



# SARA CORNING CENTRE FOR GENOCIDE EDUCATION

45 Hallcrown Place, Toronto, ON M2J 4Y4 | [www.corningcentre.org](http://www.corningcentre.org) | [info@corningcentre.org](mailto:info@corningcentre.org)

## Unit Title

### Artsakh War

## Lesson Title

### Loss of Cultural Sites

## Learning Objectives

In this lesson, students will learn about and analyze...

- The importance of cultural heritage sites
- Reflect on the consequence of losing cultural heritage sites
- Critically think about the concept 'erasing history'
- Reflect on the impact this could have on Armenians in the diaspora and those who were forced to leave their homes

## Background Information

Cultural Heritage Sites are a vital component for all cultures around the world for a variety of reasons. These sites, whether they are monuments or monasteries, provide an important connection to the history of a nation, peoples' identity and their national pride. Communities are built around these sites and only grow stronger.

What happens when these sites are destroyed and all evidence of the people who were there before becomes erased? For Armenians living in Artsakh, this is the reality of what has taken place. Cultural sites have been damaged and defaced, while the existence of Armenians ever being in the region is slowly disappearing.

Naturally, this negatively affects the Armenian communities around the globe, causing trauma for many, and jeopardizing the preservation of culture for future generations.

## Resources

- **Persecution.org article** - [Ghazanchetsots Cathedral in Shushi Defaced - International Christian Concern \(persecution.org\)](https://www.persecution.org/story/ghazanchetsots-cathedral-in-shushi-defaced)
- **Video - Falsification of Armenian History** - [AZERBAIJANI FALSIFICATION OF HISTORY - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)



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- **Video – *Destruction of Armenian cultural heritage*** [Destruction of Armenian cultural heritage in Turkey - YouTube](#)

## Materials

- **Retell, Reflect, Relate** – Note taking graphic organizer
- **Reflection Assignment**; photo analysis and consequence it could have on cultural preservation in the area

## Assessment Strategies

- Observation
- Question and Answer
- Group Discussion
- Individual Assignment

## Activity

- In small groups, read, review and discuss the article provided and complete the note taking chart
- Allow each group an opportunity to present findings to the class
- Allow opportunities for small group and large group discussions throughout

## Discussion Questions

- Why are cultural heritage sites important?
- What are examples of cultural heritage sites that you have seen, know about or visited?
- What are the consequences of losing cultural heritage sites?
- Can culture be preserved if the sites have been destroyed?
- Critically think about the concept ‘erasing history’; could the loss of a cultural heritage site lead to this?

## Assignment

### Erasing History– Reflection Assignment

- For this reflection assignment, students are to analyze the photo captured by Emile Ghessen, Film Maker. In this photo, a priest is seen leaving his Monastery after one final mass, before handing the cultural site over to Azerbaijan.



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- During their analysis, students are to consider important aspects such as losing cultural heritage sites and its impact on the Armenian people.

## **Guided Questions**

- Consider other churches and monasteries that have already been destroyed and defaced; could this lead to erasing history of Armenians ever living in their ancestral lands?
- How do you think this affects Armenians who were forcefully displaced from the region and their homes?
- How do you think this could affect Armenians in the diaspora?
- How do you think this could affect future generations of Armenians?

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## Ghazanchetsots Cathedral in Shushi Defaced



**05/20/2021 Artsakh** (International Christian Concern) – Ghazanchetsots Cathedral in Shushi has drawn attention as photos show the defacement of the famous Armenian church. First videos circulated that indicated angels that once sat atop pillars at the main entrance were removed. Then photos, shared by members of the unrecognized Nagorno-Karabakh Region government, showed the removal of the domes.

In October 2020, the Cathedral was damaged by shelling from Azerbaijani forces. Azerbaijan claims that Ghazanchetsots Cathedral is undergoing remodeling. The Armenian Foreign Ministry condemned their actions and in a partial statement said, *“It should be noted that Azerbaijan carries out actions related to the church without consulting the Armenian Apostolic Church, which clearly violates the right of Armenian believers to freedom of religion.”* UNESCO experts have not been allowed to visit Armenian cultural heritage sites, another indication that Azerbaijan is not seeking the betterment of the historic church.

According to Nagorno-Karabakh Ombudsman Gegham Stepanyan, Azerbaijan is seeking to alter the appearance of the cathedral saying, *“We have seen many times how Azerbaijan actually treats Armenian cultural values, and it is already clear what is hidden under the ‘restoration work’: The goal is to eliminate traces of the Armenian presence.”* Through a process of “Albanization” Armenian Christian sites are converted and modified. The head of the NK Foreign Ministry called the actions cultural genocide.

The fate of Ghazanchetsots Cathedral is unknown. Some speculation fears that it will face a similar fate as the Hagia Sophia, mirroring the same type of pan-Turkism that erodes Christianity in Turkey.

For interviews, please contact Addison Parker: [press@persecution.org](mailto:press@persecution.org).

## FEATURED

### Ruth's Story: Religion is Not an Inheritance, but a Personal Journey with God

10/19/2022 Indonesia (International Christian MORE



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## Retell, Relate & Reflect

<p><b><u>Retell</u></b> <i>the details</i></p> <p>The article is about... I found it interesting when... I noticed that...</p>	
<p><b><u>Relate</u></b> <i>analysis</i></p> <p>It sounds like... This reminds me of... This is different from...</p>	
<p><b><u>Reflect</u></b> <i>opinion &amp; understanding</i></p> <p>I think that... I wonder why... I understand that...</p>	



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## Erasing History

### Reflection Assignment

- In the photo below, a priest is seen leaving a Monastery in Artsakh after one final mass before handing the cultural site to Azerbaijan.
- Consider important aspects such as losing cultural heritage sites and its impact on the Armenian people.
- Consider other churches and monasteries have already been destroyed and defaced, could this lead to erasing history of Armenians ever living in their ancestral lands of Artsakh?
- How do you think this affects those Armenians who were forcefully displaced from the region and their homes?
- How do you think this could affect diaspora Armenians?
- How do you think this could affect future generations of Armenians?



**Photo By:** Emile Ghessen, Film Maker, via Instagram