



FEZANA Age-Appropriate Lesson Plan

Subject Category (circle one): Religion/Ceremony History Prayer Gathas
 Comparative Religion Shahnameh

Age Group (circle one): PreK-K Grades 1-3 Grades 4-5 **Grades 6-8** Grades 9-12

Lesson # (if applicable): 1

Subject of the Lesson: The Importance of Studies in Comparative Religion

Background Knowledge for the Teacher:

The Importance of Studies in Comparative Religion

As we go through this series of lessons under ‘Comparative Religion’, we will learn the importance of studying comparative religion in this lesson, and then we will be introduced to eight major religions of the world. The religions we will learn about are:

Zoroastrianism	c. 1800 BCE
Hinduism	c. 1700 BCE
Judaism	c. 1300 BCE
Buddhism	c. 525 BCE
Christianity	c. 25 CE
Islam	c. 600 CE
Sikhism	c. 1500 CE
Baha’i Faith	1863 CE

Religion is a specific set of organized beliefs and practices, usually shared by a community or group. There are many different religions in the world, with different rituals and teachings, but they all teach that life has a spiritual dimension, and that connecting with that dimension through meditation, prayer or other practices is good for us.

All religions have two common goals: i) to guide people to follow the right path in life and ii) to encourage them to be kind and charitable to their fellow human beings and other creations of God.

Unfortunately, religious, and spiritual differences have also been used over time to discriminate against people because of their beliefs. Not everyone has religious or spiritual beliefs, and that’s fine. The important thing is to accept that some people place a lot of importance on this aspect of their



lives, and you must respect their right to believe whatever they want, even if you don't agree with them.

Learning about the range of religious and spiritual beliefs will help us become more understanding and more respectful of people who hold beliefs that differ from your own. Ultimately, we need to accept that we're all entitled to our own spiritual beliefs.

One crucial way that people can best learn to live with one another is by increasing their religious literacy. Comparative Religion stands as an important intersection for many fields of knowledge. Religion is connected with philosophy, but no less to sociology and anthropology, as it provides the basis of a social structure. The best of literature, philosophy, poetry, and art throughout history was created with religious goals and motivations. Religion is central to human identity and to the way people find their place in the world.

Therefore, studying comparative religion is an excellent way to also prepare oneself for a wide range of professional options. Whether in economics, government positions, or in any other professions, the study of Comparative Religion makes it easier for one to understand the human reality before them and to act accordingly.

It is every good citizen's responsibility to understand and analyze the religions existing in their society, while withholding judgment. If the only people who understand Christianity are Christian, or Islam are Muslims, or Hinduism are Hindus, we are condemned to a world of misunderstanding, conflict, and sectarianism. If we show no interest and give up on understanding other people's religious ideas, we will lose our capacity to understand the motivation behind the thoughts and actions of anyone beyond our own religious tradition.

For those students aspiring to leadership in the 21st century, knowledge of the religions of the world is not a luxury but a necessity. Study of the variety of religious traditions around the world makes it abundantly clear that different people operate under different assumptions about the way the world works. To understand their actions, we must also understand their motivation. It is believed that one's education is not complete without a study of comparative religion or the history of religions.

Learning about comparative religions has the following benefits:

1. The most important attribute it offers a student is the ability to understand others. In a world in which we are increasingly exposed to differences of all types, what could be a more vital skill than our ability to understand other people well in order to navigate our future?
2. Another advantage is that you gain spiritual intelligence. The current consensus is that young people need to develop a variety of intelligence to be genuinely successful in an increasingly multicultural world. Along with emotional intelligence, intellectual intelligence, scientific intelligence, multilingual language intelligence, artistic intelligence, and moral intelligence, we very much need spiritual intelligence as well. Without this type of intelligence, young people



are not fully equipped with the resources necessary for their full participation in a world that is crying out for leaders who are engaged and compassionate.

3. It is interesting for us to read about perspectives of other religions on questions like:

Where did we come from? Where are we going? Why are we here? What is 'here'? What is the nature of God, and of this world? What is the nature of the supreme or ultimate reality? What is spiritual fulfillment? What makes things ethical? How do we attain salvation? What is destiny? There are myriad questions that everyone has about life and people and so many things in this world!

Together, we will embark on our journey to learn about the various religious systems around us, and their beliefs and practices, and then compare them to those of our own religion. We hope you'll enjoy this journey we'll take of learning and growing together!

Material for Teacher:

1. Ask students if they have friends of different faiths and if yes, what faith do they practice? What do they know about their friends' faiths? Does knowing about their friends' faith help them to better understand their friend and the community they interact with?
2. Make a PowerPoint of the "Background Knowledge for the Teacher" to present to class.
3. Make the information provided for teacher into categories.
 - a. Why is it important to learn about comparative religion?
 - b. How does it help in one's development and growth?
 - c. How does it benefit society?

Activity for Students:

1. Describe five reasons how studies in Comparative Religion can help you in your practical life. Does it help in understanding your own spiritual beliefs?
2. Present examples of different individuals who have inspired others, and whom people look up to.
 - a. Break students into teams and assign one of the discussed individuals to each team.
 - b. Have each team answer the following question (you can add more to the questions below):
 - i. How do this person's spiritual beliefs play a role in their interaction with others?
 - ii. Has this person's background, education, and experiences influenced his/her leadership?
3. Have students make a diagram or poster highlighting the importance of study in comparative religion. In a virtual class this diagram can be guided by the teacher and the students' ideas filled in by the teacher on a shared screen.



Prepared by: Bakhtavar Desai

Edited by: Nina Kalianivala

Date: 5/2022