

Empire, Republic, Democracy: Turkey's Past and Future



THE
**CHOICES
PROGRAM**
BROWN UNIVERSITY

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Introduction: An Attempted Military Takeover

On July 25, 2016, a group of Turkish military officials shocked the nation and the world. They bombed Turkey's parliament, drove tanks through the city of Istanbul, flew fighter jets overhead, and fired at the intelligence agency headquarters from helicopters. The Turkish government was under attack by members of its own military.

Soldiers raided the hotel where Turkey's president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, had been staying on the Mediterranean coast. But the president had been warned and slipped out just minutes beforehand. He believes that the soldiers intended to assassinate him.

Military officials forced a news station to read a statement about how the government

had strayed too far from democracy and had become too religious. In the midst of the military's attempt to overthrow the government, President Erdoğan made a FaceTime call from a secret location to a Turkish TV station. The iPhone footage was broadcast to the county, as the president urged the Turkish people to come out into the streets to oppose the troops.

Throughout the country, Turkish citizens gathered in city squares and town centers to protest the military group. By the time Erdoğan flew back to Istanbul, crowds of supporters had gathered to greet him at the airport. Ultimately, the military's attempt to overthrow the government failed.



Bex Walton (CC BY 2.0).

One of the largest cities in the world, Istanbul has a population of fourteen million people. Previously known as Constantinople and Byzantium, Istanbul was once the capital of the Roman, Byzantine, Latin, and Ottoman Empires.

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Teacher Resource Book



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Art as Political Expression

Objectives:

Students will: Analyze a painting's portrayal of Turkish history.

Understand the concept of a symbol.

Consider the power of an artistic image to influence an audience's understanding of historical events.

Required Reading:

Students should have read Part II and completed the "Study Guide—Part II" (TRB 16-17) or "Advanced Study Guide—Part II" (TRB-18).

Videos:

Short, free videos that can help students think about art and its connections to history and politics can be found at <<https://video.choices.edu/curriculum/turkey>>.

Handouts:

"On the Road to Transformation" (TRB-22)

"Painting Analysis" (TRB-23)

Note:

This lesson can be done as a whole class, in groups, or as individuals.

A slideshow of this painting in color is available to project in your classroom at <<http://www.choices.edu/turkeymaterials>>.

In the Classroom:

1. Focus Question—Write the question "What is a symbol?" on the board. Establish a definition with the class. Can students think of examples of how symbols are used to represent or remember historical events?

2. Getting Started—Distribute "On the Road to Transformation" and "Painting Analysis" to students. Tell them that the Turkish artist Zeki Faik İzer created this painting in 1933. Ask students what was happening in

Turkish history around this time. Who was Turkey's leader? Have students answer the questions about the painting on the worksheet.

3. Analysis—Review the painting and students' answers with the class. Can students identify any of the figures in the painting? What "transformation" do students think the title refers to?

Can students identify any symbols in the painting? How does each symbol relate to this period of Turkish history? If identifying a symbol is challenging, here are some symbols and questions to which you might want to call students' attention.

- The box on which the central female figure is standing, labeled 1923. (What is the significance of 1923 in Turkish history?)
- Atatürk. (What is he pointing at?)
- The soldiers to the right. (What role did soldiers play in Turkey's early years?)
- The clothing of the men and women surrounding Atatürk. (What new rules were in place about dress?)
- The boy holding a book that says "Turkish Language and History," while stepping on a scroll displaying the old Ottoman script. (What changes did Atatürk make regarding language and identity?)
- The figures cowering in the right foreground. (Who might they represent? Does their posture and appearance offer any clues?)

4. Speculating about the Painting—Challenge students to think about the whole painting.

What feeling did the artist want the painting to convey? For example, did he want his viewers to feel scared, proud, safe, angry, etc.?

What kind of view of Atatürk's reforms does this image represent? Do students believe the artist supported Atatürk's efforts to transform Turkey?

What power do images have to influence viewers' perceptions, feelings, and understandings of events? For example, how do students think people in Turkey in 1933 might have reacted to the painting? In Turkey today? Would some groups have a negative reaction?

Ask students for their own reactions to the painting. Can students think of other paintings that depict historical events?

Extra Challenge:

This painting by Zeki Faik İzer was inspired by the French painter Eugène Delacroix's *Liberty Guiding the People—1830*. Delacroix's painting commemorates the French Revolution of 1830. Have students consider the similarities between the two paintings. (Be sure to preview the Delacroix painting to make sure it is appropriate for your classroom.) Ask students why they think Zeki Faik İzer chose to imitate the Delacroix painting. Do students think that Atatürk's reforms were revolutionary?

Homework:

Students should read Part III in the student text and complete "Study Guide—Part III" (TRB 24-25) or "Advanced Study Guide—Part III" (TRB-26).

On the Road to Transformation



This oil painting is titled *İnkılap Yolunda*, which translates to *On the Way to Reform*, or *On the Road to Transformation*. It was created by Turkish artist Zeki Faik İzer (1905-1988) in 1933 and is currently housed at the Painting and Sculpture Museum of Istanbul. The book cover held by the boy in the painting reads "Turkish Language and History," and the paper scroll under his foot is written in the old Ottoman script.

Name: _____

Painting Analysis

Title of painting: _____ Artist: _____ Date created: _____

People

Identify four people in the painting.	Describe them. What type of clothing are they wearing? What is their facial expression? What are they doing?	What might this person symbolize or represent?
Example: Woman in top left corner of crowd, behind the couple.	She is removing her headscarf.	She may represent Atatürk's dress reforms.
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

Objects

Identify and describe four objects in the painting.	What might these objects symbolize or represent?
Example: The platform that the woman with the flag is standing on is inscribed with "1923."	This represents the year that Turkey was founded, after the War of Independence.
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

What message do you think the artist wanted to convey?