

## 2.5 The Cyrus cylinder

Oral comprehension <https://youtu.be/nRMzrzu0wRw?t=56> (from 0'56" to 5'00")

Our story begins \_\_\_\_\_, with Cyrus the Great, \_\_\_\_\_. After uniting the Persian and Median tribes, Cyrus came into conflict with King Croesus of Lydia in what's now modern-day Turkey. He defeated Croesus in battle. Cyrus then clashed with the powerful Babylonian Empire to the west. In 539 BC, he besieged their capital, Babylon. It fell with barely a fight. Persia under Cyrus became a superpower of the ancient world.

Cyrus' conquest of Babylon had been predicted and was \_\_\_\_\_ by the Jewish prophet Daniel :

That very night, the Babylonian regent, Belshazzar had held a feast. He feasted using the sacred gold vessels from the temple of Jerusalem. And then suddenly, miraculously, there was a hand writing on the wall, and the writing said : you have been weighed in the balance, you have been found wanting, and your kingdom will be given to the Medes and the Persians.

So from this we have the expression \_\_\_\_\_. And we have Rembrand's great painting "Belshazzar's Feast". Within hours, the great empire of Babylon was no more.

Cyrus justified his invasion to the Babylonian people in a \_\_\_\_\_ written on a clay tablet such as this one, which are likely to have widely distributed. Surviving fragments, along with the Cyrus Cylinder, carry identical wording.

Because the Cyrus Cylinder was meant to a Babylonian audience which is a Semitic tongue related to the modern languages of Hebrew and Arabic and Aramaic. The writing system which Cyrus' officials used was the traditional \_\_\_\_\_ which had been invented in ancient Iraq well before 3,000 B.C. It is written by pressing a stylus, something a bit like a chopstick, into the surface of the clay which is nearly dry. And the signs which convey the sound of the language consist of different arrangement of these strokes. They are written one by one, and the reader has to join them up and the sound emerges from the clay. This is the line that says "I am Kurash, King of the world, the Great King, King of Babylon" and so it goes on.

[...Irving Finkel describes how to write cuneiform script...]

