



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):

Subject of the Lesson: Spring Celebrations

Background Knowledge for the Teacher:

How people mark the end of winter all over the world

EASTER

The springtime celebration of Easter is a Christian tradition marking the day Jesus Christ is said to have come back to life. Easter occurs on the first Sunday after the full moon that occurs on or after Spring Equinox. The day is a celebration of Christianity, but it's also a celebration of new beginnings and the changing seasons.

On Easter Sunday, people attend church services where they sing and pray. It's a day for some fun family activities too, like decorating hard-boiled eggs and searching for the hidden treats around the house or yard. The White House even gets in on the action with an egg-rolling competition. Some kids also receive baskets filled with goodies, and many families have big feasts.

PASSOVER

The Jewish holiday of Passover is celebrated for seven or eight days, depending on the branch of Judaism the person practices. It starts on the 15th day of the month of Nisan which typically falls in March or April. Passover is a time to reflect on the Hebrew people's freedom from slavery in ancient Egypt. The enslaved people were believed to have been led to freedom by a religious leader named Moses.

The celebration begins on the evening of the 14th day of the month of Nisan at sundown, when family members gather for a special dinner called a seder (pronounced SAY-dur). Most breads aren't allowed during Passover, they are only allowed to eat unleavened bread such as matzo—a flat, cracker-like bread without yeast. (The Hebrew people are said to have fled Egypt so quickly that the bread they were preparing to take with them didn't have time to rise.) A bitter herb called maror is also set on the table, symbolizing the difficult experience of the people who were enslaved. During the meal, families and friends recall stories about their ancestors' time of slavery and celebrate their independence. The first and seventh day is most sacred when Jews spend time in prayer, and refrain from work. They may spend the other days traveling.



HOLI

Holi is an ancient Hindu festival that marks the end of Winter, and the start of Spring. Holi is a celebration of love, family, friendship, and new life. It starts on the last full moon day of the Hindu lunisolar calendar month of Phalguna which usually falls sometime in March. It is a two-day event. On the first day people gather around a sacred bonfire and the second day is the festival of color. During the second day, bright neon powder called *gulal* covers revelers in northern India. Celebration continues with enjoying sweets, and traditional folk music and dancing.

NOWRUZ

Nowruz (pronounced No-rooz) means “New Day” and marks the beginning of Spring. Also known as the Persian New Year, it’s celebrated by millions of people in Iran (formerly called Persia) and other countries, especially throughout the Middle East and Central Asia. The holiday falls on the Spring equinox in the Northern hemisphere, which usually occurs on March 20th or 21st.

Families celebrate Nowruz by cleaning their homes and having a big feast. During this 13-day celebration, people exchange gifts, good wishes, and visit family and friends. On the 13th day they have a picnic usually by a stream or river. A table is usually arranged and kept for the duration of the 13 days with seven items that start with the letter *s* in the Persian language—such as sprouts (*sabzeh*) and dried oleaster (*senjed*). Each item symbolizes a principle, such as love or rebirth. Among Iranians they have come to represent the following:

1. Serkeh (Vinegar) symbolizes patience and immortality.
2. Somagh (Sumac) is a symbol of love and compassion.
3. Seeb (Apple) is said to represent health and fertility.
4. Senjed (Oleaster) is seen as a simulator of love and affection.
5. Sabzeh (Sprouts) symbolizes rebirth. The greens might have sprouted from wheat, lentils, barley or mung beans (and more recently citrus seeds).
6. Sir (Garlic) symbolizing health and averting evil.
7. Samanu is a nutritious pudding which comes in only one color: brown. To make Samanu, wheat sprouts are transformed into a sweet and creamy delight. The seventh “Seen” represents affluence.

Among Zoroastrians the items are symbolic of the 7 Amesha Spentas present on all Zoroastrian spreads (representing Spenta Mainyu (Avesta, Gatha), Vohu Mana (colored egg), Spenta Armaiti (the tablecloth), Asha Vahishta (light), Khshathra Vairya (coin), Haurvatat (water), and Ameratat (sabzeh or wheat sprout)).

Lesson for students:

1. Ask the students:
 - a. What is the Spring celebration in their household and how do they celebrate it?
 - b. Do they know if their friends have a cultural or religious celebration during Spring? What is it?



2. Share with them the Power Point presentation.

Activity for Students:

1. Ask students why they think there are Spring celebrations among different religions and cultures?
2. Break the class into groups and have each group answer the following questions, and then share with the class.
 - What are some of the similarities of these celebrations?
 - What are the rituals for each religion and what does it signify?
 - Which holiday is known as the “festival of colors”?
 - Which holiday celebrates Jesus coming back to life?
 - Which holiday is celebrated on the first day of spring?
3. Choose one of the Spring celebrations and celebrate it in class.
4. YouTube videos
 - Holi celebration: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R1hs5FO_Oqk
 - Easter: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SigoALSS1R8>
 - Passover: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LzsuL9U1a_k
 - Nowruz: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=on9KQ5UTq4U>

Sources:

<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/celebrations/article/spring-celebrations>

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