

# Teachers' Notes: Lessons for Classroom Use of the Film *Cities of Light* and Study of Medieval Spain

## ***Introduction***

This lesson packet was developed to make comprehension and use of the documentary film more productive in the classroom. The lessons are intended for middle and high school world history, world geography, or world cultures courses, as well as electives on world or comparative religions.

There are thirteen (13) separate lessons with reproducible student handouts that are divided into two tiers of material. The set of **First Tier Lessons** is intended to enhance comprehension of the documentary's content, and as reproducible lessons, they can be printed out and contain everything needed to accompany the film. For teachers who have very little time, they provide the tools for getting the film's basic message across. The set of **Second Tier Lessons** is useful for joining the content of the film to classroom study of the history and culture of medieval Spain. The two introductory second tier activities may be considered as important background information (the Abrahamic faiths and geography of the Iberian Peninsula), and many teachers will want to include them as part of basic coverage. Similarly, teachers may wish to substitute some of the First Tier activities in favor of selections from the Second Tier. The lesson set is enhanced by a historical fiction piece entitled *The Sword*, that brings the period to life for students.

The additional maps, readings, and activities provide an opportunity for students to interact with material that was briefly mentioned or shown in the film's sets. Students will be able to sample from the material culture of the period, explore different types of poetry, and learn about the lasting legacy of al-Andalus. One lesson engages the story of scientific knowledge that transferred to Europe as a result of the translation efforts first in the east, and centuries later in Spain, which contributed greatly to the rebirth of knowledge called the Renaissance, and ultimately the Scientific Revolution. On the popular side, the cultural and political legacy of the Reconquista is explored through the legend and history of the Spanish national hero El Cid. Concluding activities offer a brief collection of secondary source quotations on the significance of Islamic Spain to world history. The downloadable Second Tier lessons may be used in conjunction with information and features posted on the web site <[www.islamicspain.tv](http://www.islamicspain.tv)>, and some of them are linked to that information as reference material.

The introduction also includes a set of biographies on the experts who appear in the documentary, and bibliography follows the Table of Contents.

## ***A Note about the Authors***

Susan Douglass, author and project editor, also developed lessons for the Unity Productions Foundation documentary *Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet* at <[www.theIslamProject.org](http://www.theIslamProject.org)>. Major publications include *World Eras: Rise and Spread of Islam, 622-1500* (Thompson/Gale, 2002), teaching resources for the Council on Islamic Education, and the National Center for History in the Schools. Douglass is on the development team of the *World History for Us All* curriculum project. She most recently

served as Senior Researcher for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations initiative, and currently conducts teacher workshops nationally through the Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim Christian Understanding in the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University.

Ernest O’Roark and Eileen Wood are master teachers at Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School in Germantown, Maryland, Mr. O’Roark having recently retired. They have collaborated for a number of years on curriculum, literary projects, and films for the classroom. Their historical fiction appears in *Kongo: A Kingdom Divided*, a teaching unit published by the NCHS, and since 2001, they have been members of the research and development team for the online curriculum project *World History for Us All* (<http://worldhistoryforusall.sdsu.edu>) at San Diego State University under world historians Ross E. Dunn, David Christian, and Edmund Burke, III.

## **Correlation with National and State Standards**

Islamic Spain, the Iberian Peninsula, and the Reconquista are standard topics in world history standards as well as world geography and world cultures standards at the national and state levels. The following examples from the national standards and several of the states with content-specific (as opposed to generic) standards illustrate the place of these topics in the world history curriculum.

### **National Standards for World History**

#### **Era 4: Expanding Zones of Exchange and Encounter, 300-1000 CE**

Standard 2: Causes and consequences of the rise of Islamic civilization in the 7th-10th centuries

Standard 4: The search for political, social, and cultural redefinition in Europe, 500-1000 CE

#### **Era 5: Intensified Hemispheric Interactions, 1000-1500 CE**

Standard 1: The maturing of an interregional system of communication, trade, and cultural exchange in an era of Chinese economic power and Islamic expansion

Standard 2: The redefining of European society and culture, 1000-1300 CE

Standard 4: The growth of states, towns, and trade in Sub-Saharan Africa between the 11th and 15th centuries

Standard 5: Patterns of crisis and recovery in Afro-Eurasia, 1300-1450

#### **Era 6: The Emergence of the First Global Age, 1450-1770**

Standard 1: How the transoceanic interlinking of all major regions of the world from 1450-1600 led to global transformations

Standard 2: How European society experienced political, economic, and cultural transformations in an age of global intercommunication, 1450-1750

#### **ERA 4: STANDARD 2 Causes and consequences of the rise of Islamic civilization in the 7th-10th centuries.**

2A The student understands the emergence of Islam and how it spread in Southwest Asia, North Africa, and Europe.

5-12 Analyze how Islam spread in Southwest Asia and the Mediterranean region. [Analyze the influence of ideas]

into Sunnis and Shi’ites. [Reconstruct patterns of historical succession and duration]

7-12 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. [Analyze cause-and-effect relationships]

2B The student understands the significance of the Abbasid Caliphate as a center of cultural innovation and hub of interregional trade in the 8th-10th centuries.

7-12 Describe the emergence of a center of Islamic civilization in Iberia and evaluate its economic and cultural achievements. [Appreciate historical perspectives]

9-12 Describe the cultural and social contributions of various ethnic and religious communities, particularly the Christian and Jewish, in the Abbasid lands and Iberia. [Appreciate historical perspectives]

7-12 Evaluate Abbasid contributions to mathematics, science, medicine, literature, and the preservation of Greek learning. [Interrogate historical data]

5-12 Assess how Islam won converts among culturally diverse peoples across wide areas of Afro-Eurasia. [Analyze cause-and-effect relationships]

5-12 Describe maritime and overland trade routes linking regions of Afro-Eurasia and analyze the importance of international trade for African and Eurasian societies. [Draw evidence from historical maps]

7-12 Explain the importance of Muslims and Muslim civilization in mediating long-distance commercial, cultural, intellectual, and food crop exchange across Eurasia and parts of Africa. [Analyze the influence of ideas]

9-12 Assess the growth of North African Islamic reform movements and the success of the Almoravids and Almohads in creating empires spanning Iberia and North Africa. [Examine the influence of ideas]

5-12 Evaluate scientific, artistic, and literary achievements of Islamic civilization. [Appreciate historical perspectives]

5-12 Analyze the success of Christian states in overthrowing Muslim powers of central and southern Iberia. [Interrogate historical data]

5-12 Analyze the causes and consequences of the European Crusades against Syria and Palestine. [Analyze cause-and-effect relationships]

**Therefore, the student is able to:**

5-12 Describe the life of Jewish communities and their contributions to Europe's cultural and economic development. [Examine the influence of ideas]

7-12 Evaluate major works of art, architecture, and literature and analyze how they shed light on values and attitudes in Christian society. [Draw upon visual sources]

9-12 Assess the importance of the Islamic states of Iberia and Sicily as well as the Byzantine empire in transmitting scientific and philosophical knowledge to and influencing the literature and arts of Western and Central Europe. [Analyze the importance of ideas]

US History 7-12 Explain the causes and consequences of European Crusades in Iberia and analyze connections between the Christian crusading tradition and European overseas exploration. [Analyze multiple causation]

## **California (grade 7)**

### **7.2 Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the civilizations of Islam in the Middle Ages.**

4. Discuss the expansion of Muslim rule through military conquests and treaties, emphasizing the cultural blending within Muslim civilization and the spread and acceptance of Islam and the Arabic language.

5. Describe the growth of cities and the establishment of trade routes among Asia, Africa, and Europe, the products and inventions that traveled along these routes (e.g., spices, textiles, paper, steel, new crops), and the role of merchants in Arab society.
6. Discuss the causes and course of the religious Crusades and their effects on the Christian, Muslim, and Jewish populations in Europe, with emphasis on the increasing contact by Europeans with cultures of the Eastern Mediterranean world.
8. Understand the importance of the Catholic church as a political, intellectual, and aesthetic institution (e.g., founding of universities, political and spiritual roles of the clergy, creation of monastic and mendicant religious orders, preservation of the Latin language and religious texts, St. Thomas Aquinas’s synthesis of classical philosophy with Christian theology, and the concept of “natural law”).
9. Know the history of the decline of Muslim rule in the Iberian Peninsula that culminated in the Reconquista and the rise of Spanish and Portuguese kingdoms.

**7.9.7.** Describe the Golden Age of cooperation between Jews and Muslims in medieval Spain that promoted creativity in art, literature, and science, including how that cooperation was terminated by the religious persecution of individuals and groups (e.g., the Spanish Inquisition and the expulsion of Jews and Muslims from Spain in 1492).

**7.10 Students analyze the historical developments of the Scientific Revolution and its lasting effect on religious, political, and cultural institutions.**

1. Discuss the roots of the Scientific Revolution (e.g., Greek rationalism; Jewish, Christian, and Muslim science; Renaissance humanism; new knowledge from global exploration).

## New York

World History:

- report on the spread of Christianity and Islam throughout world history, identify regions where these religions spread, and describe the effects on the lives of the people who lived in these regions.
- develop a map of Europe, the Mediterranean world, India, South and Southeast Asia, and China to show the extent of the spread of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Confucianism; explain how the spread of these religions changed the lives of people living in these areas of the world. (Adapted from *National Standards for World History*)

## Texas

(3) **History.** The student understands how, as a result of the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, new political, economic, and social systems evolved, creating a new civilization in Western Europe. The student is expected to: (A) compare medieval Europe with previous civilizations; (B) describe the major characteristics of the political system of feudalism, the economic system of manorialism, and the authority exerted by the Roman Catholic Church; and (C) identify the political, economic, and social impact of the Crusades.

(4) **History.** The student understands the influence of the European Renaissance and the Reformation eras. The student is expected to: (A) identify the causes and characteristics of the European Renaissance and the Reformation eras;

(19) **Culture.** The student understands the history and relevance of major religious and philosophical traditions. The student is expected to: (A) compare the historical origins, central ideas, and the spread of major religious and philosophical traditions including Buddhism,

Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism; and (B) identify examples of religious influence in historic and contemporary world events.

(23) **Science, technology, and society.** The student understands how major scientific and mathematical discoveries and technological innovations have affected societies throughout history. The student is expected to: (A) give examples of major mathematical and scientific discoveries and technological innovations that occurred at different periods in history and describe the changes produced by these discoveries and innovations; (B) identify new ideas in mathematics, science, and technology that occurred during the Greco-Roman, Indian, Islamic, and Chinese civilizations and trace the spread of these ideas to other civilizations;

## **Virginia**

STANDARD WHI.8c The student will demonstrate knowledge of Islamic civilization from about 600 to 1000 A.D. by c) identifying historical turning points that affected the spread and influence of Islamic civilization, with emphasis on the Sunni-Shi'a division, and the Battle of Tours.

STANDARD WHI.8d The student will demonstrate knowledge of Islamic civilization from about 600 to 1000 A.D. by d) citing cultural and scientific contributions and achievements of Islamic civilization.

STANDARD WHI.9a The student will demonstrate knowledge of Western Europe during the Middle Ages from about 500 to 1000 A.D. in terms of its impact on Western civilization by a) sequencing events related to the spread and influence of Christianity and the Catholic Church throughout Europe.

STANDARD WHI.12d The student will demonstrate knowledge of social, economic, and political changes and cultural achievements in the late medieval period by d) explaining the preservation and transfer to Western Europe of Greek, Roman, and Arabic philosophy, medicine, and science.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS: LESSON SET FOR “CITIES OF LIGHT”

Introduction for Teachers .....	i
A Note about the Authors .....	i
Correlation with National and State Standards .....	ii
Table of Contents .....	ii
Bibliography and Additional Reading .....	iii
Biographies of Experts Appearing in <i>Cities of Light</i> .....	iv

### FIRST TIER LESSONS

### SECOND TIER LESSONS

#### INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITIES

#### 1: Vocabulary Lesson

- Words and definitions by segment
- Introduction to quotes by experts & context clues

#### 7: Map Activities

- Al-Andalus in world/regional history
- Al-Andalus the Jewel: geographic characteristics of the Iberian Peninsula

#### 2: Viewers Guide

- Overview of each film chapter

#### 8: Introduction to the Abrahamic Faiths

- Background reading and activity

#### MAKING THE POINT OF THE FILM

#### 3: Reading a Historical Map Sequence

- Outline maps showing periods in al-Andalus history

#### 9: Magic Squares: Achievements of al-Andalus

- Material culture in al-Andalus in text and image (sciences, arts, technologies, crafts)

#### 4: Timeline Activity

- Tracing the chronology of events and periods in Andalusian history

#### 10: Andalusian Literature [Primary Source Activity]:

- Poetry highlighting aspects of life in al-Andalus, with analysis (technology, reflections on politics, social life)

#### 5: Discussing the Film

- Questions for each film segment

#### 11: Story of the Transfer of Knowledge from the Ancients to Islamic Spain to Europe

#### 12: Legend vs. History: Will the Real El Cid Please Stand Up?

#### CONCLUDING ACTIVITIES

#### 6: Tolerance and Intolerance: Conditions and Outcomes

- Questions, Flow Charts & Keys
- Synectics activity

#### 13: Analyzing Secondary Sources: How Do Modern Historians Assess the Significance of Muslim Spain?

- How do historians view the legacy of Spain
- What lessons can we draw from this legacy?

### SPECIAL FEATURE: Historical Fiction *The Sword*

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