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NEH Lesson Plan: Central Asian in World History  
Conflict in the Classical World:  
Persians and Scythians

Materials and Time:

Lesson should take about one class period to complete.

All materials are included here

Objectives:

- Students will gain an understanding of the basic features that distinguish an early civilization from a classical civilization.
- Students will learn about the political, social, and cultural features of the Persian Empire
- Students will practice skills of dealing with material documents and archeological evidence of the Scythian people.

Anticipatory Set:

The lesson will open with a class discussion of features of classical civilization hitting topics discussing issues related to complexity of structures. The discussion will be based on the reading “Cities and Civilization” by Kevin Reilly.

Instructional Input:

See next page for lecture notes dealing with the Persian Empire.

After the lecture the class will be handed out the practice DBQ dealing with the Scythian material culture. Basic Students will be asked to complete the DBQ in small groups turning in one written piece per group. A short review of the artifacts will conclude this portion.

Check for Understanding:

While students are working in groups I will confirm that they understand the assignment and how to analyze archeological evidence. The completed assignment can also be used for this end.

Closure:

There will be a discussion of types of sources and how we use archeological evidence in historical writing. Students will also be asked to consider the limitations of physical evidence in contrast with documentary evidence.

## Persia Notes

### I. The rise and fall of the Persian Empire

#### A. The Achaemenid Empire

1. Medes and Persians migrated from central Asia to Persia before 1000 B.C.E.
  - a. Indo-European speakers, sharing cultural traits with Aryans
  - b. Challenged the Assyrian and Babylonian empires
2. Cyrus the Achaemenid (the Shepherd) (reigned 558-530 B.C.E.)
  - a. Became king of Persian tribes in 558 B.C.E.
  - b. All of Iran under his control by 548 B.C.E.
  - c. Established a vast empire from India to borders of Egypt
  - d. Northern border occupied by Scythian nomads
3. Cyrus's son, Cambyses (reigned 530-522 B.C.E.), conquered Egypt in 525
4. Darius (reigned 521-486 B.C.E.); largest extent of empire; population thirty-five million
  - a. Diverse empire, seventy ethnic groups
  - b. New capital at Persepolis, 520 B.C.E.
5. Achaemenid administration
  - a. Twenty-three satrapies (Persian governors), appointed by central government
  - b. Local officials were from local population
  - c. Satraps' power was checked by military officers and "imperial spies"
  - d. Replaced irregular tribute payments with formal taxes
  - e. Standardization of coins and laws
  - f. Communication systems: Persian Royal Road and postal stations

#### B. Decline and fall of the Achaemenid Empire

1. Commonwealth: law, justice, administration led to political stability and public works
2. Xerxes (reigned 486-465 B.C.E.)
  - a. Retreated from the policy of cultural toleration
  - b. Caused ill will and rebellions among the peoples in Mesopotamia and Egypt
3. The Persian Wars (500-479 B.C.E.)
  - a. Rebellion of Ionian Greeks
  - b. Persian rulers failed to put down the rebellion, sparred for 150 years

### II. Imperial society and economy

#### A. Social development in classical Persia

1. Nomadic society; importance of family and clan relationships
2. Imperial bureaucrats
  - a. Imperial administration called for educated bureaucrats
  - b. Shared power and influence with warriors and clan leaders
3. Free classes were bulk of Persian society
  - a. In the city: artisans, craftsmen, merchants, civil servants
  - b. In the countryside: peasants, some of whom were building underground canals (*qanat*)
4. Large class of slaves who were prisoners of war and debtors

#### B. Economic foundations of classical Persia

1. Agriculture was the economic foundation
2. Trade from India to Egypt
  - a. Standardized coins, good trade routes, markets, banks
  - b. Specialization of production in different regions

**AP World History –DBQ practice**

Artifact analysis will help you to understand the challenges faced by archeologists. What can you learn by studying only the material culture of a society? Think about what the artifacts depict and what the Scythians must have valued.

Using the following documents you will:

1. Group the artifacts in at least three ways.
2. Explain what each group tells you about the Scythians

Artifact 1



Artifact 4



Artifact 2



Artifact 5



Artifact 3



Artifact 6



Artifact 7



Artifact 9



Artifact 8



