

Name: _____

Date: _____

Kemal Ataturk

Ottoman sultans ruled Turkey for almost 700 years. After World War I, a period of chaos within Turkey ended when a popular, charismatic general named Mustafa Kemal took control. He was named Mustafa at birth and had no surname. As a child, he was nicknamed Kemal by his mathematics teacher. Kemal means "the perfect one." He earned his nickname because he was able to memorize his lessons faster than any of the other students.

Kemal was convinced that Turkey needed to become a modern nation. He believed that if the Turkish people continued to follow their traditions, they would again be attacked by another western power. The popular Kemal often traveled the countryside to encourage the people "Let science and new ideas come in freely," he often said. "If you don't, they will devour you." Greece attacked Turkey in 1921 and 1922, but Kemal led the Turks to victory. By the mid 1920s, the Turkish leader began a modernization program in Turkey:

- Kemal said that in a modern nation, men and women must be equal. He ordered that girls be allowed to attend school. Kemal also gave women the right to vote and take jobs in business and government.
- Kemal set aside religious law and established a western system of justice. Turkey had been governed by Shariah until Kemal set up a legal structure that was similar European nations. He also forbid men from taking more than one wife, although the practice of polygamy is allowed by the Quran.
- Kemal forbade the Turkish people to wear fezzes, veils, or other traditional Turkish clothing. The fez is a tasseled, cone shaped traditional hat. Many Muslims men wore fezzes so they could touch their forehead to the ground when they prayed. "The people of the Turkish republic," Kemal said in 1919,

"must prove that they are civilized by the way they appear." And that, he explained, meant boots and shoes, trousers, shirt, and tie, jacket and vest. "And to complete these, a cover with a brim on our heads. I want to make this clear. This head covering is called a hat." Turks who continued to wear traditional clothing were arrested and imprisoned.



What is ironic about this picture of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk?

- Kemal introduced a western alphabet and ordered all newspapers, books, and street signs printed in the new script. Kemal believed the difficulty of the Arabic script his nation used led to illiteracy in Turkey and was difficult for merchants and traders from other nations to learn. He traveled the Turkish countryside with a blackboard and chalk to personally explain how the letters should be pronounced. Many of the people Ataturk personally taught had never before held a pencil or a piece of chalk.
- Kemal decreed that everyone must have a surname, or family name. In 1934, the Turkish assembly gave Mustafa Kemal the name Ataturk, or "Father of the Turks."

Ataturk was a very popular leader. Most Turks accepted his changes, but some people disagreed because Ataturk's changes created a more secular society. Secular means non-religious.

It didn't matter if people disagreed with Ataturk. The Turkish leader allowed only one political party and did not permit people to openly disagree with his policies. Ataturk died in 1938, but he is considered a national hero to this day.

*A higher order learning question. Any reasonable answer will be accepted.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Answer in complete sentences

*1. Why was Mustafa Kemal popular with the Turkish people?

*2. Why do you think Ataturk personally traveled through his nation to teach the new western alphabet to the Turkish people?

*3. Explain the meaning behind the three names Ataturk used during his lifetime.

*6. Name a secular American leader. Why is her or she a secular leader?

7. Write a paragraph that explains how Mustafa Kemal Ataturk modernized Turkey in the 1920s. Your paragraph must include a topic sentence, at least two supporting sentences, and a valid conclusion.

*A higher order learning question. Any reasonable answer will be accepted.

©1999-2013 Mike Dowling, www.mrdowling.com. All rights reserved.