

MUST KNOW ABOUT OTTOMAN EMPIRE

- FIRST:** In **1453**, the Ottomans conquered the remnants of the **Byzantine Empire** when they took control of **Constantinople** – “**The Fall of Constantinople**”. This event is considered a **turning point** in history because the Ottomans essentially blocked the land-based trade routes of the Europeans to East Asian goods (like silk and spices) ---- so... **Columbus** (and other European explorers) went in search of water routes in order to get to the “East Indies” and acquire goods (like spices and silk). Then...**Columbus** accidentally “discovers” the Americas for the Europeans and the conquest of the Americas by the Spaniards (conquistadors) begins. And you are sitting in a class in the United States of America today...*all because the Ottomans took control of Constantinople and blocked the Europeans from getting Asian goods like spices and silk.*
- SECOND:** For the most part – the Ottoman Empire was **secular**. Which means that although the leadership of the Ottoman Empire was Muslim (followers of Islam); they believed that all their subjects should be allowed to practice whatever religion they chose as long as they follow the laws of the empire. Subjects of the Ottoman Empire who were Christian or Jewish were referred to as “People of the Book” and they had to pay an addition tax which Muslims did not have to pay but they lived without fear of persecution (which was not true of Jews and Muslims living on Christian ruled lands). This policy of **religious tolerance** allowed them to rule over people of multiple faiths (and cultures) in relative peace for hundreds of years.
- THIRD:** **Suleiman the Magnificent** was one of the most important leaders of the Ottoman Empire. His leadership led to a “Golden Age” in the Ottoman Empire learning and innovations flourished. He was an **absolute ruler** who made all the decisions but who encouraged the best and the brightest of his empire to excel.
- FOURTH:** They fell! The Ottoman Empire becomes known as the “sick old man” of Europe during its decline. They make the mistake of siding with the Germans during World War I [Great War] and they lose!!!! The other Europeans divide the empire up under a **mandate system** (it’s kinda like colonies) except for some countries like Turkey thanks to Atatürk.