



## Unit 4C - Spain and Portugal on the eve of the encounter

- **The Role of the Reconquista in the Expansion of Spain**

Social Studies Standards 2, 3, and 5 - World History, Geography, and Civics, Citizenship and Government  
*Key Ideas and Performance Indicators 2.1.3, 2.3.2, 2.4.1, 3.1.4, 3.1.5, 3.2.3, 5.1.1*

### Skills:

- Understanding the concepts of time, continuity, and change
- Viewing events and situations within a global context
- Identifying values conflicts
- Recognizing and avoiding stereotypes

### Concepts:

Change  
Culture  
Diversity  
Places and Regions

### Historical Context:

The Reconquista is the historic period (711-1492) in which the Christians of the Iberian Peninsula fought to regain control of their country, which had been invaded in 711 by Muslims. The different kingdoms in the Peninsula were forged during a war that lasted almost 800 years. The war was not continuous, and its motivation was economic and religious. That peculiar situation shaped Spain in many different aspects, influencing its culture, society, economy, and ongoing history.

In the year 1469, Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon were married, bringing together their kingdoms and establishing the foundation of a new country, Spain. In 1492 they conquered Granada, last remnant of the Al-Andalus, and after eight centuries they brought the Reconquista to a successful conclusion.

As carryover of the Reconquista period, the Spanish desired to expand their power by adding new territories and spreading the Catholic religion. Eventually, expansion and conversion became the political goals of the new state of Spain. The Golden Age of Spain, the era of Spain's expansion in Europe and the Americas, was carried out under the flag of the Catholic religion.



### Activities:

Have students review the handouts:

[Handout 1](#): Kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula During the Reconquest (Reconquista):

Tenth Century Boundary Between Christendom and Islam  
Kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula at the Beginning of the Thirteenth Century

The Five States of the Iberian Peninsula Before 1492

Chart

[Handout 2](#): The Path of the Reconquest

Ask students to read [Handout 1](#). "Kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula During the Reconquest." Have students locate and follow the path of the Reconquest and the development of the different kingdoms:

Leon  
Castile  
Portugal  
Navarra  
Aragon  
Cataluna  
Al-Andalus

Ask students to answer the following questions:

Which kingdoms were unified in 1492? And how?

Which kingdoms were independent and for how long?

Which kingdom was the biggest?

Which kingdom had the largest population?

Discuss the background of the Reconquest. Ask students to read [Handout 2](#), "The Path of the Reconquest." Review the key sites on a wall map or projects. Have students draw some conclusions regarding the Reconquest:

What was the Reconquest and how long did it last?

What were its objectives?

What different periods can be established in the Reconquest? How did they differ regarding

- Property
- The rights of people
- The cultures affected

What were the consequences of the Reconquest in politics, economy, and society?

Why did the noblemen and the clergy occupy the highest level in Spanish society?

How were soldiers paid when they participated in the Reconquest?

What aspects of the Reconquest influenced Spanish expansion in the Americas and in what ways?

Is religion still considered a justification for war?

Ask students to write a few sentences on what they learned about Spain before Columbus began his journeys.

Ask them to consider how the history of the Iberian

Peninsula influenced the history of the Americas after the encounter.

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### The Expulsion of Jews From Spain

Social Studies Standards 2, 3, and 5 - World History, Geography, and Civics, Citizenship and Government  
*Key Ideas and Performance Indicators* 2.1.3, 2.1.4, 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.4.1, 3.1.2, 3.1.4, 3.1.5, 5.1.1

#### Skills:

- Drawing inferences and making conclusions
- Getting, using, analyzing, interpreting, and presenting information
- Creating maps
- Recognizing that others may have a different point of view
- Identifying values conflicts

#### Historical Context:

In the year 1492, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain published a decree ordering the expulsion of Jews if they did not convert to Christianity. This fact put an end to a long period of a primarily peaceful coexistence among people of different cultures and religions who had lived together for centuries in Spain. The expulsion of Jews was caused primarily by the desire for unity and for the consolidation of Spain after the Reconquista. Sephardim have survived in many countries, preserving for centuries their unique culture, dress, and language.

#### Activities:

Have each student analyze and formulate a generalization based on each document:

[Handout 1](#): *The Great Dispersion*

[Handout 2](#): *Jews in Spain*

[Handout 3a](#): *The Sephardi Diaspora*

[Handout 3b](#): *The Sephardi -16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries*

Have students report their generalizations out to the class and then have the class compile a list of generalizations for each document.

Based on their generalizations, have the class discuss:

- Why is religious freedom important?
- To what extent is the expulsion of Jews from Spain more widely known than other acts of persecution of Jews in Europe at that time?
- What was the relationship among Christians, Muslims, and Jews in Spain prior to the expulsion order?

- What is the origin of Sephardic culture?
- How can religious intolerance have a negative effect on an entire nation?

Have students research the Muslim Diaspora and create a map to illustrate their fate.