



**#3621**

## **THE JANISSARIES**

Grade Levels: 8-13+

26 minutes

AMBROSE VIDEO PUBLISHING 1998

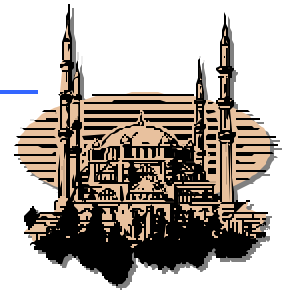
### **DESCRIPTION**

Fifteenth-century Christian Europe feared the Muslim Ottoman Turks and their Janissaries, an army of slaves serving only the sultan. Uses reenactments, artifacts, and paintings to relate the army life of these warriors; describes their conscription, loyalty, training, and weapons. Details the Ottomans' defeat of Constantinople in 1452. Three hundred seventy-four years later, the sultan had the Janissaries killed when they plotted and revolted against him.

### **ACADEMIC STANDARDS**

#### **Subject Area: World History**

- ◆ Standard: Understands the causes and consequences of the development of Islamic civilization between the 7th and 10th centuries
  - Benchmark: Understands political and economic systems of the Byzantine state (e.g., Byzantium's imperial political system compared to that of the Abbassid state; understands patterns of economic, political, and military power in the manufacturing and trading centers of Constantinople and Baghdad)
- ◆ Standard: Understands patterns of crisis and recovery in Afro-Eurasia between 1300 and 1450
  - Benchmark: Understands the origins and early expansion of the Ottoman Empire up to the capture of Constantinople in 1453
- ◆ Standard: Understands how large territorial empires dominated much of Eurasia between the 16th and 18th centuries
  - Benchmark: Understands political and cultural achievements of the Ottoman Empire (e.g., the significance of the capture of Constantinople for Christians and Ottomans; how the Ottoman military succeeded against various enemies; artistic, architectural, and literary achievements of the Ottoman Empire in the 15th and 16th centuries; achievements of Suleiman the Magnificent; the extent of the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires in the 14th and 15th centuries)
  - Benchmark: Understands cultural, political, and economic factors that influenced the development of the Ottoman Empire (e.g., the development of the Ottoman Empire among diverse religious and ethnic groups, the Christian



European view of the Ottoman seizure of Constantinople in 1453, trade routes within the Ottoman Empire and how trade was affected by the development of a sea route around Africa)

- Benchmark: Understands the social, economic, and cultural features of the Ottoman Empire (e.g., how Muslim, Orthodox, Catholic, and Jewish peoples interacted in southeastern Europe under Ottoman rule, the role and legal status of women within the Ottoman Empire, sources of revenue and patterns in state spending in the Ottoman Empire)

## **INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS**

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1. To describe the life of a Janissary.
2. To depict the conquering of Constantinople from the Turk's perspective.

## **VOCABULARY**

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- |                       |                            |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. heretic            | 12. citadel                |
| 2. infidel            | 13. moat                   |
| 3. adroitness         | 14. impregnable            |
| 4. mercenary          | 15. thunderous bombardment |
| 5. resplendent knight | 16. assault                |
| 6. monastic life      | 17. desperate              |
| 7. diligent           | 18. first wave             |
| 8. frugal             | 19. hack                   |
| 9. cowardice          | 20. dominate               |
| 10. desertion         | 21. fabricating intrigues  |
| 11. bastion           | 22. assassinate            |

## **BEFORE SHOWING**

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1. Review the history of the Roman Empire.
  - a. What was left of the empire in the 1400s?
  - b. Where was Constantinople located?
  - c. How had the Huns diminished the power of Rome?
  - d. What was the primary religion of those in the eastern Roman Empire?
2. Find the following locations on maps of Asia and Europe. Note which locations are found on current or historic maps. Identify each location as a body of water, city or country.

a. Belgrade	h. The Golden Horn
b. Sofia	i. The Danube
c. Edirne	j. Varna
d. The Black Sea	k. Asia Minor
e. Constantinople	l. The Balkans
f. Istanbul	m. Hungary
g. Athens	n. The Straits of Bosphorus

## AFTER SHOWING

### Discussion Items and Questions

1. Discuss the history of the Janissaries.
  - a. Why were the Janissaries respected by Moslems and feared by Christians?
  - b. Why were Moslems not enslaved as Janissaries?
  - c. What motivated the Janissaries to fight fiercely?
  - d. How did recruitment of Turkish citizens change the Janissaries?
  - e. Why did the sultan try to abolish the corps? How did he succeed?
2. Discuss the selection and training of Janissaries.
  - a. What role did an imperial scribe have in recruitment of Janissaries?
  - b. How did the enslavement of the Janissaries differ from other historic forms of slavery?
  - c. Which young men in the Ottoman Empire were ineligible for entry into the Janissaries?
  - d. Why were future leaders of the Janissary corps kept at the sultan's palace under lock and key?
  - e. What was the Janissaries' policy regarding weapons?
  - f. Why did the Janissaries not indulge in the typical vices of soldiers?
  - g. How could a Janissary receive better prospects?
3. Discuss daily life of a Janissary.
  - a. What preceded and followed the Janissaries?
  - b. What was typical duty like in the sultan's palace?
  - c. How were battle squads organized?
  - d. What characterized Janissary squads?
4. Discuss the pros and cons of the fact that 10,000 Janissaries could be led by a thread.
5. Discuss the life of Bukrichader.
  - a. Why was Bukrichader sent to the estate of a Turkish farmhand to begin his life as a Janissary?
  - b. For what reasons did he return a few years later to Edirne?
  - c. How did Bukrichader finally put his long education to the test?
  - d. What happened to Bukrichader as a result of his heroics in the battle at the port of Varna?
6. Discuss the sultans.
  - a. In 1538, how did the sultan solve the problem of an empire growing faster than his army?
  - b. How did a sultan keep his personal property, the Janissaries, satisfied and loyal?
7. Discuss the battle of Christianity and Islam at the port of Varna.



- a. What roles did the king of Hungary and Vlad II play in this skirmish?
  - b. What were the pros and cons of the sultan's Janissaries versus the king of Hungary's mercenaries?
  - c. What caused the Ottomans to flee?
  - d. Why did the Janissaries pretend to take flight?
  - e. How did one of the Hungarian generals try to stop the battle?
  - f. How did the gorge become full of cavalry?
  - g. How did Bukrichader distinguish himself in battle?
  - h. Why did the sultan say at the end of the battle, "May Allah never grant me another such victory"?
8. Discuss the Janissaries' conquest of Constantinople.
- a. In what ways did both sides consider this a holy war?
  - b. How did Mehmet II follow in his father's footsteps?
  - c. How did Mehmet Bey the Turk prepare better than his father?
  - d. Why did Mehmet build a castle six miles from Constantinople?
  - e. What protection did the city of Constantinople have against the Turks?
  - f. Prior to the first battle for Constantinople, why was the ground completely invisible?
  - g. How did the citizens of Constantinople initially respond to a breach in the city wall?
  - h. Why did the Turks' first offensive by sea fail?
  - i. Why was the admiral of the fleets punished? How did the Janissaries benefit from this?
  - j. How did the Janissaries finally gain entry to the port?
  - k. How did the actions of the Janissaries influence their victory over Constantinople?
  - l. What was the irony of the Janissaries being pitted against the Christians?
  - m. What long-term results did individual Janissaries gain from triumphing over Constantinople?

### **Applications and Activities**

1. Investigate historical and modern instances of slavery.
  - a. How do people become enslaved?
  - b. What do they earn for their services?
  - c. How can their slavery be terminated?
2. Research instances in history where a family's firstborn son was given as payment. Consider the Israelites' exodus from Egypt, and sacrifices to Asheroth.
3. Debate the efficiency of war.
  - a. Which would be better: amassing large number of soldiers to fight battles or choosing a single champion to fight solo?
  - b. What are the long- and short-term costs of war?
  - c. What other methods of solving conflict could be used?
4. Create drawings or other artwork to depict the following poetic language from the video.

- a. A Christian island in a Moslem sea
  - b. The sword of Allah and the scourge of Christendom
  - c. Rising out of Asia Minor like a whirlwind
  - d. Heads rolled in the field like pebbles
  - e. The Turkish fleet slithered into their harbor
  - f. There were more than 10,000 of them fighting with the courage of lions
5. Investigate the Crusades.
    - a. What made these wars "holy"?
    - b. Where were they fought?
    - c. What were the reasons for these battles?
  6. Imagine being a male prisoner of war in an Ottoman conquest. Choose between martyrdom for Christianity or slavery and conversion to a Janissary.
  7. Create tests for slave boys to take to determine where in the Janissaries they will be placed. Include both physical and mental tests.

## RELATED RESOURCES



### Captioned Media Program

- The Armenian Genocide #8031
- The Ottoman Empire #3065
- The Siege of Constantinople #3516

### World Wide Web



The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and "kid-safe" sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

- **THE FALL OF CONSTANTINOPLE, 1453**

<http://www.greece.org/Romiosini/fall.html>

A brief page including a picture, poem and newspaperlike account of the battle between the Christians and Janissaries.

- **CONSTANTINOPLE**

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Oracle/7823/>

Covers the 1000-year history of Byzantium and modern information regarding Turkey. Slanted from a Moslem and Middle Eastern point of view.

- **THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE**

[http://www.hyperhistory.com/online\\_n2/maptext\\_n2/ottoman.html](http://www.hyperhistory.com/online_n2/maptext_n2/ottoman.html)

Opens to a clickable map of the Ottoman Empire with links to information regarding history and the fall of Constantinople.