

INJUSTICE IS ONLY ENABLED BY SILENCE



A GLOBAL NOMADS GROUP CURRICULUM

VIRTUAL REALITY LAB | [GNG.ORG](https://gng.org)

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01 | BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

> The Armenian Genocide is considered by scholars to be the first modern genocide, predating the Holocaust by over 20 years. The term “genocide” was created to describe the systematic extermination of the Armenian people, yet many people have

never heard of the Armenian Genocide. Over the course of seven years, between 1915–1922, the Ottoman government attempted to eliminate the Armenian people, murdering nearly 1.5 million people. Conflict between the Muslim Turks and the Christian Armenians goes back hundreds

of years, culminating in the first of what has resulted in nearly a dozen genocides in the past 100 years. As part of our commitment to Genocide awareness, Survival Pictures is proud to offer you Siroun, a short film told as a unique 360 degree experience to accompany The Promise.

Siroun, opens with a scene in an Ottoman village 1915 that might feel familiar in any time and place - five boys playing marbles in the streets in front of their homes. When an argument breaks out between two Turkish boys, Bilal and Temin, Temin’s friend Artak, an Armenian boy, attempts to intervene. Bilal turns his anger into taunts and insults against Artak, finally stealing his marble as some boys chime in, while Temin and others look on. Later, during his daily prayers, Temin reflects on his failure to defend his friend as he listens to a passage from the Qur’an about the importance of compassion. He seeks out Artak to make amends, but finds the Armenian quarter already emptied and razed, while Artak is captured by Turkish soldiers. The film closes as Temin imagines Artak’s journey across the Syrian desert and imagines his fate. Posing a seemingly timeless and universal incident – teenage boys arguing over a schoolyard game – in the context of this historic atrocity, the

film challenges viewers to consider how everyday acts of unkindness and violence intersect with the possibilities and realities of extreme violence.

Siroun, was developed in complement with feature film *The Promise*, an Open Roads film directed by Terry George and produced by Eric Esrailian (<http://variety.com/exec/eric-esrailian/>) of Survival Pictures, an historical drama that follows a love triangle between two Armenians who meet in “Constantinople,” and an American journalist reporting on the emerging Ottoman civil war and eventually the atrocities against Armenians. **Siroun**, filmed on the set of *The Promise*, gives viewers an opportunity to immerse themselves in a rural Ottoman village at this moment in history, creating a foundation of empathy to consider the choices and experiences of everyday people caught at the crossroads of civil war and genocide.

THE
PROMISE

To learn more, visit the Promise Movie (<http://thepromise.movie>).

02

SIROUN:

A RESOURCE FOR HIGH SCHOOL HISTORY CLASSROOMS



Global Nomads Group developed the VR experience **Siroun** to enrich high school students' opportunities to learn about this moment in history. The VR film may be especially useful in high school social studies or history course units on 20th century European history and the inception of World War I,

and related topics such as the expansion and decline of empires, the rise of nationalism, and World War II and the Holocaust. Some teachers may find it useful in English Language Arts, literature or other humanities courses, especially those that explore themes such as conflict and peace, control and resistance, violence and nonviolence.

The curriculum map below suggests possibilities for using **Siroun** in relation to topics and themes in a social studies, history or other humanities course, with lesson strategies that address National Social Studies NCSS Themes and Common Core Curriculum English Language Arts and Literacy (CCC ELA) standards.

USING THIS CURRICULUM MAP

Teachers can use the curriculum map below to find entry points for **Siroun** along with other primary and secondary resources as a social studies, history or other high school course and to develop lessons that will be relevant and engaging for their students. A quick guide to curriculum planning using the suggestions in this map is as follows:

TOPICS	THEMES & STANDARDS	ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS	LEARNING & ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES
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- Identify the **topics and issues** within your social studies, history or other course for which **Siroun** will be a relevant resource, *and/or*

- Plan one lesson that addresses key topics and issues that are most relevant for your course, or a short sequence of lessons for your students to explore this historical topic in more depth.

TOPICS	THEMES & STANDARDS	ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS	LEARNING & ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choose lesson topics and strategies that are aligned with the NCSS themes and CCC ELA strategies that you are prioritizing in your social studies, history or other course. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As you plan lessons, adapt the lesson and assessment activities to address. <i>The extent to which the lessons and assessment activities support students' attainment of the indicated learning standards depends especially on how the activities are utilized and implemented, and on teachers' classroom practices. Teachers are encouraged to adapt all activities, and their own methodologies and approaches, to strengthen the lessons' emphasis on and effectiveness in relation to the specific learning standards you wish to prioritize.</i> 	<p>Note: This guide focuses on CCC ELA standards for grades 9-10. Teachers using Siroun and this curriculum guide with students in other grade levels may adapt the lesson and assessment strategies using the indicated anchor standards.</p>

TOPICS	THEMES & STANDARDS	ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS	LEARNING & ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the essential questions to frame class discussions about the film Siroun and other primary and secondary resources students examine in relation to this historical period, <i>and/or</i> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop lesson and assessment activities through which students explore and responds to the questions through oral presentations, written essays, or through other media. 	<p>Note: Encourage students to explore different perspectives, possibilities, and nuances as they respond to any of the essential questions. They are intended to encourage discussion and debate, but not to suggest a simple "right" or "wrong" answer.</p>

TOPICS	THEMES & STANDARDS	ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS	LEARNING & ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use some or all of the suggested activities to develop a lesson (or short sequence of lessons), <i>and/or</i> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use some or all of the suggested activities to develop assessment projects, either as short assignments or longer projects students research and present in writing, visual images <i>and/or</i> using other media. 	<p>The Resources section below suggests additional primary and secondary sources, as well as other lesson ideas. The final section, Using virtual reality provides strategies for using a virtual reality film in your classroom along with other materials.</p>

03 CURRICULUM OUTLINE

USING SIROUN IN A SOCIAL STUDIES, HISTORY OR OTHER HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM

TOPIC	Diversity and division in the Ottoman empire			
THEMES & STANDARDS	NCSS	Theme 4: Individual Development and Identity	Theme 5: Individuals, Groups and Institutions	CCC ELA (9-10): RH 1, 2, 6, 9 WHST 1, 7, 8, 9
ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did the different identities of Turks and Armenians emerge? What similarities and connections existed between Turks, Armenians and other ethnic groups under the Ottoman Empire? What differences and divisions? How and why did the <i>differences</i> between Turks and Armenians become divisions in the mid 1910's? How can we see these shifts in the experiences of Temin and Artak in this film? How did these shifts affect other Turks and Armenians that would have lived in similar villages and circumstances? How did these changes contribute to the transformation of nations, and the identities of Turkish and Armenian people? What did Temin mean when he said, <i>"Each of us is many things. I was no more a Turk than I was a tree-climber."</i>? 			
LEARNING & ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES	<p>Examining primary and secondary sources, students explore the cultures and religions of Turks and Armenians and the social and economic relationships that existed among them in Ottoman communities before the decline of the empire.</p> <p>After watching the film Siroun, students imagine the relationships that existed between Turkish and citizens of Temin and Artak's village before World War II and after the Armenian genocide. They describe these through maps, parallel historical narratives of characters they invent, or a comparative historical essay.</p>			

TOPIC	Bystanders and Interveners		
THEMES & STANDARDS	Theme 5: Individuals, Groups and Institutions	Theme 10: Civic Ideals and Practices	CCC ELA (9-10): RH 1, 2, 6, 9 WHST 1, 7, 8, 9
ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who were the bystanders in the film Siroun? Why did those characters decide not to take action when they witnessed cruelty or injustice? What actions might Temin have taken to respond to the way Bilal and others treated Artak, and when? In what ways might these actions have shaped short term or long-term outcomes and events? Do bystanders who witness acts of injustice have a responsibility to take action to intervene and interrupt it? Are there conditions under which bystanders should (or should not take action), and what are they? The character Temin says, <i>“I did not get up in time to save Artak. I only wish he had made it to that desert to some small chance of survival.”</i> To what extent is Temin responsible for what happens to Artak? 		
LEARNING & ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES	<p>Students view the film Siroun, and identify different characters (including but not exclusively Temin) who were bystanders.</p> <p>Students examine other primary and secondary sources about this period in history and identify real life individuals who were bystanders or interveners, and analyze their role in shaping the outcome of events. They consider alternative possibilities for actions those individuals might have taken, and what might have happened as a result.</p> <p>Students consider the risks and responsibilities facing bystanders who witness acts of violence and injustice, and formulate, debate and defend positions on the ethical responsibilities of bystanders in class discussions or written editorials.</p>		

TOPIC	History and reconciliation				
THEMES & STANDARDS	NCSS	Theme 5: Individuals, Groups and Institutions	Theme 6: Power, Authority and Governance	Theme 10: Civic Ideals and Practices	CCC ELA (9-10): RH 1, 2, 6, 9 WHST 1, 7, 8, 9
ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which modern day political and social groups have different positions on what happened in Turkey during this period, and how it should be remembered? Why are events that happened in the past part of a controversy today? Are people who live today responsible for making amends for wrongdoing in the past? Why or why not, and under what circumstances? Can actions taken by people today right historical wrongs? Do Temin's actions at the end of Siroun make an important difference in "righting" the injustice to Artak? 				
LEARNING & ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES	<p>Students watch the VR film Siroun and read contemporary news articles and editorials presenting different evidence with respect to the events that took place in the Ottoman empire from 1915-16, and how they should be acknowledged and remembered.</p> <p>Students formulate and present their own concepts for how the Armenian genocide should be commemorated, and/or possibilities for contemporary actions that could be taken to reconcile or "right" historical injustice.</p> <p>Note to GNG team: We should make clear and explicit that we are not suggesting that students consider "whether" the genocide took place but rather how it is remembered and other issues related to responsibility, commemoration, and reconciliation.</p>				

04

VIRTUAL
REALITY

USING VIRTUAL REALITY IN YOUR CLASSROOM

>

Virtual Reality (VR) film is a new form of media, one that offers audiences an exciting new way to connect with and immerse themselves in the stories and experiences of people and events they feature. This curriculum was designed especially to inspire teachers who may be using VR for the first time, and to offer helpful guidance as they do so.

In many ways, using a VR film as part of a lesson involves the same preparations, steps and considerations teachers take when they use a standard-format video or film. However, teachers can use this new medium if they understand some of the unique and specific elements and experiences that are part of watching a VR film. Following is a list of key understandings about VR film as an educational resource, and steps to effectively for its full potential.

GNG'S VIRTUAL
REALITY LAB AND TOOLKIT

Teachers using this curriculum are also encouraged to explore [GNG's Virtual Reality Lab](#) online, and to download and read GNG's [VR101 Toolkit](#).

Among other helpful tips and information, the VR101 Toolkit includes strategies for teachers to plan and adapt lessons using VR films, depending on the number and type of devices on which students will view it.

VIRTUAL REALITY: WHAT TO KNOW AND WHAT TO DO

WHAT TO KNOW	WHAT TO DO
<p>Virtual Reality films can be viewed on smartphones, tablets, laptops or desktop computers – devices most teachers and students already have available for use.</p> <p>It is not necessary to purchase or learn how to use new special or expensive equipment to use VR in your classroom.</p>	<p>Prepare to have tablets or laptops, or students' own smartphones ready for use in a class in which you will show a VR film.</p> <p>To view the VR on a mobile device, download GNG's mobile app, check that it works, and practice using it in advance.</p>

WHAT TO KNOW	WHAT TO DO
<p>The experience of viewing a VR film can be even more exciting and immersive with inexpensive, easy-to-use accessories.</p> <p>With head-mounted devices, viewers can watch VR films in 3D and experience footage shot in 360 degrees. The simplest and least expensive headsets, made of cardboard and widely available, enable viewers to watch VR films on smartphones. For more information about different HMDs and how to order them see GNG's VR101 Toolkit.</p>	<p>If you are interested and have resources available, consider purchase a few headsets in advance, and practice using them with your own smartphone.</p>

WHAT TO KNOW	WHAT TO DO
<p>VR is designed for each viewer to a film on their own device (unlike a video or film in which students in a class, together, watch a film projected onto one screen).</p>	<p>Arrange to have as many devices available for every student to access one as they view the film. If you only have a few devices available, the “station-based approach” (described in each lesson, and also in the GNG VR 101 Toolkit) is an easy, feasible strategy for using VR film along with other resources in the same lesson.</p> <p>Note: It is possible for an audience to watch the film in 360 video on a standard screen, for those teachers and classrooms for which a 1:1 ratio of devices to students is not available.</p>

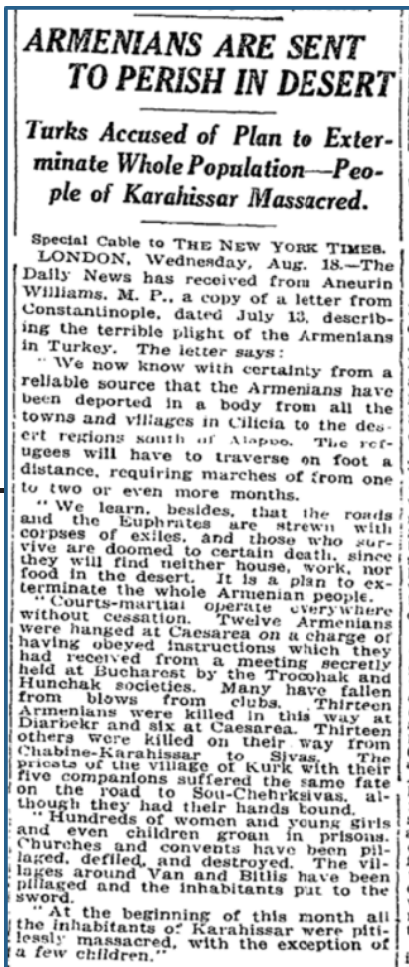
WHAT TO KNOW	WHAT TO DO
<p>Viewing a VR film is exciting and new for most students.</p> <p>An advantage to using VR in a classroom is that students may be especially interested and curious to use this new medium. However, the first time they view a VR film, students may become so involved in exploring the new technology that they may not focus on or observe key parts of the content that are important for your less.</p>	<p>Consider leaving time for students to view the VR film more than once, so they have the chance to explore the immersive experience the first time they view a film, then absorbing and reflecting on key content the second time they view it. The film Siroun is 5 minutes long, so it should be feasible to view more than once, even in the same lesson.</p>

WHAT TO KNOW	WHAT TO DO
<p>Viewing a VR film causes some people to have temporary physical discomfort such as nausea or dizziness, especially when they are using HMDs.</p> <p>These effects can be prevented or mitigated with some easy steps for viewing VR films.</p>	<p>Arrange your classroom so that students watching VR films in HMD have space around them. Advise and remind students using HMDs move their heads slowly as they look around to explore the 360 degree footage they see around them. Give them time and reminders to sit quietly and take a few deep breaths before beginning to view an HD film, and when they remove HMDs after a film in order to reconnect with their immediate environment.</p> <p>Monitor students as they use HMDs. If you notice signs that they may feel nauseous or dizzy, help them to pause, breathe and take a break.</p>

WHAT TO KNOW	WHAT TO DO
<p>People viewing VR films often respond to difficult or emotional content much more intensely than they do to standard film or video.</p> <p>Virtual Reality is considered by some “the ultimate empathy machine”</p>	<p>Watch a VR film before showing it to your students, just as you would with any other film video. Identify story lines or events that students might find upsetting, taking special note of content that may correspond with their personal, difficult experiences. Prepare to adapt your use of the video accordingly and/or provide support if students react intensely to the film, keeping in mind that students’ emotional response is likely to be even stronger to a VR film than it would be to standard video. (For example, the film Siroun includes subject matter related to bullying between peers, and images of families’ forced displacement from their homes).</p>

WHAT TO KNOW	WHAT TO DO
<p>Viewers who watch the same film may not see the same footages and images, depending on the directions they choose to look.</p> <p>This is especially true for those using HMDs, and who have more individual choice as they guide themselves as they watch a film.</p>	<p>There are a few different steps teachers can take to work with the possibility that each student in a class may see – and does not see – different parts of the same film:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After students have viewed a film, begin a debriefing discussion by asking them to compare what they saw. This will give them, and you, a better understanding of the different scenes or images they encountered. • As you watch a VR film to prepare for a lesson, take note of any important scenes or images that they might miss. Provide them with guidance in advance so that they can find and see those images when they reach the relevant point while watching • Consider making time for each student to view the same VR film twice. This gives them a chance to first experience what it is like to take a “self-guided tour” through a film, and then to watch while identifying key scenes that you or their peers suggest. (As suggested above, this is also a strategy for giving students an opportunity to enjoy the new experience of exploring VR, while also having a chance to focus on and absorb key content from a film.) <p>Note: <i>Siroun</i> follows a clear storyline, so students watching this VR film are likely to focus on, see and remember the same key events it includes.</p>

05

USEFUL
RESOURCES

The New York Times

<https://www.nytimes.com/topic/destination/armenian-genocide?8qa>

The New York Times. April 18, 1915, p. 5

The New York Times' archives include historical articles about the Armenian genocide dating from the first days of its coverage by American foreign correspondents reporting on World War I in Europe. More recent articles and updates address the ongoing controversy over how this historical era is understood and remembered, as well as contemporary relations between ethnic Turks and Armenians in modern-day Turkey.



Teachers using the film *Siroun* as a resource to teach about World War I and the Armenian genocide may also find the following resources useful:

Facing History and Ourselves

<https://www.facinghistory.org/topics/genocide-mass-violence/armenian-genocide>

The education organization Facing History and Ourselves offers lesson plans and an array of resources for teaching about the Armenian genocide and other instances of extreme violence in history. Among are this resource book for teachers, with historical summaries, primary resources and essential questions to guide discussions and assessment activities.

Crimes against Humanity and Civilization: The Genocide of the Armenians.

Brookline: Facing History and Ourselves, 2004.

<https://www.facinghistory.org/books-borrowing/crimes-against-humanity-and-civilization-genocide-armenians>

USC Shoah: Visual History Online

<http://vhaonline.usc.edu/about/archive>

The Visual History Online archive of the University of Southern California's Shoah Foundation is a publicly accessible, searchable database that includes 370 interviews of survivors of the Armenian genocide, as well as thousands of testimonies of eyewitnesses of the Holocaust and other genocides.

Building Bridges Between Turkey and Armenia.

James Estrin for The New York Times, January 24, 2017.

This slide show from *The New York Times* "Lens" series includes photographs taken by Turkish and Armenian photographers:

https://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2017/01/24/building-bridges-people-to-people-between-turks-and-armenians/?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FArmenian%20Genocide&action=click&contentCollection=world®ion=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=1&pgtype=collection&r=0