The Persian Empire

BEFORE YOU READ
In the last section, you read about the military might of the Assyrians.
In this section, you will read about the wise rule of the Persians.

AS YOU READ
Use the chart below to take notes on key people in the rise of Persia, its rule, and its religion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TERMS AND NAMES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cyrus</td>
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<td>Cambyses</td>
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<td>Darius</td>
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<td>satrap</td>
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<td>Royal Road</td>
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<td>Zoroaster</td>
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The Rise of Persia (pages 99–100)

**How did Persia come to power?**
Persia, a new power, arose east of Mesopotamia, in modern Iran. The area had good farmland. It was also rich in minerals. There were mines of copper, lead, gold, and silver.

The Persians joined with other forces to help defeat the Assyrians. About 550 B.C., the Persians began their own conquests.

Their king was **Cyrus**, an excellent general.

Cyrus led his army to conquer a huge empire. It stretched from the Indus River in India all the way to Anatolia. The empire covered about 2,000 miles. Cyrus took all this land in just over 10 years.

Cyrus won this vast land in part because of the wise way he treated the people there. Cyrus did not follow the examples of the Assyrians. They destroyed towns and cities. Cyrus, however, made sure that his army did not harm the people he conquered. He allowed the people to practice their old religions, too. Cyrus let the Hebrews return to...
Jerusalem and rebuild their temple there. Cyrus was also a great warrior. He was killed in battle.

1. **What made Cyrus a great leader?**

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**Persian Rule** (pages 100–101)

**Who was Darius?**

Cyrus died in 530 B.C. The kings who followed him had to decide how to run the vast new empire. His son, Cambyses, conquered Egypt. Cambyses was not like his father. He was not wise or understanding. He did not respect the Egyptians and their way of life.

The next king, **Darius**, proved as able as Cyrus. Darius put down several revolts. He won more land for the empire and created a government for the empire. Only Greece escaped Persian control.

Darius divided the land into 20 **provinces**, each holding a certain group of people. He allowed each group to practice its own religion, speak its own language, and obey many of its own laws. He also put royal governors—**satraps**—in place to make sure that the people obeyed his laws.

Darius built the **Royal Road** to unite his large empire. This excellent road system ran 1,677 miles. Royal messengers on horses could travel this distance in about seven days. The Royal Road made communication better within the empire. Transportation became easier too.

Darius also had metal coins made that could be used for business anywhere in the empire. The coins had a standard value. This money system, along with the Royal Road, helped increase trade.

2. **How did Darius change Persia?**

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**The Persian Legacy** (page 103)

**What is the legacy of the Persian Empire?**

During the Persian Empire, a new religion arose in Southwest Asia. A prophet named **Zoroaster** said there were two powerful spirits. One stood for truth and light. The other represented evil and darkness. The two spirits were in a constant struggle. People needed to take part in the struggle. They would be judged on how well they fought. These ideas influenced later religions.

The Persians left their mark in history. They were fair and understanding. The Persians showed respect for other cultures. Their government brought order to Southwest Asia.

3. **What mark did the Persians leave on history?**

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