

## FEZANA Age-Appropriate Lesson Plan

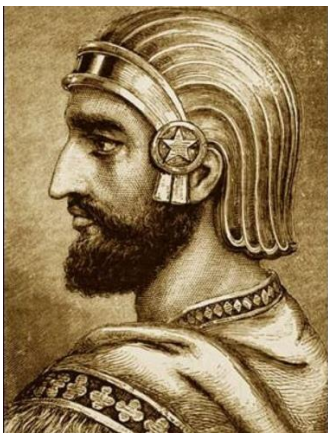
**Subject Category** (circle one): Religion/Ceremony Celebration **History** Prayer  
 Gathas Comparative Religion Shahnameh

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

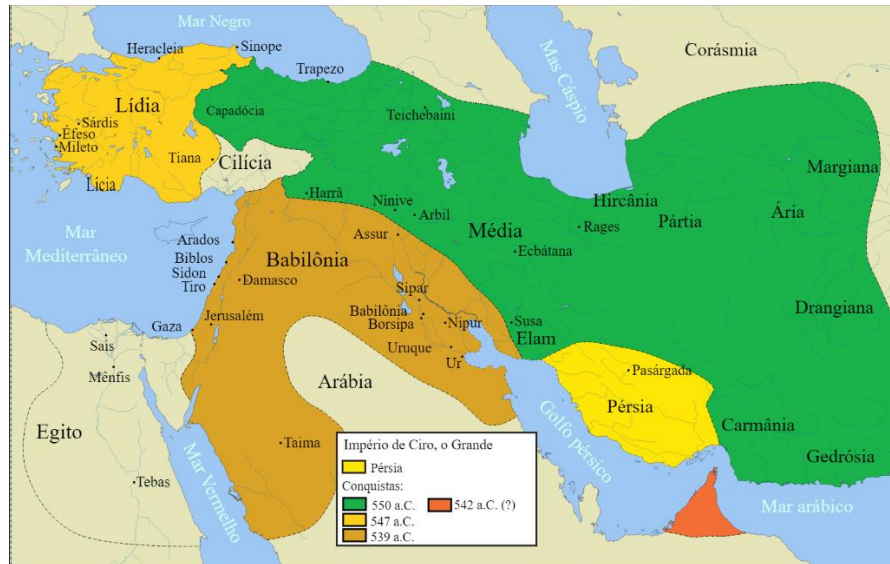
**Lesson #** (if applicable): Lesson 3

**Subject of the Lesson:** The Achaemenids- Cyrus the Great (Part 2 of 2)

**Background knowledge for teacher:**



**CYRUS THE GREAT**  
559 - 529 BCE



**Empire of Cyrus II**

### Babylonian Empire

Cyrus continued to expand the Empire, moving on to Babylon.

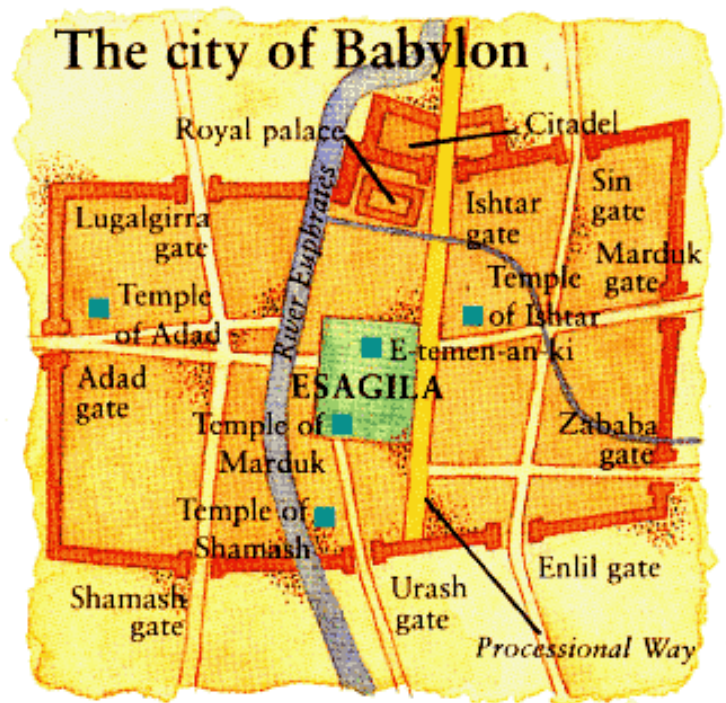
Babylon was the largest city in the ancient world. The entire city was enclosed within a wall of 10-14 miles on each side. The river Euphrates passed through the city walls. Each of the four walls were pierced by 25 fortified gates, each guarded by massive bronze gates, through which the 50 thoroughfares of the city passed, forming 625 regular city blocks, each of at least 100 acres. The famous Ishtar Gate was a gated entrance to an inner wall in the city.



Hanging Gardens

The area inside the walls included gardens and farms, as well as buildings and a full-size pyramid, all made of bricks and wood. The view from the top of the city showed the river, parks, walls, and the Hanging Gardens.

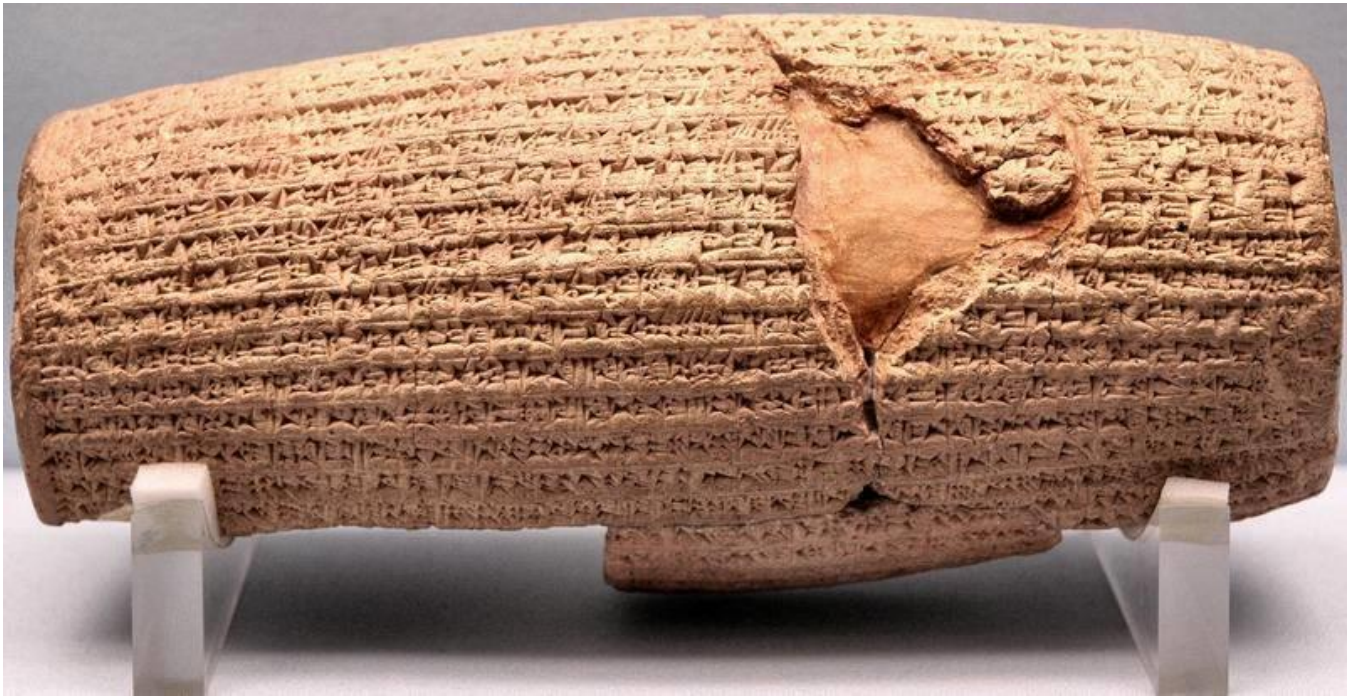
Babylon was also protected by the mighty River Euphrates which was impossible for an army to cross. However, Cyrus was not only brave, but he was also clever. First, he had to split another river, the river Gyndes, into 360 channels, lowering the water levels. This allowed his army to march through it. Then, he diverted the water from the [Euphrates](#) River into a canal so that the water level in the River dropped, allowing the Persians to enter Babylon by walking in. The Babylonians were so sure they were secure in their walled city that they were feasting and dancing and did not know the Persians were at the Gate till they had been conquered!



When Cyrus, on his way to Babylon, came to the River Gyndes (the modern Diyala) and attempted to cross it, one of his sacred white horses dashed recklessly into the stream; but the river current overwhelmed it, swept it under, and drowned it in its depth. At this violent deed of the river Cyrus was enraged, and threatened so to break its strength that, in future, women should be able to cross it easily without wetting their knees. Having so threatened, he put off for a time his march on Babylon and, dividing his army into two parts, he marked out by cords the plan of 180 canals on each bank of the river; then he set his army along the lines and bade them dig. Since a great multitude was at work the task was accomplished with all speed; yet they wasted the whole summer season there before it was finished. (Herodotus i. 189)

Cyrus freed the slaves including the Jewish people who had been captured and made slaves by the Babylonian King. He allowed them to return to their native land and even paid for them to build the temple that the Babylonians had destroyed.

### Cyrus Cylinder



Cyrus Cylinder was 'Written' at Cyrus' command after his conquest of Babylon, the Cyrus Cylinder recounts his victories and merciful acts and states the rights of the people that he captured. A copy of it is in the United Nations Building in New York. Some refer to it as the first recording of human rights.

The Cyrus Cylinder was discovered by Hormuzd Rassam (1826-1910), an Assyrian-born British diplomat and archaeologist, overseeing the extensive excavations throughout Mesopotamia. In February or



March of 1879, during the excavation of the foundations of the city's main temple, Esagila, in Babylon fragments of a clay cylinder were found. It was barrel-shaped cylinder of multi-layered baked clay originally constructed between 539-530BCE. It was comprised of two main fragments (A and B) reunited in 1972. It has 45 lines of text written in Akkadian cuneiform script. There are 35 lines in fragment A and 10 lines in fragment B with a few lines at the start and end of the text too badly damaged for more than a few words to be legible. The text can be divided into distinct parts:

- The reviling of Nabonidus, the previous king, and associating Cyrus with the god Marduk (lines 1-10)
- Detailing Cyrus' royal titles and genealogy, and his peaceful entry into Babylon (lines 20-28)
- Returning of the peoples to their homelands and restoring their sanctuaries (lines 29-35)
- Declaration that Cyrus had enabled the people to live in peace and to increase the offerings made to the gods (36-37)
- Details of the building activities ordered by Cyrus in Babylon to improve the city (38-45)

The Cylinder's text has been seen by biblical scholars as corroborative evidence of Cyrus' policy of the repatriation of the Jewish people following their Babylonian captivity.

"Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia.... the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing, saying, thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is among you of all His people? May the Lord his God be with him and let him go up!" -2 Chronicles 36:22-23

In the Bible, Isaiah 45 we read that Cyrus is proclaimed as the Messiah or the anointed one, a title reserved for few individuals in the Bible including Jesus.

Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whom he has taken by his right hand to subdue nations before him and strip the loins of kings, to force gateways before him that their gates be closed no more: I will go before you levelling the heights. I will shatter the bronze gateways, smash the iron bars.

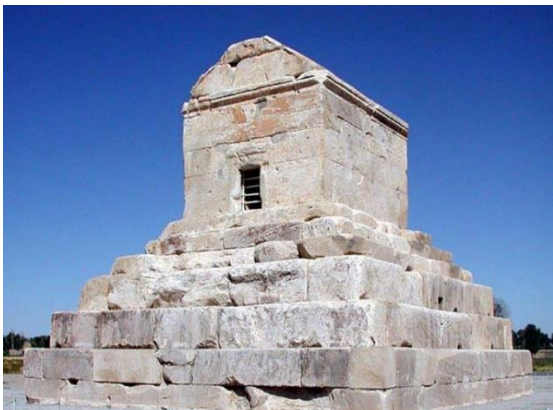
At a time when the victors would enslave the defeated people, burn their city, and destroy the temples of their gods, Cyrus showed great tolerance by doing the opposite, he freed the slaves, built temples so everyone could worship any god they wished, paid respect to the main god of Babylonians, Marduk, and improved the city. He allowed people to live anywhere they wished within the Empire or return to their original homelands.

## Xenophon's Cyropaedia

Cyropaedia means, "The Education of Cyrus" which was written in the early 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE by Xenophon of Athens. It describes the education of an ideal ruler, trained to rule as a benevolent despot over his admiring and willing subjects. Xenophon's portrayal of Cyrus as the ideal ruler and his implemented government as the best form of government could not have been pained had there not been a credible memory of such a ruler, Cyrus. The Cyropaedia influenced the thinking of many European leaders and our Founding Fathers.

## Cyrus' Death

The most accepted version of Cyrus' death is that he died while fighting in a fierce battle with the Queen of Scythians, Tomyris. He was loved by his people and even the people he had conquered because he was brave, just and compassionate. Cyrus' [tomb](#) lies in the ruins of [Pasargadae](#). His epitaph said, "O man, whoever you are and wherever you come from, for I know you will come, I am Cyrus who won the Persians their empire. Do not therefore grudge me this little earth that covers my body." Many Iranians on October 29<sup>th</sup>, the day he entered Babylon, honor his leadership, humanitarian spirit and empire of tolerance that he built by presenting lectures and other remembrances. After Cyrus' death, his eldest son, [Cambyses II](#), succeeded him as King of Persia.



Cyrus' Tomb in Pasargadae, Iran



Nowruz in Pasargadae, Iran



## Lesson for Students:

### ➤ Lesson Goals:

At the end of the lesson, students should understand the following:

1. Cyrus II expanded the Empire to its largest extent when he continued the expansion of the Empire into Babylon.
  2. Cyrus was able to enter Babylon without bloodshed through major engineering feats: Lowering the levels of the River Gyndes and [Euphrates](#) River through the use of complex channels and canals.
  3. After conquering Babylon, Cyrus freed the slaves and established a set of basic human/religious rights captured in the Cyrus Cylinder.
- Use the accompanying PowerPoint to present the lesson to students.
- Enhance the lesson with YouTube videos:
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iokGgmrOj4Q&t=283s>
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NTAgTCXja4Q>
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U99\\_Xe-pwBI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U99_Xe-pwBI)
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liBp7r9O-fk>

## Activity for Students:

### ➤ Lesson Prompts:

Babylon

- Where and what was Babylon?
  - Where is it on the map?
  - What is its earlier history?
  - Ancient Wonders of the World. Use and Hand out.
  - What engineering feats did Cyrus use to get past Babylon/s defenses?
  - What does the Bible say about the fall of Babylon to Cyrus?
- The Cyrus Cylinder and Religions Tolerance:
- Discuss the Cyrus Cylinder.
  - Why is it important?
  - Why else might Cyrus make these proclamations? What did previous conquerors of Babylon do?
  - What was the impact of religious tolerance on the growth and prosperity of the empire? Why?



➤ Guided discussion:

EX:

- What was the importance of Cyrus Cylinder during ancient times and what is its importance today?
  - How were Cyrus' deeds different from the other rulers of the time? Consider the current events around the world, can we learn from Cyrus ways to solve these conflicts?
  - In present times, Iranian people gather around the Cyrus' tomb during Nowruz and the Islamic Republic of Iran has declared this illegal and prevents people gathering at the site. Why?
- Have a copy of the first 4 articles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and a translated copy of Cyrus Cylinder (provided along with this lesson). Have the class break into teams and have them find the first 4 articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights within the translated text of the Cyrus Cylinder. Discuss.

Translation of Cyrus Cylinder (kids can start reading on line 20)

[https://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/History/hakhamaneshian/Cyrus-the-great/cyrus\\_cylinder\\_complete.htm](https://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/History/hakhamaneshian/Cyrus-the-great/cyrus_cylinder_complete.htm)

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

<https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

- The accompanying Cartoon, "The Riches of Croesos" can be shared with the students.

**Sources:**

1. Information has been provided by Mr. Xerxes Koval
2. [https://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/History/hakhamaneshian/Cyrus-the-great/cyrus\\_cylinder\\_complete.htm](https://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/History/hakhamaneshian/Cyrus-the-great/cyrus_cylinder_complete.htm)

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