



**Big Era Four**  
**Expanding Networks of Exchange and Encounter**  
**1200 BCE – 500 CE**



**Closeup Teaching Unit 4.4.2**  
**Pressured by Persia: The Persian Empire**  
**550 – 479 BCE**

**Table of Contents**

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Why this unit?	2
Unit objectives	2
Time and materials	2
Author	2
The historical context	3
This unit in the Big Era timeline	5
Lesson 1: The Persian Press	6
Lesson 2: The Second Persian War: A Series of Plays	12
Lesson 3: Geography of the Persian Wars	32
Lesson 4: Women of the Persian Empire	37
Assessment	47
This unit and the Three Essential Questions	48
This unit and the Seven Key Themes	48
This unit and the Standards in Historical Thinking	48
Resources	49
Correlations to National and State Standards	50
Conceptual links to other lessons	51

## Why this unit?

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The founding of the Persian empire began with the fall of the Babylonian empire. Cyrus the Great founded the Persian [state](#) after his conquest of Babylon. During the following years under emperors Cyrus, Darius, and Xerxes, Persia steadily expanded in both [Southwest Asia](#) and Egypt. Persia's expansion influenced various societies of [Afroeurasia](#), such as the Jews, Greeks, and northern Africans. In teaching this unit, teachers will be able to actively engage students in the story of Persia's development, while also deepening their knowledge of Athens, Sparta, and the Persian Wars. Students will also learn about the influence of women in Persian politics.

## Unit objectives

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*Upon completing this unit, students will be able to:*

1. Outline the founding, expansion, and organization of ancient Persia.
2. Analyze the battle strategies of Persia and Greece during the Second Persian War.
3. Explain the events of the Second Persian War.
4. Compare and contrast the military strategies of Athens and Sparta during the war.
5. Evaluate the roles of Persia, Athens, and Sparta in the war.
6. Analyze the interaction of the Persians with other societies in the ancient world.

## Time and materials

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This unit will require approximately five class periods of fifty-five minutes each.

Teachers will need to assemble 11 x 17-inch white construction paper, color pencils, pencils, and sheets of white 8 ½ x 11-inch paper.

## Author

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## The historical context

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The term "Persia" originally referred to a territory centered on what is today Iran. The language spoken by people in that territory since ancient times is known as Persian or Farsi. It is the principal language of Iran today. In modern times, Persia and Iran have often been used interchangeably. The Persian empire discussed in this unit did not have fixed boundaries but expanded and contracted along with the political fortunes of its emperors. The line of emperors who ruled between the sixth and fourth centuries BCE is known as the Achaemenid dynasty.

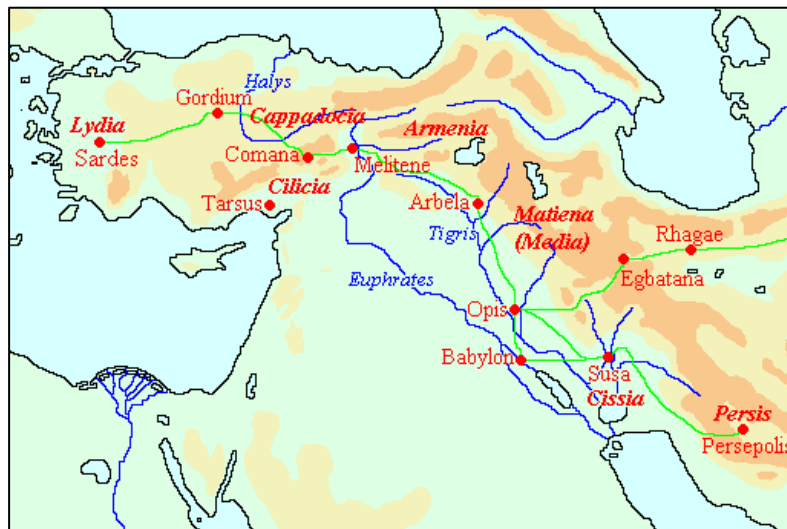
## Cyrus and the Founding of an Empire

In 550 BCE, King Cyrus founded the Achaemenid dynasty and the Persian empire after conquering the Median kingdom and uniting the Medes and the Persians. Cyrus the Great then went on to conquer Lydia (today part of Turkey) and the Babylonian empire (in Iraq).

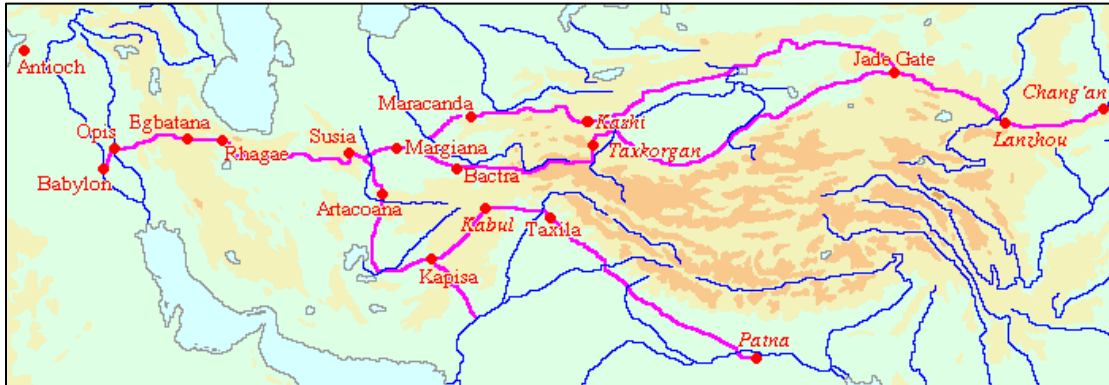
Cyrus followed a policy of tolerance towards his conquered people. When he conquered the Medes, he still incorporated both Median and Persian officials into the government. He also allowed conquered peoples to maintain their religious and cultural traditions, which can be seen in his interactions with the Hebrews after his conquest of Babylon. His tolerance for others led him to develop the Charter of Human Rights, which could be compared in some ways to our Bill of Rights. Additionally, he did not condone slavery within his empire.

## Darius

Cyrus's successor, Darius, inherited a large empire. He decided to maintain order by enhancing the use of the Royal Road, which already existed but would become integral during his reign. According to the Greek historian Herodotus, the Royal Road extended from Sardis to Susa. He also explains how the road was used as a kind of "pony express." Furthermore, the Royal Road encouraged long-distance trade. The road curved from Babylon to Opis and out to Egbatana, where it connected to the silk roads of Inner Eurasia.



**Political policies.** Darius governed the empire using an imperial bureaucracy. He assigned *satraps* (governors) to positions throughout the empire. This aided in the administration of provinces that were far from the capital. He also maintained a standing army, which was not common for that time.



**The First Persian War.** Darius attacked Naxos in Ionia (western coast lands of Turkey) in 499 BCE because its people rebelled, but after four months the Persians were forced to withdraw. The Ionians became over-confident and revolted against Persia, setting up a new government. The Ionian leader, however, knew Persia was strong and asked Sparta and Athens for help. Sparta declined but Athens sent twenty ships. The Ionians were able to conquer Sardis (today, in Turkey) but were eventually defeated by the Persians. King Darius showed mercy towards the Ionians and did not punish them. The Athenians, however, needed to be taught a lesson not to interfere. King Darius attacked Athens in 490 BCE at the Battle of Marathon. Persia, however, suffered a defeat there, and a runner ran back to Athens to tell of the Greek victory while the Persians retreated.

Darius vowed revenge. But before he set out again on another campaign to Greece, Egypt, which had also been subjugated during Darius' reign, revolted. While deciding whether to invade Egypt or Greece, Darius died, leaving the task to Xerxes, his successor.

**Religious reform.** While historians are still unsure of Cyrus the Great's religious inclination, extensive evidence exists telling of the Zoroastrian practices of Darius and Xerxes. Both men followed the teachings of the prophet Zoroaster, which were monotheistic. Darius often wrote about his relationship with his god, and rock inscriptions of Darius' beliefs still exist.

### Xerxes

Xerxes chose to attack Egypt first from a motive of honor. He felt that it would be better to demonstrate his power against a country that attempted rebellion against his father and himself before conquering a new people. In the second year of his reign, he marched toward Egypt, passing Judea along the way. He showed the same tolerance toward the Hebrews that his predecessors had shown, even aiding in the reconstruction of the temple in Jerusalem. Eventually, he reached Egypt, where the rebellion was easily put down within a year. He established his brother as viceroy before returning to Susa. He then turned his attention to Greece and marched towards Athens, thus beginning the Second Persian War.

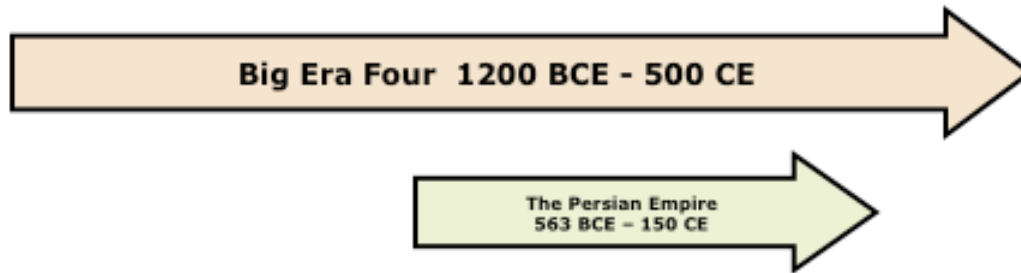
During Xerxes' reign, the Persian empire stopped expanding. Outermost provinces in the empire were lost, and Xerxes suffered a devastating defeat in the Second Persian War. However, for the

next seventy years, the Persian empire still remained “the strongest empire on earth” and continued to influence both Southwest Asia and the lands around the eastern Mediterranean Sea.

Map sources: Livius: Articles on Ancient History, <http://www.livius.org/>

## **This unit in the Big Era Timeline**

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## *Lesson 1*

### *The Persian Press*

#### **Preparation**

Before doing the lesson, make copies of Student Handout 1.1 (The Persian Press). Prior to distributing the copies, review the following vocabulary with the students to facilitate reading comprehension. This can be done as homework and then reviewed before reading The Persian Press.

#### **Vocabulary**

<b>Administration</b>	A method of managing a group's business
<b>Canal</b>	A ditch or channel in which water flows; used for both irrigation and boat transport
<b>Citadel</b>	A strongly fortified building or fort used for military defense and protection
<b>Coinage</b>	Money in the form of coins
<b>Culture</b>	The shared way of life of a group of people
<b>Daric</b>	A gold coin used in the Persian empire
<b>Rebel (verb)</b>	To rise up against political authority, usually with violence
<b>Revenge</b>	Action taken to pay back or retaliate against someone who has caused an offense or injury
<b>Satrap</b>	Governor appointed by the emperor of a province in the Persian empire
<b>Shekel</b>	A unit of currency, often a silver coin; still used in Israel today
<b>Silk roads</b>	A set of trade routes that crossed Inner Eurasia and that connected Europe, the Mediterranean, Southwest Asia, India, and China

**Tolerance**                    The quality of being open-minded and accepting

## **Introduction**

Students will use reading comprehension skills to investigate how Cyrus and Darius of the Achaemenid dynasty controlled the Persian empire. They will understand the founding, expansion, and political organization of the Persian empire under each ruler. They will also understand how Cyrus' political policies produced a time of peace and how Darius expanded and managed an extensive empire. Students will also learn about the death of Darius and the rise to the throne of Xerxes. This lesson will also aid students with reading comprehension skills and the writing of a historical narrative from a first or third person perspective.

## **Activities**

By reading Student Handout 1, The Persian Press, students will be taken back in time to ancient Persia. They will obtain a "first-hand account" of the achievements of Cyrus and Darius.

Extensions:

- Compare and contrast Persia's imperial bureaucracy with that of the government of Athens or China.
- Compare and contrast Persia's Royal Road with the silk roads.
- Compare and contrast Cyrus's Charter of Rights with the US Constitution and Bill of Rights).

## **Assessment**

Students will answer the questions found at the end of The Persian Press. These questions can be done in class or for homework.

### **Teacher answer key for questions (answers may vary)**

1. In 550 BCE, King Cyrus founded the great Persian empire after conquering the Median kingdom and uniting the Medes and the Persians. He went on to defeat and conquer Lydia and Babylon.
2. King Darius introduced coinage, the daric and the shekel, which greatly aided in the administration of the empire. He also made the empire more efficient with the construction of the Royal Road and a canal connecting the Nile with the Red Sea. The Royal Road's paved surface made trade between Susa and Sardis effortless and greatly increased the wealth of Persia. The canal also made trade with Egypt easier.
3. Cyrus was able to control the Persian empire because when he conquered Babylon, the imprisoned Jews welcomed him as a liberator and were allowed to return to their homeland of Jerusalem. He allowed every people he conquered to keep its religious beliefs and cultural traditions. This earned him respect throughout the empire. His wisdom led him to be tolerant of others and, as a result, he developed the first Charter of Human Rights. He also refused to

make anyone a slave or condone terrorism. In his imperial bureaucracy, Darius used satraps, which enabled him to control his empire as well as aid in the administration of so many provinces. He also maintained a full-time professional army, which was not common.

4. He attacked Naxos in 499 BCE because the people rebelled (the Ionian revolt), but after four months the Persians were forced to withdraw. The Ionians became over-confident and revolted against Persia, setting up a new government. The Ionian leader, however, knew Persia was strong and asked Sparta and Athens for help. Sparta declined, but Athens sent twenty ships. The Ionians were able to conquer Sardis but were eventually defeated by the Persians. King Darius showed mercy towards the Ionians and did not punish them; however, the Athenians needed to be taught a lesson not to interfere. King Darius attacked Athens in 490 BCE at the Battle of Marathon.
  
5. Answer for map question: one of the silk roads intersects with the Royal Road at Opis.



**Lesson 1*****Student Handout 1—The Persian Press***

# The Persian Press

1 shekel

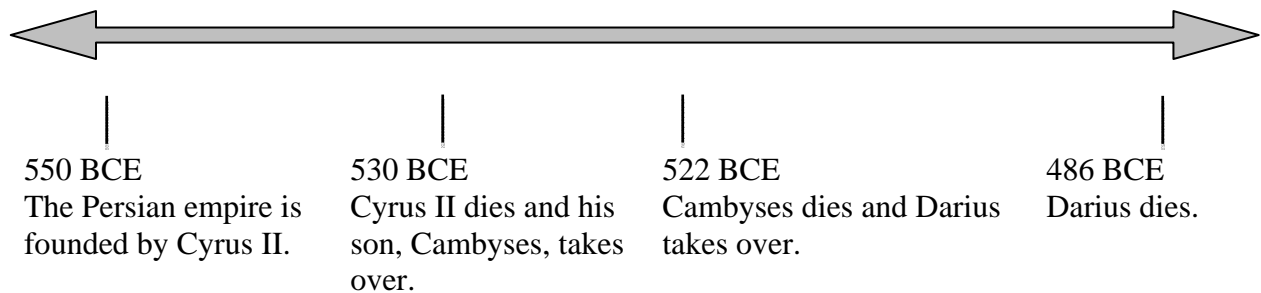
November 486 BCE

## King Darius Dies

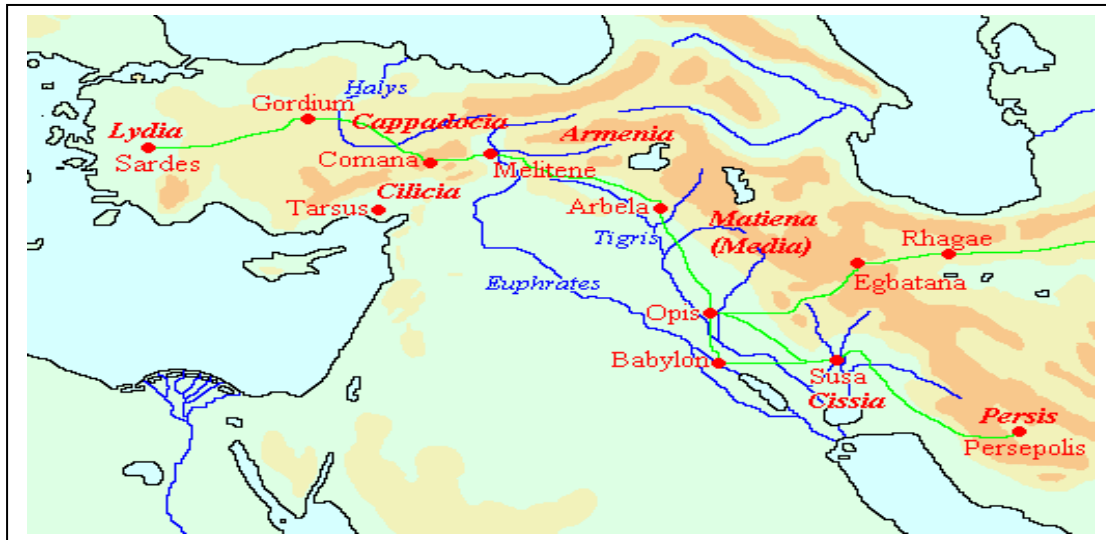
King Darius died last night at his palace in Susa, the capital. He will be remembered as a man who brought wealth to the empire through his reforms and his influence on trade. King Darius introduced coinage, the daric and the shekel, which has greatly aided in the administration of the empire. He also made the empire more efficient with the construction of the Royal Road and the canal between the Nile and the Red Sea. The Royal Road's paved surface has made trade between Susa and Sardis effortless and has greatly increased the wealth of those here in Persia. The canal had also made trade with Africa much simpler. Due to these feats of engineering, the empire has expanded to the largest it has ever been. The Persian empire now stretches from North Africa to India in the east and the Aral Sea in the north to the Persian Gulf. People from our diverse empire (made up of Medes, Egyptians, Greeks, Babylonians, Bactrians, as well as Persians) have come to pay their respects to Darius. In his imperial bureaucracy, satraps enabled him to control his empire as well as aid in the administration of so many provinces. "We are devastated to learn that King Darius is dead. However, we will continue to do our duty for Persia and collect tribute for the next king," stated one satrap. Who will the next king be? King Darius' son Xerxes is likely to claim the throne, yet his brother may be willing to fight him for it.



Add any important dates as you read The Persian Press.



King Darius' Royal Road begins in Susa and ends in Sardis. If King Xerxes remains in power, he will lengthen the road to Persepolis. Trace the road as it travels through eight cities and add other cities along the route. Mark where the silk road intersects the Royal Road.



## Persia's Past Remembered

In 550 BCE, King Cyrus founded the great Persian empire after conquering the Median kingdom and uniting the Medes and the Persians. Founding the Achaemenid dynasty, he went on to defeat

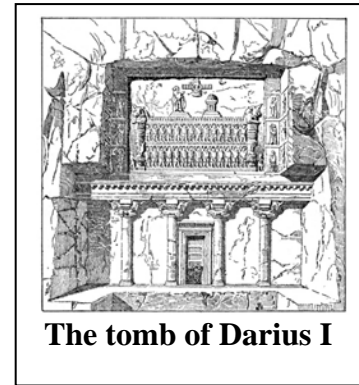


and conquer Lydia and Babylon. King Cyrus was able to manage his empire through a policy of tolerance. When he conquered the Medes, he allowed them to serve in the government. When he conquered Babylon, the imprisoned Hebrews welcomed him as a liberator and were allowed to return to their homeland of Jerusalem. He allowed every people he conquered to keep its religious beliefs and cultural traditions. This earned him respect throughout the empire. His wisdom led him to be tolerant of others and, as a result, he developed the first Charter of Human Rights. This charter outlined the rights all humans had within his empire. He refused to make anyone a slave.

He also condemned terrorism and aided those he conquered in restoring their cities. Once he had captured an empire, few rebelled. They admired Cyrus for his benevolence and did not wish to cause problems. However, Cyrus did face problems when warlike tribes attacked the eastern part of the empire. The Persian emperor, Cyrus the Great, lost his life in the east in 530 BCE fighting the tribes near the Oxus and Jaxartes rivers.

## Persia Mourns the Loss of a Great Leader

King Darius will always be remembered as one of the most persistent leaders of the Persian empire. Throughout his reign, he continuously tried to expand the empire for the glory of Persia. He attacked Naxos in 499 BCE because the inhabitants rebelled (the Ionian revolt), but after four months the Persians were forced to withdraw. The Ionians became over-confident and revolted against Persia, setting up a new government. The Ionian leader, however, knew Persia was strong and asked Sparta and Athens for help. Sparta declined but Athens sent 20 ships. The Ionians were able to conquer Sardis but were eventually defeated by the Persians. King Darius showed mercy towards the Ionians and did not punish them; however, the Athenians needed to be taught a lesson not to interfere. King Darius attacked Athens in 490 BCE at the Battle of Marathon. Persia was beaten and King Darius died before he could enact his revenge. In spite of this, plans are being made even now to attack Greece once more and finally show Athens which is the more powerful civilization. Will there be another Persian War?



**The tomb of Darius I**

### Wanted: Soldiers

Soldiers are needed for the new king's bodyguards (the Immortals). Soldiers will use a new training system implemented by King Darius. Unlike in Cyrus' time, soldier positions are paid and full-time. Inquire at the citadel.

### Questions for Review

1. How was the Persian empire founded?
2. How did Darius' accomplishments as king help Persia unite and expand?
3. What political policies helped Cyrus and Darius control the Persian empire?
4. What events led to the first Persian War and how did it end?

### Picture sources:

Darius: Rock relief, Behistun, Iran, Wikimedia Commons, [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Darius\\_I\\_of\\_Persia](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Darius_I_of_Persia)

Royal Road map: Livius: Articles on Ancient History, [http://www.livius.org/ro-rz/royal\\_road/royal\\_road.htm](http://www.livius.org/ro-rz/royal_road/royal_road.htm)

Darius's tomb near Persepolis: Karen Whimsy, <http://karenswhimsy.com/ancient-persia.shtml>

Cyrus The Great: Karen Whimsy, <http://karenswhimsy.com/cyrus-the-great.shtml>

## *Lesson 2*

### *The Second Persian War: A Series of Plays*

#### **Preparation**

Before beginning the lesson, review the reigns of Cyrus and Darius, the two Persian kings who preceded Xerxes. This can be done using Student Handout 1, The Persian Press. Teachers should introduce these two kings prior to this unit, and the contributions and major events of their reign should be highlighted, particularly the revolt of the Greeks in Asia Minor, which led to the First Persian War. Students should be aware that the defeat at Marathon set the stage for Xerxes to follow in his father's footsteps and also attack the Greeks.

This lesson will help students understand, through preparation of class dramas, historical events at important geographical locations (the Hellespont, Thermopylae, Athens, and Salamis) and their importance during the Second Persian War. Copy the geographic information relevant to Student Handouts 2.2-2.5 (Crossing the Hellespont, The Battle of Thermopylae, The Burning of Athens, and The Battle at Salamis). Make copies of each of the four handouts, one set for each of four student groups of about nine, depending on the size of the class.

Student Handout 2.1 (Flow Chart) may be used for all of the plays to help students organize their thoughts. Teachers should copy the Flow Chart onto the backs of Student Handouts 2.2-2.5. For example, Student Handout 2.2 (Crossing the Hellespont) should be copied with the flow chart on the back. Students may also copy the flow chart themselves.

Next, make copies of Student Handouts 2.6-2.9 (Play Templates), one set for each of the four student groups. Have students staple each Play Template to the corresponding topic in Student Handouts 2.2-2.5.

Students will prepare plays in this lesson but perform them in connection with Lesson 3.

#### **Introduction**

This lesson will underscore the events that occurred at important geographical sites (the Hellespont, Thermopylae, Athens, and Salamis) and how the geography of these locales was significant to the Second Persian War. Students will also discover the political and military organization of the Persian empire and Persian methods for expanding the empire. Students will also examine the Athenian and Spartan perspectives during the Second Persian War.

#### **Activities**

Students will construct a play based on the Persian Wars. In high school or advanced classes students may develop their own plays with the named characters rather than using the Play Templates. Students must include the boldfaced words in their plays to facilitate the audience's understanding of historical events.

## Vocabulary

The following vocabulary will also aid with reading comprehension and should be reviewed either individually or in student groups.

<b>Crossing the Hellespont</b>	<b>The Battle at Thermopylae</b>	<b>The Burning of Athens</b>	<b>The Battle at Salamis</b>
Strait	Reinforcements	Plundered	Anxious
Engineers	Corps	Deity	Ally
Reprimanded	Beautifying	Oracle	Admirals
Cordage	Resistance	Renowned	Avenge
Eclipse	Decapitated	Citadel	
Omen		Pitch	
Magi		Exuberant	

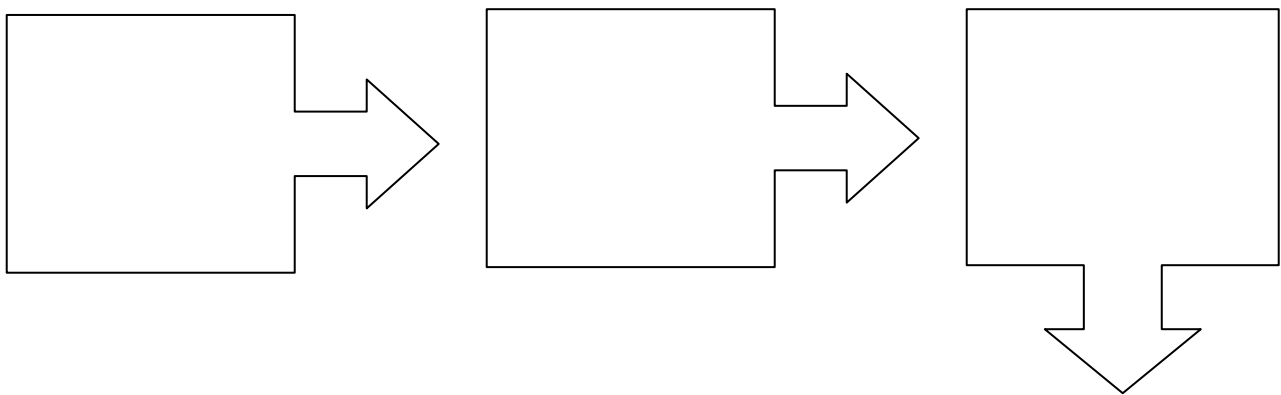
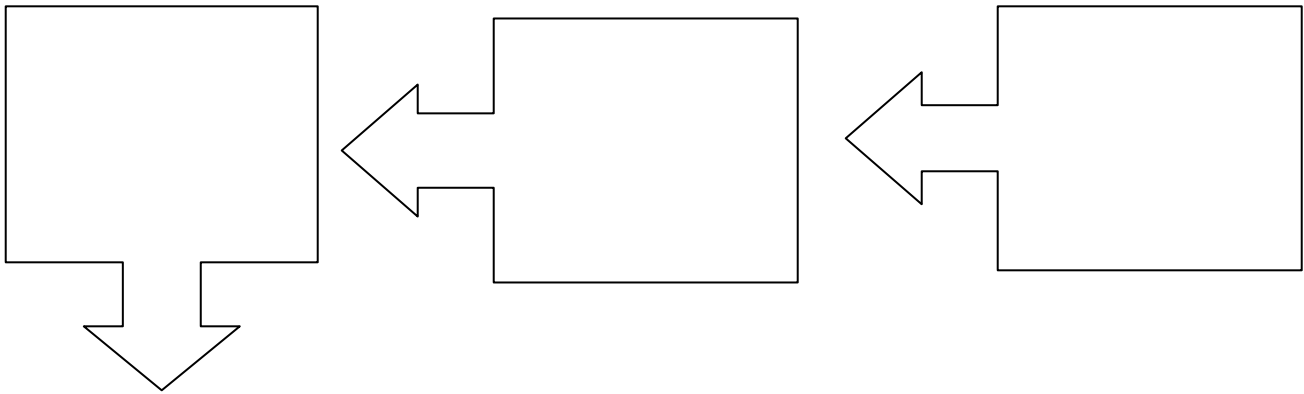
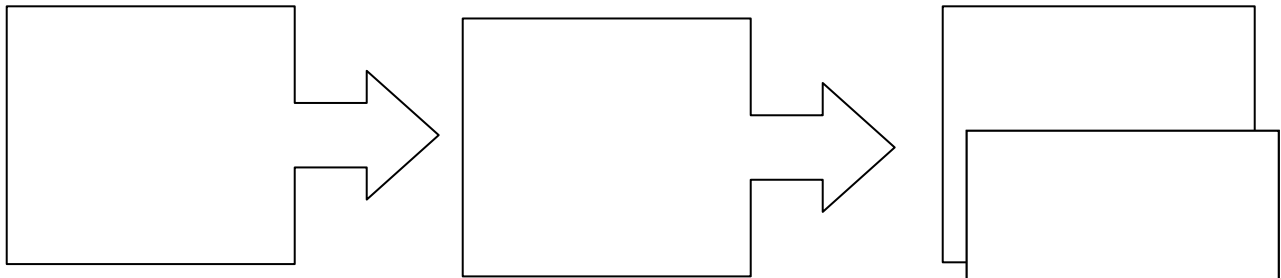
## Assessment

Teachers will use the following rubric to grade the students on their performance. Special attention should be given to historical accuracy. The rubric below may also be given to the students ahead of time so that they are aware of the requirements. The rubric uses a 1-3 scale, with 3 being the highest score. Because there is no 0 point value, each student will be able to accumulate points for doing some work.



**Lesson 2**

*Student Handout 2.1—Flow Chart (sequence of historical events)*



## Lesson 2

### *Student Handout 2.2—Crossing the Hellespont*

In 481 BCE, Xerxes called for soldiers from Bactria, a region at the northeastern edge of the Persian empire. The Bactrian soldiers used the silk road to march to Susa, where Xerxes, who had come from his palace in Persepolis, met them. Then, they all marched for three months along the Royal Road to Sardis. During the winter of 482 BCE, Xerxes and the Persian army reached the Hellespont on the way to Greece. The Hellespont is a narrow **strait**, called in modern times the Dardanelles, that extends from southwest to northeast and connects the Aegean Sea with the Sea of Marmara. In the traditional geography of continents, the Hellespont is part of the dividing line between Europe and Asia. Today, the strait lies within the Republic of Turkey.

To reach Greece, Xerxes had a choice either to march his troops all the way around the Black Sea, a journey that could take months, or use ships to cross the Hellespont from Anatolia (the Asian side of modern Turkey) into Greece, which would take only days. He ordered men to build a bridge across the strait, but a winter storm destroyed it. When the news of its destruction reached Xerxes, he became furious. He ordered the construction **engineers** to be beheaded, and then he ordered the sea to be whipped! While the sea was being **reprimanded**, the punisher reportedly had to yell, “Bitter water! This is your punishment for wronging your master when he did no wrong to you!” Once the punishments had been administered, Xerxes hired new engineers to build two stronger bridges. These builders procured the strongest ships and anchored them down in a row from one shore to the other. Then, they made cables to stretch across the tops of the ships. The end of each cable was fastened to a spike on either shore. Once the cables were in place, they needed to be secured. Workmen tied **cordage** around the cables and attached them to the deck of the ships. Then, across the cables, they placed tree trunks to make a flat surface. The cracks were filled with dirt to make the bridges more level, like a road. A fence was also built on either side of the bridges so that the water below would not frighten the horses as they carried the soldiers and supplies across the strait.

When the bridges were complete, Xerxes readied himself to march into Greece. As the army was moving to the bridges, however, an **eclipse** of the sun occurred. Xerxes became worried that this might be a bad **omen**. He consulted with his **magi**, who told him that the eclipse was a bad sign for the Greeks, not the Persians, since one of their main gods was the sun god Apollo. With his mind at ease, Xerxes went with his army to the plains of Troy in western Anatolia. It was traditional that soldiers stop and pay homage at Troy in acknowledgment of the great battles fought in the past against Priam, the king of Troy. Xerxes honored this tradition. He and his army camped there for the night, but to his detriment. In those days, the majority of the army was made up of slaves who had little food or clothing and little desire to fight battles that would bring no advantage to them. During the night, a storm ravaged his poorly-equipped slave troops, and there was not enough water on the plains of Troy to water all the horses and other animals. Thousands died that night, the men from exposure and the animals from thirst. The next day, Xerxes poured a wine offering into the sea and began his march across the Hellespont. The whole army crossed on the first day, and Xerxes and his sacred horses and chariots came the second day. For five more days, the procession continued until the whole Persian army had crossed the Hellespont on the bridges, accomplishing a feat that had been thought impossible.

*Source:* Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), *passim*.





## Lesson 2

### *Student Handout 2.3—The Battle of Thermopylae*

The pass at Thermopylae was a narrow passage with steep mountains on one side and a cliff on the other. Some three to four thousand Greeks put aside their differences and stationed themselves at Thermopylae, where they chose Leonidas from the city-state of Sparta as their leader. With him were 300 Spartan soldiers, whom he had personally selected. The Greeks waited at Thermopylae for **reinforcements** from the Peloponnesus. While they waited, news reached Leonidas that one million Persians were quickly moving towards Thermopylae. Many of the Greeks favored retreating; others, however, feared that their cities would be at the mercy of the enemy. After some debate, the Greeks decided to stay, and Leonidas and his 300 stood at the front. The rest of the Greeks were stationed behind Leonidas along the path, except one **corps**, the soldiers from Phocis. Phocis was the city closest to Thermopylae, and its soldiers were stationed on a mountain pass above the 300.

As the Persian king, Xerxes, approached Thermopylae, he sent a horseman ahead to survey the area. The horseman came to the section of the pass where the Spartans were preparing for battle. He could only see the 300 because the other Greeks were around a bend. The 300 appeared to be preparing for battle by practicing gymnastics and **beautifying** themselves. The horseman rode back to Xerxes and reported his findings. The emperor was delighted because he felt that these Greeks, who seemed more interested in looking handsome than in fighting, would not put up **resistance**. Xerxes marched his army to the entrance of the pass and waited for the 300 to retreat. After five days, however, Xerxes saw that the Spartans would not move and so decided to act. He sent some troops to fight the Spartans. A few hours afterwards, a messenger came back to ask for reinforcements. Xerxes sent more men, only to have many killed and others return wounded. He then ordered his Immortals, or expert soldiers, to attack. The Spartans lined up side by side in a row, their shields covering them from knees to chin. Because the Thermopylae pass was narrow, the Persians could not attack from either left or right. Some time later, the Immortals returned to Xerxes, defeated.

This fighting lasted one or two days until a Greek spy approached Xerxes. The spy told the emperor about a secret pass that would lead the Persian troops behind the Spartans. Xerxes was delighted with the news, and that night the Persian army set out. The soldiers advanced along the pass and then waited for Xerxes' orders. Meanwhile, Leonidas, having found out that the Persians had the advantage, ordered the rest of the Greeks to retreat, leaving him with his 300. When morning dawned, Leonidas moved along the pass to wait for the Persian army. Finally, the two groups met in a battle that left Leonidas and all 300 Spartans dead. When Xerxes identified Leonidas' body, he **decapitated** it and nailed the torso to a cross. Leonidas and his 300, however, gave Athens time to prepare. Due to their bravery, the Athenians were able to evacuate Athens. This city-state therefore kept its independence.

Source: Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), *passim*.





## Lesson 2

### *Student Handout 2.4—The Burning of Athens*

Once the Persians had defeated the Greeks at Thermopylae, they marched north towards Athens. They attacked every city they encountered. They **plundered** the towns, and took everything they could from the inhabitants. Whatever they could not take, they destroyed. Not only were objects of value taken by the Persians, they also sought revenge by taking prisoners, enslaving them, and making them follow behind the army. After destroying several cities, the army split up, some soldiers continuing to Athens, the rest advancing on Delphi, a sacred town where the famous shrine with the **oracle** was located.

The Greeks believed that the **deity** Apollo often came to this mountain town and that it was under his special protection. Delphi was **renowned** throughout the ancient world for its beautiful architecture. It was especially famous because of the oracle, which could be consulted to learn about the future. It was believed that Apollo gave his prophecy, or oracle, speaking through the Pythia, a priestess. Ancient sources tell us that the Persians entered this marvelous city, but historians believe that much of the following account is legend. When the Persians neared the town, they thought to take its gold and silver and give the treasures to their king. Upon hearing that the Persians were near, the Delphians went to the temple and asked the deity through the Pythia if they should remove and hide the shrine's treasures. The oracle told them not to take the treasures and to protect themselves and their families. Consequently, the Delphians moved their families south and left only a military force to protect the city. When the Persians approached Delphi, a lightning bolt flashed from the sky, knocking boulders loose. The boulders rolled down the mountain, causing great confusion in the Persian ranks. The Delphian army was able to take advantage of the situation and, along with the ghosts of two Greek heroes, defeat the Persians. The Persians, in turn, retreated to rejoin Xerxes.

While his army fought at Delphi, Xerxes approached Athens. Meanwhile, the Athenians had also asked Apollo what to do about the Persians, and the oracle was, "While all else that lies within the borders of [Greece] is falling to the enemy, far-seeing Zeus gives you ... a wall of wood. Only this will stand intact and help you and your children." The Athenians returned to Athens to decode the meaning of the oracle. Themistocles, one of their generals, told the people to make their way to the sea coast, where they boarded ships. He was convinced that the oracle meant the wooden walls of a ship would protect them, while others believed the walls of the **citadel** would. As a result, some people stayed within the wooden walls of the citadel in the Acropolis (the high fortress on a hill) in Athens. When Xerxes arrived, he had no trouble taking over the city, which was deserted, except for the people who had locked themselves in the citadel. Xerxes and his army burned the city and then positioned themselves on a hill across from the citadel. They dipped the points of their arrows in **pitch** and set them on fire. The arrows flew towards the wooden walls, which were soon consumed by flames. Xerxes and his army waited until the walls turned to ash and then entered the citadel. They killed the Athenians within, took the treasures, and burned the rest of the fortress. Xerxes was **exuberant** and immediately sent messengers to Susa to tell the good news. He had finally taken revenge on the Athenians for rebelling against Darius, his father.

*Source:* Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), *passim*.





## Lesson 2

### *Student Handout 2.5—The Battle at Salamis*

The Greek navy had been pushed back to the island of Salamis to get supplies. Xerxes, king of Persia, was **anxious** to defeat the Athenian fleet, and he felt he had them trapped. He called a meeting of his officers to receive advice. All of Xerxes' commanders agreed with their leader and told him that the Persian navy should attack the Greeks and destroy them. However, Artemisia, one of his commanders and a woman, advised him against this action. She felt that the Greek ships were superior to the Persian navy and that the Persians should wait until land reinforcements could come. King Xerxes did not listen to Artemisia. Instead, he decided to follow the advice of his other commanders.

Meanwhile, the Greek navy under the command of Themistocles stayed in a small, enclosed harbor. One day in September 480 BCE, Themistocles decided to send a messenger to Xerxes. The messenger told Xerxes that Themistocles wished to switch sides and give control of his navy to Persia. Xerxes had used Greek spies before and thought this might prove to be a great offer. He felt that with the Athenians on his side, he would be able to defeat the rest of the Greek navy. He sent his navy back to the Bay at Salamis to meet with the Athenians. He set his throne on a cliff overlooking the Bay of Salamis to watch as his navy encountered the Athenians. When the Persian ships sailed into the bay to meet the Athenians, however, the Greeks attacked them. The Greek warships, called triremes, were larger than the Persian vessels. The Persians were unable to get around the Greek navy and became trapped. They were rammed by the triremes, and their smaller ships were tossed about by a strong wind that swept across the bay. The Greek warships also trapped Artemisia's ship. Quickly, she developed a battle plan. She knew the only way she could escape with her crew would be to pretend she had switched sides. She ordered her ship to ram a fellow Persian ship in an attempt to flee the bay. Thinking she was an **ally**, the Greeks did not chase her. She was able to escape and save the lives of her crew. The rest of the Persian **admirals** fled the bay but were pursued by the Greeks who, in the end, destroyed half the Persian fleet.

After this battle, Xerxes realized that the Greeks were going to be a difficult people to defeat. He called another meeting of his commanders to ask for advice. Mardonius, one of his most powerful commanders, urged Xerxes to continue fighting the Greeks or be judged a coward. After listening to all his male commanders, he specifically asked Artemisia for suggestions. She advised Xerxes to leave Greece. He had come to Greece, she argued, to **avenge** the defeat of his father, king Darius, at Marathon. Xerxes got his revenge by burning Athens and, she continued, he could now leave with justice done. If he feared being called a coward, he could leave Mardonius in Greece to continue fighting. If Mardonius lost, it would not matter because Xerxes had already avenged Darius. If Mardonius won, his victory would be credited to Xerxes, and Persia would gain control of Greece. Xerxes thought Artemisia's advice was brilliant and decided to leave the Persian forces under Mardonius and return to Persepolis. Mardonius was eventually defeated at Plataea. Although the Athenians had united with the Spartans during the Persian Wars, they went back to their old rivalries afterward. Eventually, they fought each other in the Peloponnesian War.

Source: Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), *passim*.





**Lesson 2*****Student Handout 2.6—Play Template: Crossing the Hellespont*****(A play in groups of 9)**

On this Student Handout, create a short skit. Students will perform it in front of the class in connection with Lesson 3. The play is about the crossing of the Hellespont, and it would be useful to first write down the sequence of events before beginning to write the play. Begin when the messenger comes to tell Xerxes that the first bridge has been destroyed. You may also add extra speaking parts. Your dramatic presentation must include the following characters and props.

**Cast of Characters****Props**

1 messenger

A maps of the Hellespont

Xerxes

A diagram of the bridge

1 punisher

4 workmen

2 Magi

Messenger:

Xerxes:

Punisher:

(Backstage: 2 workmen are beheaded)

(The workmen begin explaining to the audience how they are building the bridge. They use a map and diagram to show what they are going to achieve.)

Workman #1:

Workman#2:

Workman #3:



Workman #4:

(The workmen tell the messenger the bridge is complete.)

Messenger:

Xerxes:

(An eclipse occurs.)

Xerxes:

Magi:

Xerxes:

(The army marches towards the Hellespont and Xerxes tells the army to camp at Troy.)

Xerxes:

(The men in Xerxes' company sleep and a storm begins. Some die. In the morning, the messenger tells Xerxes about the damage caused by the storm.)

Messenger:

Xerxes:

(The army crosses the Hellespont. The army rejoices.)

**Lesson 2*****Student Handout 2.7—Play Template: The Battle at Thermopylae*****(A Play in groups of 10)**

On this Student Handout, create a short skit. Students will perform it in front of the class in connection with Lesson 3. The play is about the Battle of Thermopylae, and it would be useful to first write down the sequence of events before beginning to write the play. Begin when Leonidas and his 300 have just received news that one million Persians are marching towards them at Thermopylae. Your dramatic presentation must include the following characters and props.

**Cast of Characters****Props**

1 Greek messenger	A map of the pass at Thermopylae
Xerxes	A diagram of the Greek battle strategy
Leonidas	Fake shields and spears
2 Spartan soldiers	
1 Greek spy	
1 Persian horseman	
1 Persian messenger	
2 Persian soldiers	

(Leonidas and his 300 are at the Pass at Thermopylae.)

Greek Messenger:

Leonidas:

(The Spartans beautify themselves and train for battle. They do not see a horseman watching them. After some time, they all exit the stage and Xerxes enters followed by the horseman.)

Horseman:

Xerxes:

(Xerxes exits and Persian soldiers enter, attacking the Spartans. Fighting continues as they go off stage. Xerxes enters and waits until a Persian messenger comes crawling in, asking for reinforcements.)

Persian Messenger:

Xerxes:

(Xerxes exits and Spartans enter holding off an attack from the Immortals. They are all killed and the Spartans exit rejoicing.)

(The stage is empty and Xerxes enters followed by the Greek spy.)

Xerxes:

Greek Spy:

Xerxes:

(The Persian army follows the secret path.)

Leonidas:

(The Spartans stay with Leonidas and they wait for the Persian army.)

(A battle occurs and all the Spartans are killed.)

(Xerxes enters with his Persians.)

Xerxes:

Persian:

Xerxes:

**Lesson 2*****Student Handout 2.8—Play Template: The Burning of Athens*****(A Play in groups of 9)**

On this Student Handout, create a short skit. Students will perform it in front of the class in connection with Lesson 3. The play is about the burning of Athens, and it would be useful to first write down the sequence of events before beginning to write the play. Begin when Xerxes is instructing his army to march north to Athens and to burn all the cities along the way. Your dramatic presentation must include the following characters and props.

**Cast of Characters****Props**

2 Athenians

A map of area between Thermopylae and Athens

Xerxes

A diagram of Athens

2 Persian soldiers

Fake shields and spears

2 Delphians

1 Pythia

Themistocles

Xerxes:

(The Persian soldiers cheer and all of them move off stage. Enter the Delphians, who are worried because they have just received the message that Xerxes is coming.)

Delphian #1:

Delphian #2:

Delphian #1:

(They decide to consult the oracle. They exit, and the Pythia enters. The Delphians return with the Athenians.)

Delphian #2:

Pythia:

Delphian #1:

Athenian #1:

Pythia:

(They all exit after each one was told by the oracle, through the Pythia, what to do. Persian soldiers enter and get ready to attack. There is a bolt of lightning.)

Persian Soldier #1:

(A panic begins, and the Delphians attack, driving the Persians off stage. Enter the Athenians, arguing about what they should do.)

Athenian #1:

Themistocles:

Athenian #2:

Themistocles:

(Themistocles and Athenian #1 leave for the ship, while Athenian #2 goes to the citadel. The Persians arrive.)

Xerxes:

Persian soldier #2:

(The Persians continue to shoot arrows and then attack the citadel. They run Athenian #2 off stage, and the audience hears deadly sounds.)

Xerxes:

**Lesson 2*****Student Handout 2.9—Play Template: The Battle of Salamis*****(A Play in groups of 8)**

On this Student Handout, create a short skit. Students will perform it in front of the class in connection with Lesson 3. The play is about the Battle of Salamis, and it would be useful to first write down the sequence of events before beginning to write the play. Begin when Xerxes asks his commanders for advice about fighting the Greeks. Your dramatic presentation must include the following characters and props. You may also add extra speaking parts.

**Cast of Characters****Props**

1 Messenger

A map of the Bay of Salamis

Xerxes

A diagram of the Greek battle strategy

Artemisia

6 ships and a chair (throne)

3 Greek commanders

Mardonius

1 Persian commander

Xerxes:

Commanders: We all agree (All the commanders say this except Artemisia.)

Artemisia:

Xerxes:

(A messenger runs in, after all the commanders exit).

Messenger:

Xerxes:

(The messenger exits, and Xerxes sits on his throne at the edge of the stage. Six ships enter: three are Greek and three are under Persian commanders. A battle begins, and the Persians become trapped. Commanders call out orders to their crews.)

Artemisia:

(Artemisia rams a Persian ship, not the one commanded by Mardonius, and flees while it sinks.)

Greek commander #1:

(The rest of the Greek ships chase the other Persian vessels but not Artemisia's. All the ships exit and the commanders reunite with Xerxes.)

Xerxes:

Mardonius:

Xerxes:

Artemisia:

Xerxes:

## *Lesson 3*

### *Geography of the Persian Wars*

#### **Preparation**

Before doing this lesson, students should have experience creating maps. Teachers should provide students with two 8 ½ x 11-inch sheets of paper, scissors, color pencils, a pencil, stapler, glue, and a map of the Aegean Sea region that includes both Greece and the western part of Turkey. Make sure the map includes ancient Lydia, which is in modern Turkey. The map can be any size because students should be able to enlarge or reduce it as needed. One version of a map is provided in Student Handout 3.1 (Map of the Aegean Region).

Along with the map, teachers should provide students with the following place name list:

Aegean Sea	Lydia	Sardis
Athens	Mediterranean Sea	Sparta
Greece	Royal Road	Thermopylae
Hellespont	Salamis	

It would also be beneficial to expand the map to include Persepolis, Susa, Babylon, and the connection from the Royal to the silk road system. If this is not possible, students may be asked to refer to Student Handout 1, The Persian Press, to see where Greece and Persia were geographically located in relation to one another.

#### **Introduction**

Using the silk roads, Xerxes was able to obtain soldiers from Bactria (north of Persia) to help him fight against the Greeks. He left his palace at Persepolis and met these troops at Susa. Xerxes then traveled for three months with his army along the Royal Road until he reached Sardis. The Royal Road had been constructed by Xerxes' father, Darius the Great, but was thought to have existed prior to Darius' reign. The road was not a direct route from Persepolis to Sardis, and because it was not the quickest route, perhaps it was built earlier by Assyrian kings and improved and lengthened by Darius. It was used for general travel and trade but was especially known for relaying information from one horse rider to another, as a kind of "pony express." Today, the US Postal Service gets its inspiration for its unofficial motto from the Persians. Herodotus stated that Persian riders were so efficient because "Whatever the conditions—it may be snowing, raining, blazing hot, or dark—they never fail to complete their assigned journey in the fastest possible time."

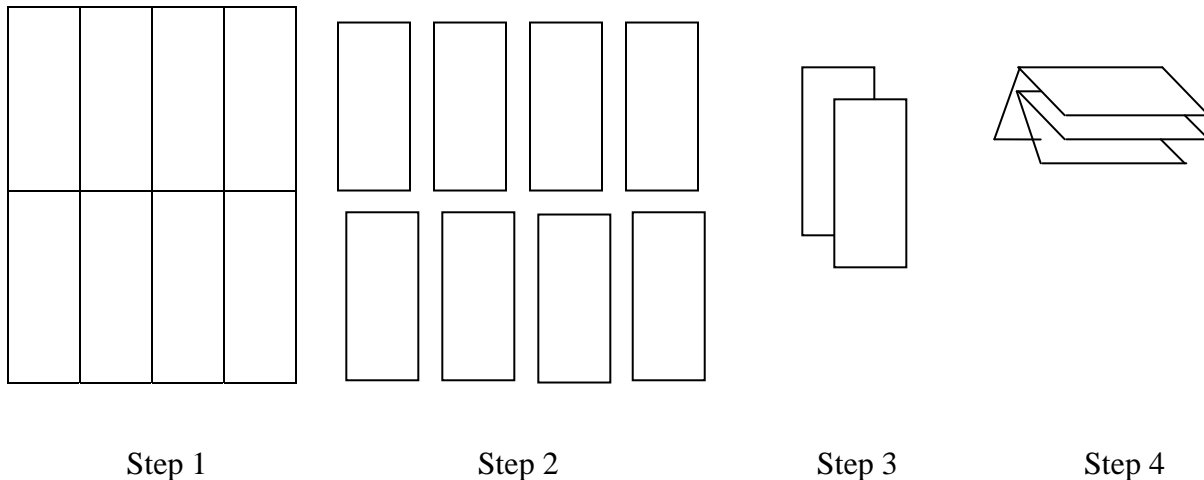
Source: Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), *passim*.



## Activities

Give students one 8 ½ x 11-inch sheet of paper and have them draw *in pencil* a map of the Aegean Sea region that includes both Greece and Lydia. This map may be found in a history textbook, in an atlas, or on the Internet. Once students have drawn the map on the paper, have them pinpoint the given locations. Do not color the map yet.

Next, give the students the second 8 ½ x 11-inch sheet of paper and have them fold it into eight equal squares. Have the students cut along all the folds so that they are left with eight rectangles. Have them pick up two of the rectangles and put them together. They should then fold these in half to make a small book with four pages.



The booklet should be turned horizontally and then stapled together. Altogether, students should create four small booklets of four pages each. Once this task is completed, have the students choose one booklet. The cover should be left blank. On the back of the cover page, students should write the title “Location Diagram.” On the back of the next page, they should write the title “Individuals.” The back of the following page should be titled “Strategies” and the back of the next page should be titled “Outcomes.” Then, have the students do the same with the other booklets.

As part of this lesson, students will act out their plays from Lesson 2. While they are doing this, the teacher will have the rest of the class fill in the information in Student Handout 3.2 (Location and History). Since there may be two groups for a given location, the teacher should allow both groups to perform before using questions to prompt discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of the location, individuals involved, strategies used at each location, and the outcomes of applying those strategies. Student Handout 3.1 may be used to organize information before placing it in the booklets or, if the teacher prefers, the students may directly place the information into the booklets. Student Handout 3.2, however, requires students to analyze more information and to understand the Persian, Spartan, or Athenian perspective. Some classes may like to just draw and label the map and fill out the Student Handout. This will save time and may be useful for more mature groups.

**Assessment**

Students will complete the map with the booklets attached. The booklets will contain insightful, neatly written information.

### Lesson 3

#### *Student Handout 3.1—Map of the Aegean Sea Region*



**Lesson 3*****Student Handout 3.2—Location and History***

Location	Location diagram	Advantages for Persia	Disadvantages for Persia	Individuals involved	Strategies	Outcomes
Hellespont						
Thermopylae						
Athens						
Salamis						

## *Lesson 4*

### *Women of the Persian Empire*

#### **Preparation**

The teacher should provide students with a sheet of paper at least 11 x 17 inches, scissors, glue, and a pencil. Students will also need a copy of Student Handout 4.1, or the teacher may choose to have students copy the same information onto lined paper folded into fourths. Also, arrange students into table groups. Later in the lesson, the teacher will place copies of Student Handouts 4.2-4.5 on the tables. Each table group will have one set of handouts, and students will be able to walk from one table group to another to acquire the knowledge.

#### **Introduction**

Women in the ancient world were traditionally thought to be inferior to men. Persia, however, was an exception in some respects. Xerxes, for example, was greatly influenced by the women in his life. This lesson will give a perspective on women during the Persian Wars, but it will also offer insight into social aspects of ancient Persia.

#### **Activities**

Students will create a foldable of women in the Persian empire. Give students the 11 x 17-inch sheet of paper and have them fold it into thirds by folding both ends until they touch in the middle. (The paper should resemble a science display board. The two end panels will be 4 ¼ inches wide.)

Next, have the students cut the left and right panels of the paper in half horizontally. Make sure they do not cut the middle panel. Have students fold the right and left panels into the middle so that they see a paper divided into four flaps. On the front of each panel write the names of the four women the students will be investigating.

Once this is completed, have students open the flaps and then pass out Student Handout 4.1. Students should cut out the boxes on this handout and paste them behind the corresponding woman. In the center panel, students should paste their map from Lesson 3. In doing this, they will stay organized, and all the information for the unit will be located in one place. Student Handout 4.1 can also be pasted onto the back panel.

After the foldable is done, students will begin to analyze the information on each woman. Have the students read the Student Handouts and answer the questions on the flaps of the foldable. Give the students five to ten minutes, depending on their academic level. Then have them switch table groups.

The foldable will look something like this:

Profile of a traditional Persian woman c. 450 BCE	Atossa
Esther	Artemisia I

Flaps Closed

Role within the Persian empire. Significance to the empire. What does this tell about the role of women?		Role within the Persian empire. Significance to the empire. What does this tell about the role of women?
Role within the Persian empire. Significance to the empire. What does this tell about the role of women?		Role within the Persian empire. Significance to the empire. What does this tell about the role of women?

Flaps Open

**Assessment**

Students will complete a foldable that shows an understanding woman of Persian society. Once they have finished, they will fill in the social pyramid in Student Handout 4.6 and answer the questions. This Student Handout can then be pasted into the inside flap of the foldable.

**Lesson 4**

***Student Handout 4.1—Women of the Persian Empire***

<b>Profile of a Traditional Persian Woman c. 450 BCE</b>	<b>Atossa</b>
Role(s) within the Persian empire. _____ _____ _____	Role(s) within the Persian empire. _____ _____ _____
Significance to the empire. _____ _____ _____	Significance to the empire. _____ _____ _____
What does this tell about the role of women in Persia? _____ _____ _____ _____	What does this tell about the role of women in Persia? _____ _____ _____ _____

<b>Esther</b>	<b>Artemisia I</b>
Role(s) within the Persian empire. _____ _____ _____	Role(s) within the Persian empire. _____ _____ _____
Significance to the empire. _____ _____ _____	Significance to the empire. _____ _____ _____
What does this tell about the role of women in Persia? _____ _____ _____	What does this tell about the role of women in Persia? _____ _____ _____



## Lesson 4

### *Student Handout 4.2—Profile of a Traditional Persian Woman in 450 BCE*

While most women of their time had little rights, Persian women enjoyed significant social and legal freedom. Available evidence about women in ancient Persia depends largely on social class. The higher the social status of a woman, the more information there is likely to be found pertaining to her. Royalty or nobility gave women the highest social status, with the top-ranking woman in the Persian empire being the king's mother. Next came the wife and sisters of the king. Working women were part of the middle class. The Greek writer Plutarch states that Persian armies employed women soldiers. Others specialized as artisans. Women, like men, received wages and were praised for their good work. Sometimes men and women had the same specialization and worked together. Conversely, some jobs were done only by one gender. Records show that in ancient Persia gender did not dictate who had more power. For example, women could be managers of a workshop and thereby hold a higher position than a man. No lower class is documented in Persian records, only two divisions of royalty and aristocracy and one division making up the ordinary working class.

Because some women earned their own wages, they enjoyed an economic freedom unknown to many women in the ancient world. Women were able to own land and manage their estates, even if they were far from home. These estates housed people who worked the land and paid a tax to the woman landowner. Because she controlled her own money, she was able to use it as she wished. At times, women would host lavish parties, and they bought their own wine and food for their guests. They could also choose who inherited their money. It did not automatically become the property of their husbands.

Ancient Persia, however, was a patriarchal system, meaning that it gave certain privileges to men. Though women had the power to become rulers if their husbands died or to initiate a divorce, they could not have more than one husband. A husband, however, could have several wives. If the wife committed adultery, the courts would sentence her to death. Women could also not be witnesses to legal contracts. A man had to be present whenever a contract was signed. Men also had substantial control over their children. If the family had debt, the children could be sold.

Though the Persian empire was large, women had more freedom than in other parts of the ancient world. Slight differences in rights occurred throughout the empire, but generally each sex was seen as socially and economically equal.

Principal Source: *Pars Times*, [http://www.parstimes.com/women/women\\_ancient\\_persia.html](http://www.parstimes.com/women/women_ancient_persia.html)

## Lesson 4

### *Student Handout 4.3—Atossa, Mother of Emperor Xerxes*

In ancient Persian tradition, successors inherited not only the throne of the king but also his family. And so it was that when Cyrus died attacking the Scythians, his son Cambyses assumed the throne and responsibility for Cyrus' family. Cambyses fell in love with two of his sisters, one of them named Atossa. He petitioned the courts to marry them and since no Persian law forbade it, he received the right to do so. Cambyses was a wild and wicked ruler, and he ended up killing his own brother to keep him from gaining power. Later, Cambyses committed suicide. Thus, Darius, a Persian official, came to power. In accordance with tradition, he took on Cambyses' family. He married Atossa, who then became the catalyst for his invasion of Greece.

Atossa suffered from an illness and was cured by a prisoner, who was a Greek physician. As payment, he asked to be returned to his native country. Atossa agreed to try to persuade Darius to allow this. She approached the king by stating that an invasion of Greece would extend the glory of the Persian empire. Darius had instead been planning to invade the territory of the Scythians by making a bridge across the Hellespont. He felt this would show his power in succeeding where Cyrus had failed. Atossa, however, impressed upon him that the Greeks were a more sophisticated people than the Scythians and that conquering them would be a greater accomplishment.

A commission was sent to explore Greece and bring back a report. The physician went on the expedition, escaped, and never came back. Meanwhile, the commission brought back a favorable report, and Darius planned to attack Greece. Before the invasion, however, it was necessary to assign a regent. Darius had two sons. Xerxes was the oldest son of Atossa and Darius. But Darius also had an older son, Artobazanes, from the time before he ascended the throne. Atossa argued that Xerxes was the grandson of Cyrus and therefore had a direct bloodline to the throne. Darius could not claim such a bloodline, and this may have hurt his pride. So Xerxes, not Darius' older son and heir, assumed the throne. Atossa's reasoning, however, could not be denied. Darius was also told that because he was king when Xerxes was born, Xerxes was therefore the son of a king, while Artobazanes was only the son of Darius the official. Consequently, Darius' older son was passed over, and Xerxes was made heir to the throne.

Source: Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), *passim*.

## Lesson 4

### *Student Handout 4.4—Esther, Wife of Emperor Xerxes*

King Xerxes held a feast lasting 180 days to display the wealth of Susa, his finest capital. Some scholars believe that this may have also been part of a planning session for a Persian invasion of Greece. Representatives from 127 provinces throughout the Persian empire came to the palace at Susa. During the festivities, Xerxes called for the queen, Vashti, to perform for his guests. However, Vashti refused to join the feast. Angered, Xerxes banished her from the palace, thereby showing that women had to obey their husbands and should be punished for their disobedience. In the years following the feast, Xerxes put down a rebellion in Babylon and led an invasion of Greece. When he returned to Susa in 480 BCE, he began to search for a new wife. He appointed commissioners in every province to bring beautiful young women to the citadel in Susa.

In the city of Susa, there was a group of about 100 Jews. Mordecai, one of them, worked for Xerxes. Mordecai's fourteen-year-old cousin, Hadassah, also known as Esther, was taken to the citadel to become a candidate for queen. Before she left, Mordecai told her to keep her religion a secret, and Esther promised she would tell no one. For twelve months, Esther and the other young women who had been assembled at the citadel were given beauty treatments and special food to prepare them for their meeting with Xerxes. When the time came for the king to choose a new wife and queen, he became attracted to Esther and placed the crown on her head.

Some time later, Xerxes selected the nobleman Haman to be the vizier, or chief minister, of the empire. Everyone at the city gates bowed down to Haman except one man, Mordecai. Being a Jew, Mordecai believed that there was only one God and that only God should be worshipped. This enraged Haman, yet day after day Mordecai continued to disobey the order to bow before Haman. Finally, Haman was told that Mordecai was Jewish, and he began to look for a way to destroy all the Jews. He went to the king and said, "There is a certain people dispersed and scattered among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom whose customs are different from those of all other people and who do not obey the king's laws; it is not in the king's best interest to tolerate them. If it pleases the king, let a decree be issued to destroy them ..." King Xerxes allowed Haman to carry out his plan on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Adar.

Mordecai, however, heard of the plan and asked Esther to go to Xerxes. She replied, "All the king's officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that he be put to death. The only exception to this is for the king to extend the gold scepter to him and spare his life. ..." Esther, however, decided to try to save the Jews. After three days, Esther entered the king's inner court, and when the king saw her, he was pleased with her and extended the golden scepter. Then the king asked, "What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you." Esther very humbly said, "My petition and my request is this: If the king regards me with favor and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, let the king and Haman come tomorrow to the banquet I will prepare for them. Then I will answer the king's question." The king agreed, and for two days Haman and the king attended a banquet with Esther. Finally, on the second day, the Xerxes asked again, "Queen

Esther, what is your petition? It will be given you. ...” Queen Esther replied, “If I have found favor with you, O king, and if it pleases your majesty, grant me my life—this is my petition. And spare my people—this is my request. For I and my people have been sold for destruction and slaughter and annihilation. ...” “Who is he? Where is the man who has dared to do such a thing?” asked Xerxes, and Esther replied, “The adversary and enemy is this vile Haman.”

Haman became terrified before the king and queen. King Xerxes got up in a rage and left the banquet room. Haman rushed to Esther to beg for his life and at that moment the king returned, “Will he even [bother] the queen while she is with me in the house?” Immediately, he ordered that Haman be hanged, and Esther was given all his estates. Mordecai also took Haman’s place as the highest noble in the empire. Haman’s orders to kill the Jews could not be revoked, however, because they had been stamped with the king’s signet ring. Instead, Xerxes allowed Mordecai to issue a new edict where the Jews could legally defend themselves. On the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> day of Adar, the Jews throughout the Persian empire defended themselves and in the process killed 75,000 people. Without Esther’s bravery, Jews throughout the Persian empire would have faced destruction. Today, the Jews celebrate this victory by giving each other gifts and feasting during the holiday of Purim.

Source: Adapted from *Book of Esther*, Holy Bible, New International Version,  
<http://www.biblica.com/bible/verse/?q=Esther%202&niv=yes>

## Lesson 4

### *Student Handout 4.5—Artemisia I, a Naval Commander*

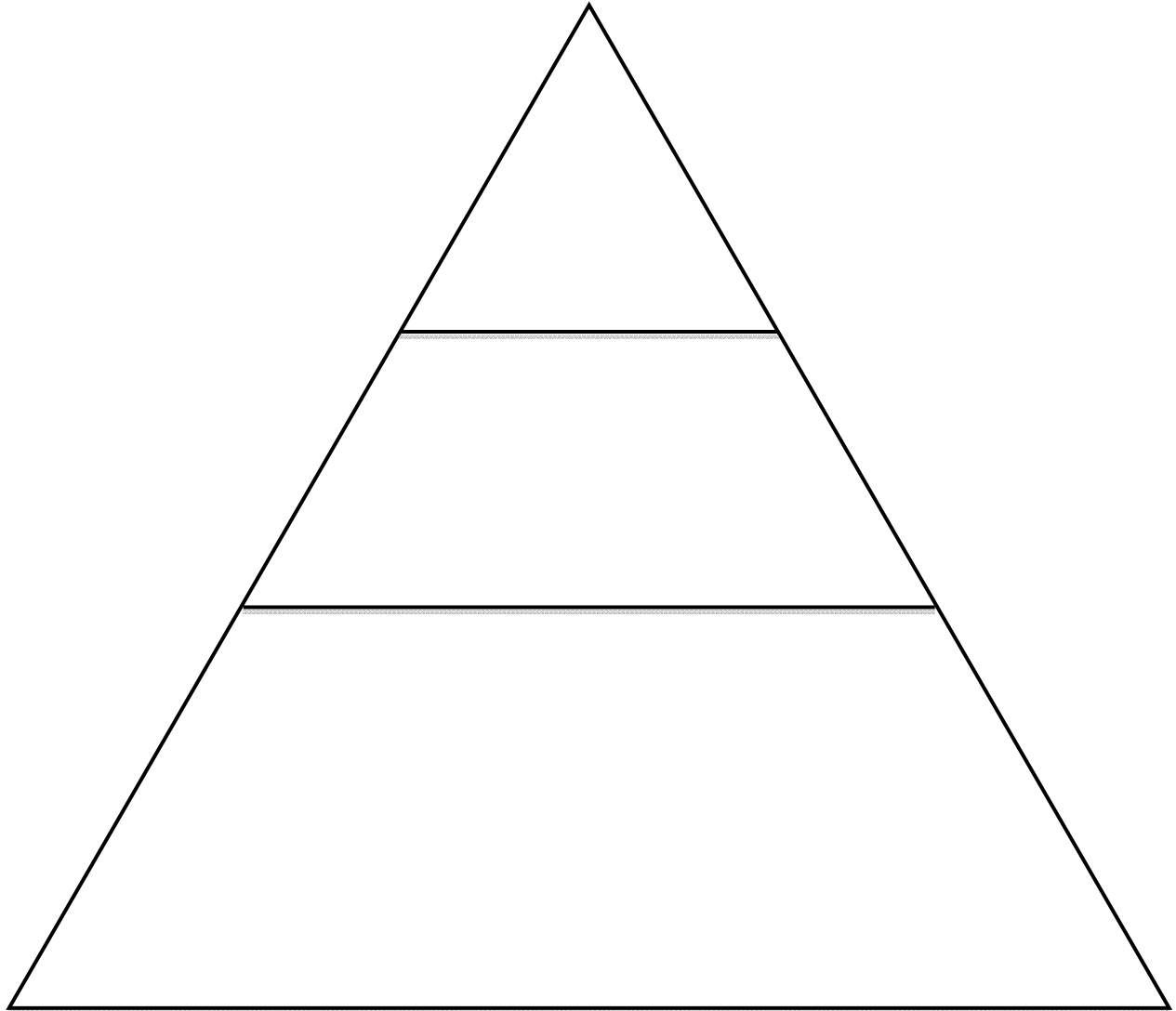
In 499 BCE, Athens supported an uprising of the Ionian Greek city-states in Asia Minor. The Ionian city-states were part of the Persian empire, and Darius the Great put down the revolt. He later attacked Greece for Athens' involvement in the rebellion. Darius was defeated at the Battle of Marathon, and about twenty years later, his son Xerxes, attacked Greece again. This time, according to Herodotus, Artemisia I of the culturally-Greek Halicarnassus in Asia Minor commanded five ships in Xerxes' navy.

Before Xerxes' attack on Greece, he questioned all of his admirals as to whether he should attack Salamis. All of his admirals urged him to attack, except Artemisia. Herodotus recorded in his *Histories* a supposed conversation between Artemisia and Xerxes. In this conversation, Artemisia reminded Xerxes that he had already accomplished what he had come to Greece to do and had burned Athens. That city-state had a superior navy, and Artemisia suggested that Xerxes keep his ships off the coast of Greece. Later, he could take the army onto the peninsula and attack on foot. She had heard that there were no supplies on the Peloponnesus and, if they attacked there, the Greeks would not likely defend Athens. Though this was not a popular idea, Artemisia voiced her opinion. Instead of being upset with her, Xerxes was pleased. He chose, however, to follow the advice of his other admirals. During the Battle of Salamis, Artemisia became surrounded and trapped by ships. She rammed one of the ships in an attempt to save the lives of her crew. Cleverly, she purposely hit a ship of Calyndia, an ally of Persia. The Athenians thought Artemisia's ship must be Athenian since she had destroyed their enemy's ship. So they stopped pursuing her. When the Athenians discovered that they had been outsmarted by a woman, they offered a reward for her capture.

After the Battle of Salamis, Xerxes convened his admirals once more. Mardonius, one of his generals, urged Xerxes to stay and fight. This time, however, Xerxes specifically asked Artemisia for advice. She urged him to depart from Greece and leave Mardonius in charge of some troops. If Mardonius lost the battle, Xerxes would be safe back in Persia, and he still would have had revenge on Athens by burning it to the ground. If Mardonius won, Xerxes would be praised because he appointed Mardonius. This time, Xerxes took Artemisia's advice. Xerxes went back to Persia, and after months of fighting, Mardonius was killed and the last of the Persians were defeated in Greece.

Many stories surround what happened to Artemisia. Some records suggest she became a pirate. Other stories tell of how she fell in love with a younger man, but when he did not love her back, she committed suicide. No one knows for sure what happened to her, but her grandson eventually became ruler of Halicarnassus.

Source: Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), *passim*.

***Student Handout 4.6—Assessment***

1. Label the pyramid with the following words according to who was the highest or lowest in Persian society: working class, royal family, aristocracy.
2. Would the social pyramid change if it applied only to Persian men? Why or why not?
3. To which social classes would Atossa, Esther, and Artemisia have belonged?

## Assessment




Below each series of words, write in one or two sentences how the three terms are related:

Terms	How are the terms related?
1. Tolerance, Cyrus, Hebrews	
2. Darius, Marathon, Athens	
3. Royal Road, silk road, trade	
4. Hellespont, bridge, storm	
5. Thermopylae, Leonidas, Greek spy	
6. Athens, oracle, wooden walls	
7. Salamis, Artemisia, advice	
8. Esther, monotheism, Purim	
9. Persia, social class, women	



## This unit and the Three Essential Questions

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	<p>In the context of Afroeurasia as a whole, why do you think Persia's geographic location was favorable for long-distance trade?</p>
	<p>Construct a chart describing fundamental differences between Athens and the Persian empire as forms of political organization.</p>
	<p>Research the basic beliefs and practices of Zoroastrianism and describe the role that scholars believe it played in the Persian empire of the Achaemenid dynasty. Was Zoroastrianism a monotheistic religion?</p>

## This unit and the Seven Key Themes

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This unit emphasizes:

Key Theme 3: Uses and Abuses of Power

Key Theme 4: Haves and Have-Nots

## This unit and the Standards in Historical Thinking

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Historical Thinking Standard 1: Chronological Thinking

The student is able to (F) reconstruct patterns of historical succession and duration in which historical developments have unfolded, and apply them to explain historical continuity and change.

Historical Thinking Standard 2: Historical Comprehension

The student is able to (G) draw upon data in historical maps in order to obtain or clarify information on the geographic setting in which the historical event occurred, its relative and absolute location, the distances and directions involved, the natural and man-made features of the place, and critical relationships in the spatial distributions of those features and historical event occurring there.

Historical Thinking Standard 3: Historical Analysis and Interpretation

The student is able to (C) analyze cause-and-effect relationships bearing in mind multiple causation including (a) the importance of the individual in history; (b) the influence of

ideas, human interests, and beliefs; and (c) the role of chance, the accidental, and the irrational.

#### Historical Thinking Standard 5: Historical Issues-Analysis and Decision-Making

The student is able to (A) identify issues and problems in the past and analyze the interests, values, perspectives, and points of view of those involved in the situation.

## Resources

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### *Resources for teachers*

Allen, Lindsay. *The Persian Empire*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005. In this cultural and political history of the development of the empire, Lindsay Allen, whose posts at the British Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art make her a leading authority on Persia, surveys written sources, art objects, warfare, politics, archaeological sites, and daily life during Persian rule.

Curtis, J. E. and N. Tallis, eds. *Forgotten Empire: The World of Ancient Persia*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005. This sumptuous book traces the rise and fall of one of the ancient world's largest and richest empires.

Holland, Tom. *Persian Fire: The First Persian Empire and the Battle for the West*. New York: First Anchor Books, 1995. Written as a third person narrative, this work analyzes the strategies of all parties involved in the Persian Wars. It provides readers with insight behind decisions made during the First Persian War and gives different perspectives, which help the reader empathize with the characters. The author relates the story of the Second Persian War, often from Persia's perspective. Persia is portrayed as a "global superpower," while Athens and Sparta are "terrorist states." Though the Persian army is glorified down to the details about the luxurious army décor, this book is useful for providing a different perspective and provoking discussion with students.

Olmstead, A. T. *The History of the Persian Empire*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948. This text supplies readers with the history of Persia from Cyrus the Great to Alexander the Great. The information on the rise of Xerxes' religious reforms (Zoroastrianism) and the great detail the book gives about the often-overlooked topics regarding the Persian army and navy, the Egyptian revolt, and Xerxes' personal life are particularly useful. The book also provides pictures of artwork and maps from the Persian empire and a chronology of art, diplomacy, science, and technology within the empire.

### *Resources for students*

Belezos, Dimitris, Ioannis Kotoulas, Nikos Giannopoulos, and Kyriakos Grigoropoulos. *Marathon 490 BC: Athens Crushes the Persian Might*. United Kingdom: Squadron Signal Books, 2008. This book contains photographs and maps of the area to help depict military strategies. It describes the causes of the Persian invasion, and then follows the Marathon runner on his trek to Athens to announce the victory. The authors place the Battle of

Marathon in a global perspective by recounting battle myths that are still told around the world today.

Cassin-Scott, Jack. *The Greek and Persian Wars, 500-323 BC*. Oxford: Osprey, 1977. While this picture book covers over two hundred years of history, it does provide an overview of the Persian Wars, especially for young or struggling readers. It is a good starting point for any unit on this subject.

Fields, Nic. *Thermopylae 480 BC: Last Stand of the 300*. Oxford: Osprey, 2007. This 96-page book is a concise summary of the Battle of Thermopylae. It provides maps and pictures of both the Spartan and Persian armies. The author also goes to great lengths to describe the differences between the two armies.

Podany, Amanda H. and Marni McGee. *The Ancient Near Eastern World*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005. This book in the lively and beautifully illustrated series “The World in Ancient Times” includes a chapter titled “Of Camels, Kings, and Conquerors: The Persian Empire.”

Sekunda, Nicholas. *The Persian Army, 560-330 BC*. Oxford: Osprey, 1992. This book provides artwork detailing the Persian army uniforms. This makes it interesting for boys in particular, but it also provides pictures of artifacts that show women soldiers.

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## **Correlations to National and State Standards**

### ***National Standards for World History***

Era 3: Classical Traditions, Major Religions, and Giant Empires, 1000 BCE – 300 CE. 2C: The student understands the development of the Persian (Achaemenid) empire and the consequences of its conflicts with the Greeks.

### ***California: History-Social Science Content Standard***

Grade Six, 6.4.5. Outline the founding, expansion, and political organization of the Persian Empire; 6.4.6. Compare and contrast life in Athens and Sparta, with emphasis on their roles in the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars.

### ***Virginia History and Social Science Standards of Learning***

WH1.4. The student will demonstrate knowledge of the civilizations of Persia, India, and China in terms of chronology, geography, social structures, government, economy, religion, and contributions to later civilizations; WH1.5. The student will demonstrate knowledge of ancient Greece in terms of its impact on Western civilization by d) evaluating the significance of the Persian and Peloponnesian wars.

## Conceptual links to other teaching units

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PANORAMA



### Big Era Four Panorama Teaching Unit

#### Expanding Networks of Exchange and Encounter, 1200 BCE – 500 CE

The Iranian Plateau, the heart of ancient Persia, is part of the Great Arid Zone that runs across Afroeurasia. Persia also included well-watered highlands, fertile irrigated river valleys, and some of the most important cities in the trans-Afroeurasian commercial network. This made Persia a tempting target of Inner Eurasian pastoral nomads, including the cavalry bands that migrated into the region and subsequently formed the core of the Persian, or Achaemenid empire.



LANDSCAPE



### Big Era Four Landscape Teaching Unit 4.4

#### From the Mediterranean to India: An age of Greek and Persian power, 600 - 200 BCE

The cities and routes of ancient Persia constituted the “hinge” that connected the Mediterranean basin, India, Inner Eurasia, and ultimately China with one another. No wonder that one military group after another tried, and sometimes succeeded, in unifying this region under a single imperial authority. The Achaemenid empire was one of the most successful ventures, though the forces of Greek city-states stopped expansion in the west.



CLOSEUP

### Big Era Four Closeup Teaching Unit 4.4.2

#### Pressured by Persia: The Persian Empire

In the later sixth and the fifth centuries BCE, the Persian empire launched an aggressive expansion that gave it control of most of Southwest Asia and, for a time, even Egypt. These conquests magnified the empire’s wealth and power. The emperors Darius and Xerxes tried to extend their realm westward into the Aegean Sea basin, the central region of Greek-speaking peoples. Those attacks ultimately failed.