



FEZANA Age-Appropriate Lesson Plan

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

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

Lesson # (if applicable):

Subject of the Lesson: New Year Celebration

Background Knowledge for the Teacher:

New Year Celebration

Zoroastrianism

Navroze is celebrated at the exact moment of the Spring Equinox in the Northern hemisphere. This falls on the first day of Spring which usually falls on March 20th or 21st every year. Navroze (or Norooz) in Farsi, means New Day and according to the modern Iranian calendar, the first day of spring is the first day of the New Year. Navroze has been celebrated throughout Persian history in one way or another. Some historians claim that the new year was recognized in the pre-Zoroastrian era, and it symbolized the victory of renovation and rebirth of life over death and winter. Zoroastrians set up a spread of seven items starting with the letter “s” in Persian, such as apple (seeb), garlic (seer), wheat sprout (sabzeh), vinegar (serekh), coin (sekeh), hyacinth flower (sonbol) and other items such as candle, mirror, rose water, colored eggs, and sweets. During Navroze people visit family and friends to wish them a happy New Year.

It is also known as Jamshedi Navroze in honor of Great King Jamshid of the Pishdadian Dynasty in the Shahnameh (Book of Kings composed by Ferdowsi). King Jamshid was a just king who brought prosperity to the people. He had a throne constructed, studded with gems and had the demons raise him above the earth into the heavens; there he sat, shining like the Sun. The world’s creatures gathered and scattered jewels around him. The day is celebrated as a New Day or Nowruz. This was the first day of Farvardin (the first month of Persian calendar) and the beginning of Spring

This day is the first day of spring and what a logical day to mark the start of a New Year! This is the day when new life on earth begins- snow melts, flowers and leaves blossom and grow- and life begins again.

Christianity

Annunciation Day

In Medieval times (5th to 15th centuries) the Christians of Europe believed Jesus Christ, the prophet of Christianity also known as the Son of God was born on December 25. Nine months before his birth is March 25 known as Annunciation Day. This is the day when the Archangel Gabriel announced to the Blessed Virgin Mary that she would conceive and become mother to Jesus and Son of God.



Although the Church began very early to commemorate this event, the date itself could not have been fixed before the date of Christmas was established, which was sometime late in the fourth century. The two dates are dependent on each other, because they must be nine months apart. The people decided that this was not only the day on which Christ's earthly life began, it was the day everything began, the day of Creation itself. From here it was a very short step—an almost unavoidable one—to the idea that March 25th must be the beginning of the year, and from the twelfth century until the calendar reform in 1752, March 25th was New Year's Day.

Judaism

Rosh Hashanah- means head of the year. Rosh Hashanah marks the beginning of the civil year according to the teaching of Judaism. It is the traditional anniversary of creation of Adam and Eve, the first man and woman according to the Hebrew Bible and the inauguration of God's world. It commemorates the creation of man. The new year is celebrated in autumn and is usually around the first two days on the seventh month of the Hebrew Calendar called Tishrei

The Hebrew New Year is connected to the beginning of the economic year in the agricultural societies of the Near East. The New Year is the beginning of the cycle of sowing, growth, and harvest. The harvest was marked by its own set of major agricultural festivals. Some ancient civilizations set the beginning of the New Year in autumn, while others chose spring for that purpose, such as the Persians or Greeks; the primary reason was agricultural in both cases, the time of sowing the seed and bringing in the harvest.

Islam

The **Islamic New Year**, also called the **Hijri New Year** or **Arabic New Year**, is the day that marks the beginning of a new Hijri year. It takes place in late July or early August.

The first day of the Islamic year is observed by Muslims on the first day of the month of Muharram. The year was 622 (CE), was when Muhammad and his followers left Mecca to Medina, known as the Hijra. He along with his followers fled persecution and established a new Muslim society.

The Islamic New Year is a low-key event in the Muslim world, celebrated less than the two major festivals of Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Adha. These festivals, which mark the end of hajj and Ramadan, are viewed as the most significant events in the Islamic calendar.

Traditions and customs for Hijri New Year vary for Muslims all over the world, but the date is a public holiday in most Islamic countries. The majority will celebrate the holiday by attending prayer sessions in their mosque and spending time with family. The main emphasis is on reflection, remembrance, and gratitude.

Hinduism

Diwali- is a festival that celebrates the beginning of the Hindu New Year. Also called the Festival of Lights or Deepavali, it takes place on the 15th day of the Hindu month of Kartika. The holiday usually



falls sometime between October and November. It commemorates Ramachandra, the 7th incarnation of Vishnu, called the 7th avatar, along with other gods associated with the celebration. Diwali is marked with giving gifts, feasting, and fireworks. Many will take the time to pay off debt or follow the theme of rebirth or renewal of cleaning the house and making new purchases- clothing or household decorations.

In the spiritual sense, Diwali is a celebration of the inner light, which is why it is also called the Festival of Lights. Within Hinduism, Atman is a phrase used to refer to a person's inner light that goes beyond the physical and the mental and is seen as immortal and pure. Diwali celebrates this inner light, and this light's ability to win the battle of good over evil. It is through this light that one achieves higher knowledge and awareness of one's self.

Diwali is also considered the celebration of the end of the harvest and past harvests. These thanks are often directed towards the god Lakshmi, associated with success, in order to receive her blessings for the next farming seasons.

The 7th avatar Ramachandra was in exile for 14 years when he fought against the demon king of Ravana. The day of the festival is believed to celebrate his glorious return to his people. The theme of victory or good over evil aligns this victory. (Wilstar.com)

Lesson for students:

1. Refer to New Year's Celebration PowerPoint lesson
2. Focus on the rituals of each New Year celebration. What do families do and where do they go? Is it a communal celebration or a family one?
3. Does an aspect of the history of the religion play a part as to when and how the New Year is celebrated?
4. How does each New Year celebration compare or differ from the Zoroastrian New Year celebration?

Activity for Students:

1. Refer New Year Celebration- Activity 1
2. Use New Year Celebration-Activity 2: Coloring sheet
Have each student talk about what they have learned about the New Year image they colored. What aspect of the celebration did they find most interesting?
3. Break the class to groups and assign each group a new year celebration
 - a. Ask each group to create a graphic (Venn diagram, mind map, etc.) to compare Zoroastrian new year with the new year celebration of the religion assigned to them. Do they have similar practices or times during the year when they celebrate? Do they share common community involvements? Etc.
 - b. Then have each group choose a new year celebration by a different religion than they originally chose and add it to their graphic and discuss.



Sources:

<https://bigthink.com/culture-religion/5-different-new-years-celebrations?rebelltitem=3#rebelltitem3>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nowruz>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feast_of_the_Annunciation

<https://nationaltoday.com/hijri-new-years-day>

Prepared by: Shiraz Antia

Edited by: Tanaz Karai and Persis Driver

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