Shifting Identities during the Demise of the Ottoman Empire



OTTOMAN MUSLIM ARAB PALESTINIAN JERUSALEMITE

3. Of the events of 1915 recorded in his diary, what do students believe most contributed Turjman’s identification as Arab as opposed to Ottoman? Ask students to substantiate their answers with examples from the diary excerpts.

4. Based on the diary excerpts, how likely do students think it would be for Turjman to

- A. Fight with the Ottomans if sent to the front.
- B. Desert the Ottoman army if sent to the front.
- C. Join the Arab Revolt and fight on the side of the British against the Ottomans

5. Assign students to write an essay based on either the second or third Essential Question of this lesson. In their essay they should cite Turjman’s diary extensively, and make use of the timeline referred to in Handout 5.

ASSESSMENT:

	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Meets Some Expectations	Falls Below Expectations
--	----------------------	--------------------	-------------------------	--------------------------

“World War I and the Middle East” Weekend Workshop
Oct 24-25, 2015
Lesson Plan: Shifting Identities during the Demise of the
Ottoman Empire

Class participation				
Homework on Question Set				
Group Participation				
Research Component (optional)				
Essay				

RESOURCES:

Fromkin, David. *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East*. New York: Henry Holt, 1989.

Gelvin, James L. *The Modern Middle East: A History, Third Edition*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Hourani, Albert. *A History of the Arab Peoples*. New York: Warner Books, 1991.

Lewis, Bernard. *The Middle East: A Brief History of the Last 2,000 Years*. New York, Simon & Schuster, 1995.

McMeekin, Sean. *The Berlin-Baghdad Express: The Ottoman Empire and Germany’s Bid for World Power*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2010.

Peretz, Don. *The Middle East Today, Sixth Edition*, London: Praeger, 1994.

Rogan, Eugene. *The Fall of the Ottomans: The Great War in the Middle East*. New York, Basic Books, 2015

Tamari, Salim, *Year of the Locust: A Soldier’s Diary and the Erasure of Palestine’s Ottoman Past*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011.

“World War I and the Middle East” Weekend Workshop

Oct 24-25, 2015

**Lesson Plan: Shifting Identities during the Demise of the
Ottoman Empire**