



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 7

Subject of the Lesson: The Origins of Writing

Background Knowledge for the Teacher:

The material for teacher and lesson for student is combined in this section. For virtual class a PowerPoint can be made to present to students or share screen the Lesson 7 handout for students to read, accompanied by pictures and in between discussion to enhance their engagement.

Lesson Objective: To learn the invention of writing and its significance in civilization.

Lesson Length: 1- 1.5 hour

In-class activity

Teacher starts the class with an activity, before giving out the “Pancake Recipe” Handouts:

- Teacher reads the “Pancake Recipe” to class from handout then challenges students to write down answers to the following question from recipe:
 - What are the ingredients for this recipe?
 - How long is the cooking time?
 - How many cups of flour do we need?
 - Is salt used for this recipe?
 - How many calories are there per servings?

Wait for their response and quickly check the answers. Most likely there are many wrong answers, or they were not able to remember the information.

Teacher follows by giving out the “Pancake Recipe” handout to students.

Then asks the same and/or a few more questions from the recipe. This time students will look up the answers from the recipe handout.

Teacher challenges the students:

Which way is better to follow instruction, verbal or written?

Most likely the answer would be the written instruction. Because it is visual and permanent.

Teacher shares:

- Writing allows us to communicate our message with clarity and ease to a far larger audience.



- Writing makes our thinking and learning visible and permanent. It allows us to see someone else's ideas, like this pancake recipe!
- E.g., Books, letters, newspapers, etc.

Teacher asks students, when and how did writing begin? Then asks students to read the first paragraph from Lesson 7 handout:

The Origins of Writing

After the foundation of the very first city states around 3400 B.C.E. the first civilization appeared. Mesopotamia was the first civilization including Sumer and Elamite. The first cities began to grow and consequently their administration became quite complex, which was the proper setting for the emergence of writing. People needed to keep records of things, and this is when writing became important.

...

Teacher explaining the following locations using the Glossary page and maps.

- Mesopotamia
- Sumer
- Elam

Teacher asks students to continue reading the next paragraph from handout:

...

Humans began to write using pictography, which is the art of registering something through images. Early pictorial signs were gradually substituted by a complex system of characters representing the sounds of Sumerian (the language of Sumer in Southern Mesopotamia) and other languages. Cuneiform writing was done on clay tablets, particularly to make accounting commercial and properly record that was essential for city administration. If they wanted to keep records for longer periods of time, they baked the clay tablets in ovens.

...

Teacher explains the following term using the Glossary page.

- Pictography

Teacher asks students to continue reading the next paragraph from handout:

...

The evolution of writing led to the creation of phonetic alphabets. Sounds were no longer depicted by illustration, instead they would be represented by signs. This made writing much easier and more accessible; therefore, simplifying communication.



The invention of writing was surely one of humanity’s major breakthroughs. From this invention, humans could register their existence, the record of their deeds and discoveries, their culture, and their laws. This allowed historians to learn of ancient cultures and civilizations.

Teacher explains the following term using the Glossary page.

- Cuneiform writings

Teacher asks students to continue reading the next paragraph from handout:

...

The Cyrus Cylinder is one of many kingly proclamations on stone or clay known from ancient Mesopotamia. What makes it unique is not its form, but rather the policy it records: Cyrus's decision to allow deported peoples to return to their settlements and to restore their desecrated sanctuaries. In addition, it records that he ordered the restoration of the damaged structures and religious buildings. A replica sits in the United Nations building in New York, USA.

Teacher explains the following term using the Glossary page.

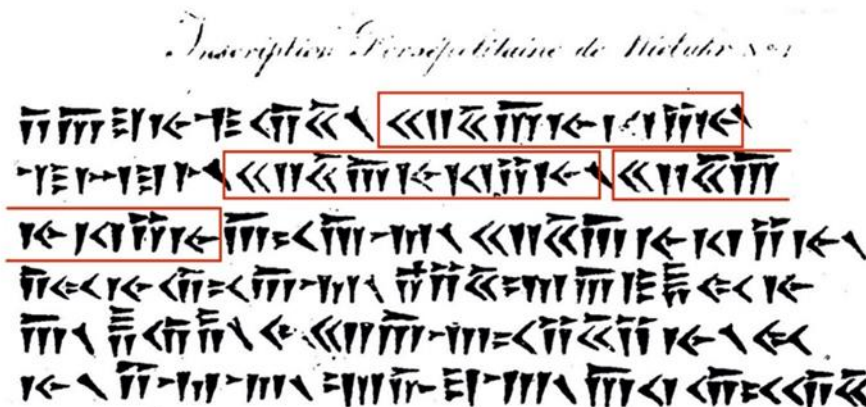
- Cyrus Cylinder

Teacher shares the following:

- This Old Persian cuneiform sign sequence was discovered because it kept repeating itself in inscriptions. Historians correctly guessed that it was the word for "King". Look below where another scholar has isolated the word "king."

- Share the video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HbZ2asfyHcA>



Niebuhr inscription 1, with the suggested words for "King" highlighted. This inscription is now known to mean ***"Darius the Great King, King of Kings, King of countries, son of Hystaspes, an Achaemenian, who built this Palace."***

Teacher should give a relevant description of the information below.

Much of what we have learnt of the Achaemenid Kings and their empire, comes to us from the Bas reliefs at Bisotun/Behistun.



Behistun Inscription

The Behistun Inscription is a multilingual inscription and large rock relief on a cliff at Mount Behistun in the Kermanshah Province of Iran. Three versions of the same text are written in three different cuneiform script languages: Old Persian, Elamite, and Babylonian (a variety of Akkadian).

The Behistun Inscription is believed to be a quote from Darius the Great about his ancestry and lineage. According to the inscription, he attributed his victories in all battles during the period of upheaval to the "grace of Ahura Mazda", and a symbol of the Faravahar is also shown in the inscription.

Pahlavi language and script:

Pahlavi is a standard spoken and written form descended from a dialect of Parthian. The Parthians drove out the Greek overlords in the northeastern part of Iran in 246 BCE and dominated the region for centuries. Greek remained the official language of the region until 1st century BCE when Pahlavi became the official language of Parthian Empire and became widespread. In 224 CE Ardashir I conquered Parthia, established the Sassanid Dynasty (224-651CE), and adopted Pahlavi as the official state language and Zoroastrianism as the official state religion. As a result of these two events Pahlavi became the language of Zoroastrianism. In 652CE the Sassanid Empire was overthrown by Islamic forces. Minority communities continued to communicate in Pahlavi which eventually became the foundation of Modern Persian language such as Persian and Dari.



The text of the *Avesta*, the sacred book of Zoroastrianism, was transmitted by priests from generation to generation and was transcribed into Pahlavi during the early Sāsānian period. Other important Zoroastrian texts recorded in Pahlavi include *Bundahishn* (“Original Creation”), *Denkard* (“Compendium”), *Zartusht namah* (“Life of Zartust”), and *Arda Viraf* (“Book of Viraf”). The Zoroastrians who migrated to India in approximately the 10th century CE continued to use Pahlavi script to record their religious texts. These works were transcribed in Jamnagar (India) and distributed from there to Iran and elsewhere.

The Pahlavi script was eventually replaced by the Perso-Arabic script, though a few Pahlavi inscriptions that date to as recently as the 10th to early 11th century CE have been found. Although many aspects of Arabic language and literature penetrated Persian grammar and literature over the centuries, many of the major structures of Modern Persian have remained close to those found in Pahlavi.

Din Dabireh script:

Din Dabireh evolved from the Pahlavi script during the Sassanid Dynasty in which *Avesta* was written. Consisting of 48 letters, 14 of which are vowels and 34 constants. It is written from right to left just as Pahlavi script. This alphabet was created to correctly pronounce Avestan words.

Conclusion:

The invention of writing took place within several different civilizations around the world at about the same time. The Egyptians, Sumerians, Chinese and people in Mesoamerica invented their own writing systems independently of each other! They created their own symbols and pictures, and eventually alphabets.

Cuneiform originally represented the sounds and words in the Sumerian language. Over time, other cultures, and empires, including the Achaemenids, developed their own alphabets from it.

*Pahlavi and Din Dabireh scripts were developed during the Parthian Empire and later Sassanid Empire and used for a few centuries after the Arab invasion of Iran. During the Sassanid Empire Din Dabireh script used to write the *Avesta*.*

Glossary

Mesopotamia is a historical region of Western Asia situated within the Tigris–Euphrates River system, in the northern part of the Fertile Crescent. It occupies the area of present-day Iraq, and parts of Iran, Turkey, Syria, and Kuwait.

The word Mesopotamia means "between rivers" in Greek.



Sumer is the earliest known civilization in the historical region of southern Mesopotamia (now southern Iraq)

Elamite was an ancient civilization centered in the far west and southwest of modern-day Iran, stretching from the lowlands of what is now Khuzestan and Ilam Province as well as a small part of southern Iraq.



Pictograph is a pictorial symbol for a word or phrase. Pictographs were used as the earliest known form of writing; examples having been discovered in Egypt and Mesopotamia from before 3000 BC.

Cuneiform Relating to the wedge-shaped characters used in the ancient writing systems of Mesopotamia, Persia, and Ugarit. Surviving mainly on impressed clay tablets and rock facings. "A cuneiform inscription"

Cyrus Cylinder or Cyrus Charter is an ancient clay cylinder, on which is written a declaration in Akkadian cuneiform script in the name of Persia's Achaemenid king Cyrus the Great. It dates from the 6th century BC and was discovered in the ruins of Babylon in Mesopotamia (modern Iraq) in



1879. It is currently in the possession of the British Museum, which sponsored the expedition that discovered the cylinder.

Activity for Student:

1. Present students with a sentence. (EX. Three corns and five potatoes were given in exchange for one day of labor at Mr. Jones' farm) then have them present this sentence using pictography. Share with the class and have the class vote which one is the clearest presentation.
2. Have students write their names using cuneiform and Din Dabireh Alphabet.
 - a. Students can use this site to see their name in cuneiform (virtual)
 - b. Use the Lesson 7 Handout as a guide on how to write different letters in cuneiform and Din Dabireh.

Sources:

1. Google
2. Encyclopedia Iranica
3. Encyclopedia Britannica
4. <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/dabire-dabiri-mid>
5. <https://en-academic.com/dic.nsf/enwiki/933243>
6. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Pahlavi-language>
7. <https://omniglot.com/writing/avestan.htm>

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