



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): The Achaemenid Empire- Lesson 9

Subject of the Lesson: The Fall of the Achaemenid Empire and the Hellenic Iran

Background Knowledge for the Teacher:

Background:

After Xerxes' assassination, the Achaemenid Empire began to decline. This decline was mainly due to weak and unfit kings governing the country. The lack of a strong leader encouraged disloyalty and unenthusiasm from the army and endangered the nation's security. The hiring of foreign soldiers, instability along the borders, heavy taxes, inflation, and self-interest of the satraps all were signs of neglect by the later Achaemenid kings.

The last of Achaemenid kings:

At a time when the Empire was most fragile and troubled, Artaxerxes III became king in 358 BCE. He was able to re-conquer Egypt with great difficulty. Large parts of the Eastern half of the Empire remained independent of his control. Before he could re capture these territories, he was assassinated in 338 BCE by one of his advisors named Bagoas, who killed all of the royal princes except the youngest (Arses) who ruled for less than two years as Bagoas' puppet before he too was killed by him. Bagoas then selected as king an unknown Achaemenid kinsman named Codomannus, who was renamed Darius III after he was crowned. Darius III killed Bagoas before becoming a victim himself. Darius III was the last ruler of the Achaemenid Empire.

He was a mild-mannered, generous man who wanted the best for his country but the circumstances when he became king were not in his favor.

Situation in Greece:

The Greece city-states for years continued to battle one another until they were as militarily exhausted as Persia. Macedonia, a kingdom north of Greece in 359 BCE had a new king called Philip II. He was a politically shrewd and militarily brilliant individual who in 338 BCE, two years before Darius III became king, was able to defeat a untied Athens and Thebes and form a new Macedonian-controlled Greece. Soon after he started organizing an anti-Persian army to invade Asia but in 336 BCE, he was assassinated, and his son Alexander stepped in to make his father's goal a reality.



Image above: Map of Macedonia, Greece, and Persian Empire in relation to one another.

In 334 BCE, at 22 years of age Alexander led an army across Hellespont into Asia Minor. At the Granicus River he defeated a Persian army of three local satraps and reached northwestern Syria. There Darius III was waiting for him with a large army. Darius III exhibited impressive tactical planning, but Alexander won the battle. When Alexander reached the Persian camp, he captured Darius III's wife, children, and mother whom he treated with kindness. Darius III wrote a letter to Alexander negotiating a truce, however, Alexander replied naming himself the king of all Asia and that he plans to take revenge on the Persians for entering Greece over a century ago.

Darius III began gathering another army, in the meantime Alexander conquered Egypt in 332 BCE who welcomed Alexander as the liberator. The following year, Alexander marched to Persian heartland. On October 1, 331 BCE, Darius III met Alexander a few miles southeast of the ruins of Assyrian Nineveh. At one point during the battle, Alexander charged toward Darius III's position, breaking away the king's bodyguards forcing Darius III to flee.



Above: Image of Alexander and Darius III in battle

When the news reached the Persian army that the king had fled, victory was easily Alexander's. Alexander then entered the Persian heartland, Pars, without opposition. He raided the treasury and burned the royal palace of Persepolis. Many important books and historical records were burned. The records that were kept on clay, however, survived and they serve as a window to life during the Achaemenid Empire.



Above image: Burning of Persepolis

In June 330 BCE, Alexander pursued Darius III who had fled to the satrapy of Bactria. It is believed that Bessus the satrap of Bacteria had chained and killed Darius III who later was found by one of Alexander's soldiers in an abandoned wagon. Alexander captured and punished Bessus for murdering Darius III.



Image above: Alexander's Campaigns of Conquest

Hellenic Iran:

Alexander moved with his army through eastern Persian satrapies including Parthia, Bactria and as far as India. At Hydaspes River he defeated an Indian army, but he did not pursue conquest of India because his men exhausted demanded to return home to Macedonia. Shortly after reaching Babylonia

in 323 BCE, he died unexpectedly (possibly of malaria) at the age of 33. At the time of his death, his empire reached from India to Macedonia.

After his death, his generals fought over his succession. These wars lasted for forty years. By 280 BCE three large kingdoms emerged in what was Alexander's empire. Ptolemies formed in Egypt, Antigonids in Macedonia and the largest area which embodied today's Iran and included the Persian heartland, sections of Palestine and Asia Minor was founded by Seleucus. The Seleucus followed Alexander's lead and spread Greek language and culture throughout its realm. This led to native cultures incorporating Greek ideas and customs producing hybrid "Hellenistic" or "Greek-like" versions. Scholars refer to the 300 years after Alexander conquest of Persia as the Hellenistic Age.

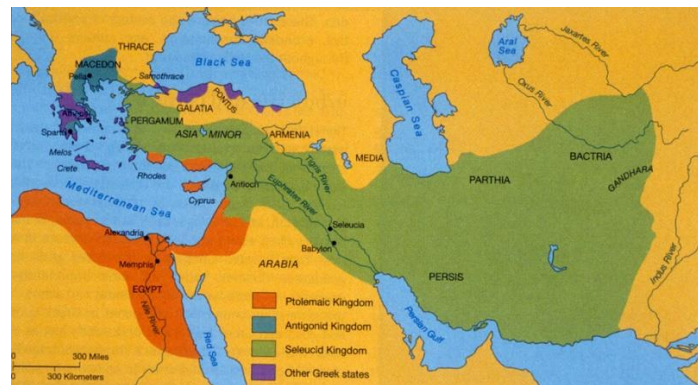


Image above: division of Alexander's conquered empire after his death

During Seleucid rule, the higher political and military positions were granted to the locals who had become Hellenized or at least pretended to be as such. The Greeks who had settled in the area married Persian women and Persians who integrated to Greek army had contact with Greek culture and language. During Darius the Great's reign Aramaic, a non-Iranian language, as a lingua franca, was chosen because it was widely spoken in the western part of the Empire. The Seleucids replaced Aramaic with Greek as the most important common language, but Aramaic must have continued in some manner, for eventually the Iranian language was written with Aramaic signs. The Greek kings became patrons of art, architecture, and sculptures influencing Persian art and architecture. Jewelry, for example, took on a new elaborate form and incorporated rare and unique stones which were available through newly established trade routes. Representations of Greek gods took on new forms influencing and being influenced by the Iranian religious and cultural history. An example of this is images of children and elderly in Greek art which were more representative of the Iranian ethnic people. The longest lasting of such influences was in the Bactria Satrapy which became known by scholars as Greco-Bactrian culture.

The Seleucids ruled Iran for 80 years until an Iranian tribe from northeastern region near today's Khorasan rose to power.



Above image is a sample of jewelry during the reign of the Seleucids

Lesson for students:

Depending how in depth the teacher would like to present the lesson, it can be divided into two lessons or kept as one.

1. Make a PowerPoint of the lesson to present to the student using maps, and image.

Use YouTube videos to enhance the lesson:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FhMLA3BCCIk>

2. Divide the class into teams and give each team a portion of the lesson to discuss in their group and present to the class in turn.

Activity for Students:

1. Sample discussion ideas:
 - a. Vohu Khshathra means good or desired dominion/rule. Open the discussion with students using similar questions as what qualities in a leader will help establish Vohu Khshathra? Use examples of Achaemenid kings and/or contemporary figures.
 - b. Was the vastness of Persia a reason for its fall? Why or why not?
 - c. Do you think it was a smart move for the Achaemenid kings to allow the conquered regions maintain their language and culture or should they had enforced Persian culture and language as the Greeks did during Seleucid Dynasty? Why or why not? Which choice is more parallel with Zarathushtra's teaching?
2. Give students a map of the India to Greece and have them draw the borders of the Persian empire on their map. Which modern countries did the Empire include?
3. Make a model or draw a portion of the Persepolis
4. Refer to the "Teacher's Guide" section of FEZANA Religion Education Committee website for in person and virtual activity ideas.



Sources:

1. The Persian Empire by Don Nardo
2. <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/hellenism>
3. <https://www.penfield.edu/webpages/jgiotto/onlinetextbook.cfm?subpage=1653418>
4. <https://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/Art/porada/porada-secleucids.htm>
5. https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/haht/hd_haht.htm
6. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237571316_Aramaic_as_a_Lingua_Franca_During_the_Persian_Empire_538-333_BCE#:~:text=ArticlePDF%20Available-,Aramaic%20as%20a%20Lingua%20Franca%20During,Empire%20\(538%2D333%20B.C.E.\)](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237571316_Aramaic_as_a_Lingua_Franca_During_the_Persian_Empire_538-333_BCE#:~:text=ArticlePDF%20Available-,Aramaic%20as%20a%20Lingua%20Franca%20During,Empire%20(538%2D333%20B.C.E.))

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