



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):

Subject of the Lesson:

What does it mean to be a Zoroastrian today?

Background Knowledge for Teacher:

Goal: Zoroastrianism is an ancient doctrine that is as modern today as it was 3800 years ago. It is a practical way of thinking and living practiced daily by a Zoroastrian.

Preserving and practicing Zoroastrian living:

What do we mean when we call ourselves a Zoroastrian and what qualities does a Zoroastrian have?

When we say that we are a Zoroastrian, it means that we follow a set of beliefs, thoughts, ethics, and morals that together make the Zoroastrian culture and religion. Zoroastrian culture is a moral and universal heritage, and its preservation and utilization are on our shoulders. For example, it is every Zoroastrians' responsibility to preserve the religion and culture just as it is every global citizen's responsibility to preserve our Earth. Our Earth is unique and vital to every human just as Zoroastrian history, religion and culture is vital to every Zoroastrian's identity. In Iran, Persepolis, the palace of Achaemenid kings who were Zoroastrian rulers is considered a universal cultural, and historical heritage however, preservation and correct usage of its resources are on the shoulders of Iranian people and the native people of the area. Zoroastrian culture is also a treasured heritage, and we must understand, preserve, and use it in our daily lives.

Zoroastrian culture is not a historical object to be placed in a museum to look at, it is a style of living with a different outlook on life. This style of living is both ancient and noble with its roots in a brilliant past and yet modern, innovative and in tune with today's global reality.

Zoroastrian living:

Being a Zoroastrian is not just a heritage from our parents or forefathers. It is a useful and practical tool for today's living and future. Zoroastrian religion and culture has certain properties and traits accepted by us as a style of practical and useful living.

1. Universal and inclusive

Zoroastrian culture originated from Iran and is native to Iran. It is in harmony with its ancient past specially when ruled by benevolent leaders such as Cyrus (Kurosh) and Darius (Dariush). Zoroastrian culture indicates a lifestyle and community that was built upon Zarathushtra's teachings, some of this heritage continues to be part of Iranian culture. Although it is dear and familiar to Iran's native people, it is not limited to any race, people, language, or geographic location.

In Yasna 46 Verse 12 we read that in a time when there were limited communicational tools, Ashu Zarathushtra speaks of a noble from Turan (land mostly believed to have located Northeast of Iran) accepting his teachings.

In the Gathas, Zarathushtra is steadfast against discrimination indicating his criteria and standard for assessing a person's caliber is through that person's adherence to a collective set of beliefs, ethical and moral values that manifests in that person's words and deeds such as truthfulness, working to improve the community, being honest, etc. In other words, one's actions, principles, and beliefs signify one being a Zoroastrian versus a non-Zoroastrian.

2. Based on ethical values

The universal and eternal ethical values of good thoughts, good words and good deeds is the basis of Zarathushtra's teachings. Doing our action according to what is true, right, and beneficial to all are timeless ethical Zoroastrian values.

3. In tune with today's world

Zoroastrian religion is one the oldest monotheistic religions, however, its dynamic and flexible nature allows it to be in harmony with today's changing rules and norms. We can name the Human Bill of Rights as an example. Human Bill of Rights is a product of modern society and of current global importance, however, the same core rights are in the Gathas composed by Zarathushtra about 3800 years ago. There is no conflict between the Human Bill of Rights and the teachings of Zarathushtra.

Link of Human Bill of Rights: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

4. In harmony with current scientific thinking of improving lives and further discovering the laws of the natural world

Zarathushtra's teachings and Zoroastrian religion, concentrate and strive towards improving individual and communal ethics and enhancing the value of life. This religion leaves the door open for innovative scientific opinions and theories in areas such as biology, medicine, engineering, etc. Technology and sciences are changing daily to improve lives and



Zarathushtra's teaching is based on progression towards global happiness, hence it is in tune with beneficial discoveries and sciences. Yasna 48.5 (Song 13.5) says,

“...Giving health and happiness in life is best for a man who works for the living world in order to increase its splendor.”

For example, some individuals adhering to their religious beliefs refuse blood transfusion or vaccines. In the Gathas there are no such dos and don'ts. Zarathushtra teaches us to listen to knowledgeable people and think about their words with an open mind and then make our decision. This coupled with emphasis on improving the living world as part of our duty leaves the door open for accepting, practicing, and advancing scientific discoveries and ethical values.

5. Equality of gender

Women and men are equal with equal rights according to Zarathushtra's teachings. This right in all aspects of society is another valuable characteristic of Zoroastrianism in harmony with today's world.

6. Peace, serenity, and coexistence.

The Gathas do not encourage or advise in favor of conflict, warfare, or dominance over other people. The Gathas speak of conflict between better and worse ways of thinking. Zarathushtra invites his followers to only defend themselves and their beliefs.

7. Equality of human values and life

The Gathas do not consider anyone better than anyone else because of one's race, sex, ethnicity, etc. What gives a person value is that person's deeds, ethical and moral values, and conduct.

8. Respect of the arts

In Iranian and Zoroastrian culture beauty is praised and art which is the grandest form of beauty has special value. Art such as music, sculpture, painting, etc. were popular and widespread in ancient Iran.

a. Two examples of Zoroastrian artists:

- i. Vanecha Roudbaraki is a Zoroastrian artist living in France.

https://www.instagram.com/vanecha.roudbaraki_official/?hl=en

- ii. Fereydoun Ave living in Tehran and Europe

Take away from this lesson:

The important take away from the above is that all the values of Zoroastrianism manifest their merit only when we use them in our daily individual and communal lives and benefit from them in our practical living. Now the main question is how can we apply these values in our individual lives and



what role can we play in their application of building a benevolent and productive society that continues to understand and preserve Zarathushtra's teachings?

Lesson for students:

Option 1:

Focus the lesson on the fact that we are all different in terms of our features, where we come from, our family background, our beliefs, etc. but we are all Ahura Mazda's creation and thus important to help one another and live together with friendship, kindness, and harmony.

1. Ask students to name some of the differences between them and their best friend. Do these differences stop them from being able to play together and be friends?
Now concentrate on the values that they share to make them good friends. Values such as kindness and being to play together in harmony and friendship.
2. Discuss the importance of acting with the same kindness they have for their best friend with the rest of the world.
3. Read a short or have them watch a short video about the above subject.

Activity for Students:

1. Have students draw an act of kindness and share with class.
2. Short play
 - a. On small sheets of paper write different acts of kindness or good deeds that the kids can act out. Fold the papers.
 - b. Put the students into teams and have each team pick a folded sheet of paper.
 - c. Give them a few minutes to decide how they'd like to act out the kindness or the good deed written on the paper.
 - d. Enjoy the different plays with class.

Option 2:

Lesson for Grades 1-3: The Essence of Zoroastrianism Through Storytelling

Lesson Objectives / Learning Targets:

1. Students will be able to identify the three key principles of Zoroastrianism: Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds.
2. Students will recognize the importance of implementing these principles in their daily lives.

Essential Questions:

- Why is it important to think good thoughts, speak good words, and do good deeds?
- How can we practice these principles in our daily lives?



Materials Needed:

1. "The Little Zoroastrian: Aria's Day of Good Thoughts, Words, and Deeds" story.
2. Drawing paper and coloring supplies.
3. Projector or large book for story reading.

Introduction / Anticipatory Set:

- Begin with a short discussion: "Have you ever helped someone? How did it make you feel?"
- Introduce the three Zoroastrian principles and explain that today's story will explore them.

Vocabulary:

1. Zoroastrianism
2. Good Thoughts
3. Good Words
4. Good Deeds

Lesson Procedure:

Direct Instruction:

1. Read aloud the story "The Little Zoroastrian: Aria's Day of Good Thoughts, Words, and Deeds."
2. As you read, pause to discuss and emphasize the moments where Aria practices each of the three principles.

Independent Practice:

1. Hand out drawing paper and coloring supplies.
2. Ask students to draw a picture of themselves practicing one of the three principles.
3. Encourage them to think about situations in their own lives where they can apply these principles.

Summary/closing activity:

1. Invite a few students to share their drawings and describe their chosen principle.
2. Reinforce the idea that everyone can practice Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds daily.

Learning Extensions:

1. Encourage students to share the story with their families and discuss how they can incorporate the three principles at home.
2. Set up a "Good Deeds Diary" in the classroom where students can write or draw about their good deeds.



Assessment:

1. Observation during the discussion and story reading.
2. Review of students' drawings to check their understanding of the principles.

Activity for Students:

1. Set up a "Zoroastrian Corner" in the classroom with the story and drawings.
2. Throughout the week, students can add to this corner with additional drawings or notes about their experiences practicing the principles.

Lesson Story (AI Generated): If you can find another lesson, please feel free to use it.

The Little Zoroastrian: Aria's Day of Good Thoughts, Words, and Deeds

Once upon a time in a vibrant town, there was a curious little girl named Aria. She was known for her bright eyes, her enthusiastic spirit, and the colorful ribbon she always wore in her hair. Aria was a Zoroastrian, an ancient faith that she had learned about from her grandparents.

Every morning, her grandmother would remind her, "Remember Aria, practice Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds." Today, Aria decided she would consciously practice each one.

Good Thoughts:

In school, Aria's friend Sam was feeling sad because he couldn't solve a math problem. Instead of thinking negatively or joining others in teasing him, Aria remembered her first principle: Good Thoughts. She thought about how she could help Sam. "Maybe if we try to solve it together, it'll be easier," she mused.

Good Words:

At lunch, Aria's friend Mia was upset because someone made fun of her new shoes. Remembering her second principle, Good Words, Aria said, "I think your shoes are lovely, Mia. They're unique, just like you!" Mia smiled, her mood instantly lifted.

Good Deeds:

After school, while walking home, Aria saw a stray kitten looking hungry and scared. She remembered the last principle: Good Deeds. Using some of her snack, she lured the kitten and took it to a nearby animal shelter, ensuring it would be safe and cared for.



That evening, Aria excitedly shared her day's experiences with her grandparents. Her grandfather, with a twinkle in his eye, said, "You've made us proud, Aria. By living these principles, you're keeping the essence of Zoroastrianism alive."

And so, in her small, meaningful ways, Aria practiced her faith, showing everyone that even a little girl could make a big difference with Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds.

Sources:

1. Amoozesh e din va farhang e Zartoshti – Grade 7
2. The Gathas Our Guide by AA Jafarey

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