



FEZANA Age-Appropriate Lesson Plan

Subject Category (circle one): Iranian 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): Pre-Achaemenid Empire-Lesson 5

Subject of the Lesson: Aryans

Background Knowledge for the Teacher:

Material for teacher and Lesson for Student is combined for an interactive session.

Lesson Objective: To learn about ancient Iranian people – the “Aryans”, and their migration.

Lesson Length: 1- 1.5 hour

Introduction:

Teacher asks students the following question and spends time exploring the responses:

- What does race mean?
- Who were the Aryans?

Teacher: shares the definitions of race and racism from the Glossary and adds the following:

Race is usually associated with biology and linked with physical characteristics, such as hair texture or skin color, etc.

We can write the following: "Frequently, skin color has been used to define race in humans, but this is an adaptive trait (traits influenced by our environment). Genetic studies in the late 20th century denied the existence of biogenetic distinct races. In other words, human beings do not vary in their genetic make-up. As a result, anthropology and history scholars began to examine race as social and cultural, rather than a biological phenomenon and have determined that race is a social invention of relatively recent origin."

The idea of “race” began to evolve in the late 17th century in Europe. In the twentieth century, the word “Aryan” has been used in association with racism, crime, hate crimes, and Nazism which has given the word a new negative connotation.

Teacher shares the following and explains:



“Aryans” were group of people who migrated from Central Asia into ancient Iran and India (2000 B.C.E.), and farther westward into Europe. They were speakers of Indo-European languages (which will be discussed in detail in the next lesson!).

Aryana (Airyanem Vaijah) means “The land of the Aryans” from which the name “Iran/ Aryan” comes from.

‘Arya’ means ‘noble’ or ‘honorable’ in Sanskrit and Avestan.

Teacher asks students to read from handout (page 2) and use the map (page 3) to further explain the path of the migration.

ARYANS

The Aryans were a group of people who came from somewhere in Central Asia and moved into ancient Iran and India (2000 B.C.E.), and farther westward into Europe.

They were pastoral people who herded cattle, sheep, and goats. They tamed horses and had two-wheeled chariots. They lived in tribes that spoke forms of a language we call Indo-European.

The historical evidence and archeological remains suggest that the migration of Iranian tribes into the Iranian plateau and the surrounding area took place through a succession of numerous tribes, each tribe speaking its own variety of the Iranian language.

The earliest groups contained the “Western” Iranians (Medes and Persians), whose migration is generally placed at the end of the 2nd millennium B.C. However, their exact routes have been extremely hard for historians to establish. There are two possibilities:

(1) They went north of the Caspian Sea, crossed the Caucasus and the Armenian Highlands, and then went southeast.

(2) They came directly from the steppes in the north or northeast, crossed the Dasht-e Kavir, to be brought to a halt only by the Zagros mountains. The last group was the “Eastern” Iranians, who in historical times settled in the region extending from Margiana and Bactria to Arachosia and Baluchistan.

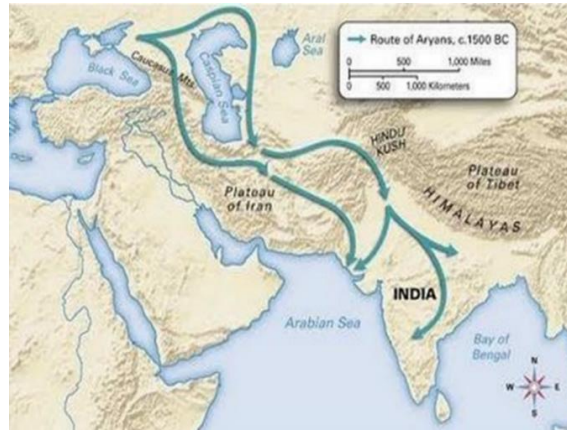


Image 1

Iranian plateau was home to great cities and civilizations. The Aryan tribes settled in the Iranian plateau and started organizing small cities, headed by local mayors. Slowly the Aryan tribes re-organized themselves into united kingdoms to gain more power in the region.

The books of the Avesta as well as the Middle Persian Pahlavi texts tell us that Airyanem Vaijah, the Aryan homeland, was where Zarathushtra's father lived and where Zarathushtra first developed his beliefs.



Aryan Migration (2000 B.C.E.)

Glossary

Race Any people united by common history, language, cultural traits, etc.



Racism	The systemic oppression of a racial group to the social, economic, and political advantage of another.
Arya	'noble' or 'honorable' in Sanskrit and Avestan.
Aryana (Airyanem)	“The land of the Aryans” from which the name “Iran/ Aryan” comes from.
Airyanem Vaejah	is the homeland of the early Iranians and is mentioned in the Avesta.

Activity for student:

1. Discussion:
 - a. Why do you think the Aryans migrated from their homeland?
 - b. Given the two mentioned possible routes, and considering the landscape, which would you think makes the most sense?
2. Use the fill-in worksheet to review the lesson with students.
3. Give students each a sheet of paper and have them draw the map using Image 1 and draw the migration route of the Aryans.

Sources:

1. Google (photos and illustrations)
2. Encyclopedia Iranica
3. Encyclopedia Britannica
4. <https://www.rcsdk12.org/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=26321&dataid=61031&FileName=Chap%203.1%20indo%20Europeans.pdf>

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