Spain

Tinley Park Library
Spain Facts

LAND: Spain is in southwest Europe. Spain can be very hot and dry in the summer. The winters can be cold and wet, especially in the north. However, Spain’s climate is pleasant for most of the year.

GOVERNMENT: For hundreds of years, Spain was a monarchy. In 1931, a republic was formed and the king exiled. A civil war occurred between 1936 and 1939 between republican and nationalist forces. After winning, the nationalist leader General Francisco Franco ruled as a dictator until his death in 1975. Spain is now a constitutional monarchy under King Felipe VI. The royal family live right outside of Madrid, the capital city of Spain.

LANGUAGE: Castilian, or Spanish to the rest of the world, is the official language of Spain. At least 4,000 Arabic words and Arabic-derived phrases have been absorbed in to the Spanish language. However, there are many regional languages. Catalan is spoken in Catalonia in northeastern Spain and resembles French. Galicia, closely related to Portuguese, is spoken on the northwestern coast in Galicia. Basque, or Euskera (yoo-SKAY-rah), is spoken in the Basque Provinces.
Festivals of Spain

Spain is the country of fiestas and festivals! No matter how small the village, each has their own special celebrations.

**THE HOLY WEEK**: Takes place during Easter. It’s an entire week filled with processions and religious celebrations. It is one of the top events in Spain.

**LA TOMATINA**: In Buñol, on the last Wednesday in August, 20,000 people gather to throw tomatoes at one another.

**FIESTAS OF SAN FERMIN**: Internationally, this festival is known as the running of the bulls. It is held every year in Pamplona from July 6-14. Each day, twelve bulls run alongside human runners for about a half mile. It’s a popular but dangerous festival.

**THE FALLAS OF VALENCIA**: For one week, in the middle of March, a wild party takes place in Valencia. Gigantic, colorful statues and figures fill the streets. They are often satirical and reference cultural events that took place throughout the year. On the last night, the statues are burnt during a light show.
Animals: Iberian Lynx

Iberian Lynxes live in the southwest region of Spain. Lynxes grow to 20-28 pounds and 3-4 feet in length. They have large wide-spreading feet that act as snowshoes in the winter. Lynxes have long black ear tufts and a flared facial tuft that resembles a human beard. They have long hind legs and a short black tipped tail.

Lynxes are primarily nocturnal except during the winter months when they have diurnal tendencies.

Lynxes are solitary animals and very territorial. They stay within a 10-mile radius of their den. Lynxes will only leave their territory if food becomes scarce.

Female lynxes produce litters of 2-3 kittens. The kittens become independent at 10 months old. However, they will stay in their mother’s territory until around 20 months old.

The Iberian Lynx is the world’s most endangered cat. There were only 100 lynxes remaining before 2002; thanks to conservation efforts there are 400 adult lynxes at this time.
The Legend of Princess Casilda
by Debbie L. Yanuck

A mean king named Zenón once ruled part of Spain. Beneath King Zenón’s castle were dark prisons. He locked people in the prisons.

King Zenón’s daughter was Princess Casilda. Each morning, the princess picked flowers from the castle gardens. She carried them in her apron back to the castle. No one ever told her about the prisons.

Late one night, Princess Casilda heard people crying. The sound echoed through the large castle until dawn. That morning, the princess asked the servants if they had heard the cries and moans. They whispered never to ask about the noise again.

That night, the princess heard the cries again. With each cry, she felt a pain in her heart. Unable to sleep, she crept from her room and followed the sound. She walked through dark hallways and down stairs she had never seen before.

As she walked, the air grew cold and moist. Spider webs hung from the walls. Still, she followed the sounds until she found guards standing at a gate. Princess Casilda gave gold coins to the guards, who opened the gate. She saw sick and
hungry prisoners. The sight of her father’s prisoners made her sad.

The next morning, Princess Casilda did not go to the gardens. Instead, she went to the kitchen. She carried away scraps of food in her apron. That night, she carried the food to the prisoners. She brought food to the prisoners each day.

King Zenón heard what his daughter was doing. He caught her in the kitchen and asked her what she carried in her apron. Princess Casilda answered that she had only roses in her apron. She hoped her father would not ask to see them. But the king did not believe her. She closed her eyes and slowly opened her apron. The bread and apples she had taken were gone. Instead, roses filled her apron.

The king saw the surprise on his daughter’s face. He knew the food had turned to roses. A miracle had happened. That day, King Zenón freed all his prisoners. He was never cruel again. For many years, the kingdom lived in peace.

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Spanish Arts

**MIGUEL DE CERVANTES**: The author of the famous *Don Quixote*. It is considered to be the first modern novel, and one of the best works of fiction. It has come to symbolize the heroicsness and honor of Spanish life, as Quixote committed his whole self to upholding justice without regard to danger. There is even a monument in the Plaza de España in Madrid dedicated to the work.

**DIEGO VELÁZQUEZ**: One of the most highly regarded of all Spanish painters. He was a court painter for King Philip IV in 1623. In 1650, he created one of his greatest works, a portrait of Pope Innocent X. His masterpiece came towards the end of his life, *Las Meninas* (*The Ladies-in-Waiting*). It is an example to future generations of artists of technical perfection.

**GENERATION OF 1898**: A group of brilliant poets and writers that produced some of the finest literature in Spain. They were the embodiment of new feelings developing toward the emerging Spanish nation. Their goal was to reveal the true soul of the beloved country. They staged a literary revival, advocated political liberalism, and proclaimed a moral and cultural rebirth for Spain.

**SALVADOR DALÍ**: He is most famous for his work in surrealism. It channels the unconscious to unlock the power of imagination. Dalí uses extensive symbolism in his art. One of his most famous paintings is *The Persistence of Memory*. It’s considered one of the greatest masterpieces of the 20th century.
Never Say a Mean Word Again
by Jacqueline Jules

Samuel, the son of the grand vizier, walked into the castle courtyard wearing a flowing purple robe. His eyes were on the flowers and the fountains, not where he was walking.

“OUCH!” Too late. Samuel bumped into Hamza, the tax collector’s son.

“You stepped on me!”

“Sorry,” said Samuel.

“No, you’re not! You think you’re better than everybody else!”

Samuel’s father, the grand vizier, was the most powerful advisor in the royal court. Being the son of an important man didn’t help Samuel make friends.

At the castle banquet, Samuel and Hamza were seated beside each other. Samuel felt uncomfortable. He didn’t know if he should talk to Hamza or ignore him after what had happened in the courtyard.

He bit his lip and picked up his goblet. It slipped out of his fingers. Oh no!

Water landed in Hamza’s plate, sloshing lamb sauce into his lap.

“I’m sorry,” said Samuel for the second time in an hour. “It was an accident.”

Hamza would not accept an apology. “DONKEY BRAIN! STUPID! LOOK WHAT YOU DID!”
The brown stain in the middle of Hamza’s white tunic looked like a mud puddle. Did it give him the right to call Samuel names? Samuel’s father didn’t think so.

“He spoke unkindly,” remarked the vizier as Hamza rushed away.

“Will you punish him?” asked Samuel hopefully. The vizier rubbed his chin.

“No. You will take care of this matter.”

“Me?”

“Yes,” confirmed the vizier. “Make sure Hamza never says a mean word to you again.”

No one ignored the vizier. He was considered the wisest man in the kingdom.

“I will,” promised Samuel.

That night, Samuel stayed awake, thinking. What should he do to Hamza?

He could tie his mouth with a cloth. That would keep Hamza from saying mean words.

“But I don’t know how to make a strong knot,” realized Samuel.

Maybe he could train a monkey to sit on Hamza’s shoulders. The monkey could clamp Hamza’s lips shut. Training a monkey would take time. And where would he get a monkey?

What about lemons? He could make Hamza eat one. That would be good punishment for a boy who said mean things.
“My father will be proud,” thought Samuel.
The next morning, Samuel knocked on Hamza’s door with a large lemon in his hand.
“Lemon juice won’t clean the stain,” Hamza said. “My mother already tried it.”
Samuel hadn’t come to clean Hamza’s clothes! What should he say now?
“That lemon is the size of a ball.” Hamza laughed.
Hamza’s comment gave Samuel an idea for a challenge. “I bet you can’t catch it.”
“I bet I can.” Hamza stepped outside.
They threw the lemon back and forth until it was so battered, it couldn’t have made anyone’s mouth pucker.
The next day, Samuel had a better plan than a lemon. He walked to Hamza’s house with ink and paper. He would make Hamza write out a promise, a promise he could tell the vizier.
But when Hamza opened his door, he didn’t wait to hear what Samuel wanted.
“Paper! I love to draw!”
Together, they drew a picture of the castle on the hill.
Samuel went home that day, worried. Everyone was expected to obey the vizier, especially his own son.
“What if my father asks about Hamza?” wondered Samuel.
Samuel went to Hamza’s house the next day and the next. He tried beating Hamza at chess. It was a tie.

He tried a water fight at the lake. They laughed too much. Soon they became used to seeing each other every day.

One sunny afternoon, the vizier found them in the courtyard playing.

Hamza put four marbles in Samuel’s hand.

“These are for you, my friend,” he said.

The vizier stared at the boys. “What is going on here?”

Samuel gulped, worried his father would be disappointed in him. Then he remembered what the vizier had said at the banquet. “Make sure Hamza never says a mean word to you again.”

“My friend just gave me a gift,” Samuel explained.

The vizier tilted his head. “Then you did what I asked?”

Samuel looked at Hamza’s smiling face. “Yes, father. I did.”

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Early Spain:

Spain has been inhabited for nearly a million years. Caves of the Sierra de Atapuerca, in the northeastern corner of the Castilian plateau, contain fossils of the earliest human beings in Europe. Bones and tools of early humans have also been found at other Spanish sites. The polychrome paintings of bison, horses, and other animals on the ceilings of the caves at Altamira from around 15,000 years ago are the most impressive Stone Age remains.
Ferdinand and Isabella:

King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella united 2 Spanish Kingdoms when they were married. They paid explorers to find new trade routes. One of these, was Christopher Columbus. In 1492, Columbus arrived in the Bahamas and later the coast of South America. He was followed by the conquistadors, who claimed the “New World” in the name of Spain. There is a statue erected of the 3 in Cordoba, Spain.
Flamenco:
The flamenco is an improvised expressive dance. It originated in Andalusia. It takes years of instruction and diligent practice to perfect. The three elements of the flamenco are song, guitar, and dance. Dancers combine subtle arm and hand movements with complex heelwork. The dance can be joyous, passionate, or very sad. Singing-Cante chico, meaning small song, is lightweight and cheerful while the more important cante jondo, meaning deep song, is passionate and sad. Jaleo also accompanies flamenco song, an important element of stamping feet, clapping hands and occasional shouts of “Olé!”
Spanish Real

Escudo

Pesetas
Currency:

Around the mid-14th century, the Spanish Real (meaning royal) coin was introduced as currency. Prior to this, each region had its own form of currency that was able to be traded between areas. Reales were even used in American Spanish colonies.

The escudo coin came into being in 1566 to be used with the real. The gold escudo was used from 1566-1833. The silver escudo was used from 1864-1869 until it was replaced by the Peseta.

Pesetas were in use from 1869 until 2002 when Spain adopted the Euro as its sole form of currency.