

The Promise and the Armenian Genocide



Overview

This guide contains support for you and your family as you learn more about the Armenian Genocide and the lessons that we can take from it today. This activity follows a *Discuss, Watch, Act*, format to guide your family in making connections between the past, and current events, to find ways to take action to promote understanding, compassion, and remembrance as a family.

Did you Know?

The Armenian Genocide, which lasted from 1915 to 1923, resulted in the massacre of more than 1.5 million Armenians by the Turkish regimes of this period. It is referred to as the “prototype” for subsequent genocides. As your child learns about the Armenian Genocide in the classroom, you can carry on the conversation at home by viewing the historical fiction film *The Promise*. For more information about the Armenian Genocide, please visit: iwitness.usc.edu.

Continuing the Conversation at Home

Discuss

In the classroom, your child has learned about the causes and impact of the Armenian Genocide. While initiating a conversation about genocide may be challenging, opening up this dialogue with your family is an important first step in building compassion and tolerance. Some helpful supports for getting your child sharing what they have learned could be:

- Discover what your child knows. Use the summary information to connect to their prior knowledge. Ask what else they want to know and research together to learn more.
- When discussing the topic, ask open ended questions (see below) that deepen the conversation. Be careful not to judge their responses and be sure to listen thoughtfully.

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- Think together about your opinions, thoughts as a family, and worldview. Discuss next steps, this can be something they do on their own or something you do together or as a family. Included at the end of this activity are meaningful ways to take action.

As you begin discussing the Armenian Genocide and viewing the film and testimony, consider using the following questions on the *Family Reflection* handout to anchor the conversation in contemporary society. These questions can help your family understand the past and find connections to today.

Note: These questions could be helpful to revisit over time as your child grows older or as current events arise.

- How can understanding human rights violations of the past help us understand similar violations happening today?
- What can individuals do to stay informed about current human rights violations locally and around the world?

Watch

Historical fiction films can be a meaningful way to engage your family in thoughtful dialogue around a complex topic. The film *The Promise* tells the story of the Armenian Genocide from multiple perspectives.

For a synopsis of the film and more information, please visit:

thepromisetoact.org.

- **Before Viewing:** As a family, share what you know already about the events of the Armenian Genocide. Consider how a historical fiction film may portray actual events.
- **After Viewing:** Share thoughts on how the film highlighted information your child learned in class. It may also be helpful to use the family reflection questions to address deeper connections to contemporary society.

Another way to help your child make connections to their learning and foster empathy is through the use of testimony. Hearing a first-person account can help young people and adults put a face to historical events, making them more real and relatable. To help students deepen their understanding of the impact of the Armenian Genocide and its denial on survivors, watch the following clip from [Hagop Asadourian](#). In this clip, Hagop expresses his personal pain and frustration that the

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denial of the Armenian Genocide causes him. Discuss what stood out to them from the testimony. What does it make them think about?

Note: For more support and strategies for using clips of testimony with your family, please visit teachingwithtestimony.com.

To extend their learning, after viewing and listening to Hagop, consider the following questions as a family:

- What is the significance of the term “genocide”?
- Why is it important to recognize a crime by its name?

Act

Now that you and your family have engaged in creating connections from school to home, consider the steps below as opportunities for your family can use to take action. You can also brainstorm your own ways to build compassion and tolerance!

- Use the website thepromisetoact.org for your family to use your voices to speak out against injustices like genocide and other human rights violations taking place around the world. To other see contributions and make your own, use #keepthepromise.
- Engaging in reflection and remembrance using artistic expression is a meaningful way to take informed action on a challenging topic. As a family, consider working through what you have learned in this activity to create something new to honor survivors of genocide or call attention to modern human rights violations. Examples could include creating a poem, song, painting, or other piece of art.

Family Reflection Handout



FAMILY HANDOUT

After discussing what your child has learned in the classroom consider using the following questions with your family to help link the past with the present.

How can understanding human rights violations of the past help us understand similar violations happening today?

What can individuals do to stay informed about current human rights violations locally and around the world?