

Mini Lesson: Resilience after the Armenian Genocide

Samuel Kadorian & Arshag Dickranian



Subject Area: ELA/History

Grade Level: 9 – 10

Duration: 30 minutes

Standard Addressed: CCSS.ELA–LITERACY.CCRA.W.10

Testimony:

Samuel Kadorian
Armenian Survivor



(1:16)

Testimony:

Arshag Dickranian
Armenian Survivor



(0:37)

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

CCSS.ELA–LITERACY.CCRA.R.2

Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

Learning Aim: As a result of the lesson, students will: identify evidence in audiovisual text in the form of testimony, interpret audiovisual text based on a set of guiding questions, and write a reflection based on oral discussions and audiovisual text in the form of testimony.

CONSIDER

- Tell students that they will learn about the residual emotional effects of genocide through the testimony of two survivors of the Armenian Genocide. Their testimonies are part of the largest collection of filmed interviews of survivors and witnesses of the Armenian Genocide, the first genocide of the twentieth century. The interviews were conducted by the late J. Michael Hagopian, who recorded them on 16 mm film between 1975 and 2005 for a series of documentaries.
- For background information on the Armenian Genocide, show the Connections Video, “What is the Armenian Genocide?” (available on the IWitness dashboard) to your class.
- Tell students to consider the following question and to quietly reflect on it, then to turn to a partner and share as much as they feel comfortable:
 - ◇ Are there thoughts and experiences from your life that you carry every day? Perhaps particularly difficult ones, such as fears, phobias, or secrets?
 - ◇ Do you share these thoughts, experiences and feelings with others? Why or why not? Do you feel these experiences make it harder for people to understand you?

COLLECT

- In this lesson, you will watch clips of testimony from two survivors of the Armenian Genocide. Although these examples are an extreme example of the effects of trauma on survivors of genocide. Watch the clips.
- Share Sam Kadorian’s and Arshag Dickranian’s biographies by distributing the handout, projecting it on the board, or reading aloud to the whole class.
 - ◇ Viewing 1: Play Sam’s and Arshag’s clips all the way through as a class.
 - ◇ Viewing 2: Play the clips a second time and direct students to take notes about what they see. How do Sam and Arshag appear when they tell their story? What do you notice about their body language, voice and tone?
- As a whole group, discuss Sam’s and Arshag’s testimonies:
 - ◇ Even though Sam and Arshag were victims of genocide much earlier in their lives, how do you think the experience of genocide affected them into their late adulthood?
 - ◇ How were their experiences of life after the genocide similar to or different from each other’s?
- Engage students by saying these testimonies remind us that people carry with them experiences, including trauma, which those on the outside may not see and that may be triggered in ways that surprise us.

CONSTRUCT

- Tell students that they will be working individually and that they will be completing a written reflection to the following prompt using what they have learned and discussed thus far.
- How could this lesson and the testimonies of Sam Kadorian and Arshag Dickranian help you understand others, particularly others who are different from you? Explain.

COMMUNICATE

- Ask students to volunteer to read their responses. Encourage discussion and ensure students understand the importance of knowing what others are experiencing and being mindful of these experiences. There may be much more below the surface.

Student Handout

Samuel Kadorian Biography

Samuel Kadorian (Kachaturyan) was born in 1907 in Harput, Ottoman Empire. Both his parents were orphans. Kadorian and many other boys were thrown into a pile to be killed, but since he was at the bottom of the pile, he survived. His family escaped the genocide and returned to Urfa, where they were thrown into jail. In the jail, Kadorian lost his grandmother, two sisters, and his brother. From Urfa, he escaped to Der Zor, Syria then immigrated to New York. He gave his testimony on August 15, 1980 in the United States.

Arshag Dickranian Biography

Arshag Dickranian was born on January 26, 1905 in Izmit, present-day Turkey, which was then the Ottoman Empire. The city was diverse, with Armenians, Greeks, Jews, and Turks living there, albeit segregated. Arshag was born to an affluent family; his father was a business owner. When the genocide began, 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 via 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, bringing no belongings, to evade capture. They lived in Konya for four years. Arshag was able to attend school, illegally, in an attic schoolhouse for the Armenian community. For safety reasons, Arshag's father Mirtad 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 the United States.