

# Queens of the Empire: The Powerful Muslim Women of the Mughal Court

## Lesson Overview

**Target Age:** 10 Years Old / Grade 5

**Duration:** 40 Minutes

**Subject:** History / World Cultures

**Success Criteria:** By the end of this lesson, you will be able to name three influential Mughal women, describe their specific contributions to art, politics, or literature, and explain how they exercised power in the 16th and 17th centuries.

## Materials Needed

- Computer/Tablet with internet access
- Notebook or plain white paper
- Colored pencils or markers
- The "Royal Decree" template (described in the activity section)

## 1. The Hook & Objectives (5 Minutes)

**The Hook:** Imagine a world of glittering diamonds, giant elephants, and massive marble palaces. Now, imagine who is in charge. Most people think only of the Kings (Emperors), but in the Mughal Empire, the women were often the "secret engines" of the country! They were architects, international traders, poets, and even tiger hunters.

### Learning Objectives:

- I can identify key figures like Gulbadan Begum, Nur Jahan, and Jahanara Begum.
- I can explain the difference between a "hidden" role and a "powerful" role.
- I can create a royal symbol representing a Mughal woman's legacy.

## 2. I Do: The Three Powerhouses (10 Minutes)

*Instructional Note: Read through these profiles together. Focus on the "Superpower" of each woman.*

### A. Gulbadan Begum: The Storyteller

**Her Superpower:** History. She was the daughter of Emperor Babur. While the men were fighting battles, she was watching and recording. She wrote the *Humayun-nama*, the only book written by a woman about the royal court during this time. Without her, we wouldn't know what it was actually like to live inside the palace.

## B. Nur Jahan: The Real Boss

**Her Superpower:** Leadership. She is the only Mughal queen to have coins minted in her name! When her husband, Emperor Jahangir, was ill or distracted, she ran the empire. She signed laws, designed gardens, and was a legendary marksman—once shooting four tigers with six bullets from a moving elephant!

## C. Jahanara Begum: The Architect & Merchant

**Her Superpower:** Business. She was the daughter of Shah Jahan (who built the Taj Mahal). Jahanara was incredibly wealthy and owned her own trade ships that traveled to reach Europe. She also designed *Chandni Chowk*, which is still one of the most famous market squares in Delhi, India, today.

## 3. We Do: Discussion & Source Analysis (10 Minutes)

### Online/Interactive Discussion Points:

- **Question 1:** Gulbadan Begum wrote about family life and arguments, not just wars. Why is it important to know about "everyday life" in history, rather than just who won a battle?
- **Question 2:** Nur Jahan issued her own coins. In today's world, whose faces do we see on money? What does putting a face on a coin tell the public about who is in charge?
- **Question 3:** Jahanara Begum was a master of trade and architecture. If you were a princess with unlimited gold, what kind of public building would you design for your city? (A library? A park? A hospital?)

*Check for Understanding: Quick Poll—Which of these three women would you want as a mentor? Why?*

## 4. You Do: The "Royal Seal" Design (10 Minutes)

**The Task:** Mughal rulers used "Seals" (stamps) to sign official documents. You will design a Royal Seal for one of the women we studied today.

1. **Pick your subject:** Choose Gulbadan (The Writer), Nur Jahan (The Ruler), or Jahanara (The Builder).
2. **Draw a large circle:** On your paper, draw a circular border.
3. **Inside the circle, include three things:**
  - A symbol of their power (e.g., a quill for Gulbadan, a tiger or coin for Nur Jahan, a ship or building for Jahanara).
  - Their name written in your best decorative handwriting.
  - A "Motto" or short phrase (e.g., "The Pen is Mightier" or "Queen of the Seas").
4. **Color it:** Use "Royal" colors like gold, deep red, or emerald green.

## 5. Conclusion & Recap (5 Minutes)

**Summary:** Today we learned that Mughal women weren't just living in palaces; they were building them, writing the history books, and running the economy. They used their education and wealth to leave a mark on India that we can still see today.

### Exit Ticket (The 3-2-1 Challenge):

- **3** facts you learned today.
- **2** things you found surprising.
- **1** question you still have about the Mughal Empire.

## Adaptability & Differentiation

- **For Advanced Learners:** Research "Mumtaz Mahal" and explain how her influence led to the creation of the Taj Mahal, even though she didn't live to see it finished.
- **For Struggling Learners:** Focus only on Nur Jahan. Draw a picture of her on an elephant to visualize her unique role as a leader.
- **Digital Version:** Use a tool like Canva or Google Drawings to create the Royal Seal digitally.