



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): 7

Subject of the Lesson: The Combat Between Rostam and Esfandiyar

Background Knowledge for the Teacher:

The two warriors meet and swore that no one would come to their aid while they fought. Again and again, they rode against one another with couched lances; blood poured from their armor, and their lances' heads were shattered, so that the combatants were forced to draw their swords. Weaving and dodging right and left, they attacked one another, and their horses' maneuvers flung them against one another with such violence that their swords were shattered. They drew their maces then, and fought like enraged lions until their bodies were wounded and exhausted.

Rostam and Esfandiyar Renew the Battle

They turned then to their bows and arrows; the sun turned pale and fire flashed from Esfandiyar's armor where the arrow heads struck. He frowned with shame, since he was a man whose arrows no one escaped: he notched diamond headed shafts to his bow, bolts that pierced armor as if it were paper, and sorely wounded both Rostam and Rakhsh. Esfandiyar wheeled round, circling Rostam, whose arrows had no effect, and who felt that he faced defeat. Rostam said to himself, "This Esfandiyar is invincible," and he knew that both he and Rakhsh were growing weaker. In desperation, he dismounted and began to climb the mountain side, while Rakhsh returned home riderless and wounded. Blood poured from Rostam's body, and as his strength ebbed from him this great mountain of a man began to tremble and shake. Esfandiyar laughed to see this, and called out: "Where is your mammoth strength, your warrior's pride? Have arrows pierced that iron mountain side? Where is your mace now and your martial might, that glorious strength with which you used to fight? What are you running from, or did you hear a lion's roar that filled your heart with fear? Are you the man before whom demons wept? Whose sword killed everything that flew or crept? Why has the mammoth turned into a fox that tries to hide among these mountain rocks?"

Rostam's only reply was: "Now I must seek help for my wounds." Esfandiyar watched him make his way back to his own territory.

When Rostam reached his castle, his father, Zal, his son Faramarz and his brother Zavareh wept to see all his wounds. Rostam asked that Rakhsh be brought to him and that farriers be found to treat his wounds.



Rostam Consults his Family

Rostam turned to Zal and said: "I have never seen a warrior on the battlefield like this invincible Esfandiyar, although I have traveled the world and have knowledge of what is plain and what is hidden. I lifted the White Demon by the waist and flung him against the ground like a willow branch. My arrows have pierced anvils and rendered shields futile, but no matter how many blows I rained on Esfandiyar's armor, my strength was useless against him. When leopards saw my mace, they would hide themselves among the rocks, but it made no impression on his armor, or even as much as damaged the silk pennant on his helmet. But how much more can I plead with him and offer him friendship? He is stubborn and all he does and says and wants only enmity from me. I thank God that night came on, and that our eyes grew dim in the darkness so that I was able to escape this dragon's claws. I don't know whether I'll be able to survive these wounds: I see nothing for it but to leave Rakhsh tomorrow and seek out some obscure corner where Esfandiyar will never hear of me, even if this means that he'll sack Zabolestan. He'll get tired of that eventually, although his nature rejoices in the evils of conquest."

Zal said to him: "My son, listen to me, and think carefully about what I'm going to say. There is one way out of all this world's troubles, and that is the way of death. But I know of a remedy, and you should seize on it. I shall summon the Simorgh, and if he will help us, we may yet save our tribe and country. If not, then our land will be destroyed by this malevolent Esfandiyar, who rejoices in the evil he does."

Lesson for students:

The teacher will use the information in the "Background Knowledge for the Teacher" section to go over the story. After reading the first story to the students, the students can work on the activity listed below.

Activity for Students:

After reading, students will answer comprehension questions about the story created by the teacher. Students will also 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.

Suggested discussion questions:

- Who is Simorgh (Review the lesson Zal and Simorgh)?
- What would you do if you were Rostam?



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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