Lesson Plan: 1683 Siege of Vienna Drama

Bring:

Box prop: taped box containing book (Siege of Vienna by John Stoye), coffee cup, and box of croissants for the class, label on outside of the box “Why this battle was important”, scripts for participants (see p. 5-14), PowerPoint.

Goals:

Experience the realities of both sides of an early modern siege
Hear or voice the words of participants in the siege preserved in source documents
Articulate why this battle changed everything
Debate why this battle was lost by the Ottomans
Articulate why this battle changed everything
Release your inner thespian

Pre-class prep:

Find volunteers and sit them on the side of the room appropriate for their part.

In-class prep:

Explain the process to the class. Some of you have the opportunity to be the voices of the Turks or the Hapsburgs and tell us what is happening from your perspective.

The Turks are against the window. The Hapsburgs are the rest of the room. Some of the things you read are direct quotes, others are projections. Just introduce your character and read or improvise with passion. Bring out your inner thespian. If you don’t want to play a part and you have a script, give it to a classmate who does not have a part.

Lecture introduction and Narrator part:

The goals I have for this class is for you to understand

• Why did the Ottomans provoke this war?
• Why were the Hapsburgs vulnerable?
• Why did the Turks loose?
• What changed because of the summer of 1683?
• And what did it feel like to be in a besieged city or to be a soldier fighting in a 17th C. army?

Lecture:

Reform can destroy you! If you don’t reform, you fall apart and are destroyed. If you do reform and return to your former strength, then you feel that you have to again pursue your original goal which destroyed you and made you need reform in the first place. Last class we learned about the KOPRULU Viziers who had been so successful in consolidating and reforming the Ottoman Empire. By stabilizing the monetary system by going back to silver and by bringing a semblance of military effectiveness by hiring new troops, the empire gained back its strength. But would the Ottoman Empire now use that strength to go back to its original goal of conquest and jihad? Would the Ottomans choose to re-energize the Ottoman attack machine?

The Siege of 1683: The summer that changed everything. (Shading indicates new PowerPoint slide)

I. The year before, 1682. Who were the power brokers? The reasons and the decision to go to war.

Mehmed The Sultan, Mehmed IV, had been on the throne since age 6 but was now age 43. He was a product of the harem with little to no political or military training. He had stayed on the throne through the machinations of his mother who had fought his grandmother and some say was responsible for the order to strangle her with curtain cords, because she had wanted to replace Mehmed with another grandson with a more compliant mother. His goals were to survive childhood, go hunting, and not die for many years. The real power lay in the hands of his mother who collaborated closely with the powerful Grand Vizier, Kara Mustafa, an adopted son of the Koprulu Vizier family.

B. The Grand Vizier, Kara Mustafa is the ultimate bad guy in our story. He wanted a war for his own political gain. He had lost out badly to the Russians and a new war would enhance his grip on power, would unify the Ottomans and would push all the idle troublemaking soldiers out of the capital….not to mention the loot and choice of captured girls for his harem.

Besides all these internal motivations, the Grand Vizier knew from his spies that his northern neighbors, the Habsburgs were busy with France. Ottomans also had a window of opportunity offered by the relative success of their vassal, the Nobelman Imre Thokoly, who was leading the Hungarian nobles in a Protestant/Lutheran anti-Hapsburg rebellion.
This handsome young man’s father had been killed by the Hapsburgs. He could offer the Ottomans some home court advantage. He was seen as key to combat intelligence, logistics, and pacification of the local population. A war would deal with the Habsburg meddling in Transylvania and Wallachia. The Grand Vizier, then knowing his own personal need for a outside conflict to get back his prestige and the Hapsburg military weakness due to France and this Protestant rebellion chose 1682 to provoked a crisis as an excuse for invasion.

**LEOPOLD** B. Why did the Hapsburgs desperately not want war?

The Habsburgs led by Leopold would buy peace at almost any price from the Ottomans because they always believed that Louie XIV in France was their greatest threat. The Ottoman army had not been at the gates of Vienna for 150 years but France was even then encroaching on Flanders, Germany and Italy that the German princes felt were under their sphere. Further concessions to France would be fatal to Habsburg power and reputation while concessions to Ottoman Sultan Mehmed IV could be later retrieved. The Habsburg diplomatic strategy was to drag out negotiations with the Muslims, maybe hand them a fortress or two on the border thereby allowing them to concentrate force in the West to oppose Louie XIV in France. The Ottomans had been no more than pesky mosquitoes raiding on the borders for a long time and Leopold held his breath that that would not change. But things had changed, 1681 marked the end of a dismal three year war with Russian Cossacks and the Grand Vizier needed a new project to keep the troops busy and to improve his reputation. He convinced the Sultan to give the orders for the army to gather and march north.

**SCRIPTED DRAMATIZED LECTURE HERE (p. 5-14)**

The conclusion of the lecture: (Box prop labeled “Why this battle was important”-Inside taped box: English book, coffee cup, and enough croissants for the entire class.)

What this battle means for us. (Open Box-pull out each visual for these three points)

- We don’t speak Turkish, we are not *dhimmis* or Christians living under a Muslim ruler. Germany is the only state still fearing a Turkish takeover from its guest workers.
- Cappuccino Coffee
- Croissants-the legend is that croissants were invented by the bakers inside the starving city who made their bread in the shape of the Turkish crescent so everyone could know who to blame for the food shortages and daily take a bite out of the enemy.

Discussion Questions: (Divide class into groups and debate a position. Poll answers after 5-10 minutes.) We were given the scholarly debate of whether the war was lost to the Ottomans because the elite i.e. the Grand Vizier and the Sultan did not realize that the army had deteriorated or because the Grand Vizier had made too many critical mistakes, i.e. the distance
was too far, the army camp needed a siege wall of its own to defend itself against an allied attack. Get into groups of four and debate a position. (Poll answers after 5-10 minutes.)

If time-How was the top level Hapsburg and Ottoman leadership alike?

Why the Ottomans provoked this war?

Why were the Hapsburgs vulnerable?

Why did the Turks loose?

What changed because of the summer of 1683?

And what did it feel like to be in a besieged city or to be a soldier fighting in a 17th C. army?

Sources: I’ve used both European Christian and Turkish military history sources. The best read on this battle is the *Siege of Vienna* by John Stoye. There are also dramatizations of the Siege of 1683 on YouTube.
MAP The Ottoman military had to move 100,000 people on foot to the northern battlefields across a cold wet Balkan spring. We have an eyewitness account by the secretary of Caparar, the Hapsburg diplomat.

Caparar’s Secretary: “April 1683, on the road to Belgrade. I am secretary to Emperor Leopold’s diplomat. We are being brought along on this trek as privileged captives in case we may prove useful to the Grand Vizier. Some of the army marches or rides forward by day but when I try to sleep at night, I am woken by the noise of other troops advancing through the darkness by the flare of countless torches. Carts and wagons of every description follow the various detachments unless they are lost or lagging behind. Great flocks of sheep and herds of cattle are driven along; I am estimating that 32,000 lbs. of meat and 60,000 loaves of bread are consumed every day. Privileged persons go by coach which stick in the mud. The rains are shocking. Most men are sleeping in tents while the exalted sometimes find accommodation in hospices along the road. The Janissaries are the indispensable vanguard going ahead leading the way, marking out distances and preparing ovens every evening for those following them.”

It wasn’t just mud slowing down this army moving across the land like a swarm of locusts but the bridges ahead of them had not been repaired as quickly as ordered. They had to cross the swamps of Hungary and tributaries of the Danube and the unusually heavy rains had swollen all the streams.

Other vassal troops joined them daily from Albania, Thessaly, Egypt, Aleppo, Mesopotamia and Hungary. Only the 8,000 Tatars coming from the Ukraine were not slowed down. (TARTARs were one of the Turkic tribes that had moved west with the Mongolian invasion.) They preferred to cross the steppes while the ground was still frozen and didn’t need bridges. They just tied their prisoners to the tails of horses and forded the streams arriving a month ahead of the army. They used that time soften up the enemy by pillaging the Austrian countryside.
Both Poland and Austria knew that the Turks could attack anywhere on the 1200 mile long border. Jan Sobieski, king of Poland, was officially an ally of the French emperor Louie XIV but he had no illusions that if Austria was hit first by the Muslims that he would be the next domino to fall. He did not know that the French ambassador let the Sultan know that if he attacked Poland, the French would come to their assistance but the French diplomat let the Sultan know that it was open season on their enemies, the Habsburgs. With October 1682 reports of the Ottomans gathering a huge army and heading north, the Poles and the Hapsburgs dropped their differences and signed a mutual protection treaty. Jan Sobieski and Leopold together

Because Vienna had not been attacked for a long time, its defenses had decayed. The moat no longer held water, timbers were rotted, and suburbs and garden walls had been built up and would provide cover for an attacking army. The population had been decimated by the plagues of 1679 and 80 which reduced the defense force. Still Leopold was able to double his forces and tax revenues within two years without which, everything would have been different. Austria would have approximately 30,000 men to fight off the 100k in the Ottoman army.

But perhaps the most crucial lack of the Habsburgs was military leadership. The emperor, Leopold, knew that he was not the warrior that his father, Ferdinand, had been and he preferred to hand over the military command to a general. That decision to stay off the battle field was his positive trait. His weak point was his lifelong inability to make a decision. The general he chose had the same inability to make decisions. The new head of the army, Charles V, The Duke of Lorraine had only having seen one war 20 years earlier and was frequently sick.

Charles V “I just cannot decide which fortresses to hold to stop the Ottomans. The scouts give me different reports and the distances between the forts are much greater than I had expected. When I do try to give orders, the other nobles here argue and have a different opinion of where we should hold the line. No one really agrees what we should do to stop these invaders”

The decision was not needed as the Turks just skipped attacking the fortresses that the Austrians had planned to guard and marched directly on towards Vienna. It was Charles’s indecision and the lack of unity in command that cost the Austrians the short 6 weeks that they had available to stop or slow down the Turks advancing to Vienna.

Charles V “The only choice I have now is to get as many infantry troops as possible back to protect Vienna and find a safe place to hide the cavalry across the river until help can come.”
The Ottomans were coming and the news finally hit Vienna that their border fortresses had proved useless. The smoke of burning homes and farms filled the great plain towards the southern border. Refugees carrying everything they owned crowded through the gates looking for safety behind the walls. The Viennans inside panicked. The rich were burying their silverware in their cellars and packing their jewels and furs to flee north.

Their voices;

“I am the Bishop of Vienna. We have sought God’s deliverance from the invaders by prayer and petition. I have ordered the old “turkenglocken” These are bells that ring every morning to summon the whole land to kneel and pray for help from God. Some of my priests are preaching that God sent the Moslem terror to punish when punishment was needed but others preach “Up! Up! You Christians! Courage and Action against a Brutal but cowardly enemy.”

(Man Shouting) “Bishop! Your eminence! News has come that rocks have been thrown through the windows of your palace. Why are you being attacked?”

Bishop-“I think those rocks are from the people who secretly support the Protestants in Hungary and think that it is the church’s strong actions against that movement that has brought the Protestants to join the Muslims to fight us, the true church.”

Emperor Leopold “I have kept the crown of Hungary safe in the castle of Pressburg. If that cursed Thokoly laid hands on it, the repercussions would be serious indeed. I have sent an escort of cavalry to bring it to my palace, the Hofburg where the Treasury-jewels, crowns, scepters, crosses, everything is being packed into wagons to leave the city. But I just don’t know what to do, to leave or to go. I guess I’ll spend the day hunting to have time to think away from this chaos.”

Lady in Waiting on the Queen. “I have just received a letter from my husband who is an officer serving under Charles V of Lorraine. They are retreating and HE begged me to flee as quickly as possible. But I
cannot leave my queen as she is great with child. She also wants to flee but the Emperor has still not decided.”

Caprara’s servant again. (get up and move from the Turkish side of the room to join the residents of Vienna.) “My master finally was given leave by the Sultan to return to Vienna. We arrived July 7th to find the city in a panic with wounded who are still able to walk, fleeing from the country side. The cries throughout the city is the “Turk is at the gates” even though other reports came that the cavalry has regrouped and the Turks are several days behind”

King Leopold “My couriers have finally convinced me that I must go for the safety of the government but where? I will hold my final conference at 6 tonight and they will advise me where to go. Those Tatars and Turks threaten every road.”

PIC OF CITY The Burgomaster or Mayor. “I have to still finish repairs on the walls, to finish digging out the moat, to redistribute the reserves of grain around the city, to arrange guard duty and bring in the timber stacked outside New-gate that we will need for repairs from the cannons. But it seems as if every able bodied male is packing his goods and women folk and fleeing the city. Tomorrow morn at 4 AM all men, including myself must be at work finishing the timbering, buttressing the weak patches in the stone, deepening the moat.”

Bishop- “I will stay behind to fight for Church and Emperor and I have allowed the mayor to enroll the clergy in the work details.”

Starhemberg, the military commander in charge of defending Vienna: July 10. “I had just the ghost of a garrison until today, when the troops retreating from the border arrived. This morning I had 5,000 men with which to defend this city, tonight, I have 11,000 and I will need more. It looks like I can recruit about 5,000 civilian men from the city and the university. Now we have some hope to hold this city against the Turks. The first thing
we have to do tomorrow is burn all those mansions in the suburbs that will provide cover for the enemy from our artillery on the walls.”

Woman in the street—“The infantry is burning the houses outside the gates but the sparks blew over the walls and landed on a roof. The fire then spread to an inn, and from there to a wall of the Arsenal where 1,800 barrels of powder are stored. Nearby are our other powder magazines. If they blew, not only would we lose our powder but also the outer wall and there would be no defense against the Turks. The flames burned on and no one could find the keys. Finally soldiers broke through the door and cleared the path in front of the fire. The mob was so hysterical and thought that the fire had been deliberately started. They lynched a lunatic and a boy dressed in women’s clothes. Everyone is afraid that Ottoman spies and enemy Protestants have snuck in with the refugees.”

By mid-July, the government had collapsed (except for the mayor and military units inside the city) and an estimated 60,000 people had fled from Vienna. Luckily, a good number of the wealthiest had banked their savings with the government so there was enough money left inside to pay the soldiers and laborers on the repairs. The Turks were coming.

Master of Ceremonies of Kara Mustafa. “We are marching now toward Vienna. The weather has turned so dry that the dust raised by marching feet make it impossible for one man to recognize another.”

MAP OF CITY Kara Mustafa- July 14th, “I have finally looked down on the city that I mean to take for Allah and the Sultan. I have talked it over with my advisors and it is obvious to all that the place best suited for mining is that sector next to Leopold’s palace. Here the river, Wien, curves away from the wall, and the drainage is good so rain will not fill our tunnels. The rising ground behind provides a good area for artillery so Engineers and gunners alike have a chance to concentrate their power to the best advantage. But being a faithful Muslim and an Ottoman gentleman, I must first send the infidels an offer of surrender.”
Turkish officer, “Here is the Ottoman demands: ‘Accept Islam, and live in peace under the Sultan! Or deliver up the fortress, and live in peace under the Sultan as Christians; and if any man prefer, let him depart peaceably, taking his goods with him! But if you resist, then death or spoliation or slavery shall be the fate of you all’”

Starhemberg—“You are dismissed. I am busy walling up the gates.”

Master of Ceremonies of Kara Mustafa—“The Grand Vizier says, ‘Let the guns speak’”

For the next two months, those guns never stopped speaking day or night, the balls slamming somewhat ineffectively against the wall of the new Italian designed star fort. These pictures are not Vienna but give you a better idea why the star fort design would deflect cannon balls. It meant that the miners in tunnels setting charges under the walls became the real danger. Between shots, people listened in their cellars for sounds of miners tunneling their way into the city.

The people inside were locked away from news. No cell phones. No telegraph. Not even carrier pigeons or fire beacons on hill tops had been organized. A few brave men would dress as Turks and crawl down the walls and swim across the river to get to the cavalry but this marooned army also had no news if or when relief could come. Jan Sobieski, king of the Poles, had been sent urgent messages to hurry to assist but he had to put together and fund an army and then ride 443 miles south. A few German princes had also agreed to come but their arrival was even more prolonged.

By September food supplies were growing short and being requisitioned for those who fought. Old people were dying of hunger. Dysentery and other fevers were taking as many men as the battles. But there was also hunger in the Turkish camp. The Tatars had pillaged the countryside so completely, burning crops and killing livestock that there was no food left for the army to requisition from the countryside.

Starhemberg, Military commander over the city. Sept. 2. “Today a powerful mine brought down the wall of the Burg bastion. I had to withdraw the men with terrible losses. It’s the beginning of the end and both sides know it.”

Colonel Hoffman. Sept. 4. “After a morning of calm there was such an explosion that it shook my house. I ran to the bastion where there
was a huge hole in the wall. I could see the tops of the Turkish flags through the breach as their troops climbed up for the assault. They were calling, “Allah, Allah, Allah” which you could hear between cannon fire. Our boys kept up a steady fire with their muskets while others stopped up the gap with timber and sand bags. The onslaught lasted 2 hours. We lost 200 men, the enemy lost even more but we cannot hold out any longer by our own efforts.”

The Turkish interrogator. Sept. 5 “We captured a servant of an Armenian doctor who said that Starhemberg's position is desperate in the city. They only have 5,000 fighting men left. This prisoner said that if we’d only pressed yesterday’s assault a bit longer that the city would have offered to surrender.”

Sept. 8th. Two mines went off and the wall of the second bastion crumbled at once. This time the assault lasted a full hour but perhaps the extreme heat of the day caused the attack to stop. The Turks retreated sure of their soon victory. Their miners continued setting up explosives to blow out the whole wall between the holes so they can storm the city on a grand scale.

Starhemberg-“I am down now to only 4,000 exhausted men but must prepare for house to house fighting.”

And then........The Polish cavalry came over the hill. Suddenly everything changed. Now the Christians have three times the men and two times the firepower. The Turks had never fought trapped between a walled city and relieving force. The Poles lead the charge down from the Vienna Woods into the back and most unprotected part of the camp throwing everything into confusion. BATTLE SHOT

Turkish soldier. Sept.12. “By 5 A.M., the Christian army became a flood of black pitch coming down the mountain consuming everything it touched.”

By 5:30 in the evening, September 12, the battle was over, Vienna was saved. The Turks who survived fled south. The Grand Vizier only managed to grab the Flag of the Prophet and his personal treasure chests leaving behind his pet ostrich to die in battle.

Polish King Jan Sobieski. “I wrote to the pope immediately, ‘we came, we saw, and God conquered’.”
Some scholars like Bernard Lewis believe that the Siege was lost because the Ottoman government just did not comprehend the limitations of its decaying military pitted against an overly ambitious undertaking. Other scholars believe that the Ottoman military functioned properly from the beginning to the final defeat on October 7, 1683 and that victory was lost at the last minute because of the personal misjudgment of the commander in chief, the Grand Vizier.

What were these bad decisions that lost the battle for the Ottomans?

First, the time, speed and distance required to march to Vienna. Suleiman the Great had proved in the first failed siege of Vienna that the city was too far away for the Ottomans to conquer in a summer. 150 years later, it was just as far and men couldn’t walk any faster. In addition, a cold rainy spring and damaged bridges slowed everyone down. The Grand Vizier had to move 100,000 marching men through heavy rain and mud 1065 miles. That is like walking from Salt Lake not just to Seattle, but to Vancouver Canada and that reaches only the border where you can expect to start fighting. Now imagine having no REI boots, no plastic rain gear, no paved roads, 100,000 soldiers and about that many logistics people plus the animals who must also eat.

The Habsburgs under Charles of Lorraine were waiting to guard their expensive fortresses that that been built to defend their border but the Ottomans just swept by and kept on going towards the crown jewels in Vienna. At this point the Grand Vizier had regained the element of surprise which he wasted by slowing down which allowed the emperor to flee with the treasury, allowed several infantry regiments of Habsburg fighting men to get back to the city, allowed the city of Vienna to finish repairing their walls, gave time to burn the suburbs which would provide cover, and to clean the moat out.

Second, The Grand Vizier could not control his raiders, the Tartars who burned the wood and food crops that he would need. They had burned several tons of wood next to the city. Now more time was lost going to the forest to hew more timber which was needed to reinforce tunnels and to cover trenches under the sandbags. Because of the ineffectiveness of artillery against modern fortifications, Ottomans had learned to depend on mining and engineering operations. You can see the maze of zigzag trenches, parallels, and contravallation which means walls built to protect the besiegers from the snipers in the city. After the siege, the engineers on the Christian side marveled at the expertise of the tunneling. The Ottoman underground miners lacked just hours to finish the job.

Third, Mustafa Pasha was so arrogant about victory that he chose not to build defensive walls against any relieving force. Nothing was covering the back of the army. Also the forces guarding the countryside behind him were inadequate. The approximately 6,000 cavalry men
guarding the countryside were having more fun burning and pillaging than they were doing reconnaissance. Even when captured prisoners told their interrogators that allies were coming, the Grand Vizier didn’t increase his surveillance. Even on the day of the attack, he kept 1/3 of his men focused on attacking the city.

Fourth mistake, many of the Grand Vizier’s staff and generals had pointed out the need to bring the heavy artillery pieces to Vienna that were sitting in Budin and Belgrade. No other reason than confidence and arrogance or maybe lack of camels can explain why the Grand Vizier brought only 30 medium and 95 light cannons to Vienna giving the people inside the city the time they needed to hold out for the slow arriving reinforcements.

How everything changed.

For the people. It is estimated that half a million people died in Austria as a result of the Turkish invasion, mostly peasants from the countryside. When added to the heavy tolls of the plague less than 5 years earlier, Austria suffered from serious shortages of working people. The town and villages of Lower Austria were so de-populated as to have trouble paying any taxes, not to mention any new taxes needed for the war in Hungary. The historian of the region speaks of a wave of new colonization of the region but it still took 25 years to recover from its enormous losses.

For the Hapsburg. Their focus shifted from West Europe to East for the next 15 years as they fought for Hungary with their new Polish and Venetian allies supported by the pope.

For the French. The Habsburgs were right about Louie the 14th. As soon as they were tied up fighting the Ottomans, the French moved their troops into the Spanish Netherlands, Flanders and Luxemburg. If you want to know how permanent his stay was, ask what language is spoken in Brussels today. Without the Ottoman attack, that language might have been German today. If the Ottomans had won, it might even have been Turkish!

For the Hungarians and the Balkans. Their lands became a bloody battlefield pushing the Ottomans back until 1699 when the Treaty of Karlowitz was signed….with amnesty for all the Protestants …except our friend, Imre Thokoly who did, however, die peacefully in his old age and is celebrated as a Hungarian patriot.

For the Ottomans.
ANOTHER PIC of Mustapha Pasha. The Grand Vizier: “Upon getting back to the safety of the Gyor fortress, I called my officers together and executed those who had been responsible for such a huge loss of men....starting with the governor of Buda who had told me this whole jihad was not a wise decision. I tried to reorganize my troops after the route but their condition was deplorable as we had fled without food or tents. I was afraid of being killed by my own men so left for Buda. There we finally had a victory against that Polish demon, Sobieski but the next day was the end. That day 16,700 fresh German troops and 8,000 Poles confronted the 16,000 troops that I had left (The Tatars and Hungarian vassals were nowhere to be found). By Allah, it was a massacre. I and about 900 of my men were able to get across the bridge before it broke. Anyone else who survived had to swim. So many men were shot as they tried to cross the broken bridge that the broken areas were filled with enough corpses to walk across their bodies. 9,000 brave Ottoman soldiers died that day.

I now desperately needed to get to the Sultan to explain my side of the story to save my life. I rushed to Belgrade but he had already left. His mother, the Valide Sultan had convinced him to order my execution.”

Executioner: “You, Mustasfa Pasha, Grand Vizier, must turn over the seal, the holy standard of the Prophet, blessings on his name, and the key of the Kaaba at Mecca.”

Grand Vizir: “Am I to die?”

Executioner: “Yes, it must be so.”

Grand Vizier; “As God Wills.....Make sure you get the knot right!”

Executioner “Here is the Vizier’s head in a velvet bag, please deliver it to the Sultan”

ARMY PHOTO Due to the purge or death of so many commanders, the Ottoman military suffered from a leadership vacuum. The Ottoman officer training system depended upon the on
the job mentoring. This method could not train a large numbers of officers quickly in time of need. Plus the oral tradition of passing on knowhow and experience was lost forever with the heavy officer casualties. The traditional officer training system collapsed. They faced the next 16 years of war with the Habsburg Holy Alliance with many humiliating defeats and the loss of almost all of Hungary.

The second result was the worsening of an old problem; military rebellions. Janissaries increasingly became tools of competing elites and rebelled frequently, one rebellion which dethroned the Sultan, Mehmed IV.

Third result, Ottoman military strategy had to go from a stationary empire to the defensive. Fortification became the program.

The fourth result was the mass exodus of Muslims living north of the Danube to the south and growing unrest among Christians. As Christian auxiliary troops became disloyal, there was an increasing dependence on the Muslim population for recruitment and levies and a growing distrust of Christian populations as they grew more restless.

(Box prop labeled “Why this battle was important”-Inside are the visuals of an English book, coffee cup, and enough croissants for the entire class to be removed for each of the following)

What this battle means for us.

- We don’t speak Turkish, we are not dhimmis or Christians living under a Muslim ruler. Germany is the only state still fearing a Turkish takeover from its guest workers.
- Cappuccino Coffee
- Croissants- the legend is that croissants were invented by the bakers inside the starving city who made their bread in the shape of the Turkish crescent so everyone could know who to blame for the food shortages and daily take a bite out of the enemy.

Discussion Questions: We were given the scholarly debate of whether the war was lost to the Ottomans because the elite i.e. the Grand Vizier and the Sultan did not realize that the army had deteriorated or because the Grand Vizier had made too many critical mistakes, i.e. the distance was too far, the army camp needed a siege wall of its own to defend itself against an allied attack. Get into groups of four and debate a position. (Poll answers after 5-10 minutes.)

If time-How was the top level Hapsburg and Ottoman leadership alike?

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Why were the Hapsburgs vulnerable?
Why did the Turks loose?

What changed because of the summer of 1683?

And what did it feel like to be in a besieged city or to be a soldier fighting in a 17th C. army?

Sources: I've used both European Christian and Turkish military history sources. The best read on this battle is the Siege of Vienna by John Stoye.

‘Worthy of the pen of a Thucydides or a Herodotus ... it is a measure of the fascination of Mr Stoye's subject that one should think of comparing his treatment of it with the work of the greatest historians.’ - Times Literary Supplement

‘fine historical work ... well worth reading’ - Otto von Habsburg, Catholic Herald

‘the master of every aspect of his subject’ - C.V. Wedgwood, Daily Telegraph

There are also YouTube dramatizations of the Siege of 1683 if you want to compare your performances.