

THE MIDDLE EAST EXPLAINED

A project of the Duke-UNC Consortium for Middle East Studies

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Video: Women in the Middle East

This video is recommended for use in advanced Middle School and High School classrooms.

Video Overview

Women in the Middle East represent an extremely diverse group of individuals, however popular media and news coverage often presents a narrow view of this group. This 6-minute video introduces the stories of three different Middle Eastern women to highlight the diversity of women's experiences in the region. The women featured represent a variety of nationalities, languages, generations, and professions with unique stories that move beyond simplistic understandings of Middle Eastern women. The three individuals presented are Shirin Ebadi (1947-), Iranian lawyer, former judge, and human rights activist; Umm Kulthum (unknown - 1975), Egyptian singer and influential figure; and Güler Sabancı (1955-), Turkish businesswoman and well-known philanthropist.

Each of these women have faced challenges related to traditional rules and gender expectations in their respective lives and professions. However, they have all overcome obstacles to become successful and important figures. All three of these women have significantly impacted their communities and broader society, becoming role models not only for women in the Middle East but for women around the world.

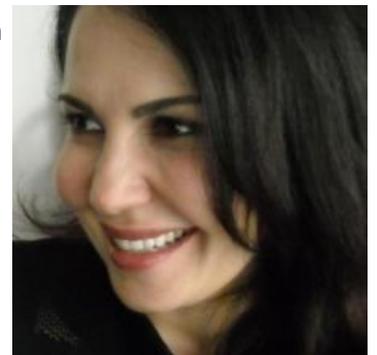
Learning Objectives

After watching this video, students will be able to:

- Summarize the lives of three leading female figures in the Middle East
- Understand the roles that women have played in the economy, culture, politics, and society in the Middle East
- Understand some of the challenges that women have faced over time
- Rethink the diversity of women's experiences in the Middle East

About the Speaker

Didem Havlioğlu is Lecturing Fellow in the Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies at Duke University where she teaches courses on gender in the Middle East and Turkish language and culture. She is the author of *Mihri Hatun: Performance, Gender-bending and Subversion in Ottoman Intellectual History* (Syracuse, 2017). Her research focuses on women and gender in Islamic Cultures, and gender and sexuality in early modern Ottoman culture production. Havlioğlu holds a doctoral degree in Near and Middle Eastern Studies from the University of Washington.



The **Duke-UNC Consortium for Middle East Studies** is a collaboration of the Carolina Center for the Study of the Middle East and Muslim Civilizations and the Duke University Middle East Studies Center. As the recipient of a Title VI Middle East Studies grant from the U.S. Department of Education, the Consortium is a National Resource Center. Our Outreach Program supports K-12 and community college educators in deepening understanding of the Middle East through professional development trainings, local study tours, providing access to speakers, creating classroom resources, and more. *Visit us online at <http://ncmideast.org/outreach/>.*

Classroom Activities: Women in the Middle East

Materials/Resources Needed: “Women in the Middle East” video link (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bAWKThbeOM0&> or Teacher Tube: <https://www.teachertube.com/video/women-of-the-middle-east-481612>), copies of the Student Viewing Guide

Optional: Rather than making copies for each student, teachers may project one copy of the comprehension chart for the entire class.

Step 1: The diversity of female lifestyles and experiences is often forgotten in discussions of women in the Middle East. Acknowledge that while many people may have a stereotype that comes to mind when they think of Middle Eastern women, women in the region represent an extremely diverse group of individuals and have played an important role in political, social, cultural, economic, and religious life.

Step 2: Pass out the Student Viewing Guide. Before playing the video, ask students to read about the key figures featured in the video. Then, inform students that they will fill out the comprehension chart, taking notes on each woman, as they watch the video.

Differentiation: Divide students into small groups and assign one of the women featured to each group member. After the video, ask students to explain their answers to their small group.

Step 3: Play the video (please note that subtitles are available on YouTube if needed). Give students extra time after the video is complete to finish answering the comprehension chart on the Student Guide. Check for understanding by going over answers to the questions out loud as a class.

Step 4: To encourage further understanding, consider facilitating a class discussion or addressing the following points:

- The experience of being a woman is just one part of an individual’s identity. Intersectionality, or the interconnectedness of social categorizations such as ethnicity, class, and gender, creates overlapping layers of disadvantage. Consider how other aspects of their identities might have affected the lives of these women.
- Compare and contrast the lives the women featured in the video. What do they have in common? How are they different? What can we learn from their experiences, struggles, and successes?
- Imagine a conversation between these women on perceptions of women in Middle Eastern societies. What do you think each woman would discuss and why?
- A lack of gender equality and sexism is not only experienced by women in the Middle East. What kinds of discrimination have women in the United States (or elsewhere in the world) overcome throughout history?
- Most women in the Middle East live their lives outside of the spotlight. What might we infer from these famous figures about the average lives of women in Middle Eastern societies?

Assessment:

Informal Student Performance Assessment: Observation of each student participating in small group or class discussions. Formal Assessment: Written student responses on the Student Viewing Guide. Good responses will demonstrate understanding of learning objectives.

Extension: After watching the video, further topics for exploration include: research on each of these women more in depth, research on other important female figures in the region from the 20th and 21st centuries such as Benazir Bhutto (Pakistan), Tawakkol Karman (Yemen), or Nawal El Saadawi (Egypt), women’s participation in revolutionary movements, politics, or family life, and the progression of women’s rights over time in the region.