Al-Andalus: Islamic Spain Moorish Culture in Iberia

**Description**

Through the investigation of primary and secondary sources, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain the details of Al-Andalus (Moorish Iberia), including how Muslim forces came to rule over Christian Iberia, the cultural contributions Spanish Moors developed, and ultimately what led to their downfall after such a long rule.

**Subjects**

European History

World History

**Grade Level**

11-12

**Duration**

90 Min

**Standards Compliance**

College Readiness: R1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; and cite specific evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

College Readiness: R5: Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and large portions of the text relate to each other and the whole.

College Readiness: R9: Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

College Readiness: SL1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

College Readiness: W1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

College Readiness: W2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

College Readiness: W8: Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital resources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.

College Readiness: W9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

**National History Standards**

***National Center for History in the Schools***

WHS Era 4: 2Ae: Analyze how the Arab Caliphate became transformed into a Southwest Asian and Mediterranean empire under the Umayyad dynasty and explain how the Muslim community became divided into Sunnis and Shi’ites.

WHS Era 4: 2Af: Analyze Arab Muslim success in founding an empire stretching from Western Europe to India and China and describe the diverse religious, cultural, and geographic factors that influenced the ability of the Muslim government to rule.

WHS Era 4: 7Ac: Trace major changes in the religious map of Eurasia and Africa between 300 and 1000 and account for the success of Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam in making converts among peoples of differing ethnic and cultural traditions.

WHS Era 5: 2Bc: Analyze the success of Christian states in overthrowing Muslim powers of central and southern Iberia.

WHS Era 5: 7Af: Analyze ways in which encounters, both hostile and peaceful, between Muslims and Christians in the Mediterranean region affected political, economic, and cultural life in Europe, North Africa, and Southwest Asia.

WHS Era 6: 1Ab: Analyze the major social, economic, political, and cultural features of European society, and in particular of Spain and Portugal, that stimulated exploration and conquest overseas.

HT 3B: Compare multiple perspectives of various peoples in the past by demonstrating their differing motives, beliefs, interests, hopes and fears.

HT 3C: Analyze cause-and-effect relationships bearing in mind multiple causation including (a) the importance of the individual in history; (b) the influence of ideas, human interests, and beliefs; and (c) the role of chance, the accidental and the irrational.

HT 4A: Formulate historical questions from encounters with historical documents, eyewitness accounts, letters, diaries, artifacts, photos, historical sites, art, architecture, and other records from the past.

HT 4C: Interrogate historical data by uncovering the social, political, and economic context in which it was created; testing the data source for its credibility, authority, authenticity, internal consistency and completeness; and detecting and evaluating bias, distortion, and propaganda by omission, suppression, or invention of facts.

**Experiential Learning Components**

Moorish Quarter, Madrid

Muslim Wall, Madrid

Islamic Cultural Center, Madrid

Great Mosque, Cordoba

Granada

Toledo

**Classroom Learning Components**

Companion lesson plan in compliance with, or exceeding, applicable standards.

**Essential Questions**

Where was Al-Andalus?

Who were the Moors?  How were they able to conquer Christian Iberia in the 7th century CE?

What was the Reconquista?  How were Christian knights and monarchs able to re-take the Iberian Peninsula from their Moorish neighbors?

What legacy did the Moors leave in Spain?  Is there anything left of Moorish culture in modern Spain?

**Key Terms**

Al-Andalus

Cordoba

Ferdinand II and Isabella I

Granada

Iberian Peninsula

Islam

Madrid

Medieval

Moorish Culture

Mosque

Reconquista

**Academic Summary**

***Primary Sources***

Praise be to God, who ordered that he who speaks with pride of Al-Andalus may do so without fear and as boldly as he pleases, nor meet any that may contradict him …

*Al-Shaqundi, "Of the Excellence of Al-Andalus"*

… and there was no one who did not weep abundantly with pleasure giving thanks to Our Lord for what they saw, for they could not keep back the tears; and the Moorish sultan and the Moors who were with him for their part could not disguise the sadness and pain they felt for the joy of the Christians, and certainly with much reason on account of their loss, for Granada is the most distinguished and chief thing in the world …

*Contemporary Christian account (unnamed) of the surrender of Granada to Spanish forces, 02 Jan 1492*

***Secondary Summary***

On 02 Jan 1492, Muhammad XII, Sultan of Granada and last ruler of the Nasrid dynasty, surrendered the Emirate of Granada to King Ferdinand II of Aragon and Queen Isabella I of Castile, united Catholic Monarchs of Spain.  The Reconquista was over.  For over 700 years, Christian soldiers and kingdoms had been fighting Muslims for control of the Iberian Peninsula.  Seven centuries of fighting were over.  Seven centuries of division were over.  Seven centuries of Moorish control were over.

Catholic Spain would go on to explore and dominate the New World.  Spanish institution, religious practices and language dialects would be brought to the corners of the globe.  Over the next few centuries, through the use of the Catholic Inquisition and Auto-da-fe practices, Muslims in Spain were either forced to leave the peninsula, forced to convert to Catholicism or executed by the state as criminals.  Over time, much of Moorish Spain (known as Al-Andalus) was forgotten by a Christian population determined to show the Reconquista as God’s will.  After centuries of mistrust, that trend is reversing.  Moorish Spain was a center of culture, artistic achievements, exceptional literary works and scientific advances far above anything Christian Europe could hope to produce.  Cordoba, the longtime capital of Al-Andalus and a world-renowned center for learning and tolerance, boasted a population of over 100,000 at a time when Europe was struggling to recover from the Dark Ages.

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**Objectives**

• Students will identify, understand and be able to explain the details of Al-Andalus (Moorish/Muslim) period in Spanish history from the early days of the Moorish conquest in the 7th century to the collapse of the last Muslim stronghold in 1492.

• Students will identify, understand and be able to explain the contributions to art, architecture, language and culture that the Moors made to Spanish culture.

• Students will identify, understand and be able to explain what happened to the Moors in Spain and whether their legacy still exists in modern Spain.

**Procedure**

**I.  Anticipatory Set**

• Writing / Question:  What happened to the Romans in Spain? (5 min)

• Handouts – Copies of documents and readings from the websites listed (5 min)

**II.  Body of Lesson**

• Lecture / PPT – (20 min)

• Video – Moorish Spain (15 min)

• Independent Activity – Students read the articles and sources on Al-Andalus, taking notes as appropriate. (20 min)

• Suggestion: Have the students read some of these articles and sources for homework before class.

• Group Activity – Socratic Seminar: Discussion on Al-Andalus and the Muslim contributions to Spanish art, architecture, language and culture. (15 min)

**III. Closure**

• Assessment / DBQ – Essay: Explain in detail the contributions made to Spanish culture by the Moors during the Al-Andalus period.

**Links**

***Lesson Plan Websites***

[www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/711Tarik1.asp](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/711Tarik1.asp)

“Al Maggari: Tarik’s Address to His Soldiers, 711 CE, from the Breath of Perfumes” (primary source) – from the Muslim leader who led the conquest of Hispania.

[libro.uca.edu/](http://libro.uca.edu/)

LIBRO: The Library of Iberian Resources Online (website) – tremendous online resource by the American Academy of Research Historians of Medieval Spain – contains many primary and secondary sources – highly recommended for students and teachers.

[www.fordham.edu/Halsall/source/moorishpoetry.asp](http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/source/moorishpoetry.asp)

“The Poetry of Spanish Moors, Selections” (primary sources) – on the Medieval Sourcebook at Fordham University.

[www.saudiaramcoworld.com/issue/199205/the.art.of.islamic.spain.htm](http://www.saudiaramcoworld.com/issue/199205/the.art.of.islamic.spain.htm)

The Art of Islamic Spain (website)

[www.islamic-arts.org/2011/when-spain-was-islamic/](http://www.islamic-arts.org/2011/when-spain-was-islamic/)

“Islamic Arts and Architecture: When Spain was Islamic” (article)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=ULptVmaMjYw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ULptVmaMjYw)

Historic Centre of Cordoba (video) – UNESCO TV video

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=wBsDDGCIFLQ&list=PL3823597FA2408AE8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wBsDDGCIFLQ&list=PL3823597FA2408AE8)

When the Moors Ruled in Spain (video) – UKNova video (this is the first part of 11), originally shown on British television, does a great job in explaining the history of Moorish Spain and its link to today’s culture.  Highly recommended for students and teachers.

[www.teachingchannel.org/videos/choosing-primary-source-documents?fd=1](http://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/choosing-primary-source-documents?fd=1)

Reading Like a Historian: Primary Source Documents (video) – great 2 minute video on how to incorporate primary sources into the Common Core and history classes – from Shilpa Duvoor of Summit Preparatory Charter High School in Redwood City, CA – highly recommended for teachers.

[www.pbs.org/programs/citiesoflight/](http://www.pbs.org/programs/citiesoflight/)

“Cities of Light: The Rise and Fall of Islamic Spain” – PBS website

[www.islamicspain.tv/For-Teachers/LessonPlans.htm](http://www.islamicspain.tv/For-Teachers/LessonPlans.htm)

“Cities of Light: The Rise and Fall of Islamic Spain” – lesson plans in PDF format – these lesson plans go directly with the video listed below.

***Background Information***

[www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Andalus](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Andalus%C2%A0)

“Al-Andalus” – Wikipedia article

[www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Umayyad\_conquest\_of\_Hispania](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Umayyad_conquest_of_Hispania%C2%A0)

“Umayyad conquest of Hispania” – Wikipedia article

[www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reconquista](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reconquista%C2%A0)

“Reconquista” – Wikipedia article

www/passports.com/group\_leaders/on\_the\_road/spain/madrid

On the Road: Madrid – city facts from Passports Educational Travel

[www.passports.com/group\_leaders/on\_the\_road/spain/cordoba](http://www.passports.com/group_leaders/on_the_road/spain/cordoba)

On the Road: Cordoba – city facts from Passports Educational Travel

[www.passports.com/group\_leaders/on\_the\_road/spain/granada](http://www.passports.com/group_leaders/on_the_road/spain/granada)

On the Road: Granada – city facts from Passports Educational Travel

**Credit**

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