



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

# Center for Middle Eastern Studies

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## Assignment Description (For Teachers)

**Title:** Contagion, Quarantines, and Cures in History: Case Study – Ottoman Empire

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**Purpose/Connection to the Curriculum:** This is a lesson that combines elements of Social Sciences (World History, Geography, Government), Science, and Language Arts.

### What the Lesson Entails:

Using the Eurasian frontier as a case study, this lesson will introduce students to the importance of disease transmission and containment in history – and their connection to world trade, military movements, population movements, and government social policies. On Day 1, students will be introduced to the topic through participation in a read-aloud script. On Day 2, they will work in small groups to evaluate a short primary source document and share their findings with the class. Then, students will research a topic related to public health. (These topics can be adapted to the specific course content that you teach.)

### Case Study:

The lesson uses the case study of the Ottoman Empire/Eurasian frontier. From medieval times through the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, this region (including the steppes of central/western Asia, the Silk Road, the Black Sea trade routes) formed a cultural and economic bridge between Europe and Asia, a point of intersection where Western, Middle Eastern, and Central Asian civilizations came together. An important highway for population movements, international trade, and cultural diffusion, the area was also a route for the spread of disease (the Black Death, malaria, cholera). No wonder that this region gave rise to various efforts to contain and cure diseases!

This lesson focuses on medical and public health developments in this constantly changing part of the world. A readers' theater script, an activity using several short primary source documents, and a brief student research project get students actively

involved in exploring the relationship between science and social science, between public health concerns and governments' efforts at population control and regulation of economic activities.

The lesson will not only span cultural-geographic borders but will also cross historical eras: the 14<sup>th</sup> century when Italian merchants brought the Black Death from Asia to Europe via the Black Sea trade routes, the 18<sup>th</sup> century when a British woman introduced into England an early form of a smallpox inoculation that she learned about during her travels in the Ottoman Empire, to the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the first nursing corps was formed to treat ill or wounded soldiers during the Crimean War. Students will be surprised to discover that advances in medical care moved in both directions (contrary to the Western-centric view of Europe/the U.S. at the forefront of medical knowledge); for example, mental hospitals in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman Empire were much more advanced and humane in their treatments than those in the West during the same time period.

As diseases – and treatment methods – spread from region to region, governments were forced to develop public health measures aimed at containing the spread of disease without limiting trade, travel, or the exchange of ideas. Quarantines, the development of border checkpoints, and legal restrictions preventing people from fleeing an infected area all developed in this region, leading students to examine the role of governments and international agreements in public health.

Thus, this lesson is cross-disciplinary (medicine/science, geography, history, government) as well as cross-regional (Central Asian, Middle Eastern, European). The goal is to help students make connections across disciplines and geographic regions, improve their literacy and presentation skills, and challenge their stereotypes about relations between various parts of the world.

**Grade Level:** High School/College.

**Time:** 2 class periods – 51 minutes each – plus whatever time is allotted during class for research.

**Objectives:**

- to integrate the study of scientific concepts into the social studies
- to teach important concepts in World History (Ottoman Empire, rise of Russia, East-West contact and cultural diffusion throughout history)
- to teach important concepts in geography (population movements, relations between settled and nomadic populations, relationship of geographic conditions to the spread of disease)
- to teach important concepts in political science (government's role in public health) and international relations (public health efforts on the international level)
- to think critically about the relationship of scientific/medical advances, political control, and international relations (for example, the influence of disease control on the establishment of the first border checkpoints)
- to challenge students' stereotypes about western versus non-western civilizations (for example, medical developments in the Ottoman Empire that only later spread to the West)

- to promote the development of critical thinking, literacy, and research skills among high school students

## **Targeted Skills - Based on Arizona State Standards:**

### **High School Social Studies: Geography Strand:**

- Concept 2: Places and Regions. PO 1 – Identify the characteristics that define a region – with specific reference to human processes such as religion and political organization. PO 3 – Examine geographic issues in places and world regions. PO 6 – Analyze how a region changes over time.
- Concept 4: Human Systems. PO 1 – Interpret population growth and demographics. PO 2 – Analyze push-pull factors that contribute to human migration. PO 3 – Analyze the effects of migration on places of origin and destination. PO 4 – Analyze issues of globalization. PO 6 – Analyze factors (e.g., social, biotic, abiotic) that affect human populations. PO 7 – Predict the effect of a change in a specific factor (e.g., social, biotic, abiotic) on a human population. PO 8 – Explain how ideas, customs, and innovations (e.g., religion, language, political philosophy, technological advances, higher education, economic principles) are spread through cultural diffusion.
- Concept 6: Geographic Applications. PO 3 – Analyze how geography influences historical events and movements.

### **High School Social Studies: World History Strand:**

- Concept 1: Research Skills for History.
- Concept 3: World in Transition. PO 3- Compare the development of empires (including a specific mention of the Ottoman Empire). PO 4 – Describe the interaction of European and Asian civilizations from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, d. plague.
- Concept 5: Encounters and Exchange. PO 1 – Describe the religious, economic, social, and political interactions among civilizations that resulted from early exploration.
- Concept 9: Contemporary World. PO 3 – Describe the development of political and economic interdependence during the second half of the twentieth century, e. growth of non-governmental organizations (specific reference to the Red Cross/Red Crescent).
- Concept 9: Contemporary World. PO 5 – Connect current events with historical events and issues using information from class discussions and various resources.

### **High School Social Studies: Civics and Government Strand:**

- Concept 5: Government Systems of the World. PO 3 – Describe world governmental and non-governmental organizations (e.g., the United Nations and its agencies, NATO, the European Union, the International Red Cross).

### **High School Language Arts: Reading - Strand 3: Comprehending Informational Text:**

- Concept 1: Expository Text. Identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the purpose, structures, and elements of expository text.

**High School Language Arts: Writing – Strand 3: Applications:**

- Concept 6: Research Skills. The writer locates and evaluates information about the topic or question, and then organizes, summarizes, and synthesizes the information into a finished product.

**High School Science – Strand 2: History and Nature of Science:**

- Concept 1: History of Science as a Human Endeavor. Identify individual, cultural, and technological contributions to scientific knowledge.

**High School Science – Strand 3: Science in Personal and Social Perspectives:**

- Concept 3: Human Population Characteristics. Analyze factors that affect human populations.

## Suggested Procedures

- Day 1:

**Required:** Class set of copies of the script (**Document 2**).

1. Introduction:

A. Review with the students where the Ottoman Empire is located. Why might disease have been a particular problem in this area? (Note: It's not the climate or location that's unhealthy, but the fact that it's a crossroads of trade, pilgrimage routes, and nomadic migrations, and it was involved in many wars. In other words, it was the contact with others that resulted in disease.)

B. Brainstorm some ways that disease, disease prevention, and medicine affect a society. Tell the students that they should be thinking about this issue as they read the script.

2. As a class, have the students read through the script together. (For each scene, assign students to read each part.) Discuss as you go along.

3. What can they add to the list of ways that disease, disease prevention, and medicine affect a society?

- Day 2:

**Required:** Copies of a primary source document/materials for each group (**Documents 3a and 3b**). \*Note the adaptations below. For the images/maps (# 4 and 5), you may have the group access them via computers (if available) or make photocopies.

**Adaptations:**

- If you have more than 16-24 students, you will have to assign more than 1 group to a document. (Don't advertize the fact that you are doing this since you don't want them to form one group of six people!)
  - If you have ELL or special needs students who are weak in reading, assign them to Group 5 (images) or possibly Group 4 (maps).
1. Ask them what they remember of the discussion yesterday. Tell them that today they will work in pairs/groups to examine some primary source documents or maps, discuss what the source reveals about disease/medicine in the Ottoman Empire, and share their findings with the class. (You may need to remind them what a primary source is and why using primary sources is valuable.)
  2. Tell each group that they have 15 minutes to read/examine their document and jot down ideas about what an historian can learn from it.
  3. Have each group report briefly summarize what their document was about and report to the class about what they have learned.

## **Assessing Student Learning**

They should receive a class participation grade for the above activities. You may also have them write a follow-up paper, one-paragraph essay, or journal assignment OR include material on your next test/quiz.

## **Extending the Lesson:**

If you want, you could have students do a research paper or project on disease in history. Here are some examples of topics:

- Geography: Population movements and the spread of/containment of disease – a student picks a particular war, population movement (forced or voluntary), or religious pilgrimage at any time/place in history and looks at the effect on disease.
- World History: Comparative topics (Black Death, 1918 influenza, mosquito-borne illnesses in history, formation of the Red Cross, development of formal nursing corps during the Crimean war, development of vaccines, etc.)
- U.S. History: Compare the issues raised to U.S. developments (establishment of public health care in the U.S.; women in medical schools; influenza of 1918; diseases affecting American activities and troop movements abroad – malaria in wars, disease and the Panama Canal, wartime medicine; quarantines and immigration policies; establishment of American Red Cross and CDC).
- Current Events: Relate Ottoman example to modern issues (efforts to contain the spread of ebola or bird flu, AIDS as an international issue, disease after natural disasters or wars, work of Red Cross and other medical organizations abroad).

