



FEZANA Age-Appropriate Lesson Plan

Subject Category (circle one): Religion/Ceremony Celebration 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): 8

Subject of the Lesson: Sikhism

Background Knowledge for the Teacher:

Sikhism

Guru Nanak (1469-1539 CE.) was the first of Sikhism's ten Gurus, a lineage of holy teachers that continued until the end of the seventeenth century. The Gurus are understood to be the mediators of divine grace. The term Sikh is derived from the Sanskrit word for "disciple" or "learner." Sikhs are those who are disciples of the Guru. Sikhism originated in the Punjab region of northwest India (current day Pakistan), where it drew on elements from Bhakti Hinduism and Islamic Sufism to develop into a distinctive religious tradition in its own right. Sikhs believe that liberation from the karmic cycle of rebirths occurs in the merging of the human spirit with the all-embracing spirit of God. Their religious worship involves contemplation of the divine Name. The ultimate deity is known by several names: Sat (truth), Sat Guru (true Guru), Akal Purakh (timeless being), Kartar (creator) and Wahi-Guru ("praise to the Guru"). By concentrating on God's Name (or many titles), one conquers one's ego and unites with God. Known as the "religion of the householder", Sikhism emphasizes the family, and advocates living in the world without being worldly. Moral purity is considered the chief basis of the religion. There is no priesthood per se, but there are official readers of scripture.

The tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, instituted the Khalsa brotherhood, in which initiates are required to wear five distinctive symbols: uncut hair, a comb, a steel wrist bangle, a sword, and short underpants. Not all Sikhs belong to this disciplined fellowship, but many do obey the principal rules of Khalsa. Guru Gobind Singh also required all male Sikhs to take the name Singh (meaning "lion") and all female Sikhs to take the name Kaur ("princess"). These measures give Sikhs a strong sense of communal identity, symbolized by the characteristic turbans and beards worn by Sikh men.

Main sacred text:

The compilation of the Sikh scriptures, the Adi Granth, was begun in 1604 by the Fifth Guru. The last of the ten Gurus, Guru Gobind Singh, announced that he would be the last personal Guru and that thereafter, Sikhs were to regard the Adi Granth (Guru Granth Sahib) as their teacher. This sacred book, Guru Granth Sahib, is considered the living embodiment of all ten Gurus and is therefore the focus of worship in all Sikh temples /Gurudwaras, or sanctuaries. It is written in Gurmukhi. This is the script the Punjabi language is written in. It is placed in the prayer hall within the gurudwara. Any building that has a copy of the Guru Granth Sahib is considered a gurudwara.



The Adi Granth comprises three main parts:

1. a long poem by Nanak summing up the elements of Sikhism,
2. a collection of Ragas, or songs composed by the first five Gurus, and
3. a mixed collection of commentaries elaborating on the Ragas together with hymns of many Hindu saints and Sufi mystics.

Their principal center of religion/pilgrimage is the Golden Temple of Amritsar, in India.

Important Holidays:

The most important holidays in Sikhism are gurburbs, festivals marking the birthday or martyrdom of a Guru. Other holidays are melas or fairs. Sikhs celebrate Gurburbs with an 'akhand path'. This is a complete and continuous reading of Sikh scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib, that takes 48 hours and finishes on the day of the festival.

Guru Gobind Singh's Birthday - Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru, was born in 1666. His birthday is celebrated in December or January. Guru Gobind Singh founded the Khalsa and nominated the Guru Granth Sahib, the holy book, as his successor Guru.

Hola Maholla - Hola (or Holla) Maholla is a mela celebrated in Anandpur on the Indian festival of Holi (in March) in memory of Guru Gobind Singh. The Guru instituted this day for military exercises and mock battles, followed by music and poetry contests. The holiday is still celebrated with mock battles and displays of horsemanship and skills with the sword. There are also processions with the Sikh flag and the Guru Granth Sahib.

Vaisakhi - Vaisakhi, in April, began as a Hindu festival of thanksgiving but for Sikhs, marks the founding (birth) of the Khalsa in 1699. Those ready to be initiated into the Khalsa are usually baptized on this day, and the Sikh flag is normally replaced annually on Vaisakhi. The old flag is not thrown away, but divided into pieces which people take as gift from the Guru. These pieces of the Nishan Sahib are used to stitch the chola (long shirt) of infants. Martyrdom of Guru Arjan - Guru Arjan, the fifth Guru, was tortured and killed by the Mughal emperor Jahangir in 1606. His martyrdom is commemorated in May. Celebration of the Guru Granth Sahib - This festival, celebrated in August or September, commemorates the completion of the Sikh holy text in 1606.

Diwali - For Sikhs, Diwali is particularly important because it celebrates the release from prison of the sixth guru, Guru Hargobind, and 52 other princes with him, in 1619. The Sikh tradition holds that the Emperor Jahangir had imprisoned Guru Hargobind and 52 princes. The Golden Temple was illuminated with lights to welcome the Guru home, and Sikhs continue this tradition by lighting lamps on Diwali each year (usually in Oct or Nov). The Golden Temple is illuminated with thousands of lights.



Guru Nanak's Birthday - Also in October is Guru Nanak's (the first Guru) birthday celebration. He was born in 1469 in modern-day Pakistan.

Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur - Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Guru, was executed in November 1675 by the Emperor Aurangzeb.

Lesson for students:

1. Make a PowerPoint of the lesson highlighting the major aspects of Sikhism such as:
 - a. The name of the messenger/s what we know about him.
 - b. The name of their scripture/s and the language it is written in.
 - c. Nature of God
 - d. Basic beliefs and practices
 - e. Place of origin and where do Sikhs live today?
 - f. Purpose of life in Sikhism
 - g. Sikhs celebrations and how are they conducted.
 - i. What are the holy days centered around? How does this compare to Zoroastrian celebratory days?
 - ii. Do you see any similarities between Sikhism's celebrations and the other religions you learned about and Zoroastrianism?
 - iii. Show YouTube videos of these celebrations to enhance the lesson.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ORokOITc-_I
 - h. Compare and contrast the major concepts of Sikhism to Zoroastrianism
 - i. The lesson can be enhanced with videos such as:
 - i. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MWsCIPXLApA>
 - ii. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RdIPy5HlppY>

Activity for Students:

1. Pair up the students (it can also be an individual activity) to solve the Lesson 8 Puzzle. The team that solves it first is the winner.
2. Make a booklet or a poster of this series of comparative religion lessons.
 - a. Booklet:
 - i. Give each student a sheet of paper and ask them to write, draw or design some of the major aspects of Sikhism.
 - ii. After finishing all the lessons about the different religions, they can design a cover page and bind all the pages to form a booklet which illustrates their work for all the covered religions.
 - b. Poster:
 - i. Give each student a half sheet of paper and ask them to design depicting some of the major aspects of Sikhism.



- ii. After finishing all the lessons about the different religions, they can glue their half sheets on a poster board and design it.

3. Virtual activity:

- a. After each lesson, ask students to say something they learned from the day's lesson and record them. Make sure they do not repeat the facts. Use the recording from all the lessons in this series to make a comprehensive video to share.
 - b. Make a Kahoot game.
 - c. Visit the Teacher's Guide section of fezana.org/education and get ideas for in class and virtual activities by using "Activity Menu" and "Virtual Class ideas".
4. Break the class into groups of 2-4 students. Have them imagine that they will be talking about Sikhism at an interfaith gathering. Give each group a specific category (for example the goal of life in Sikhism, and his/their beliefs, etc.) Give each team about 10-15 minutes to prepare a 5-minute talk about their specific category. Then have each group present their talk to the other groups.

Bibliography:

1. John Bowker, ed., World Religions (DK Publishing, 1997).
2. "Ceremonies and Festivals." Sikhs.org.
<<http://www.sikhs.org/fest.htm#gurpurbs>>
3. "Sikh Festival Dates 2004 and 2005." infoplease.
<<http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0777467.html>>
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