



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): 4

Subject of the Lesson: Rostam and Sohrab- Part 1

Background Knowledge for the Teacher:

Sohrab goes to Iran

With the help of Turanian king Afrasiyab, Sohrab gathered an army and went towards Iran to search for his father.

All was going well for King Kae Kaus (Kae Kavus) when he received a letter from Gazdam, the caretaker of the fort of Sapid, which was on the border between Iran and Turan. A young lad of 14 by the name of Sohrab, who hailed from Turkistan, had come with the army from Turan. He was creating havoc and was unstoppable. His facial features resembled Rostam and he seemed to be of the family of Nariman.

Hazir, son of Gudarz, who was the custodian of the fort, was defeated and imprisoned by Sohrab within the blink of an eye. Gazdam requested instant help from the king, dispatched a messenger at night through a secret route and he himself with his family fled the fort at night. The next morning Sohrab entered the fort without any difficulty or opposition.

When King Kae Kaus received Gazdam's message, he realized the urgency of the situation and immediately called a conference of his trusted warriors Toos, Keshvad, Gudarz, Giv, Gurgin, Behram and Farhad and appraised them of the situation. It was unanimously decided in the conference that Rostam was the only person who could contain the might of Sohrab and save the Iranians, and so they selected Giv to be urgently sent to Zabulistan to summon Rostam.

King Kae Kaus sends for Rostam:

King Kae Kaus prepared a hasty letter and dispatched it to Rostam. In the letter, he first lauded the services of Rostam and his family to Iran, and then requested him to urgently come to the aid of his country. He dispatched Giv and advised him to come back immediately with Rostam without even waiting for rest. Giv immediately set off for Zabulistan and did not wait anywhere on the way either for eating or resting.

On reaching Zabulistan, he gave the urgent message of summons, but Rostam was not willing to go immediately, as he believed that he was not a servant of the king to go at his beck and call. He asked Giv to wait till he was ready. Three days passed during which Giv repeatedly reminded Rostam that the fury of the king would know no bounds if they were late, but Rostam was in no mood to relent. Finally on the fourth day, they set off for Iran.



King Kae Kaus insults Rostam:

As soon as Giv and Rostam reached the palace, they went to see the king. However, the king was fuming with anger because of the long delay. He fired at Rostam by saying, “Who do you think you are that you disobey the king’s orders and place your own whims before the interests of the country”. Then, in a fit of anger he ordered Toos to take Giv and Rostam to the gallows and hang them.

Rustam’s scathing reply:

This insult was too much for the great Rostam. As he was fuming with rage, Toos approached him to pacify him and take him away from the temperamental king. However, a furious Rostam jerked away the great warrior Toos, who hurtled away like a small child.

Rostam reminded the king in no uncertain terms that he was alive and, on the throne, just because of him. He told the king, “Don’t think you are my master or provider – God alone is my provider. My horse Rakhsh is my throne, my mace is my seal, and my helmet is my crown, I don’t need anything else.” He hastily left the palace telling the other paladins to fend for themselves and their country as he was leaving Iran forever.

The paladins were very upset with their king for insulting and infuriating the great Rostam. They once again approached the senior paladin Gudarz for a solution to this problem. The aged warrior went to the king and reproached him for being rude to Rostam, who had several times saved the king from certain death.

Gudarz told the king that he would now be responsible for Iran’s plight as Gazdam had clearly indicated in his letter that no paladin except Rostam would be capable of taking on the might of Sohrab. He once again chided the king for losing his cool instead of handling the situation delicately and wisely.

Lesson for students:

The teacher will use the information in the “Background Knowledge for the Teacher” section to go over the story. The complete story and activity will probably take multiple classes to complete. After reading the story to the students, the students can work on the activity listed below.

Activity for Students:

After reading, students should discuss the lesson/moral of this section of the story. They can also discuss where the characters might have made changes to their actions to change the events of the story. Students will also begin to create and perform a play about the story of Rustam and Sohrab. Some sample discussion questions include:

- Was Rostam’s decision correct in delaying King’s orders? Why?
- What do you think about Kay Kavus’ reaction toward Rostam? Was it wise or in haste? Why?
- Was his punishment for Rostam a fair one?
- If you were Kay Kavus, what would you say to Rostam for disobeying King’s orders?



Sources:

1. *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings* retold by Elizabeth Laird
2. *Shahnameh: The Epic of the Kings* by Abolqasem Ferdowsi (Translated by Reuben Levy)

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