

4: Timeline of Medieval Spain

Author: Ernest O’Roark

Overview and Purpose of the Lesson:

The purpose of this lesson is to give students a sense of the chronology and span for the many phases of Islamic Spain’s history. In a text or video presentation, events and their dates are mentioned frequently, but it can be difficult for students to visualize how an event or time period fits into the timeline of the overall story. Dates can quickly become relatively meaningless. By studying a timeline of the major events and periods, students can more easily see the sequence of events and how each time period relates to the others. As an aid to viewing the video, a second, parallel timeline is provided that illustrates the span of each segment of the film.

Performance Objectives:

The student will be able to:

- Identify the major periods of Islamic Spain’s history.
- Calculate the span of time over which each major period took place.

Materials Needed:

- Handout: “Timeline of Medieval Spain” – one for each student or as a class set (requires color printing)
- Handout: “Reading the Timeline of Medieval Spain” – one for each student
- Transparency (optional) of “Timeline of Medieval Spain” or video projector to display the timeline from a computer

Time: One class period or less (not including use in conjunction with viewing the video)

Procedure:

1. If you are using the timeline in conjunction with viewing the video, *Cities of Light: The Rise and Fall of Islamic Spain*, give students the timeline in advance. Using the overhead or a projector discuss the time period shown by the timeline. Point out that all dates are AD (or CE) Review if necessary how spans of time are calculated by subtracting earlier dates from later. Point out and discuss how the video is divided into segments that *do not* represent equal spans of time.
2. Refer to the timeline as part of the discussion following each segment of the film.
3. Following the video, give students the activity, “Reading the Timeline of Medieval Spain.” Assign students to complete it individually or in small groups.
4. When students have completed the activity, discuss the answers, emphasizing the significance of each.

Adaptations:

- Instead of giving students the “Timeline of Medieval Spain,” give students a list of dates, events, and time periods and have students create their own timelines.

- Using Lesson 3: Reading a Historical Map Sequence, have students correlate the maps to points on the timeline when invasions, battles, conquests and other political changes happened.

Assessment:

- Include information from the timeline and the timeline activity on a unit test.

Student Handout 4a: Reading the Timeline of Medieval Spain

Read and analyze the timeline provided to answer these questions.

The Umayyad Dynasty and Caliphate, which began when Abd al-Rahman I became Emir of Cordoba, was the longest period of unified rule in Islamic Spain. It effectively ended when Berbers rebelled after control of the Caliphate was seized by the vizier, Al-Mansur.

1. About how many years did the unified Umayyad Dynasty and Caliphate survive? _____

The Umayyad Caliphate of Cordoba reached its height during the period beginning with the reign of Abd al-Rahman III and ending with the “Time of Fitna.” This period is sometimes referred to as Spain’s “golden age.”

2. How long was this period of Spain’s history? _____

Following the fall of the Caliphate of Cordoba, the once-unified Muslim Spain shattered into many small, rival kingdoms called taifas. This first period of taifa disunity lasted until Berbers from North Africa brought the taifas under their rule.

3. How long did this first taifa period last? _____

Northern Christian kingdoms took advantage of taifa disunity to gradually seize Muslim territories. Berber dynasties from North Africa, the Almoravids and the Almohads, were able to hold off the Christian forces for a time.

4. How long did the Berber dynasties rule Islamic Spain? _____

Christian forces defeated the Almohad army at the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212. Following this defeat, the Almohads withdrew to North Africa leaving the now once-again independent taifas to defend themselves. Christian kingdoms, united by the spirit of the Crusades, conquered most of the weakened taifas, one by one. By the end of this second taifa period, only one taifa remained.

5. How long did the second taifa period last? _____

6. What was the last surviving taifa kingdom? _____

7. How long did it survive? _____

8. What event of the 1300's might have helped to prevent Christian armies from being strong enough to conquer this last taifa?

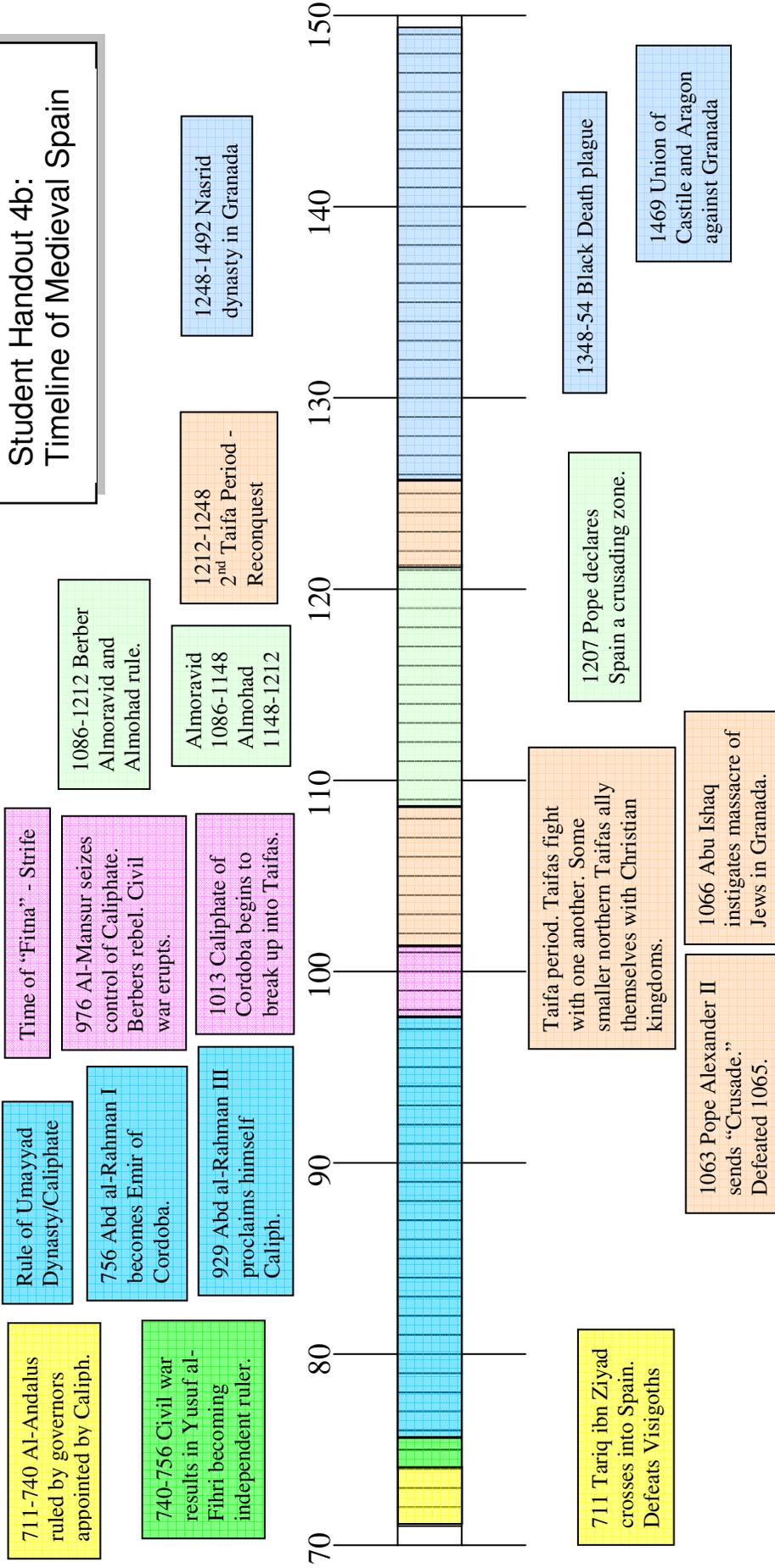
The taking of Toledo by the Christian Alfonso VI of Castile in 1085 was the event that resulted in the Almoravids from North Africa being asked to come help defend the remaining Muslim territories. Toledo became a critical point of contact and transmission between Muslim and Christian cultures as Muslim libraries were studied by Christian scholars and refugees from puritanical Almoravid rule filled the city. This time, during which a great deal of knowledge from the Muslim world was transmitted to Christian Europe, continued until shortly after 1492 when Granada fell to Christian forces and all non-Christians were expelled.

9. For how long did Europe benefit from this flow of knowledge from Muslim Al-Andalus?

Islamic Spain, known as Al-Andalus, was an important and unique center where Muslim, Christian, and Jewish cultures mixed and sometimes collaborated in the collection, preservation, and advancement of knowledge in many fields. Al-Andalus began with Tariq ibn Ziyad and ended with the surrender of Granada.

10. How long did Al-Andalus exist? _____

Student Handout 4b: Timeline of Medieval Spain



Segments of "Cities of Light: The Rise and Fall of Islamic Spain"

