

History
UNFOLDING

ISLAM AND THE WEST IN THE AGE OF THE OTTOMANS



MindSparks
CHALLENGING STUDENTS TO THINK HISTORICALLY

Contents

Introduction	2
Lesson 1	Mongols, Turks, and the Rise of the Ottomans	4
Lesson 2	Europe Under Siege	8
Lesson 3	The Ottomans and the World of Islam	12
Lesson 4	Ottoman Decline	16
Appendix	Image Close-ups	21

Introduction

The Ottoman Challenge

This MindSparks set is the second of a three-part series on the history of Islam. The first was *The Rise of Islam* (HS819). The last of the three sets is *The Rise of the Modern Middle East* (HS948).

The focus here is on the Ottoman Empire, which dominated the history of Islamic civilization from the 1300s until the empire's demise in World War I. We also take a brief look at the two other Islamic empires of this period, the Safavids in Persia and the Mughals in India.

Today, many Muslims see Islam as besieged by the West. Until the 1600s, it was the West that lived in fear of a dynamic and expansionist Islam. And it was Ottoman power above all that made Europeans tremble.

However, Europe's Renaissance and Reformation, its science, trade, and overseas discoveries, and its Age of Enlightenment gave it advantages that soon began to eclipse the Ottomans. While the Ottomans did try to reform and adapt, they never seemed quite able to find the right set of keys. Perhaps the lack of a large merchant and industrial middle class limited the resources on which the state could draw, forcing the sultans to constantly struggle just to keep up. By the 1800s, the Ottoman Empire was Europe's "Sick Man." Its demise as a result of World War I opened a new and much more chaotic chapter in the history of Islam and the Middle East.

This set uses 12 visual displays to focus on several key themes in the story of Islam in the age of the Ottomans. Each lesson uses three visual displays to explore one broad topic. Briefly, the four lessons are as follows:

Mongols, Turks, and the Rise of the Ottomans

The Ottomans emerged in a chaotic time when many nomadic tribes were on the move toward and into the Islamic realms of the Middle East.

Europe Under Siege

The illustrations here focus on the awesome power of the rising Ottoman state. Ottoman civilization at this point was advanced and confident, with political and military institutions second to none.

The Ottomans and the World of Islam

Islam was central to every aspect of life in Ottoman civilization and in the other two Islamic civilizations in this era of Ottoman dominance.

Ottoman Decline

Using a series of British political cartoons, this lesson focuses on several key factors explaining the decline of the Ottomans and their ultimately unsuccessful efforts to reverse that decline.

Using Photos, Cartoons, and Other Visuals to Teach History

Many textbooks are full of colorful visuals. However, all too often these visuals function primarily as window dressing. They make the text more entertaining, or at least more palatable. Only occasionally do the visuals in textbooks do more than offer simple pictorial reinforcement of ideas already presented in the text. In many cases, they pander to the visual orientation of the young while doing little to help young people master the challenges of the visual media that dominate their lives.

By way of contrast, our approach to using visual materials emphasizes their unique strengths as historical documents. The lessons in this booklet focus students on the visual symbols and metaphors in editorial cartoons, the dramatic qualities of certain photographs, the potential of many images to make abstract ideas more specific and concrete, the implicit biases and stereotypes in certain images, their emotional power, and their ability to invoke the spirit of a time and place. In the process, we make every effort to strengthen students' visual literacy skills in general, as well as their ability to think critically and engage in spirited but disciplined discussions.

How to Use This Booklet

The booklet is divided into four lessons, with three illustrations per lesson. Each lesson consists of the following:

A BACKGROUND INFORMATION SHEET This page provides brief summaries explaining the three illustrations on which the lesson is based and their relevance to the lesson's objectives.

DIGITAL IMAGES The booklet's PDF allows you to project the images for use in your class discussions.

DISCUSSION-ACTIVITY SHEETS

Each sheet displays one illustration. It includes a sequence of questions to help you plan an all-class discussion while using the projected images. The questions take students step by step through an analysis of the illustration. If you wish, you may reproduce these pages and hand them out. In addition to the discussion questions on the illustration itself, one or two follow-up activities are suggested. Some of these can be made into individual assignments. Others will work best as small-group or all-class activities.

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will better understand the confused setting within which the Ottoman state grew in the 1300s and 1400s.
2. Students will better understand the military advantages this early “gunpowder empire” had over its enemies.

Mongols, Turks, and the Rise of the Ottomans

Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION**Illustrations 1A & 1B**

By the 1200s, Islamic civilization already included many groups besides the Arabs who birthed it in the 600s. Among those others were various Turkish nomads from the steppes of central Asia. A caravan of Turkish peoples on these same steppes is shown in Illustration 1A. It is a photo from the late 1800s, but what it shows might well have been seen many centuries earlier. Turkish peoples first came into the Islamic Middle East as slave soldiers or mercenaries to man the armies of Islam’s rulers. Others settled as whole tribes, often adopting Islam on their own. In the 1200s, fierce Mongol warriors sowed terror in the region. The Mongols were ruthless, but by 1300 they were already losing control. A new master was rising from within the Islamic realms. It was a Turkish tribe whose first known ruler was Osman I, from which the name “Ottoman” comes. Osman’s mausoleum is shown in Illustration 1B.

Illustration 2

The Ottomans would in time carve a mighty Islamic empire out of much of the Middle East. The Ottomans developed a powerful army, one of the first to use gunpowder and artillery. This is the scene of that army’s greatest triumph: the conquest in 1453 of Constantinople, capitol of the Byzantine Empire. Ottoman military strength depended on warriors who expected to be paid partly in booty. In this, the Ottomans were like most other powers in the region, Muslim or Christian. Cities that had resisted a siege were fair game for looting, rape, and the murder or enslavement of all inhabitants. This is exactly what happened in Constantinople in 1453.

Illustration 3

In the early 1300s, the Ottomans were one small Turkish dynasty in Western Anatolia. (Anatolia is where present-day Turkey is located.) In annual military campaigns, they began taking lands from both the Christians of the Byzantine Empire and the Muslims of the Middle East. The key “frontier” for the Ottomans was in the Christian lands of the Balkans, in southeastern Europe. By the 1500s, they were at the gates of Vienna, Austria. Meanwhile, they ended Mamluk rule in Egypt in 1517 and came to control much of North Africa and Arabia, including Islam’s holiest cities, Mecca and Medina. By the mid-1500s, the Ottomans were seen as the supreme defenders and protectors of all of Islam.

Illustrations 1A & 1B

1A



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1B



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Discussing the Illustrations

1. Illustration 1A is a late 1800s photo of a caravan on the steppes of Central Asia. From the image, can you explain what the steppes are? People of the steppes are often nomadic herders and traders. Using the photo, can you explain why these might be favored ways of life in this sort of physical environment?
2. Illustration 1A shows a caravan of Turkish people. Turkish groups from the Central Asian steppes were already in contact with Arabs and Islamic civilization in the Middle East when another group of nomads from the steppes conquered much of Islam, including Baghdad in 1258. What group was that?
3. Mongol rule did not last much longer than a century. The next great Islamic empire was to be launched by a tribe in the 1300s. Its rise began under the rule Osman I. His mausoleum and that of his successor are shown in Illustration 1B. His name was the basis of that empire. What empire was it? What do these mausoleums suggest, if anything, about the values and artistic styles of Ottoman society?

Follow-up Activity

1. **Small-group activity:** The Mongols and the various Turkish tribes that moved into the Middle East were part of a steady stream of nomads of the steppes (or plains) of central Asia who moved west and, at times, invaded and then adapted to more-settled cultures in the Middle East. Learn more about such nomadic peoples in the centuries from about 800 CE to 1400 CE. Try to find out what historians think were the main causes of the migrations of such groups into the Middle East in those centuries. Create a map showing the original locations of the groups, the routes they took during major migrations, and where they settled. Use your map as the centerpiece of a bulletin-board display called “Nomads of the Steppes and the World of Islam: 800 CE to 1400 CE.” Add photocopies of any illustrations you find and write paragraphs explaining each element in your display.

Illustration 2



The Granger Collection, New York

Discussing the Illustration

1. This 15th-century French illustration shows a siege of the capital city of the mighty Byzantine Empire in 1453. What was the name of that capital city under the Byzantine Empire? What is its name today?
2. The Byzantines were Christians. But in 1453, Constantinople finally fell to the forces of a rising Islamic power—one that soon established its own vast Middle Eastern empire. Can you name it?
3. Many other powers had often tried to conquer Constantinople. From this illustration, can you explain why the city was so difficult to conquer?
4. One historian says, “The fall of Constantinople in 1453 helps to show why the Ottomans are famous as one of the three great ‘gunpowder empires’ of the 15th and 16th Centuries.” Can you explain what this statement means?

Follow-up Activity

1. **Small-group activity:** Read more about the siege of Constantinople. One account is *The Fall of Constantinople, 1453*, by Steven Runciman (Cambridge University Press, 1991). As a group, read and discuss the book. Then use it to prepare a brief talk to the class about the fall of Constantinople. To help in your talk, prepare a map of the city showing points along the wall, outside the wall, in the Golden Horn inlet, and in the city itself that were important in the course of the battle. Have one group member each present a character sketch of Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II and Byzantine Emperor Constantine XI. Have some members of your group summarize the splits between Latin and Orthodox Christianity in the Balkan Christian kingdoms and explain how those contributed to the decline of the Byzantine Empire and the fall of the city. Finally, discuss with the class the nature of the fighting in the city after its walls were breached and the morality of such post-siege slaughter in the ancient world.

Illustration 3



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Discussing the Illustration

1. This map shows how the Ottoman empire grew from a small state in the 1300s to a mighty empire in the 1600s. In what part of the Middle East did the Ottoman state begin its growth?
2. The Ottoman state arose in western Anatolia. Therefore, from the start it was a kind of frontier region between two great but conflicting civilizations or cultural regions. Can you explain?
3. The Ottomans created a vast empire. For the most part, the religion of Islam is what unified that empire. However, Islam was not the major religion in all of the Ottoman lands. Using the map and your knowledge of the history of this entire region, can you explain?
4. What other ethnic and geographic factors would have made this region a difficult one to unite into a single great empire?

Follow-up Activity

1. **Small-group activity:** By 1672, the Ottomans controlled a vast empire made up of several regions. Each region presented the Ottomans with its own unique political, cultural, religious, and geographic challenges. Have each group member (or two group members together) work on learning more about one of the following regions:

The Balkans
 The Crimea
 Mesopotamia (mainly present-day Iraq)
 Syria
 The Hejaz
 Egypt
 North Africa

As a group, create a bulletin-board display with the above map (or one like it) as its central element. Add other illustrations. Write clear and detailed text to place around the map summarizing what you've learned about each region and the unique challenges it posed to the Ottoman rulers.

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will better understand why the Ottoman Empire was so feared in Europe in the 1500s and 1600s.
2. Students will better understand how the Ottoman state was organized and defended.

Europe Under Siege

Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION**Illustration 1**

Ottoman power depended on conquest in a basic way. It was through conquest that soldiers were paid—in land and the spoils of war. At first, the key warriors were the *sipahis* (or *spahis*), cavalrymen from various tribes. They were feudal warriors, granted lands to control in exchange for military service. In time, guns and artillery made infantry more important. And to gain greater control over their soldiers, the sultans created an elite infantry corps called the “Janissaries.” The Janissaries were recruited through the *devshirme*, a system in which Christian boys in the Balkans were enslaved, converted to Islam, and trained as soldiers or imperial administrators. They were “slaves of the sultan,” but they could also rise to become powerful officials of the Ottoman state. Because they had no other ties to society, it was hoped they would be fanatically loyal to the sultan alone.

Illustration 2

Ottoman power reached a peak with the reign of Suleyman. By his death in 1566, the empire included much of southeastern Europe, western Asia, and North Africa. In theory, Ottoman sultans were all-powerful, as this inscription for Suleyman suggests. Europeans called Suleyman “The Magnificent” because of the scale of his conquests. But to Muslims, he was “The Lawgiver.” Actually, this term is also misleading, since Islamic law, *sharia*, is seen as given by God and is never to be altered. Suleyman certainly saw himself as submitting to Islamic law. The words here call him “propagator of Sultan laws”—that is, rules dealing with political matters and problems not foreseen by Islam’s holy book, the Qur’an.

Illustrations 3A & 3B

In 1529, Suleyman brought Ottoman power to the doorstep of Vienna. The Ottoman threat in eastern Europe and the Mediterranean terrified Christian Europe. Illustration 3B suggests this sense of horror at the fierce cruelty of the Ottoman warriors. However, by the mid-1500s, Ottoman power had in fact reached its peak. Another siege of Vienna in 1683 was a failure. That route of the Turks is shown in Illustration 3A. From that time on, the Ottomans were slowly pushed back out of Europe. More than two centuries of decline lay ahead for the Ottoman Empire.

Lesson 2—Europe Under Siege

Illustration 1



The Granger Collection, New York

Discussing the Illustration

1. The Ottomans at first depended heavily on cavalry soldiers. Such cavalry troops could be costly. Many were loyal to their local tribes. They were usually paid in land to control. This could make them less than totally dependable as Ottoman soldiers. Why do you think that was so?
2. As the Ottomans began to use guns and cannon, infantry soldiers became more important to them than cavalry. Can you explain why?
3. To get dependable troops, the Ottomans created an elite infantry force, the Janissaries. These were actually Christians who were enslaved as boys, converted to Islam, and trained as soldiers. This is a 19th-century British depiction of the Ottomans' recruitment methods. What point of view does it express? Some historians would disagree with this interpretation, saying at least a few Christian families even wanted their sons recruited as Janissaries. Why might they want this? Is there a way to determine who is right in this debate? Why or why not?

Follow-up Activities

1. At first, the Janissaries were forcibly recruited, mainly from Christian communities in the Balkans. They were selected in a draft called the *devshirme*, which means “collection.” Historians describe the soldiers as slaves. But some Christian families actually wanted their sons recruited. Why? Read more about the Janissaries. Based on what you learn, give a brief talk in which you explain why some Christian families wanted their sons to be Janissaries. As a class, discuss this form of slavery. Does it deserve to be called a system of slavery? Why or why not?
2. The Ottoman Empire was led by all-powerful rulers called “sultans.” However, the second-most powerful figure in the Ottoman Empire was the grand vizier. Also important was the *divan*. It was possible for a few Janissaries to rise to a position in the *divan* or even to become grand vizier. Learn more about both the *divan* and the grand vizier. In a brief report to the class, explain how these officials were chosen and why they were important in running the empire.

Illustration 2

Inscription

“The Propagator of Sultanic Laws”

Slave of God, powerful with the power of God, deputy of God on earth, obeying the commands of the Qur'an and enforcing them throughout the world, master of all lands, the shadow of God over all nations, Sultan of Sultans in all the lands of Persians and Arabs, the propagator of Sultanic laws, the tenth Sultan of the Ottoman Khans, Sultan, son of Sultan, Suleyman Khan.

Slave of God, master of the world, I am Suleyman and my name is read in all the prayers in all the cities of Islam. I am the Shah of Baghdad and Iraq, Caesar of all the lands of Rome, and the Sultan of Egypt. I seized the Hungarian crown and gave it to the least of my slaves.



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Discussing the Illustrations

1. Many see the man shown here as the greatest of all Ottoman sultans. Who is this sultan and when approximately did he rule? What idea of him do you get from the European illustration shown here?
2. In Europe, Suleyman was called “The Magnificent,” mainly because of his power and the scale of his conquests. How do the words of the inscription here help make a case for seeing Suleyman as a great and powerful conqueror?
3. Many Muslims remember Suleyman more as “The Lawgiver.” But this label, too, is not entirely accurate, since under Islam, law is already set by Islam’s holy book and the traditions and commentaries based on that holy book. What is Islam’s holy book, and what name is used for the Islamic law based on it?
4. Here, Suleyman describes himself as “Propagator of Sultanic Law.” What do you think this phrase means? What does the inscription suggest about Suleyman’s role both as a political and a religious leader?

Follow-up Activities

1. Descriptions of the Ottoman sultan often make him sound like a tyrant, plain and simple. Many sultans were little more than tyrants. Yet Ottoman political theory did justify the idea of an all-powerful sultan. Here is how one writer explains it:

In [Ottoman] tradition, adalet, or justice, is the protection of the helpless from the rapacity of corrupt and predatory government. . . . For the Ottomans, the ruler could only guarantee this justice if he had absolute power. For if he was not an absolute ruler, that meant that he would be dependent on others and so subject to corruption. Absolute authority, then, was at the service of building a just government and laws rather than elevating the ruler above the law, as Europeans have interpreted the Sultanate.

Write a brief essay explaining why you do or do not agree with this justification of the sultan’s absolute power, as this writer presents it.

Lesson 2—Europe Under Siege

Illustrations 3A & 3B

3B



Mary Evans Picture Library

3A



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Discussing the Illustrations

1. By the time of Suleyman's reign, all of Europe was well aware of the power of the Ottoman Empire. Illustration 3B is a European drawing of an Ottoman soldier in the early 1500s. What does this illustration suggest about how Europeans viewed the Ottoman Empire and its forces?
2. In 1529, Suleyman's troops reached the gates of a great European city, the capital of Austria. Can you name it?
3. Although Vienna did not fall to Suleyman, the siege terrified all of Europe. This was the furthest Ottoman advance into Europe. Soon, however, Ottoman power began to weaken. That became clear in 1683, the year of the second Ottoman siege of Vienna. The outcome of that siege is shown in Illustration 3A. Using this illustration and your history knowledge, can you explain why this second siege is often seen as the onset of Ottoman decline?

Follow-up Activities

1. The Janissary corps was first made up entirely of Christian slaves who were converted to Islam and who were expected to stay celibate. As time went on, these and other limits were eased. Most historians agree these changes made the Janissaries more of a problem for the sultans over time. In 1826, Sultan Mahmud II solved this problem. Learn more about how the Janissaries changed and what problems this caused the sultans. Also, explain what Mahmud II did about the Janissaries in 1826. Report to the class.
2. Even before Suleyman's reign (1520–1566), three events occurred whose effects, over time, would weaken the Ottoman Empire:
 - Columbus discovered the Americas; Spain flooded world markets with their gold and silver
 - The Portuguese sailed to India around Africa
 - The Safavid dynasty arose in 1501

Write a brief essay explaining the long-term impact of these three factors on the Ottoman Empire.

OBJECTIVE

1. Students will better appreciate the way in which Islam influenced all aspects of social, family, religious and political life in the Ottoman Empire.

The Ottomans and the World of Islam

Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION**Illustrations 1A & 1B**

The Ottoman Turks took over the leadership of Islam from the Arabs, Persians, and Mongols. In doing so, they also took on parts of the cultural heritage of those past societies. This was true of Byzantine culture as well. Here is perhaps the most famous Byzantine structure, the Hagia Sophia, built in 532–537 CE. Under the Ottomans, its Christian mosaics were plastered over, and it became an Islamic mosque. The four tall minarets were added later. On the right is an Islamic religious teacher. Such men were not simply concerned with theology or spiritual matters. Islam was the source of law, and religious men were the judges and legal scholars. In time, the Ottoman sultan himself took the title of “caliph”—the religious leader of all of Islam.

Illustration 2

Along with the Ottomans, two other Islamic empires arose in these centuries—the Safavids in Persia and the Mughal Empire in India. This painting shows the Mughal ruler Jahangir and Shah 'Abbas of Safavid Persia embracing while standing on symbols of peace on the globe. Shah 'Abbas strengthened the Safavid Empire by switching from spears and swords to the cannon and muskets that had given his enemies, the Ottomans, such power. He also created an army less dependent on the tribal leaders of his realm. Jahangir was not as key a figure in the history of the Mughal Empire as his father, Akbar. Akbar brought large areas of India under Mughal control and ruled in a way that was tolerant of Hindus and others who did not share the Islamic faith.

Illustrations 3A & 3B

Illustration 3A shows a Turkish man drinking coffee, with a coffee plant and mill in the lower panel. Ottoman men and women both enjoyed coffee drinking, but often did so separately. Given Islam's rules against alcohol, coffeehouses took the place of taverns as places for men to meet, smoke tobacco, and talk. At times, these places helped spread ideas, especially in a society that long resisted the new printing presses of Europe. Some sultans even tried to ban coffee drinking. As for women, Islam restricted them in more than just access to coffee houses, as Illustration 3B suggests. Actually, both illustrations show in different ways just how deeply Islam shaped Ottoman social and cultural life.

Lesson 3—The Ottomans and the World of Islam

Illustrations 1A & 1B

1B



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1A



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Discussing the Illustrations

1. The Ottomans were originally a Turkic people speaking a Turkic language. They adopted Islam. But that religion was first spread throughout the Middle East by a different group of people speaking a different language. What people and language?
2. In addition to Arab Muslims, the Ottoman Empire was made up of Persian Muslims, Jews, Byzantine Christians, and other Arab and Persian Christians. The Hagia Sophia, shown here, is a good example of this mixing of cultures. From Illustration 1A and your knowledge of this structure, can you explain?
3. Illustration 1B shows two Turkish Muslims. What do you suppose they are doing? Under Islam, religious scholars played a major role in the Ottoman state in developing its legal principles. From what you know about Islam, can you explain? Do you think religious leaders in the Christian nations of the time played as big a role in its political and legal life as Islamic religious leaders did in the Ottoman Empire? Why or why not?

Follow-up Activity

1. **Small-group activity:** The Hagia Sophia is still the most famous landmark in Istanbul (the name the Turks gave to Constantinople). It was built in 537 CE by the emperor Justinian I. It has seen many changes since then. Your group's task is to create a bulletin-board display on this great architectural landmark. The goal of the display should be to show students the most significant features of the building and how the building has changed over time. You should focus especially on how the Ottoman takeover affected the building and its history. Photos of the outside and the inside of the Hagia Sophia should not be difficult to find. Here is one Web site that may help:
http://www.princeton.edu/~asce/const_95/const.html

Be sure to write clear and careful explanations of all the images you use in your display and arrange them in chronological order.

Illustration 2



The Granger Collection, New York

Discussing the Illustration

1. This painting from around 1620 shows the leaders of two other “gunpowder empires” of Eurasia. In it, Shah 'Abbas (on the left) is being embraced by Jahangir (on the right). Their positions on the globe help to show which empire each man led. Shah 'Abbas led the Safavid Empire in Persia. Can you name the empire Jahangir led?
2. The Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal leaders were all followers of Islam. However, the Safavids were followers of a special, rather strict Islamic sect. What is the name of this Islamic sect?
3. Jahangir is not nearly as famous as his father, who greatly expanded the Mughal empire during his 49-year reign. Who was Jahangir's father?
4. In this painting, the two leaders embrace while standing on symbols of peace on the globe. The painting is by a Mughal artist. Do you think it was meant to show the two rulers as allies who are also equals? Why or why not?

Follow-up Activities

1. The Ottomans, the Safavids, and the Mughals were all Islamic empires. However, they differed in the way they dealt with non-Islamic peoples inside their own lands. Read more about how each empire dealt with the non-Islamic peoples in its midst. Now pretend you were either a Jew, a Christian, or a Hindu in the year 1600. In which of these three empires would you choose to live? Why? Write a brief paper in the form of a letter to a relative explaining your decision.
2. **Small-group activity:** All three empires (Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal) declined after 1700. Why? Divide your group into three subgroups. Each will study one of these empires closely and determine what key factors led to its decline. Arrange the factors under these headings: economic, political, military, religious, and “other.” After each group reports its findings to the class, the entire class should then decide whether any common characteristics explain the decline of these empires.

Illustrations 3A & 3B

3A



The Granger Collection, New York

3B



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Discussing the Illustrations

1. Illustration 3A depicts what was a common Ottoman pleasure. Can you describe it?
2. Coffeehouses where only men gathered to smoke tobacco and drink coffee were common in Ottoman society. Given what you know about Islam, can you explain why coffeehouses and not taverns served this purpose in Ottoman society?
3. Illustration 3B shows veiled Muslim women in Adana, Turkey, in 1909. Along with male-only coffeehouses, this illustration also sheds light on a significant aspect of Islamic culture: its impact on relations between men and women. Can you explain?
4. In Ottoman society, Jews and Christians were often treated with tolerance, though not equality. Can you explain? What else do you know about Islam's impact on the Middle East and on Ottoman society specifically in these centuries?

Follow-up Activities

1. Women could play only a limited role in the political life of the Ottoman Empire. They did this through the institution of the Imperial Harem. This harem was much more than a place where the sultan's wives and concubines lived. Learn more about this harem and the part it played at different times in Ottoman history. Prepare a brief talk to the class called "The Imperial Harem: Fiction and Fact."
2. The popularity of coffee drinking is only one small example of the way Islam influenced the social life of the Ottomans. But small areas of life such as this can tell you a good deal about a culture and its attitudes. For example, at times some Ottoman sultans sought to ban coffee. Evliya Efendi wrote, "Coffeehouses are houses of confusion." Learn more about the history of coffee in the Ottoman Empire and other Islamic lands. Give a brief talk in class on this history, on changing attitudes toward coffee drinking in these lands, and on what this history of coffee illustrates about Islam and life in the Ottoman Empire.

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will better understand how the Ottoman Empire lost power relative to Europe in the 19th century.
2. Students will consider some of the key factors explaining the Ottoman decline.

Ottoman Decline

Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION**Illustrations 1A & 1B**

In the 1500s, Europe's new direct sea-trade routes to Asia reduced its use of Ottoman-controlled land and sea routes. As Europe surged ahead, the Ottomans became more economically dependent on its trade. By the 1800s, the Ottoman Empire was seen as Europe's "Sick Man." These two British cartoons illustrate that view. Illustration 1A is about one of the many crises in which Russia threatened to seize Ottoman lands. It makes clear just how much the Ottomans' survival depended on help from other European powers. Illustration 1B is an 1879 cartoon about one nearly independent Ottoman province, Egypt. At the time, Egypt was deeply indebted to France and Great Britain. The cartoon suggests that the *khedive* of Egypt can only pay his debts by "beating" more taxes out of his "fellahs," or poor peasants. Egypt's debts helped lead to a complete British takeover in 1882. This was only one of several colonies that European powers were to carve out of the Ottoman Empire.

Illustrations 2A & 2B

In the 1800s, the Ottomans tried to reform their society several times. While the usual goal was to strengthen the sultan and his army, some reformers also worked to copy Europe's ideas about political liberty and representative government. In 1876, Sultan Abdul Hamid II agreed to an elected parliament. These two British cartoons seem to make fun of the effort as one only meant to fool Europe in order to win more military help. Actually, the reformers were serious. But in the midst of a new war with Russia in 1877, Abdul Hamid closed down the parliament in favor of even more ruthless rule by a single, desperate sultan.

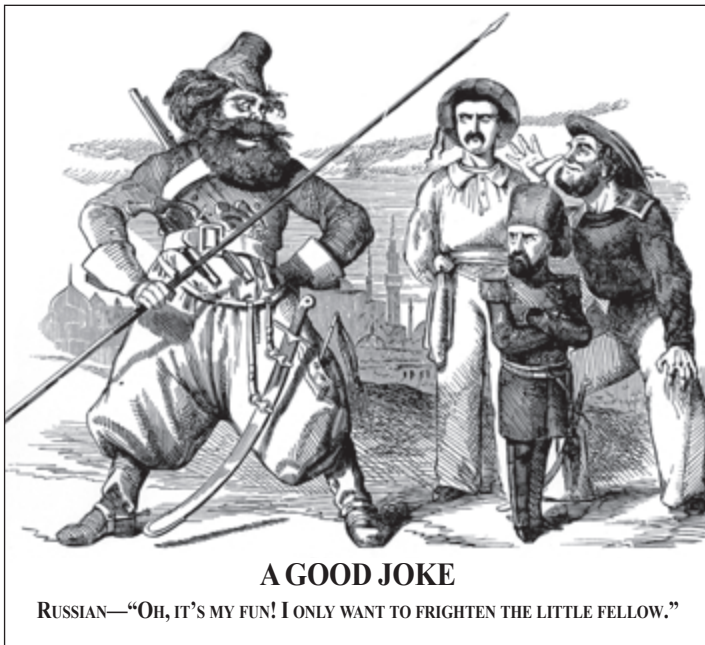
Illustration 3

The most serious problem facing the Ottomans in the late 1800s was the rise of nationalist sentiment in the Balkans and elsewhere. Greeks, Serbs, Armenians, and other ethnic groups increasingly demanded and fought for independence from the Ottomans. This cartoon shows such national groups as dogs attacking the sultan. Behind him, the European powers are "keeping the ring"—that is, keeping their distance and refusing to help the besieged Ottomans. The cartoon sums up the sad state of the Ottoman Empire in the decades before World War I, which would finally bring the long history of the Ottoman Empire to an end.

Lesson 4—Ottoman Decline

Illustrations 1A & 1B

1A



Cartoon from *Punch*

1B



Cartoon from *Punch*

Discussing the Illustrations

1. The Ottoman Empire began to weaken in the 1600s. By the 1800s, Europe had far surpassed it in power. These two British cartoons make that clear. In Illustration 1A, the large bearded figure stands for the European nation that most often threatened the Ottomans. Which nation is that?
2. The three other figures stand for France, Great Britain, and the Ottomans. The cartoon makes clear how Ottoman survival now depended on Europe, and especially on Great Britain. How does it make this point? What does the size of the Ottoman "little fellow" suggest about Europe's view of the once mighty Ottoman Empire?
3. Illustration 1B is an 1879 cartoon about one Ottoman province, Egypt. Egypt was deep in debt to France and Great Britain. Its leader, the *khedive*, rides a donkey labeled "fella," meaning "peasant." From this and the caption, can you explain how the *khedive* plans to pay off his debts? What attitude toward Egypt and its leader does the cartoon express?

Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** Egypt's debts finally led to a British takeover. Meanwhile, France and Italy were also seizing colonies in the Islamic world, mainly in North Africa. Create a bulletin-board display on the similarities and differences between these colonies. In particular, compare Egypt and Sudan under British control, with Algeria and Morocco under French control. Use maps, illustrations, and your own written text to make clear what these four colonies were like.
2. A key Ottoman literary figure was Namik Kemal (1840–1888). He was a devout Muslim, but he also greatly admired Europe's achievements, saying:

It took Europe two centuries to reach this condition, and while they were the inventors in the paths of progress, we find all the means ready to hand . . . [to] reach a stage when we would be counted as one of the most civilized countries.

Read more about Kemal. Find several passages of his that clarify his statement here. Share them in a brief talk on Kemal, his ideas, and your views about him.

Lesson 4—Ottoman Decline

Illustrations 2A & 2B

2A



The First Parliament under the new Ottoman Constitution, modeled on the English System, was opened by the Sultan on the 19th of March, 1877.

Cartoon from *Punch*

2B



ONE BUBBLE MORE!!

Cartoon from *Punch*

Discussing the Illustrations

1. By the late 1700s, the Ottomans knew they were in trouble. Many sultans and other top officials began to copy European ideas and practices in order to save their own society. Why do you think Ottoman leaders looked to Europe in this way?
2. Some reformers called for a constitution and a more democratic government. In 1876, the sultan agreed. From these cartoons, can you explain what he did?
3. Many Europeans said the Ottomans only made such reforms to win Europe's favor. These British cartoons express such doubts. How do the cartoons depict the Ottomans and their reforms? What do the cartoons suggest about European attitudes toward the Ottomans in general? Do you think such attitudes were fair? Why or why not?
4. These reformers really were serious. But most of the time, the Ottomans favored reforms mainly as a way to strengthen the sultan and his army. Were they right to stress reforms for these reasons? Why or why not?

Follow-up Activity

1. Ottoman modernizers wished to use Western political ideas and technology to strengthen the Ottoman Empire. Many were nationalists wanting a stronger nation-state. Other Ottoman Muslim thinkers saw an Islamic religious renewal instead as the only way to deal with the West's threat. One such thinker was Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905) of Egypt, who said:

He who professes the Muslim faith, once his belief is firm, ceases to concern himself with his race or nation; he turns away from sectional ties to the general bond, the bond of the believer.

Learn more about Muhammad Abduh. As you do, try to decide how he would have reacted to the above British cartoons on the Ottoman parliament of 1877. Pretend you are Muhammad Abduh and write a letter to the British editors who published the cartoons. Now pretend you are those editors and write a reply to Muhammad Abduh.

Illustration 3



Cartoon from *Punch*

Discussing the Illustration

1. This cartoon comments on another problem facing the Ottomans in the 1800s—growing nationalism among many people in the Ottoman Empire. What is nationalism, and why was it a serious problem for the Ottomans in the 1800s?
2. In this cartoon, several dogs are shown attacking the Ottoman sultan. The dog collars are labeled “Bosnia,” “Herzegovina,” “Montenegro,” and “Serbia.” From this, can you explain where the Ottomans faced their biggest nationalist challenges?
3. During this attack, the European powers are “keeping the ring”—that is, doing nothing to interfere. What does this suggest about the relationship between Europe and the Ottoman Empire at the time?
4. All the cartoons in this lesson are British. Some might say they are biased in their view of the Ottoman Turks. Yet others would say they are still useful and full of insight about problems facing the Ottomans. With which view do you agree more? Why?

Follow-up Activity

1. **Small-group activity:** In the above cartoon, the dog collars are labeled “Bosnia,” “Herzegovina,” “Montenegro,” and “Serbia.” At other times, other dogs might have been included, with collars labeled “Greece,” “Romania,” “Bulgaria,” or “Albania” as well. Before the start of World War I, the Ottomans lost all these regions. Have each group member learn more about one of these places and the specific way they Ottomans lost it. As a group, create a large map (or a series of three or four smaller maps) of the Balkans. The maps should show all of the key political changes in the area from the independence of Greece in 1829, through the Balkan Wars of 1912–13. Each group member is responsible for writing detailed paragraphs on the region in the Balkans he or she has researched. The paragraphs should be placed near the map or maps, and should explain the changes illustrated. Use this display in a brief presentation to the class on the decline of Ottoman power in Europe in these years.

Image Close-ups

Mongols, Turks, and the Rise of the Ottomans

Illustrations 1A & 1B

1A



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1B



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Mongols, Turks, and the Rise of the Ottomans

Illustration 2



The Granger Collection, New York

Mongols, Turks, and the Rise of the Ottomans

Illustration 3



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Europe Under Siege

Illustration 1



The Granger Collection, New York

Europe Under Siege

Illustration 2

Inscription

“The Propagator of Sultanic Laws”

Slave of God, powerful with the power of God, deputy of God on earth, obeying the commands of the Qur'an and enforcing them throughout the world, master of all lands, the shadow of God over all nations, Sultan of Sultans in all the lands of Persians and Arabs, the propagator of Sultanic laws, the tenth Sultan of the Ottoman Khans, Sultan, son of Sultan, Suleyman Khan.

Slave of God, master of the world, I am Suleyman and my name is read in all the prayers in all the cities of Islam. I am the Shah of Baghdad and Iraq, Caesar of all the lands of Rome, and the Sultan of Egypt. I seized the Hungarian crown and gave it to the least of my slaves.



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Europe Under Siege

Illustrations 3A & 3B

3B



Mary Evans Picture Library

3A



Stock Montage, Inc.

The Ottomans and the World of Islam

Illustrations 1A & 1B

1B



Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division

1A



Stock Montage, Inc.

The Ottomans and the World of Islam

Illustration 2



The Granger Collection, New York

The Ottomans and the World of Islam

Illustrations 3A & 3B

3A



The Granger Collection, New York

3B



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Ottoman Decline

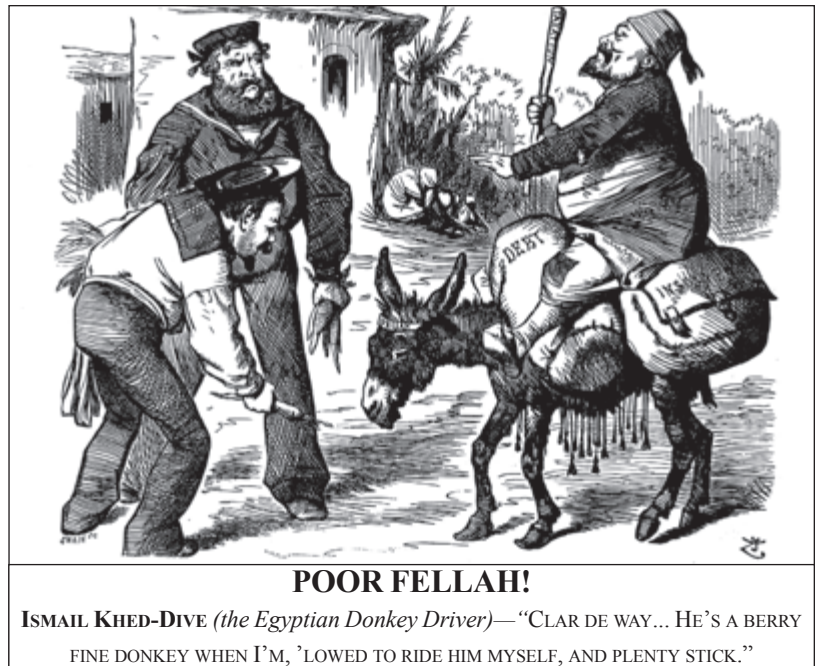
Illustrations 1A & 1B

1A



Cartoon from *Punch*

1B

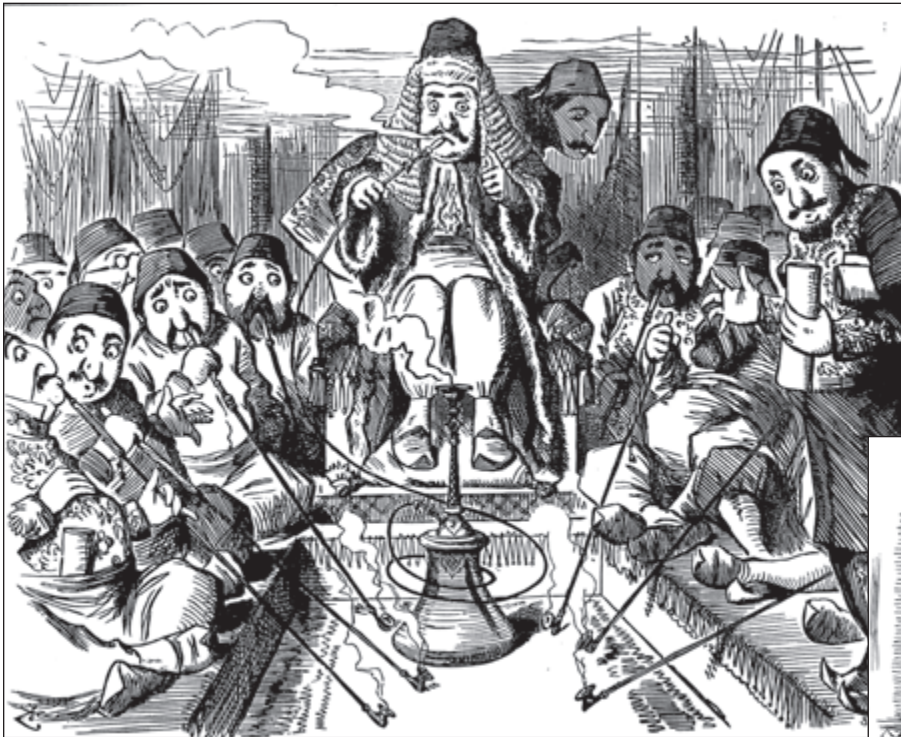


Cartoon from *Punch*

Ottoman Decline

Illustrations 2A & 2B

2A



The First Parliament under the new Ottoman Constitution, modeled on the English System, was opened by the Sultan on the 19th of March, 1877.

Cartoon from *Punch*

2B



ONE BUBBLE MORE!!

Cartoon from *Punch*

Ottoman Decline

Illustration 3



Cartoon from *Punch*

