



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 4 Part 2

Subject of the Lesson: The Achaemenids- Darius I Part 2 of 2

Background knowledge for teacher:

Darius the Great - [521- 485 B.C.](#) – Continued
Engineering and Administrative Accomplishments

Although Darius consolidated and added to the conquests of his predecessors, it was as an administrator that he made his greatest contribution to Persian history. He completed the organization of the Empire into [satrapies](#), initiated by [Cyrus the Great](#), and fixed the annual tribute due from each province. During his reign, ambitious and far-sighted projects were undertaken to promote imperial trade and commerce. Coinage, weights, and measures were standardized, and land and sea routes were developed, dramatically improving commerce and the overall prosperity of the Empire.

Coinage

Cyrus the Great adopted the coinage system upon conquering Lydia (modern-day western Turkey) but it was Darius who unified the Empire with the establishment of the Daric. The daric was a gold coin (purity of 95.83%) weighing ~8.4 grams. It bore the image of the Persian king or a great warrior armed with a bow and arrow, but who is depicted is not known for sure. In ancient times, it was nicknamed "the archer".

The coin was used until Alexander the Great's invasion in 330 BC when they were melted down and re-coined for Alexander. This is believed to be the main reason for their rarity in spite of their widespread usage at the time.




An Achaemenid daric, 4th century BC.

Some, such as the Ancient Greeks, believed that this coin's name is derived from the name Darius, but in reality, it appears to be derived from a Persian word meaning "gold"; in Middle Persian, it is called *zarig*.

Standardized Weights and Measures

Persian Weight Stones of King Darius 521-486 BC



1 karšā = 83.30 grams = 10 Gold Darics
6 karšā = 1 Babylonian Shekel

Known Persian Weight Stones:
2 karsa = 166.60 grams
120 karsa = 99.96 kg
60 karsa = 59.98 kg (pictured left)

"60 karšayā
I am Darius,
the great king,
king of kings,
king of all nations,
king of this earth,
the son of Hystaspes,
the Achaemenid."
(inscription on DWd
diorite weight from the
Treasury of Persepolis)

The shekel was a common unit of weight in the ancient Middle East before Darius I. However, Darius enforced strict standardization of the weights and measures throughout the empire to ensure fair and simplified commerce and trade. Around 515 BC, Darius I established the Babylonian shekel as the standard and set the weight to 8.40 grams. This is in fact the key unit for understanding the ancient systems of weight, forming part of a sexagesimal table (a numeral system with

60 as its base) below.

Sexagesimal Table of Units

Unit	In terms of smaller denominations	Mass
1 talent (<i>biltu</i>)	60 minas	30,240.00 g
1 mina	60 shekels	504.00 g
1 <i>karša</i>	10 shekels	84.00 g
1 shekel	2 <i>zww</i> or 6 <i>danake</i>	8.40 g
1 <i>zww</i>	3 <i>danake</i>	4.20 g
1 <i>danake</i>	8 (Bab.) <i>halluru</i>	1.39 g
1 <i>halluru</i>	n/a	0.21 g

The Persian Alphabet

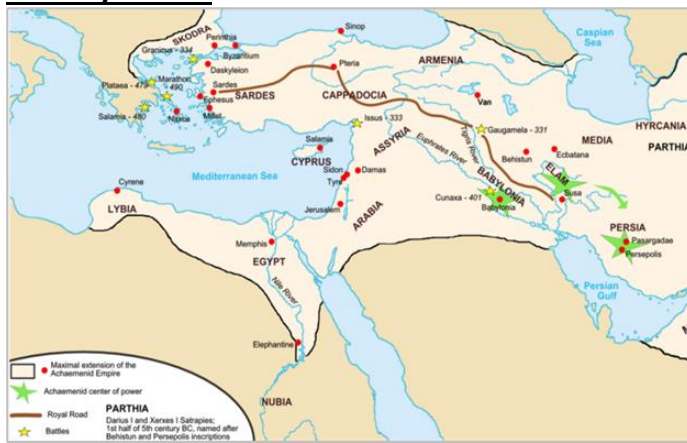
The Ancient Persian people spoke all types of languages. They originally spoke Old Persian. Old Persian was the language of the Achaemenid Court. Old Persian was the administrative language of the early Achaemenian Dynasty. Darius I ordered the making of the Persian Alphabet, which he called 'the Aryan script'. It consists of thirty-six signs indicating syllables and eight ideograms for the words 'king', 'country' (2x) 'good', 'god', 'earth', and 'Ahuramazda' (3x). A slanting wedge (∖) is used as a word divider. The alphabet was mainly used for royal inscriptions.

	A		I		U
	EA				KU
	XA				
	GA				GU
	CA				
	JA		J I		
	TA				TU
	THA				
	CA				

	DA		DI		DU
	NA				NU
	PA				
	FA				
	BA				
	MA		MI		MU
	YA				
	RA				RU
	LA				

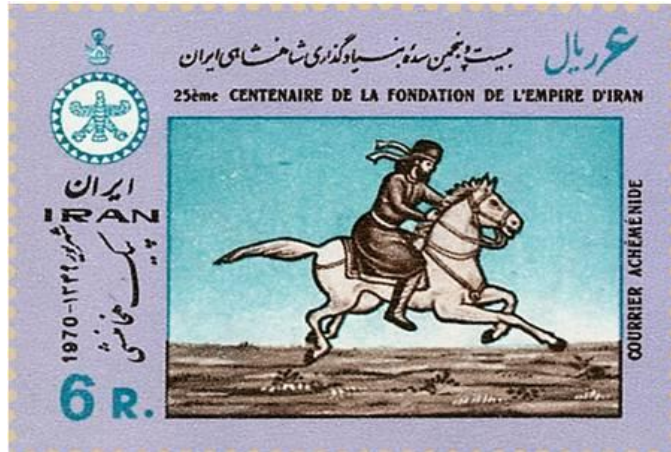
	SA				
	SA				
	ZA				
	HA				
	xšayathya 'king'		dahyāuf 'country'		dahyāuf 'country'
	Ahura Mazda		Ahura Mazda		Ahura Mazda (genitive)
	bāmīš 'earth'		baga 'god'		
	one		two		three
	ten		twenty		forty
	hundred				

The Royal Road



The Persian Royal Road was an ancient highway reorganized and rebuilt by [Darius I](#) to facilitate rapid communication throughout his very large Empire from [Susa](#) to [Sardis](#).

Mounted couriers could travel 1,677 miles (2,699 km) in seven days; the journey from Susa to Sardis took ninety days on foot. It was highly organized with rest stations, guarded garrisons, inns, and no bandits.



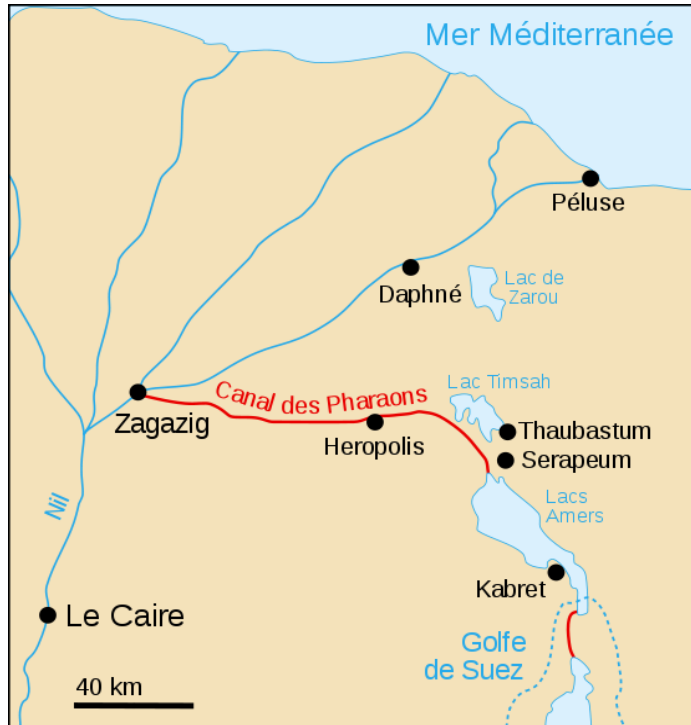
The [Greek](#) historian [Herodotus](#) wrote, *"There is nothing in the world that travels faster than these Persian couriers."*

He also wrote that these messengers *"...are stayed neither by snow nor rain nor heat nor darkness from accomplishing their appointed course with all speed."*

— Herodotus, Histories (8.98) (trans. A.D. Godley, 1924)

A similar inscription, "Neither snow, nor rain, nor heat, nor darkness of night prevents these couriers from completing their designated stages with utmost speed", is on the James Farley Post Office in New York and is associated unofficially with the United States Postal Service creed.

Darius' Canals



Between about 520 and 510 BC, Darius I, invested heavily in the economy of his newly conquered province of Egypt. Darius built several canals and waterways to improve transportation and commerce. He spent 7 years making the 130-mile east-to-west connection between the Red Sea and the Nile by building a canal from modern ZagaZig to modern Suez. According to Herodotus, Darius's canal was wide enough that two triremes (large warships) could pass each other with oars extended and only required four days to traverse.

Darius commemorated his achievement with a number of granite stelae (upright stone or column typically having an

inscription or design) that he set up on the Nile bank, including one near Kabret, and a further one a few miles north of Suez.

Darius' Inscription reads:

“Saith King Darius: I am a Persian. Setting out from Persia, I conquered Egypt. I ordered this canal dug from the river called the Nile that flows in Egypt, to the sea that begins in Persia. When the canal had been dug as I ordered, ships went from Egypt through this canal to Persia, even as I intended.”

—Darius Inscription



Fragment of the Shaluf Stela, now located at the Louvre Museum.

Religion Tolerance and Bodies of Law

In the lands that were conquered by his Empire, Darius followed the same Achaemenid tolerance that Cyrus had shown and later Achaemenid emperors would show. He supported faiths and religions that were "alien" as long as the adherents were submissive and peaceable, sometimes giving them grants from his treasury for their purposes. He had funded the restoration of the Jewish temple which had originally been decreed by Cyrus the Great, presented favors towards Greek cults, and supported Elamite priests. He had also observed Egyptian religious rites related to kingship and had built the temple for the Egyptian God, Amun.

He established a legal code around the issues of laws of evidence, slave sales, deposits, bribery, and assault.

Building Projects

Many building projects were initiated during the reign of Darius, with the largest being the building of the new **capital of [Persepolis](#)**.

Pasargadae was too well associated with the previous dynasty of [Cyrus](#) and Cambyses and so Darius wanted a new capital. The city would have walls sixty feet high and thirty-three feet thick and would be an enormous engineering undertaking.





Darius' Death

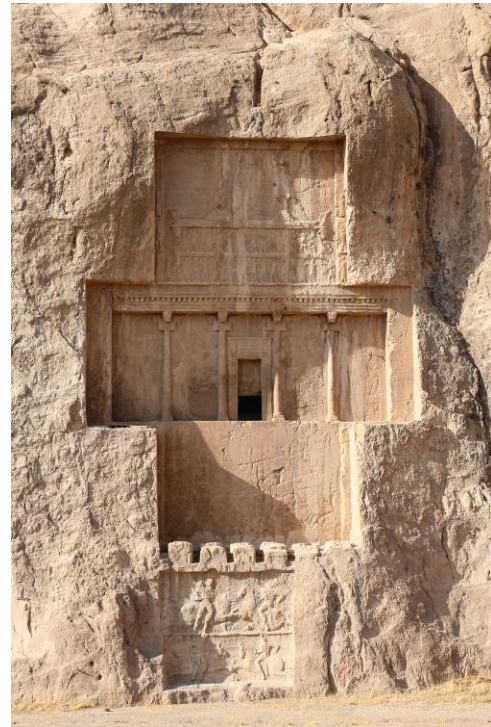
After becoming aware of the Persian defeat at the [Battle of Marathon](#), Darius began planning another expedition against the Greek city states; this time, he, not Datis, would command the imperial armies.

When a revolt broke out in Egypt, Darius had spent three years preparing men and ships for war. This revolt in Egypt worsened his failing health and prevented the possibility of leading another army himself. In 486, after a reign of thirty-six years, he died at age sixty-four.

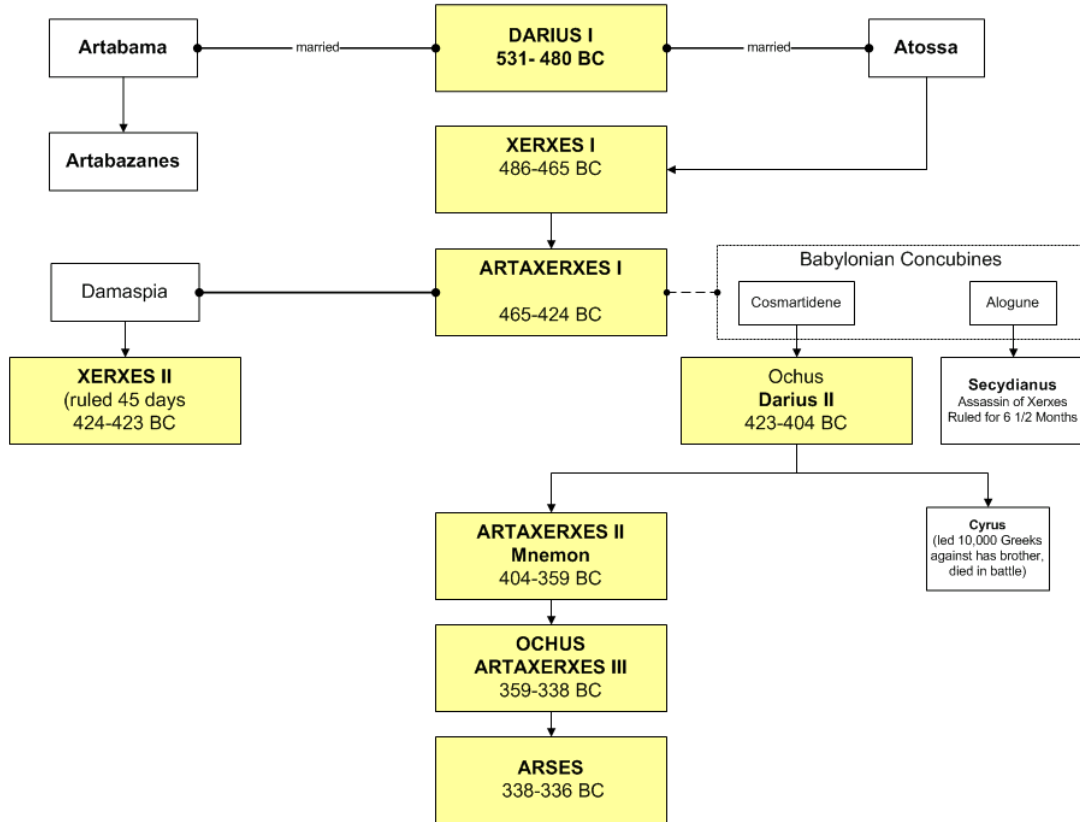
The body of Darius was [embalmed](#) and entombed in the rock-cut [sepulcher](#) which had been prepared for him several years earlier.

Darius had been a great king, as even his Athenian enemies admitted. Thirteen years after his death, the tragic poet [Aeschylus](#) evoked the days of Darius as the golden age of Persia.

Xerxes, the eldest son of Darius and [Atossa](#), succeeded to the throne as [Xerxes I](#)



The tomb of Darius II is located in Marvdash, part of Naqsh-e Rostam



THE BEHISTUN INSCRIPTIONS

What is it?

The Behistun complex is a rich archeological site, covering an area of 116 hectares. There is evidence that humans have taken shelter in this area as far back as 40,000 years ago. There are 18 historical monuments from different points in history registered in the Iranian national list of historical sites. One of these is an inscription authored by Darius the Great sometime between his coronation as king of the Persian Empire in 522 BC and his death in 486 BC.

The inscription is approximately 15 meters high by 25 meters wide and 100 meters up a limestone cliff from an ancient road connecting the capital cities of Babylon and Ecbatana. The Old Persian text contains 414 lines in five columns; the Elamite text includes 593 lines in eight columns, and the Babylonian text is in 112 lines. The inscription was illustrated by a life-sized bas-relief of Darius the Great.

What does it say?

The inscription begins with a brief autobiography of Darius, including his ancestry and lineage. Later in the inscription, Darius provides a lengthy sequence of events following the deaths of Cyrus the Great and Cambyses II in which he fought nineteen battles in a period of one year (ending in December of 521 BC) to put down multiple rebellions throughout the Persian Empire. The inscription states in detail that the rebellions, which had resulted from the deaths of Cyrus the Great and his son Cambyses II, were orchestrated by several impostors and their co-conspirators in various cities throughout the Empire, each of whom falsely proclaimed kingship during the upheaval following Cyrus's death.

Darius the Great proclaimed himself victorious in all battles during the period of upheaval, attributing his success to the "grace of *Ahura Mazda*".



Where: Behistun Mount is located near the village Besitun in Western Iran along the old carven road from Ecbatana to Babylon. It is the last peak (3,800 feet high) of a long, narrow range of mountains that skirt the Plains of Keneanshah.

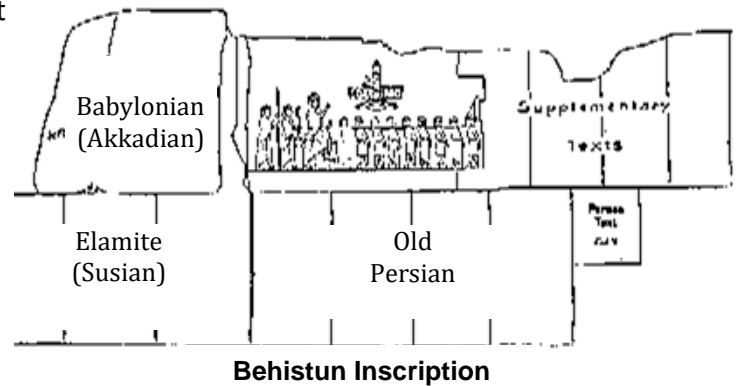


The ledge below the inscription shows Darius I holding a bow as a sign of kingship, with his left foot on the chest of a figure lying on his back before him. The supine figure is reputed to be the pretender Gaumata. Darius is attended to the left by two servants, and ten figures stand to the right, with hands tied and rope around their necks, representing conquered peoples. A *Faravahar* floats above, giving his blessing to the king. One figure appears to have been added after the others were completed, as was Darius's beard, which is a separate block of stone attached with iron pins and lead.

Why is it important?

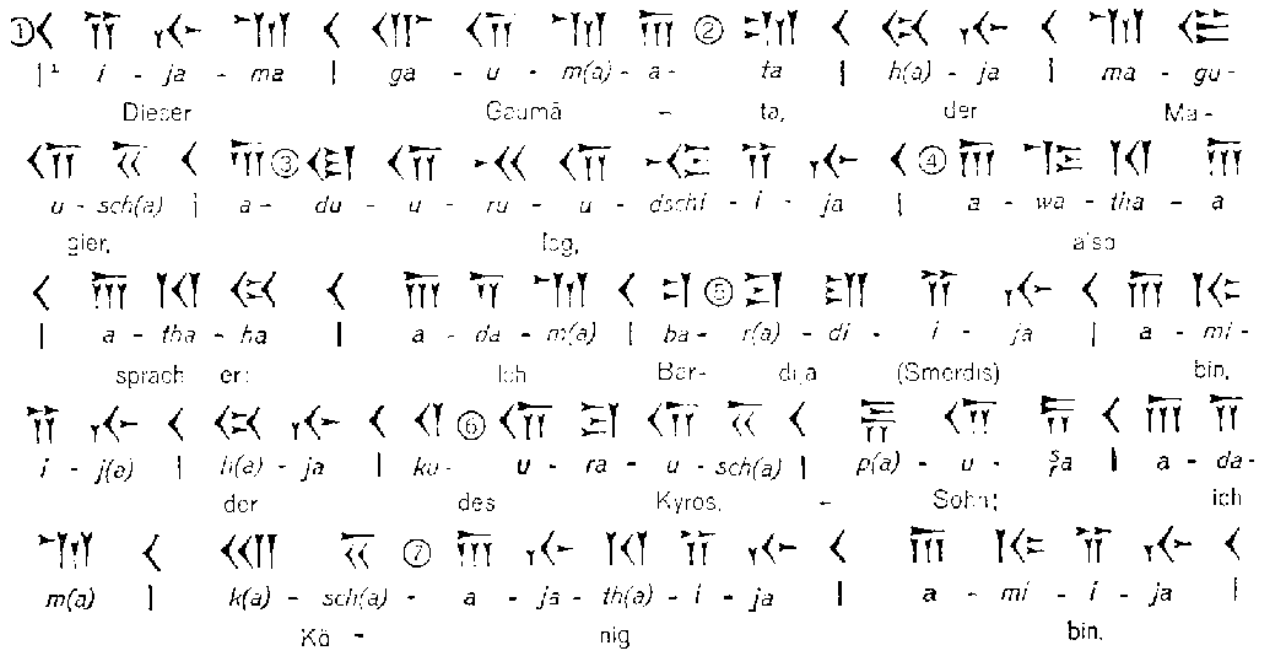
The inscription does more than provide the history of Darius' reign. The inscription includes three versions of the same text, written in three different cuneiform script languages: Old Persian, Elamite, and Babylonian (a later form of Akkadian).

The Behistun Inscription is to cuneiform what the *Rosetta Stone* is to Egyptian hieroglyphs. It allowed preserved but previously undecipherable documents to be translated, revealing much about the most ancient [civilizations](#) of human history.



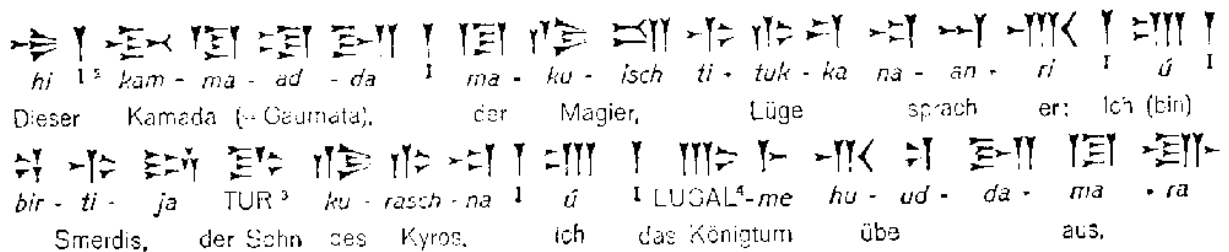
Aus der Behistun-Inschrift

Altperische Unterschrift zur Figur unter dem Fuß des Königs Darius



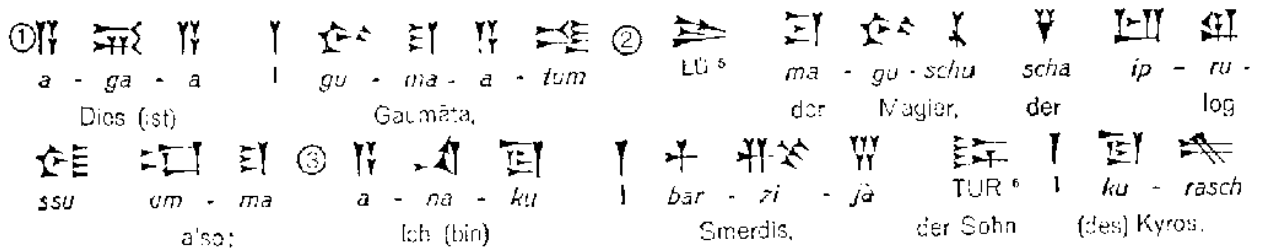
 1² i - ja - ma | ga - u - m(a) - a - ta | h(a) - ja | ma - gu -
 Dieser Gaumā - ta, der Ma -
 u - sch(a) | a - du - u - ru - u - dschi - i - ja | a - wa - tha - a
 gler, log, a'iso
 a - tha - ha | a - da - m(a) | ba - r(a) - di - i - ja | a - mi -
 sprach er: Ich Bar - dia (Smerdis) bin,
 i - j(a) | h(a) - ja | ku - u - ra - u - sch(a) | p(a) - u - ſa | a - da -
 der des Kyros, - Sohn; ich
 m(a) | k(a) - sch(a) - a - ja - th(a) - i - ja | a - mi - i - ja |
 Kä - nig bin.

Eiamische Unterschrift zu derselben Figur



 hi 1² kam - ma - ad - da | ma - ku - isch ti - tuk - ka na - an - ri | ú |
 Dieser Kamada (= Gaumata), der Magier, Lüge sprach er: Ich (bin)
 bir - ti - ja TUR³ ku - rasch - na | ú | LUGAL⁴ - me hu - ud - da - ma - ra
 Smerdis, der Sohn des Kyros, ich das Königtum übe aus,

Babylonische Überschrift zu derselben Figur



 1² a - ga - a | gu - ma - a - tum Lü⁵ ma - gu - schu scha ip - ru -
 Dies (ist) Gaumāta, der Magier, der log
 ssu um - ma a - na - ku | bar - zi - ja TUR⁶ | ku - rasch
 a'iso; Ich (bin) Smerdis, der Sohn (des) Kyros.

Die Ziffern im Kreis bezeichnen die Zeilenanfänge des Originals

¹ Worttrenner.

² Determinativ für Personen (im Babylonischen nur für Personennamen).

³ Ideogramm, gelesen *sunkuk*.

⁵ Determinativ für Menschen.

⁴ Ideogramm, Lesung unbekannt.

⁶ Ideogramm, gelesen *mār*.



Lesson for students:

Lesson Objectives / Learning Targets:

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

- Darius' numerous administrative and engineering accomplishments and improvements and why they strengthened the empire: Coinage, Standardized Weights and Measures, Persian Alphabet, Royal Road, Canals, Bodies of Law & Religion Tolerance, Persepolis, and other buildings
- The Behistun Rock's impact as a historical record, on language, and as an important tool to establish Darius' legitimacy

Lesson Slides: Use slides to teach the class part 2 of the Darius the Great lesson. *Slide 2 is used to sign up students for a section of the lesson. This is an optional activity that teachers may use.

Materials Needed:

- [Darius the Great Slides](#) Part 2 of 2
- [The Behistun Inscriptions Handout](#) (make copies for students)
- [The Behistun Inscriptions Translation](#) (make copies for students)
- [Darius Cartoon Handout](#) (students should have a copy from part 1 of this lesson)

Activity for Students:

Essential Questions: Use the questions for class discussion.

- What were some of Darius' administrative and engineering accomplishments?
 - Discuss the numerous unifying actions of Darius and their impact on the prosperity of the Empire
- What was the Behistun Rock and where is it?
 - Why did Darius build it? Maintain his legacy
 - How did it change our understanding of language and history?
 - Is there evidence that Darius was a devout Zoroastrian? How about Cambyses and Cyrus?

Behistun Inscriptions

- Have students read through the [Behistun Inscriptions Handout](#)



- Then, encourage students to read through the [Behistun Inscriptions Translation](#) in groups. Each group should write down 3-5 points of interest from the inscription to share with the class.

Darius Cartoon: Have students read and view pages 280-283.

- Ask students to share any new information they learned from the *Cartoon* about Darius that was not mentioned in the lesson.
- Optional: Encourage students to re-create one box from the *Cartoon* using their own images and dialogue. Ensure that the re-created box still flows with the entirety of the cartoon scene.

Darius the Great - Engineering and Administrative Accomplishments: Also, on slide 2 of the [Lesson Slides](#).

- Assign 2-3 students to each of Darius’ accomplishments and have them create a presentation to share with the class. Use the table below during sign-ups.

	Name 1	Name 2	Name 3
Coinage			
Standardized Weights & Measures			
The Persian Alphabet			
The Royal Road			
Darius’ Canals			
Religion Tolerance			
Bodies of Law			
Building Projects – Persepolis			
Building Projects – Susa			



Sources:

1. <https://blog.summitlearning.org/2019/08/essentialquestions/>
2. Materials provided by Mr. Xerxes Kotval

Prepared by: Xerxes Kotval

Lesson and activity for students prepared by: Hilda Kasravi

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