



## 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 (Sikhi)

**Background Knowledge for the Teacher:**

### **Sikhism (Sikhi)**

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 gurdwara.



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.

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

### **Important Holidays:**

The most important holidays in Sikhism are Gurpurbs, festivals marking the birthday or martyrdom of a Guru. Other holidays are melas or fairs. Sikhs celebrate Gurpurbs 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 material for the teacher. Use PowerPoint to teach the lesson and to stop at appropriate sections to start a discussion.
2. Make a printout of the material for teacher for each student or use a projector to display it on a classroom wall (in a virtual class share screen the information). Have each student read a section before discussing it as a class.
3. Enhance the lesson by following up with a YouTube video.
  - a. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mr4-fuUJsEc>
  - b. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MWsCIPXLApA>
  - c. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RdIPy5HlppY>

The video can be stopped at different sections to discuss with the class a summarization of points said and comparing it to Zoroastrian beliefs and practices.

### Activity for Students:

1. Fill out the comparative religion chart for Sikhism (Sikhi) and discuss the results with the class. Using the chart compare each section with Zoroastrianism.
2. Plan a field day to a Sikhi temple close to your center.
3. Plan an interfaith half day event with your local Sikhi community.
4. Invite a representative of the Sikh faith to your virtual or in-person class to share information about the religion. Have each student have a question ready to ask the representative.
5. Have each student write one thing they found interesting about the Sikh faith on a small sheet of paper along with their name, fold it, and place it in a jar. Then have each student take out one of the folded sheets of paper, read the content, and ask the person whose name is on the sheet of paper why they found what they have written interesting and discuss with class.
6. How can we use Sikh teachings today to improve ourselves and our world? Give current event examples when possible.
7. Why do you think western society is not very knowledgeable about the eastern faiths? How can that be changed?
8. Visit the Teacher's Guide section of [fezana.org/education](http://fezana.org/education) and get ideas for in class and virtual activities by using "Activity Menu" and "Virtual Class ideas".



#### 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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#### Source:

<https://theguibordcenter.org/faiths/sikhism/sikh-festivals-and-observances/>

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