



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): The Achaemenid Empire- Lesson 4

Subject of the Lesson: Darius' Contributions

Background Knowledge for the Teacher:

Review of last lesson:

After Cyrus II' death in 530BCE, his eldest son Cambyses II became king. Cambyses II accomplished two important things:

1. Created Persia's first naval fleet.
2. Conquered and added Egypt, the last superpower of the region to the Persian Empire.

After conquering Egypt and on his way back to Persia, he was informed that someone claiming to be Bardiya (his younger brother) has taken the throne and has announced himself as king. Cambyses, however, never reaches Persia alive, he dies on the route due to unknown reasons.

In Persia, a group of noblemen support a distant cousin of Cyrus named Darius. Darius with help from close allies kills the "imposter" king whom he names as being Gautama.

Darius I also known as Darius the Great

(l. c. 550-486 BCE, r. 522-486 BCE)



Darius the Great



Darius I, (Dāryoush in Persian) became the third king of the Achaemenid Empire. He marked his lineage, his claim to the throne and how he extinguished the uprisings throughout the empire and re-established a united Achaemenid Empire. To mark this accomplishment, he authorized the Behistun inscription.

Darius the Great and his Contributions:

Darius first had to keep the realm from falling apart. As soon as the news spread that Bardiya had been killed, many of the satrapies, attempted to take advantage of the situation revolted. The history of Persia scholar, Percy Sykes, writes, “Darius had to conquer and sometimes reconquer the revolted provinces and at times only a few provinces and his army remained true to him. The provinces of Elam and Babylonia were the first to break into open revolt. Then Media tried to reclaim its old provinces. To make things worse, Pars, the homeland of Persian empire revolted with Vahyazdata claiming to be Bardiya.”

In the span of little more than a year, Darius with his strong tactical ability and sheer determination crushed the revolts one by one. Once the empire was united, he served a warning to any who would rebel against the King. He used the Median revolt starter Phraortes as an example and severely punished him. A second example to all was the Behistun carving in Kermanshah, Iran, which outlines Darius’ biography and his claim to power.

His next task was to reorganize the empire he had saved. During his reign, Persia reached its greatest extent and his improvements to the land enriched Persia and people’s lives even further. He improved what was started by Cyrus in addition to starting some innovations of his own. Darius was king from 522-486 BCE. Upon his death, according to the tradition of Achaemenid kings, he was buried in a rock tomb near Persepolis.

Some of his accomplishments are as follows:

1. He divided the empire into twenty satrapies [(provinces) (satrapy=singular)] making each satrapy’s satrap or Marzban (governor) report directly to him and did not allow the satrapies to have any military authority. Bausani, an Italian scholar of Islamic, Arabic, and Persian studies, explains that the military forces of each satrapy were under the orders of the commander completely independent from the satrap and directly responsible to the king. This created a check to be kept on the civil and military authorities. The King also had people in each satrapy acting as his “eyes and ears” who reported any chance of uprising directly to the king. Four to six of these spies minimized any conspiracy against the king.
2. Darius instituted a new form of taxation in the satrapies. Before the reform, the provinces were periodically expected to give king “gifts” of gold and other valuables, but no specific amount had been fixed and satrapies often offered whatever they claimed they could afford. Darius assigned standard annual tax rates to each province depending on each province’s ability. For



example, he ordered the richest provinces such as Babylon and Egypt to pay more. This assured a more reliable flow of wealth into his treasury.

3. He standardized the value of coinage (idea borrowed from Lydians), measurements, and weights. This improved trade. His gold coins were called darics, either a homage to his own name or *zarik*, the Persian word for “golden”. Before this standardization Persian currency consisted of bars of gold and other metals as well as goods such as grain, and cattle.
4. Darius ordered the building of stone covered roads called Royal Roads, throughout the kingdom. The most famous of which stretched over 1,500 miles (1,677 miles) from Susa to Sardis. Another Royal Road stretched from Ecbatana northeast to distant Bactria. These well maintained and well-guarded roads improved long-distance communication between provinces and central government. The Royal Roads not only allowed couriers and armies to move more quickly, but they also improved the movement of trade from one province to another. These roads later became part of the Silk Road.
5. He built inns, guarded by his soldiers alongside the Royal Roads. This improved travel and safety throughout the empire, encouraging trade.
6. Darius formed postal carriers. These carriers would change horses at each inn along the way and slept in the saddle making them the fastest mail carriers of the time. This model (Pony Express) was used over two millennium later by Americans.
7. He built a bridge of boats crossing Asia Minor to Europe extending the Persian Empire from India into Europe. The bridge of boats built by Darius and later Xerxes are considered great works of engineering of the time.
8. He ordered the building of impressive canals and palaces. Some 2500 years before the construction of the Suez Canal, he completed an artificial channel already begun by the Egyptians that ran some 125 miles from the Nile to the Red Sea thus linking Mediterranean with the Indian Ocean by way of Gulf of Oman with Persian Gulf. This facilitated trade beyond the empire.
9. Darius erected spacious new buildings at Susa and started the building of Persepolis which served as a ceremonial residence of Achaemenid kings. Its beauty and grandeur were unparalleled in the ancient world. Workers (men and women) at Persepolis received fair wages depending on the work they did.
10. He devoted his attention to military development. Before Darius most of the military consisted of native soldiers from Pars and other provinces. His major reform was an increase in the use of paid foreign mercenaries to supplement the regular soldiers. He was able to do this due to the reformed system of taxes he implemented and the influx of wealth into the treasury.
11. To keep his military in form and to expand his empire, in 519 BCE he marched to Saka, people who inhabited the rugged region of northwest of India and added the land to his empire. Next, he moved west to subjugate the Scythians west of the Black Sea. This was Persia’s entrance into Europe taking control of the Black Sea and its trading routes.



Photo above: The satrapies during Darius

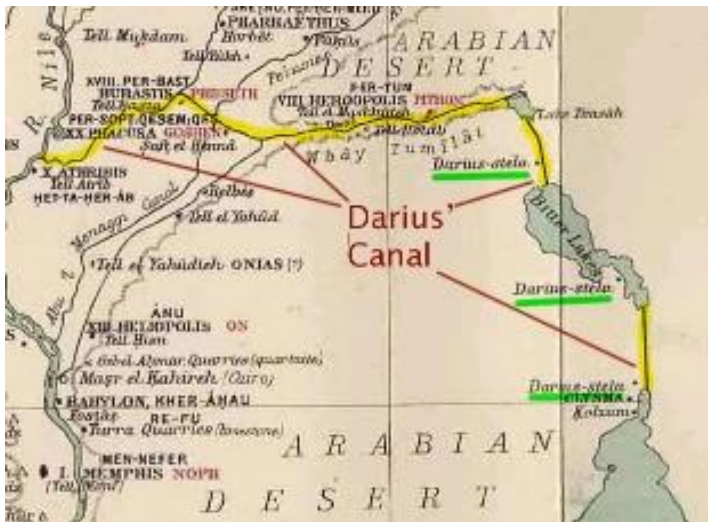




Photo above: Bridge of Boats



Photo above: Standardized coin (daric)

Lesson for students:

1. Make a PowerPoint of the lesson and stop at each appropriate point for discussion.

Possible discussion topics:

- a. What is the importance of an empire having standard value of coin, measurement, and weight? How does it improve fair trade?
 - b. How do paved roads improve trade and statecraft. (Improves trade, travel, kings' postal service moves faster between satraps, and his army can move more swiftly with the cargo and chariots)
 - c. What is the advantage of having secure roads, and inns? (Increase in trade and travel)
 - d. Why do you think Cyrus and Darius made each added country to the empire, a satrap rather than breaking it up into different satraps simulating the people to adopt the Persian language and culture? (These satrapies were designed to help people retain their culture, language, and religion (ex. Egypt= one satrapy). This is also evident in inscriptions in three major languages of the kingdom rather than just Persian).
 - e. How does Darius' leadership and contributions parallel with Zarathushtra's teachings? (EX. Improving and building, justice and a good rule, security and peace, happiness to the people of the country, etc.)
2. Enhance the lesson with YouTube videos.
 - a. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yN4F25Of3E4>
 - b. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NhboQlZ-18c>



Activity for Students:

- A. Solve the puzzle accompanying this lesson.
- B. Make a Kahoot game.
- C. Have students search how fast a horse travels (55miles and hour). Then have them calculate how long it will take to travel on a horse from Susa to Sardis (1,677 miles). Let them know that it took Persian postal carriers about 9 days to travel the route. How fast were they traveling?

Source:

1. The Persian Empire by Don Nardo
2. <https://www.historyofinformation.com/detail.php?id=131>

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