

Unsung Heroes: The Hidden Figures of Pakistani History

Lesson Overview

Target Age: 10 years old

Duration: 45 minutes

Subject: History / Social Studies / Biography

Global Theme: Gender Equality and Historical Recognition

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, the learner will be able to:

- Define the term "Hidden Figure" and explain how history can sometimes be "one-sided."
- Identify at least three Pakistani women who made significant contributions to science, politics, or literature.
- Analyze why certain achievements are sidelined and others are celebrated.
- Create a commemorative design (stamp, coin, or poster) to celebrate a "Hidden Figure."

Materials Needed

- Paper (A4 or drawing paper)
- Markers, colored pencils, or crayons
- "The Spotlight" Worksheets (or just a notebook)
- A small mirror (for the hook activity)
- Timer

1. Introduction: The Invisible Ink (5 Minutes)

The Hook: Hand the student a small mirror. Ask: "If you did something amazing today—like inventing a flying car or curing a disease—but you weren't allowed to put your name on it, how would people 100 years from now know it was you?"

Discussion: Introduce the concept of "Hidden Figures." Explain that for a long time, history was written mostly by men, often leaving out the incredible things women were doing in the background. Today, we are going to be "History Detectives" to find the lost stories of Pakistani women.

2. Body: Discovering the Figures (25 Minutes)

I Do: What Makes a Figure "Hidden"? (5 Minutes)

Explain that "Hidden" doesn't mean they were invisible; it means the "Spotlight of History" was pointed somewhere else. Sometimes people are sidelined because of their gender, their religion, or because they worked in roles that weren't considered "important" at the time.

We Do: Meet the Trailblazers (15 Minutes)

Discuss these three specific figures. Ask the student to write down one "Superpower" (skill) for each as you talk.

- **Begum Ra'ana Liaquat Ali Khan (The Organizer):**

The Story: Everyone knows her as the wife of the first Prime Minister, but she was a powerhouse economist and diplomat. She started the Women's Guard and the APWA to make sure women had rights and education from the very first day Pakistan existed.

Why was she hidden? Often overshadowed by her husband's title, even though she was a leader in her own right.

- **Zaib-un-Nissa Hamidullah (The Voice):**

The Story: She was Pakistan's first female columnist and editor. At a time when women were told to stay quiet, she wrote bold political articles. She even had a street named after her in Karachi (Zaibunnisa Street)!

Why was she hidden? Writing was seen as a "man's world," and her contributions to political thought were often downplayed.

- **Nergis Mavalvala (The Star-Gazer):**

The Story: A modern-day hidden figure. She is a world-famous astrophysicist born in Karachi who helped prove Einstein's theory about gravitational waves (ripples in space-time!).

Why was she hidden? Scientific achievements by women from the Global South are often not given the same front-page news coverage as Western scientists.

Quick Check: Think-Pair-Share (5 Minutes)

Ask: "Which of these three women's stories surprised you the most? If you could ask them one question, what would it be?"

3. Application: The "Right the Record" Project (10 Minutes)

The Task: The student chooses one of the women discussed (or a woman from their own family history). They must design a **Commemorative Postage Stamp** or a **Social Media Profile** for her.

Requirements:

- A bold portrait (drawing).
- A catchy "Headline" (e.g., "The Woman Who Heard the Stars").

- One sentence explaining her "Hidden Contribution."
- A price/value (if it's a stamp).

4. Conclusion: Sharing the Spotlight (5 Minutes)

Recap: Review the three names. Ask the student to define "Hidden Figure" in their own words.

The Takeaway: "History isn't just what is in the textbooks; it's what we choose to remember. By talking about these women today, you have officially moved them from the shadows into the spotlight."

Final Challenge: Tell one person (a parent, friend, or sibling) about one of these women before dinner tonight!

Success Criteria

- Can the student name two reasons why history might "forget" someone?
- Did the student complete a visual representation of a historical figure?
- Is the student able to identify at least one specific achievement of the chosen figure?

Differentiation & Adaptability

- **For Struggling Learners:** Provide a "Fill-in-the-blank" biography sheet for the three women so they can focus on drawing and discussion rather than note-taking.
- **For Advanced Learners:** Ask them to research a fourth figure (like Perween Rahman or Bapsi Sidhwa) independently for 5 minutes using a safe search engine.
- **Virtual/Classroom Context:** This can be done as a "Gallery Walk" where students post their stamps around the room/digital board and "vote" on which story they think should be made into a movie.