



## 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):** Lesson 1

**Subject of the Lesson:** Introduction to History as a Whole

**Lesson Objective:** For students to discuss what history is and preview the history of the universe by exploring a timeline. In doing so, students will have a better understanding of when Persian & Zoroastrian history started.

**Lesson Duration:** 1 hour

### **Background Knowledge for the Teacher:**

Teachers, some of the information and the timeline you will be using in this lesson come from the [Big History Project](#), a free, online social studies course that starts by telling the story of the universe starting from 13.8 billion years ago. It intertwines science and historical accounts that help students organize and connect what they're learning. For more information, view [this article](#).

### What is History?

"History is an attempt to understand both our insignificance and our significance. You are one of several billion living members of your species, a species that lives on the fifth largest planet orbiting a star...there are more than a hundred billion such stars in our galaxy, and perhaps a hundred billion galaxies in the Universe. And yet, you're also very large. You're a member of an extraordinarily powerful species that has dramatically reshaped the biosphere, the first species on Earth to understand the vastness of the Universe around it. And you are physically vast as well: Your body contains trillions of cells and is colonized by trillions more microscopic organisms. To study history is to better understand the world and your place in it. You, and the other humans with whom you share this world, are the culmination of the human story.

There's a lot more to history than the human story. Let's consider the world before humans. If you think of history as the story of life on Earth, almost all of it played out before our species (*Homo sapiens*) showed up on the scene. After all, we've been around only for the last 250,000 or so years—less than 0.01% of the history of life on Earth" (Big History Project, 2015).



## Big History Project Timeline

\*Teachers, either print or have this timeline accessible digitally to your students. You can even share this link with students to access it on their own devices.

The Big History Project Timeline shows students 13.8 billion years of history from the beginning of the Universe to the present day. There are eight *thresholds* (turning points in the history of the universe) that the course emphasizes. The order of these thresholds includes: 1. The Big Bang 2. The Stars Light Up 3. New Chemical Elements 4. Earth and the Solar System 5. Life 6. Collective Learning 7. Agriculture 8. Modern Revolution.

For this lesson, it's important that students view the timeline and understand our universe's large span of time and how its events lead up to the history of Persia and Zoroastrianism. In addition, students can bring together all this history in relation to the present time.

## Identity

Identity is the distinguishing character or personality of an individual (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). Identity includes languages spoken, culture, hobbies, values, ethnicity, nationality, religion, etc. Our identity makes us who we are. It changes over time as we grow and learn more about ourselves, but it's important to be proud of one's identity. Throughout this history course, students will dive deeper into learning about their family, ancestral, religious, and ethnic history; therefore, they are learning more about their identity. Reinforce the importance of embracing one's true identity rather than suppressing it. Also, emphasize the comfort in sharing a common identity such as being Persian or Zoroastrian due to the shared experiences and knowledge.

## **In-Class Lesson Discussion & Student Activity:**

- **Teacher:** Ask students, "What is history?"
- **Students:** Raise their hands and share what history means to them.

Example answers: the study of people's events from the past; geography; culture; government; science; etc.

- **Teacher:** Ask students, "Why is history important to study?"
- **Students:** Raise their hands and share why history is important in their opinion.

Example answers: to learn from history and not repeat the same mistakes; to learn about important figures that made a difference; to understand why society is structured the way it is; to learn about the origin of a religion; etc.

- **Teacher:** Commend students for sharing their responses. Share today's lesson objective (listed above) and any additional information on what history is (listed above under the Teacher Materials). Then, present to students the Big History Project Timeline.



- **Teacher:** Give students 1 minute to look over the timeline. Then, ask students to turn to a neighbor and share 2 things they notice and 2 things they wonder.
- **Students:** Share 2 things they notice and 2 things they wonder about the timeline.
- **Teacher:** Ask students to share-with the whole class things they notice. Then, ask students to share things they wonder about the timeline.

Examples: I notice the timeline starts with the Big Bang. I notice that life on earth started about 4 billion years ago. I wonder what collective learning is. I wonder how the timeline is color coded.

- **Teacher:** Explain to students the information about the timeline (listed above under the Teacher Materials). Ask students to discuss the following questions. These questions will help students' understanding of history as a whole and when religion and civilizations started to form.
  1. When was the start of the Universe? What is the Big Bang?
    1. Answer: 13.8 billion years ago. The Big Bang was a split second where all energy and matter grew at enormous speed and started the Universe. This theory is from one scientific perspective and it's important to remember that there are other perspectives on how the universe started.
  2. When did life form on Earth? When did homo sapiens, the modern human, appear on Earth?
    1. Answer: Life formed on Earth about 3.8 billion years ago. Homo sapiens appeared about 200,000 years ago.
    3. What do you think collective learning is?
      1. When modern humans formed language, it allowed them to share complex ideas and pass on knowledge from one generation to another.
    4. How do you think agriculture changed history?
      1. Answer: The development of agriculture brought about a major lifestyle change for humans that once only survived by hunting animals and gathering plants. Agriculture allowed people to live in settled communities, which led to the growth of cities, more complex political structures such as civilizations and empires, and the rise of specialized skills and trades.
    5. Where on the map can you find the Persian Empire?
      1. Answer: During 600 BCE (in purple).
    6. What other events took place around the world during the reign of the Persian Empire?
      1. Answer: In South America, there is the Mayan Civilization. In China, there is the Zhou Dynasty. In Greece, there are city-states. Etc. \*It's important to connect events in history with other events that took place around similar times, so that there's a global perspective.
  - **Teacher:** Ask students, "Why is it important to learn about the history of Persia and Zoroastrianism?"



- **Students:** Raise their hands and share why it's important for them to learn about the history of Persia and Zoroastrianism.

Example answers: to learn about their identity and the origin of their identity; to make sense of Zoroastrian principles and where they came from; etc.

- **Teacher:** Explain to students more information about identity (listed above under Teacher Materials).
- **Teacher:** To conclude the lesson, have each student share out loud or write down one new thing they learned from today.
- **Students:** Share one thing they learned from today's lesson.

#### **Sources:**

1. Bighistoryproject.com. 2015. *The Big History Project*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.bighistoryproject.com/thresholds/intro>> [Accessed 27 October 2022].
2. "Identity." *Merriam-Webster.com*. Merriam-Webster, 2011. Web. 27 October 2022.

**Prepared by:** Hilda Kasravi

**Lesson for Student and Activity by:** Hilda Kasravi

**Edited by:** Hilda Kasravi

**Date:** 11/2022