

# A Visit to Hagia Sophia by Jim Hauf

## Notes on the Curriculum Unit

**Instructions to teachers** “A Visit to Hagia Sophia” consists of a series of lessons organized around a virtual visit to Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, Turkey. While “touring” Hagia Sophia, students engage in activities related to the geography, history, art, religion and architecture of Hagia Sophia itself and of the Byzantine and Ottoman empires. The lessons are inquiry-oriented and reflect a constructivist philosophy of learning. Students have the opportunity to focus on what interests them the most and to ask and answer their own questions based on what they observe during the course of the tour. As with a real tour, no two students’ experiences will be exactly alike and so the knowledge that students construct as they visit Hagia Sophia will also be unique to each student. Authentic assessments allow students’ to present the results of their own individual experiences. The lessons are appropriate for use with students at both middle and high school levels.

This curriculum unit can be used in several ways. Students can take the full tour, either individually, with a partner or as a class, completing the lessons in the Tour Packet as they move through the building. Some teachers may wish to focus on specific and more limited topics and activities. These teachers can use the curriculum unit to develop a tour itinerary that consists of only those stops within Hagia Sophia that highlight the desired topics. Finally, some teachers may wish to allow students to first “visit” the building on their own, making observations and raising questions in advance of a more organized group tour.

Questions throughout the Tour Packet provide formative assessments. These embedded assessments combine factual review questions with questions that require students to demonstrate greater depth of knowledge. Teachers may easily develop additional factual review questions for areas they wish to emphasize. Several full unit activities and assessments are provided in addition to those in the Tour Packet. These include a unit vocabulary sheet, an Hagia Sophia timeline, and a set of summative writing prompts. The questions, Field Journal entries and other student activities from the Tour Packet are also provided in the form of a separate, condensed Student Field Journal to reduce printing requirements. Students may “visit” the virtual tour site individually, or the site may be projected for the class as a whole to view. s

**Acknowledgements** This unit grew out of my participation in the Fulbright-Hays Seminar Abroad in Turkey 2009. I would like to thank the organizers of the seminar, both at University of Texas-Austin and from the Turkish Fulbright commission, for the opportunity to travel to and learn about Turkey and for their work in developing and directing the seminar. I am indebted to my fellow participants for the discussions that enabled me to develop my thinking about the Byzantines, and to Ali Keskinbicki for numerous pieces of helpful information. I thank Brian McMorro, Naseem, and an anonymous photographer for permission to use their images. Finally, I want to thank my

family for their support and forbearance in allowing me to be “absent” from home twice, once during my time in Turkey, and once during the preparation of this curriculum unit.