LESSON PLAN · PROPHETIC SĪRAH · GRADES 6 TO 9 · ONE SESSION OF 45 TO 50 MINUTES

The Year of the Elephant

OBJECTIVES

Retell the Year of the Elephant in order, naming who reports each part. Explain what Sūrat al-Fīl says and why Sūrat Quraysh is read beside it. Label a statement by the kind of source it rests on. Write one sentence, with its label, on what the elephant's refusal meant.

MATERIALS

Part 3 of the free films at thefoundationspress.com/sirah/ (23 minutes), the worksheet on page 2, the answer key on page 3, Qurʾān 105 and 106.

THE SESSION

MINUTES	WHAT HAPPENS
0 to 5	Hook: the recitation of Sūrat al-Fīl; what do you already know? Every answer on the board, none corrected.
5 to 28	Watch Part 3. Pause at "The year he was born" (15:13): who is being quoted on screen?
28 to 38	Worksheet: label each statement Q, H, S or L. Pairs compare. Teacher reads the key.
38 to 45	Discussion: the elephant knelt facing Mecca and ran facing Yemen. What did that mean to those watching? Read 106:3 to 4.
45 to 50	Exit ticket: one sentence on what the refusal meant, with a label in brackets.

NAME _____ CLASS _____ DATE _____

Worksheet: label the source

LETTER	KIND OF SOURCE
Q	The Qurʾān
H	A ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth, cited by collection and number
S	The Sīra of Ibn Isḥāq (d. 150 AH / 767 CE) in the recension of Ibn Hishām (d. 218 AH / 833 CE), a historian's report with its chain
L	A later historian, reporting without a chain

☐ 1. "Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with the companions of the elephant?"

☐ 2. Hagar ran between Ṣafā and Marwa, seven times, looking for water for her baby.

☐ 3. Abraha built a great church in Ṣanʿāʾ and wanted the Arabs to make pilgrimage to it instead of to Mecca.

☐ 4. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib asked Abraha only for his two hundred camels, and said the House had a Lord who would defend it.

☐ 5. When the elephant was turned toward Mecca it knelt; turned toward Yemen, it rose and ran.

☐ 6. "For the security of Quraysh, their security in the winter and summer journeys."

☐ 7. The Prophet ﷺ was born in the Year of the Elephant.

☐ 8. The angel Gabriel came to Hagar at the spot where Zamzam broke from the ground.

EXIT TICKET

In one sentence: what did the elephant's refusal mean to the people of Mecca? Put the label of your source in brackets at the end.

TEACHER USE ONLY

Answer key

#	LABEL	SOURCE
1	Q	Qurʾān 105:1
2	H	al-Bukhārī, no. 3364, from Ibn ʿAbbās
3	S	Ibn Isḥāq, in Ibn Hishām, al-Sīra, vol. 1
4	S	Ibn Isḥāq, in Ibn Hishām, al-Sīra, vol. 1
5	S	Ibn Isḥāq, in Ibn Hishām, al-Sīra, vol. 1
6	Q	Qurʾān 106:1 to 2
7	L	Ibn Saʿd, al-Ṭabaqāt, vol. 1, and later historians
8	H	al-Bukhārī, no. 3364

Note on 7: that the Prophet ﷺ was born in the Year of the Elephant is reported by the historians and is the accepted date; it is not a Qurʾānic statement and no ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth gives the year. The honest label is L even though the fact is not in doubt. That is the point of the exercise.

Sources: Qurʾān 105 and 106; al-Bukhārī nos. 3364, 3365, 3520, 3521; Ibn Isḥāq (d. 150 AH / 767 CE) in Ibn Hishām (d. 218 AH / 833 CE), al-Sīra, vol. 1; Ibn Saʿd (d. 230 AH / 845 CE), al-Ṭabaqāt, vol. 1. Order of telling after Martin Lings, Muhammad (1983).