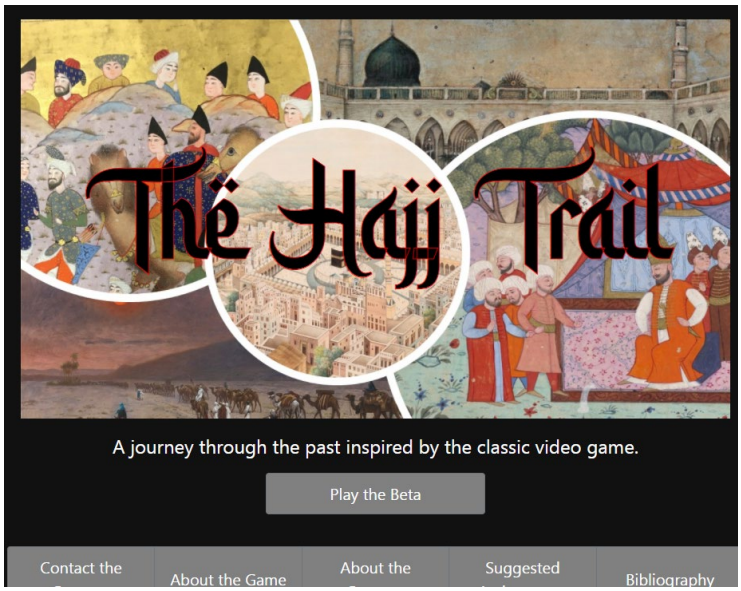


The Hajj Trail: An Educational Digital Storytelling Game

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Primary (learning) objectives of the activity

- Teach students about the experience of travel in the early modern Muslim World
- Teach students about sacred geographies related to the early modern hajj pilgrimage
- Teach students about the cultural history of the Ottoman Empire

Summary description of the activity

The Hajj Trail is a free-to-play text and image-based digital storytelling game. The game itself based off travel accounts and early modern pilgrimage narratives. The game is designed to be used in the classroom as a different medium in which students can interact with the history of the early modern Muslim world. Currently in its beta stage, we hope to add improvements to the game throughout the coming year.

The first stage of the game takes students along the hajj route from Istanbul to Mecca in the year 1671 with events, locations, and time of travel all based off various pilgrimage narratives (mainly the hajj accounts and itineraries of Yusuf Rumi, Evliya Çelebi, Yusuf Nabi, and Qutb al-Din al-Nahrawali). The plan is to slowly expand the game to have the option for pilgrimage routes from Morocco, Iran, and India as well. We also hope to get funding to have to game translated to Turkish, Arabic, and Farsi in the coming years.

The educational goal of the game is to spark student interest in the history of the region by introducing them to the images, stories, and locations related to travel in the early modern Muslim World and the Ottoman Empire in particular. The game acts like a choose your own adventure as you make choices along the way on what to do and which roads to take. Historical background information is added to each stop and includes quotes from primary sources to give students a sense of what living and traveling in the early modern world was like. This passion project is designed to make the history of the early modern Ottoman Empire, Muslim World, and Hajj more accessible to students (at the High School and College level) and the public at large. You can access the game at http://www.hajjtrail.com.

Suggested Assignments with the Game:

Suggested Readings:

- Suraiya Faroqhi, Pilgrims and Sultans: The Hajj under the Ottomans, 1517-1683. (London: Tauris, 1994), Introduction.
- Evliya Celebi, An Ottoman Traveller: Selections from the Book of Travels of Evliya Celebi, tr. Robert Dankoff and Sooyong Kim, (London: Eland, 2011), 303-305, 340-362.
- Ibn al-Tayyib, The Travels of Ibn Al-Tayyib: The Forgotten Journey of an Eighteenth-Century Traveller to the Hijaz, trans. El Mustapha Lahlali, Salah Al-Dihan, Wafa Abu Hatab, (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2010), 10-23, 57-59, 64-86.

Early Modern Travel Essay:
Students will write on travel in the Ottoman world reflecting on their own experience playing The Hajj Trail game. The essay should narrate your own journey and experience while traveling the hajj road talking about what you encountered, where you went, what difficulties your character had on the hajj road, and finally reflecting on what you learned about traveling in the Ottoman 17th century world. Students should include at least three references contextualizing their own experience in the game with quotes from either the two primary sources this week (Evliya Celebi or Ibn al-Tayyib) or citing primary source quotes (in the historical account section) from the game itself.
When you play the game, take notes (or screenshots) of different parts of your journey to help you as you write your essay about travel in the Early Modern Ottoman World. Think about the following while playing.

- What things happened to your character?
- What challenges did your character face?
- What things did your character do?
- What can these examples do to teach you about early modern travel?

The Hajj: Then and Now Assignment:
Before you play the game; watch and explore the following:

- Read the Following British Museum Blog Post on the Hajj: https://blog.britishmuseum.org/hajj-pilgrimage-to-mecca/
- These Video from the Hajj: Journey to the Heart of Islam Exhibition – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KOFTj5Oea6w https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r5l5Cwge7yk
- This advertisement showing Saudi Arabia's Plan for the Modern Hajj: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8NldoLpjMs4

Take notes on what these tell you about the modern/future hajj experience.
Then play The Hajj Trail and write a short essay on what might be different and similar for pilgrims of the seventeenth-century Muslim World compared to the modern experience of the hajj. How might religious traditions, distance, time, danger, climate, disease, and state power look different when one compares the early modern hajj to the modern hajj experience.