GRADE 6, UNIT 2

The Middle East and North Africa

CLASSROOM RESOURCES

This illustration on papyrus from ancient Egypt shows a god weighing a soul in the afterlife. Image by the British Museum via Wikimedia Commons is in the public domain.

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1. Name two countries in North Africa and two countries in the Middle East.

2. What is the name of the largest desert in Africa, located in North Africa?

3. Which sea borders Africa to the north?

4. Which sea borders the Arabian Peninsula to the south?

5. Name two countries in the Middle East and North Africa that get enough rain to grow crops.

6. Which two bodies of water are connected by the Suez Canal?

7. What is the largest country (by amount of land) in the Middle East?

8. Which river flows through Sudan and Egypt, ending at the Mediterranean?

9. Which body of water is between Saudi Arabia and Iran?

10. Which country in the Middle East is home to both the Tigris and Euphrates rivers?

11. Which country is north of Saudi Arabia and south of Syria?

12. Which climate is most often found in the Middle East?

13. Which country has Cairo as its capital?

14. Name two Middle Eastern countries that border the Mediterranean.

15. Name a Middle Eastern city or country with a very high population.

16. Which narrow sea separates Africa and the Middle East?

17. Which country is between Iraq and the Persian Gulf?

18. What is the capital of Turkey?

19. Which country borders Egypt to the east?

20. Where are most of the Middle East's mountains located: in the north or in the south of the region?

Egyptian God and Goddess Cards

Osiris

Appearance: Osiris, the first ruler to have been mummified, is shown as a mummy wrapped in a white funeral cloth and holding a crook and flail. He often has green skin to reflect his mummification. He wears the crown of Upper Egypt with an ostrich feather on each side of it.

Description and Role: Osiris was the first pharaoh of Egypt, and, according to myth, he brought order and organization to the people. After being murdered by his brother, Seth, he was brought back to life by Isis. He rules over and judges the souls of the dead in the underworld.

Ilustration of Osiris, an Egyptian god, "Standing Osiris" by Jeff Dahl via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.

Ilustration of Isis, an Egyptian goddess, by Jeff Dahl via Wikimedia Commons is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0.

Isis

Appearance: Isis appears as a beautiful royal woman and is often holding an ankh, the symbol of life, or a lotus, the symbol of luck, in her hand. She is often shown with Osiris or Horus (or baby Horus).

Description and Role: Isis is the queen to Osiris's king and is the mother of Horus. She is a protector and bringer of good fortune. She has magical healing powers and is the goddess who represents motherhood. After Osiris was murdered by his brother, Seth, Isis used her magic to bring him back to life before he went to the underworld. While Osiris rules the underworld, Isis and Horus rule over the domain of Egypt and the land of the living.

Horus

Appearance: Horus is either shown as having a man's body with a falcon's head or as a falcon. His eyes are always prominently outlined in black.

Description and Role: The son of Osiris and Isis, Horus has inherited the throne of Egypt. He is god of the sky and also represents the pharaoh's power on Earth. His eye has magical healing powers and is a symbol of rebirth and good health.

As the defeater of Seth, Horus is seen as casting out evil and maintaining order. He often wears the double crown of united Egypt.
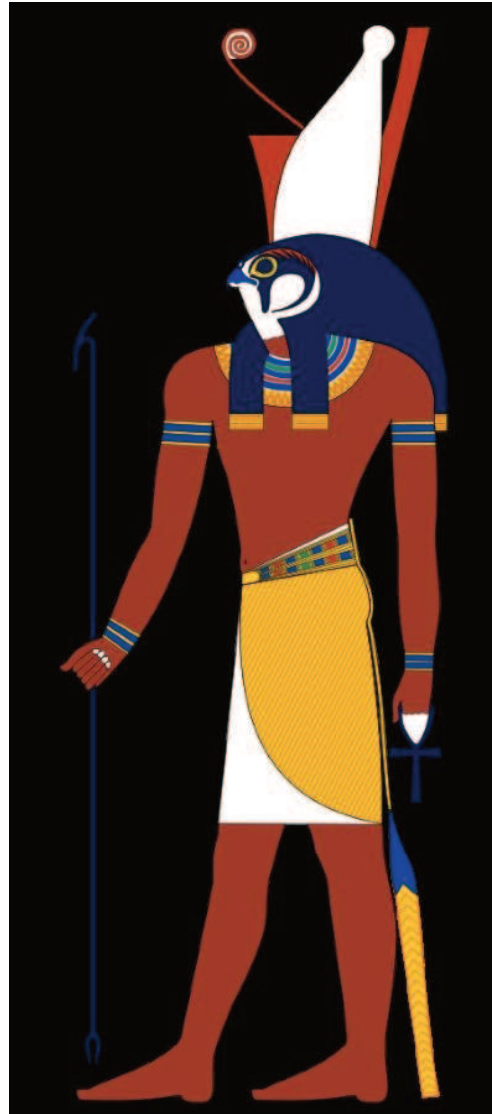

Ilustration of Horus, an Egyptian god, by Jeff Dahl via Wikimedia Commons is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0.

Ilustration of Seth, an Egyptian god, by Jeff Dahl via Wikimedia Commons is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0.

Seth (or Set)

Appearance: Seth is usually seen as having a man's body and the head of a black, long-nosed imaginary creature—something like an anteater. He often holds a staff with a forked tip.

Description and Role: Seth is a chaos agent. He represents death, destruction, and bad fortune. Jealous of his brother, Osiris, Seth tricked Osiris and chopped him up in a scheme to steal the throne of Egypt. Seth is often imagined as battling Horus for control of Egypt, but he's also a protective god of the underworld.

Anubis

Appearance: Anubis is shown with a man's body and a *jackal's* (wild dog's) head. His identity as a wild dog is connected to his protective nature.

Description and Role: Anubis is the protector of the dead and oversees mummification. He guides the spirits of the dead through the underworld, eventually leading them to Osiris. Anubis plays a role in the final judgment of the dead, determining whether a heart is lighter than the Feather of Truth. Anubis is mostly found in tombs and temples devoted to the dead.

Ilustration of Anubis, an Egyptian god, by Jeff Dahl via Wikimedia Commons is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0.

Amun, later Amun-Re

Appearance: Amun represents the sky and water before creation. For this reason, his skin is often blue. In the 18th dynasty, he was linked with the sun god Re (or Ra) and took on the role of creator. A sun disk was added to Amun-Re's crown. As Amun-Re, he is often shown as a red sun disk, a man with a tall sun-ray crown, or a ram (imagery borrowed from a Nubian god).

Description and Role: Amun-Re is considered the father of all pharaohs, the king and most powerful of the gods, and the creator of Earth. He brings fertility, prosperity, and good fortune, but he can also bring destruction. He is also a god of rebirth—just as the sun "dies" each evening in the west and is "reborn" each morning in the east.
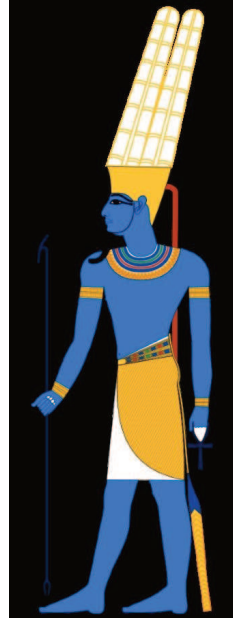
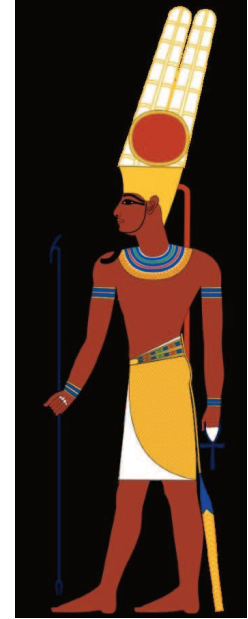Ilustration of Amun, an Egyptian god, by FDRMRZUSA via Wikimedia Commons is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0.

Ilustration of Amun-Re, an Egyptian god, by FDRMRZUSA via Wikimedia Commons is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0.

Illustration of Thoth, an Egyptian god, by Jeff Dahl via Wikimedia Commons is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0.

Thoth

Appearance: Thoth is shown as an ibis, a long-legged bird that uses its long, curved beak to search for food in shallow water. Or he has a man's body and an ibis's head and is often holding a writing tablet. Ancient Egyptians thought that the way ibis birds poke their beaks into the muddy river bank resembled the way scribes use a stylus to write on papyrus or a tablet.

Description and Role: Thoth is the god of wisdom, writing, and recordkeeping. As the scribe of the gods, Thoth is often shown in the underworld recording Anubis's judgment of whether the dead person's heart is light enough to go to the afterlife.

Hathor

Appearance: Hathor is often shown as a woman with the head or ears of a cow. Or she is an actual cow. She often has a red sun disk between her horns.

Description and Role: Hathor is a goddess of good fortune, joy, fertility, and wealth (cows were seen as a form of wealth). She is also the goddess of love, beauty, and women and children, like Isis is. Hathor is a sky goddess and is thought to live in the sky with Amun-Re. She crosses the boundaries between worlds, helping souls in their transition to the afterlife.
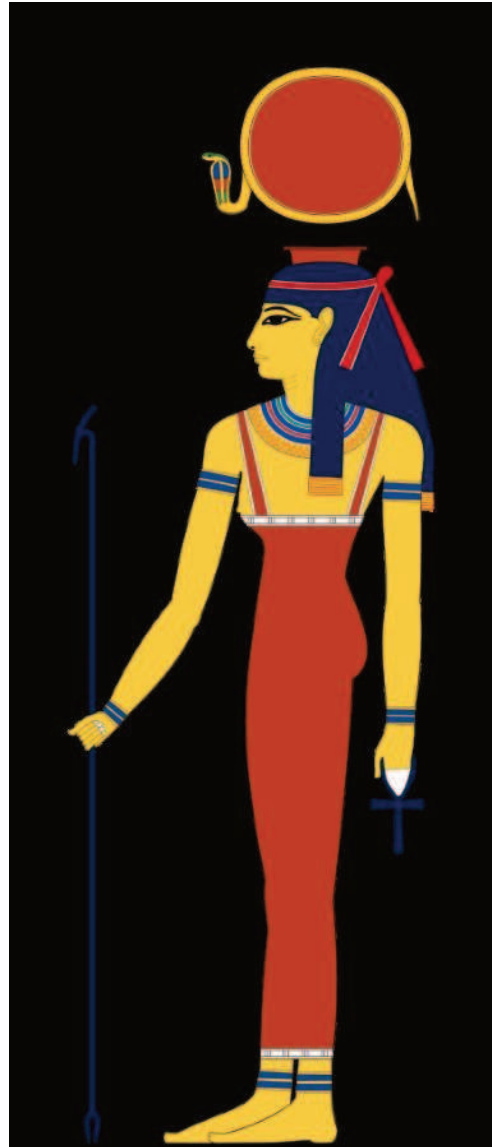
Illustration of Hathor, an Egyptian goddess, by Jeff Dahl via Wikimedia Commons is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0.

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Homer (an ancient Greek poet): Phoenicians are portrayed as "both skilled seafarers and clever, but also potentially deceitful traders at the same time" in *The Odyssey*.

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Herodotus (a Greek scholar and historian): Herodotus told the story of Phoenicians sailing on the Atlantic Ocean toward the British Isles, where they traded for tin. As they were sailing, they saw a Greek ship following them. The Phoenicians decided to sail very close to shallow water and strand themselves on a reef so that when the Greeks followed, they would also be stranded. This way, the Greeks could not find out where the Phoenicians got their tin.

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Herodotus (a Greek scholar and historian): Herodotus wrote that the Phoenicians sailed around Africa at the request of the Egyptian pharaoh Necho II (who ruled from 610 to 595 BCE). This is what the world looked like to Herodotus:
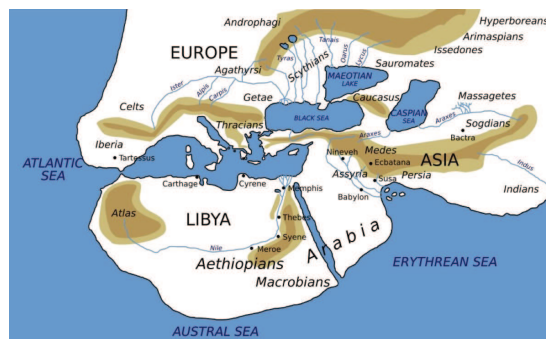
The continent of Africa as Herodotus saw it by Bibi Saint-Pol via Wikimedia Commons is in the public domain.

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Virgil (a Roman poet): Virgil told the story of Queen Dido from Tyre, who founded the colony of Carthage in North Africa. The local king was willing to trade with her and offered a piece of suitable land for the colony. However, she could only have the area of land covered by one ox-hide. Queen Dido had the hide cut into very fine strips, which she used to encircle a hill. That hill became the capital of the colony.

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Hannibal Barca (a Phoenician general from Carthage who fought against the Romans): A famous quote that the Romans attributed to Hannibal is "I will either find a way, or make one."

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The Bible (the Christian holy book): The Bible (1 Kings 5:15-20) tells a story in which King Solomon of Israel develops a business agreement with King Hiram of Tyre. The text reads, "Please, then, give orders for cedars to be cut for me in the Lebanon. My servants will work with yours, and I will pay you any wages you may ask for your servants; for as you know, there is none among us who knows how to cut timber like the Sidonians (Phoenicians)."

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The Bible (the Christian holy book): The Bible (1 Kings 5:23, 25) tells the story of the continuing business deals made between King Solomon of Israel and King Hiram of Tyre. In this story, King Hiram sends Phoenician cedar logs and Phoenician stonecutters to build a temple and a palace for King Solomon. In return, King Solomon provides an annual amount of food for King Hiram's household.

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Text sources:
- Cartwright, Mark. "Dido." *World History Encyclopedia.* June 29, 2016.
- Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art. "The Phoenicians (1500-300 BCE)." In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History.* October 2024.
- Schleeter, Ryan. "First Rulers of the Mediterranean." *National Geographic.* Last updated November 18, 2024.
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unifying the empire through improved communication

satrapies: combining a strong king with local independence

providing water for the people

ruling a multicultural empire with tolerance and respect

creating a common currency and language

Persian Innovation Cards

Satrapies: Combining a Strong King with Local Independence

A map of the Persian Empire at its peak. The Persian Empire at its greatest territorial extent, under the rule of Darius I by Cattette, CC BY 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

King Cyrus the Great of Persia conquered the largest empire the world had ever known. It would have been impossible for him to govern it all by himself. To solve this problem, he divided the land into *satrapies*, or provinces. (The Roman numerals on the map above show where the satrapies were located). He appointed the local leaders he had just conquered to govern the satrapies. The governor of a satrapy was called a *satrap*.

As long as the satraps collected taxes and were loyal to the Persian king, they had some control over local decisions. This system helped to build loyalty to the Persian Empire. It also made the Persian state wealthy, as money and the materials that were the specialties of each region flowed into the central treasury.

To keep an eye on the satraps, Persian kings created military stations on the edges of the satrapies. The Persian kings also sent inspectors, known as *King's eyes,* to check up on the satraps. It was absolutely clear that Cyrus was the *King of Kings* and must be obeyed.

This innovative balance between a strong king who must be obeyed in matters of loyalty and taxes and local self-government allowed the Persians to create stability and loyalty within the empire.

Ruling a Multicultural Empire with Tolerance and Respect

A carving of Cyrus the Great, king of the Persian Empire. Cyrus the Great at Olympic Park, Sydney, Siamax (adapted) (modern copy from a 6th century BCE bas-relief at Pasargadae inscribed "I am Cyrus the king, an Achaemenian") is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia

The empire that King Cyrus the Great conquered was quite diverse. It included many different languages, cultures, and religions. Although he had conquered the land using force, he did not force his culture and religion onto his new subjects. Instead, he ruled with tolerance. As long as the people paid their taxes and were loyal to the Persian Empire, they were allowed to worship and live as they pleased.

Cyrus's governing strategy was also innovative. In the ancient world, rulers were believed to own the land and the people they conquered. Cyrus, in contrast, freed Jewish people and let them return to Jerusalem and rebuild their temple. They had been forced to live in Babylon by the Babylonian ruler Nebuchadnezzar II. Cyrus also showed respect for local traditions within his empire: He worshiped Marduk, the god of Babylon, and wore the clothing of the Elamites (a culture near Mesopotamia).

By ruling with a light touch as long as his subjects met his expectations, Cyrus created loyal subjects who were less likely to rebel. These innovations strengthened diversity and promoted loyalty to the empire.

Providing Water for the People

Accessing water was a challenge in many parts of the Persian Empire due to the desert environment. The Persian kings knew that building water systems required skills and money that most people did not have. They also understood that people needed water to live productive lives, and they wanted to avoid conflict over water resources. To meet these needs, the government of the Persian Empire supported the building of qanats (pronounced "kuh-ˈnät"). A *qanat* is an underground well connected by underground tunnels. Qanats carry water

A qanat, a source of water in the Persian Empire. Qanat by Gonabadi, CC BY 2.0, via Wikimedia

from far-off mountains or underground sources to villages and cities. The Persian Empire supported the building of qanats by providing the following:
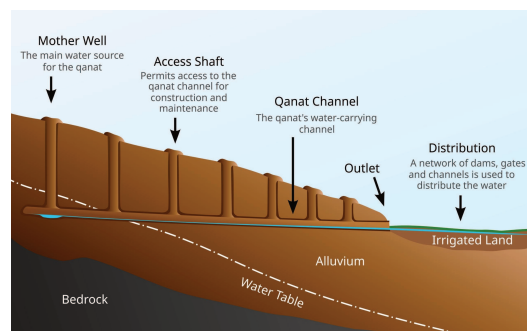
The structure of a qanat, a source of water in the Persian Empire. Qanat cross section by Samuel Bailey, CC BY 3.0, via Wikimedia

- Funds to communities who wanted to build qanats
- Skilled workers, such as engineers and laborers
- Tax breaks and land for qanat builders
- Protection and security for the areas where qanats were built

The Persian government's innovations in water resources resulted in a more stable food supply, prevented conflict, and let trading posts develop throughout the empire.

Creating a Common Currency and Language

A gold coin from the Persian Empire. Daric Gold Coin by Deflim, Public Domain, via Wikimedia

The wealthy Lydian Empire, located in modern-day western Turkey, invented the use of coins for trade. After King Cyrus the Great conquered the Lydians, he introduced this innovation to the Persian Empire. King Darius I, the son-in-law of Cyrus, improved upon the Lydian system. Darius issued coins of uniform size and weight. This made it easier to determine their value.

Darius included his image as well as symbols of the Persian Empire on the coins. This reinforced his power throughout the empire and created a sense of unity across the diverse population. Meanwhile, the use of coins in general gradually spread throughout the vast empire.

Another step Darius took to create unity was adopting Aramaic as the empire's official language. He chose Aramaic because it was already widely spoken and understood in many parts of the empire. An official language ensured that government officials, workers, and scribes could communicate with one another effectively. It also made it easier to issue orders, write official documents, and keep records.

Aramaic, the official language of the Persian Empire. Aramaic Document from Khalili Collection, CC BY 4.0, via Wikimedia
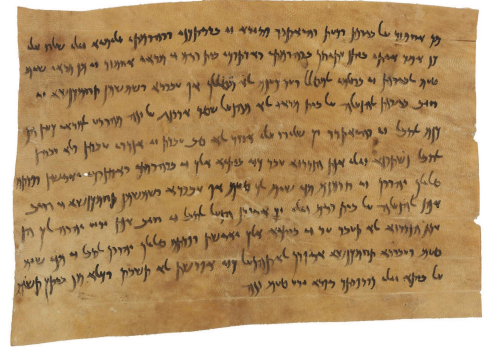
A common language and a common currency united the diverse empire and helped it to communicate and trade. These innovations provided both stability and wealth to the empire.

Unifying the Empire Through Improved Communication

The Persian Empire's Royal Road. Royal Road CC BY-SA 2.5, via Wikimedia Commons (adapted)

The leaders of the Persian Empire needed to communicate across three continents! How could they do this efficiently without cell phones or email? The Persian Empire made communication innovations by using roads and a speedy postal system. Persian King Darius I built the Royal Road, which linked the two ends of the large empire.

The Persian government staffed the Royal Road with messengers. Carrying letters written in ink on animal skin, folded, and sealed, they traveled using a relay system to deliver official news, messages, and orders throughout the empire. At each stop, a fresh horse and a fresh messenger were waiting to carry the news to its destination. Using this system, the royal messengers could travel the 1,500 miles in 7–8 days. A Greek historian wrote of them, "[They] are stopped neither by snow nor rain nor heat nor darkness from accomplishing their appointed course with all speed" (Herodotus, n.d.). This description inspired the very similar motto the U.S. Postal Service uses today.

The Royal Road also promoted trade. It was connected to a smaller system of royal roads reaching in all directions from the core. This gave the empire's people access to a great variety of products, including agricultural goods, textiles, handcrafted goods, metals and precious stones, and imported spices and silk from the east.

These innovations in communication made governing the Persian Empire more unified. And the empire became wealthier due to easy access to trade routes.

Article written by Primary Source.

Persian Innovation Cards (Bullet Points)

Satrapies: Combining a Strong King with Local Independence

A map of the Persian Empire at its peak. The Persian Empire at its greatest territorial extent, under the rule of Darius I by Cattette, CC BY 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

Cyrus the Great governed the largest empire the world had ever known.

- He divided the land into *satrapies* (provinces).
- He appointed a local leader to govern each satrapy. The leader was called a *satrap*.
- The satraps collected taxes to be paid to the Persian king.
- As long as taxes were paid, each satrapy could make decisions for themselves.
- The king sent inspectors to check on the satraps.

The innovation of allowing self-government within the larger empire created stability and loyalty within the empire.

Ruling a Multicultural Empire with Tolerance and Respect

The empire Cyrus conquered included many different languages, cultures, and religions. Rather than forcing all of the people to conform to his own culture, he practiced tolerance.

- People were allowed to worship their own gods.
- People were allowed to practice their cultural traditions.
- People who had been deported from their homelands were allowed to return.
- Cyrus showed respect for other cultures by worshipping the patron god of Babylon and by wearing the clothing of a culture near Mesopotamia.

The innovation of respecting the cultures of people he had conquered strengthened diversity and promoted loyalty to the empire.

A carving of Cyrus the Great, king of the Persian Empire. Cyrus the Great at Olympic Park, Sydney, Siamax (adapted) (modern copy from a 6th century BCE bas-relief at Pasargadae inscribed "I am Cyrus the king, an Achaemenian") is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia

Providing Water for the People

Much of the Persian Empire was in a desert environment. People needed water to survive, but they didn't always have the money to build water systems.

- The government supported the building of underground wells and tunnels (*qanats*) to provide water to communities.
- The government provided skilled workers to build qanats.
- People who built qanats would get tax breaks and land.
- The areas where qanats were built would receive protection of their water resources.

A qanat, a source of water in the Persian Empire.
Qanat by Gonabadi, CC BY 2.0, via Wikimedia

These innovations with water resources reduced conflicts over water and provided more stability to the empire.

Creating a Common Currency and Language

King Darius I followed Cyrus the Great as the ruler of the Persian Empire. He is credited with two innovations that helped unite the empire and maintain its influence.

Coins:

- He issued coins of uniform size and weight to be used across the empire, which made it easier to understand their value.
- He included his image and symbols of the Persian Empire on the coins, which reinforced his power.
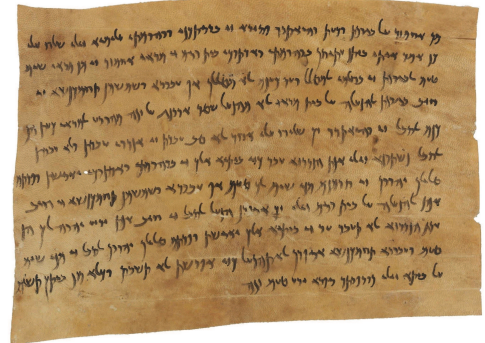
A gold coin from the Persian Empire. Daric Gold Coin by Deflim, Public Domain, via Wikimedia

Language:

- He adopted Aramaic as the official language of the empire because it was already the most widely spoken language.
- All communications were now in the same language.

These innovations provided both stability and wealth to the empire.

Aramaic, the official language of the Persian Empire. Aramaic Document from Khalili Collection, CC BY 4.0, via Wikimedia
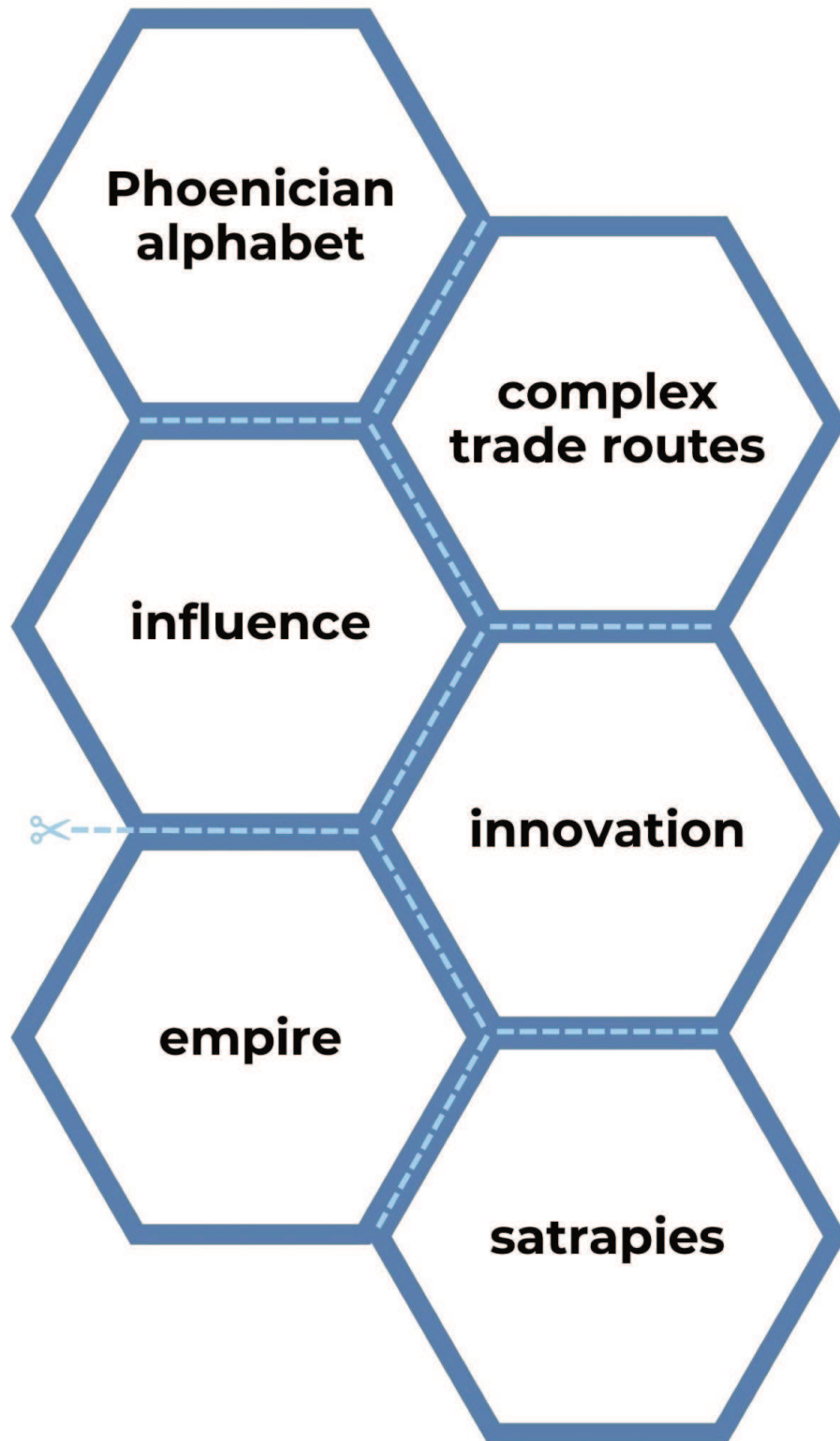
Unifying the Empire Through Improved Communication

The Persian Empire's Royal Road. Royal Road CC BY-SA 2.5, via Wikimedia Commons (adapted)

King Darius I helped unify the Persian Empire by building roads and creating a messenger system.
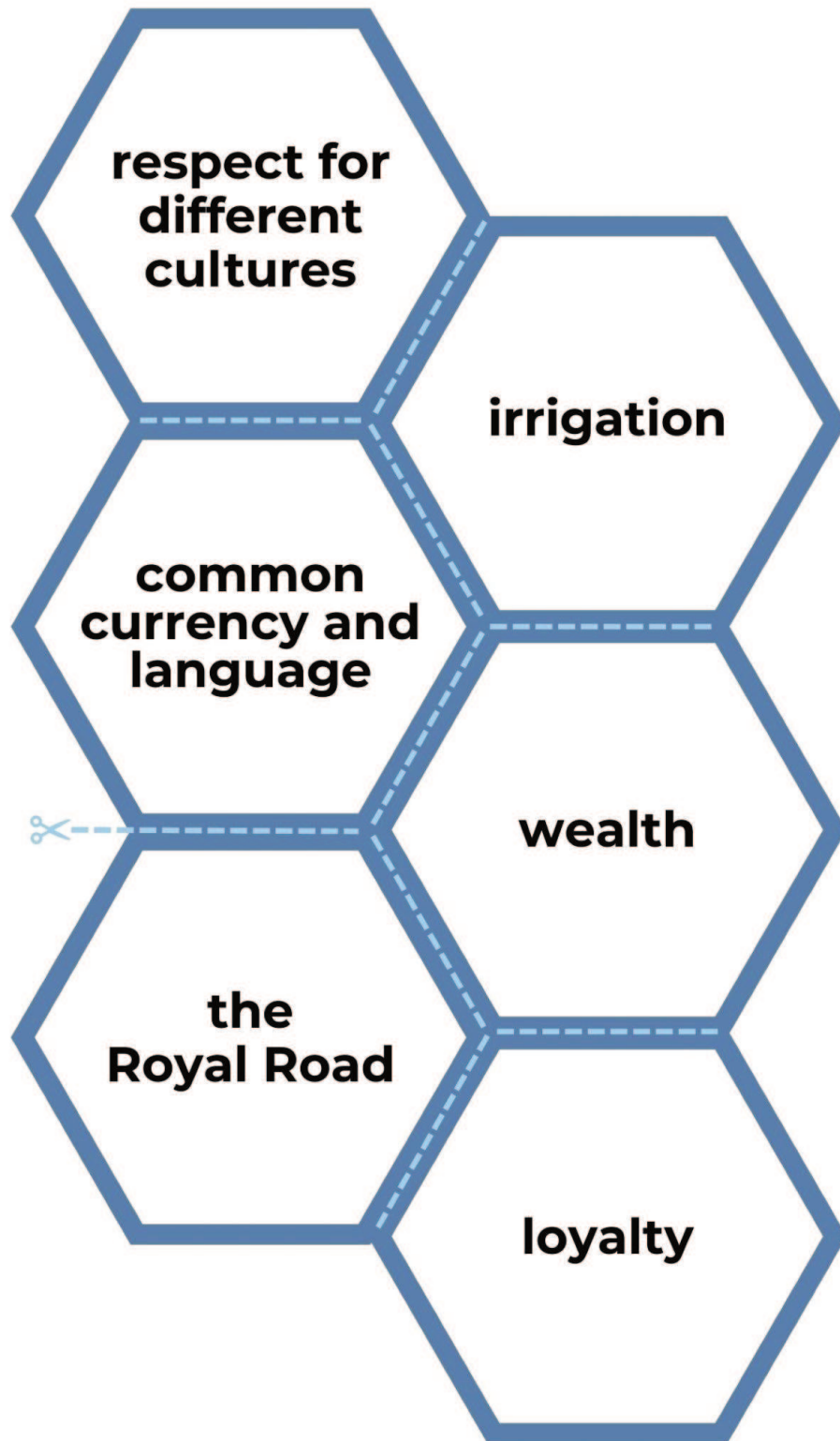
- The Royal Road linked the two ends of the large empire.
- The government hired messengers to carry letters using a relay system.
- The Royal Road promoted trade through connections to smaller roads reaching in all directions.
- By making trade easier, people had access to a greater variety of products within a trade network.

These innovations in communication made governing the Persian Empire more unified. The empire became more wealthy from easy access to trade routes.

Article written by Primary Source.

Phoenician alphabet

complex trade routes

influence

innovation

empire

satrapies

Hexagons filled with innovations

respect for
different
cultures

irrigation

common
currency and
language

wealth

the
Royal Road

loyalty

Hexagons filled with innovations