

LEVELED BOOK • T

Spain



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Focus Question

What makes Spain a unique country
that attracts tourists from around
the world?

Words to Know

cultural
industry
monarchy
peninsula
plateau

region
security
strait
tourism

Front cover: A bird's-eye view of the older section of Seville, Spain

Title page: Built in 1904, Casa Batlló in the center of Barcelona was designed by famous architect Antoni Gaudí.

Page 3: A family enjoys a traditional seafood dish in Spain.

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Countries Around the World
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Map of Spain



Where Is It?

Spain is a country located in southwestern Europe on the Iberian **Peninsula**. It lies south of the Pyrenees (PEER-uh-neeze) mountains and stretches all the way to a body of water called the **Strait of Gibraltar**. Spain's neighbors are France to the north and Portugal to the west.

Spain's land area includes the Balearic Islands. These are a string of beautiful islands off the coast of eastern Spain in the Mediterranean Sea.

The capital city of Spain is Madrid. Its population is about 3.3 million, but around 6.5 million people live and work in its surrounding area. Madrid sits on a raised **plateau** about 640 meters (2,100 ft.) above sea level. One of Europe's oldest cities, Madrid is home to several buildings that date back to the 1500s.

The Royal Palace in Madrid is one of the grandest buildings in all of Europe. It has 2,800 rooms and is now used for special parties and events for the state. The Spanish royal family used to live there, but now they stay in a much smaller palace outside of Madrid.



The Royal Palace in Madrid is one of the finest palaces in all of Europe.



Farmers grow more than two hundred types of olives in Spain. Spain overtook Italy in 2014 as the world's largest maker of olive oil.

People

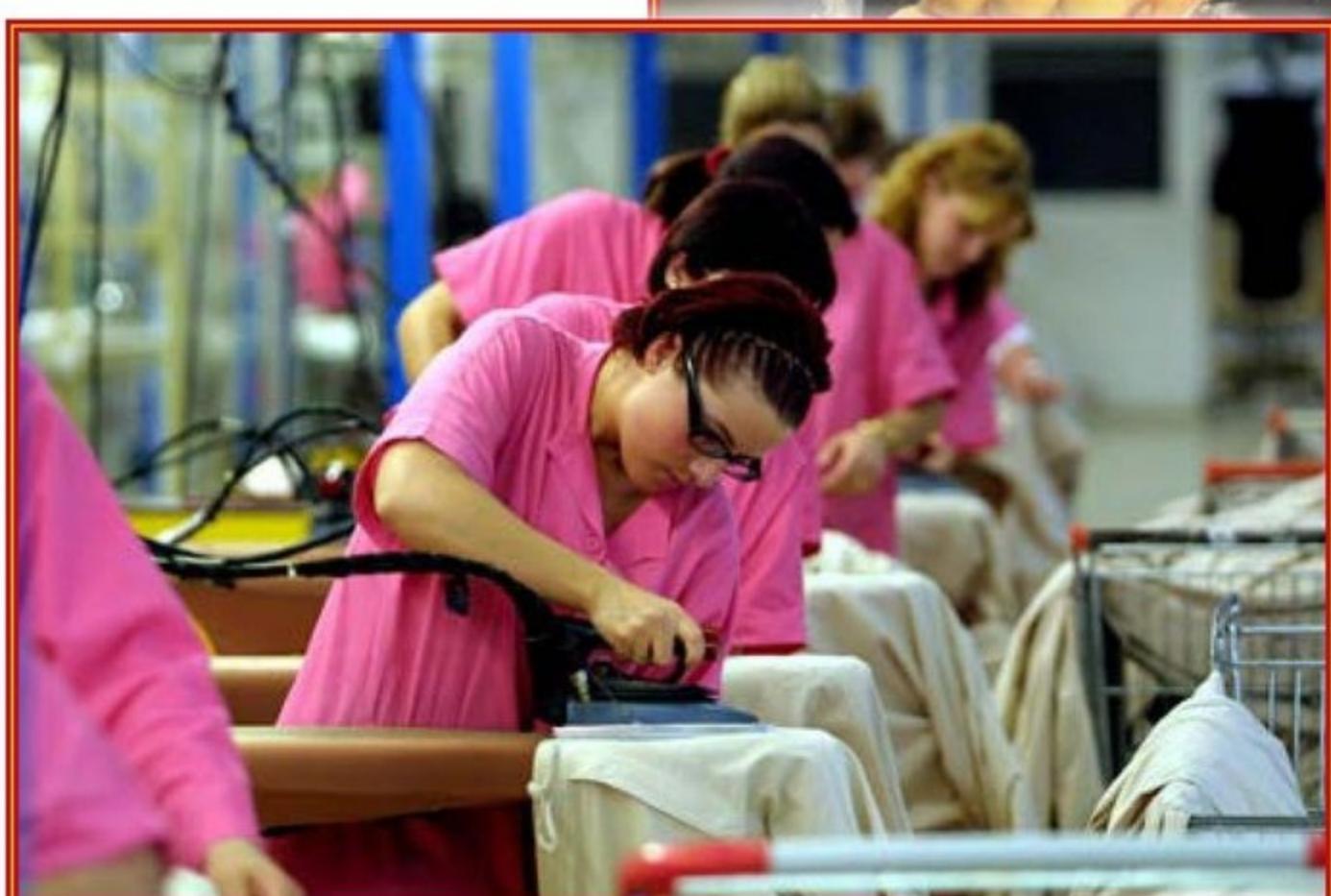
Around forty-eight million people live in Spain. Of those millions of people, most live in cities like Madrid, Barcelona, and Valencia.

Tourism is very important in Spain and employs about two million people. The car **industry** is one of Spain's largest employers as well. People also work in the food, clothing, shipbuilding, and medical-equipment industries. On top of that, Spain makes more olive oil than any other country in the world.

Spain belongs to the European Union (EU). The European Union began with the countries of Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, and Luxembourg as members. The EU wants countries to work together to solve common concerns such as trade, **security**, and the rights of citizens. As of 2015, the EU had twenty-eight member nations.

Spain's official language is Spanish. Depending on the **region**, people sometimes speak other languages.

A woman buys fruits in a market in Andalusia, Spain (right). Workers prepare clothing to be sold in stores (below).



Spain's Landforms



Land

Spain's landscape ranges from high plateaus to dry desert-like regions. A plateau in central Spain called the Meseta Central covers about half the country. At the Meseta Central's southern edge are the beautiful Sierra Morena mountains. People mine silver, lead, and copper and raise farm animals there.

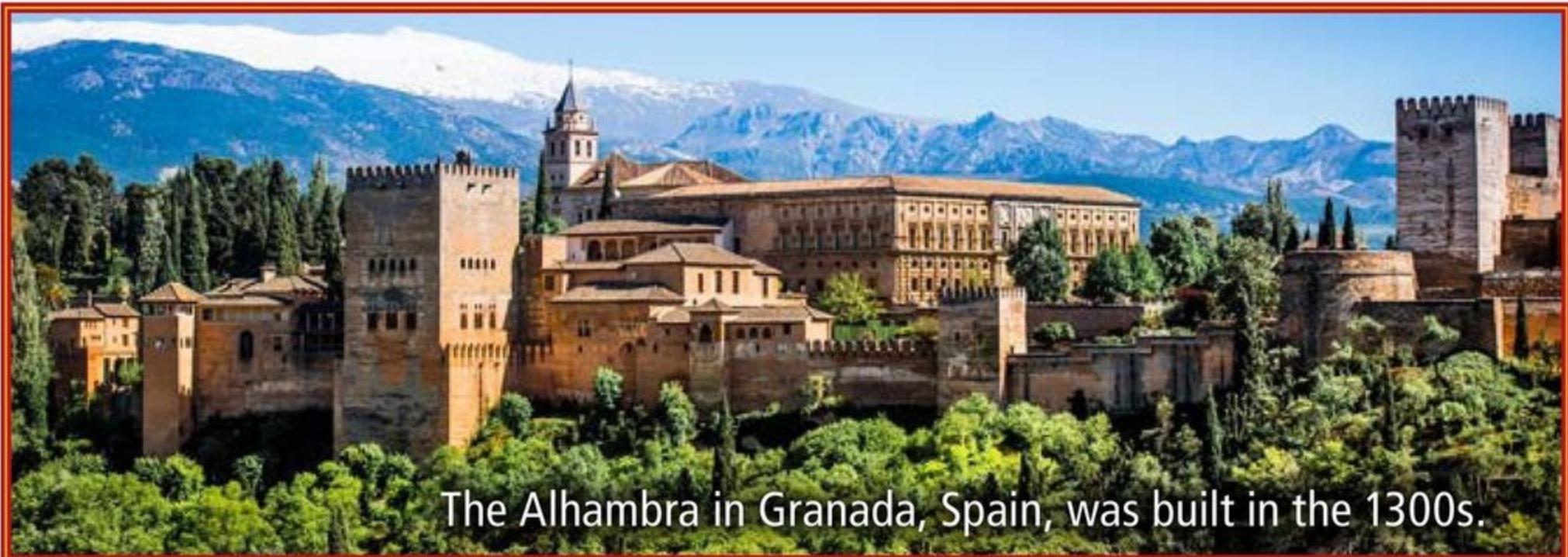
Southern Spain also has the craggy Sierra Nevada mountains. To the north, the Pyrenees mountains form a solid border between Spain and France. These mountain ranges along with Spain's plentiful beaches make a beautiful landscape that people enjoy.

The Pyrenees mountain chain stretches 434 kilometers (270 mi.), from the eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea to the Atlantic Ocean in the west. The Pyrenees mountains form a high wall between France and Spain. They are divided into three different regions—the eastern, central, and western zones.

People live in each of the different zones, and each area has its own kinds of weather. Different types of animals live there as well. The rare bearded vulture and a type of goat-antelope known for its climbing skills call these mountains home.

The Pyrenees mountains border France and Spain.





The Alhambra in Granada, Spain, was built in the 1300s.

History

People from the Middle East settled southern Spain around 800 BC. These people were great sailors and were known for their shipbuilding and glassmaking skills.

Greek traders also came to Spain, bringing with them olive trees and grapes. Then, several hundred years later, the Romans arrived and built many roads and bridges to connect towns. They also built canals, or ditches, to carry water from rivers to nearby cities.

Another group of people from the north arrived after the Romans. They designed and made colorful, beautiful jewelry.

In the AD 700s, different people came from northern Africa to Spain and took control. Some of their buildings can still be seen, such as the palace that stands in Granada today.

Several hundred years later, in the 1400s, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella came to power and ruled Spain. Ferdinand and Isabella paid explorers such as Christopher Columbus to find new trade routes for Spain. Spanish colonies were set up in the New World (North and South America today), and gold, silver, and jewels were sent to Spain. This time was the “Golden Age” of Spain.

Over time, much of the wealth Spain collected from the colonies was spent on wars with other countries. Spain’s wealth began to disappear, along with its power.

During the 1800s and early 1900s, there was unrest throughout Spain. As a result, the Spanish Civil War began in 1936 and lasted until 1939.

When the war ended, Francisco Franco became the country’s leader. Franco died in 1975, and Spain made a new kind of government in 1978. They still had a **monarchy** with a king or queen, but the ability to rule and to pass laws was in the hands of elected officials. This government leads Spain today.



La Tomatina is likely the world's biggest tomato fight. At this festival, people throw truckloads of ripened tomatoes at one another—just for fun.

Celebrations

Spaniards enjoy celebrating local holidays called *fiestas*, or festivals. Fiestas include dancing, singing, and fireworks.

St. George's Day, on April 23, is a time for people to give loved ones books and red roses. In July, the city of Pamplona hosts the Festival of San Fermín. During this festival, men and women try to dodge bulls as they run through the streets of Pamplona. The run only lasts about three or four minutes, but it causes plenty of excitement!

National Day—the date that marks Christopher Columbus's arrival in the Americas—takes place on October 12. Spanish people celebrate this day as one of the many achievements Spain has had in the world.

Food

The Spanish eat three meals a day. Many people enjoy a sweet roll and milk or hot chocolate for breakfast. Lunch—the biggest meal—includes soup, salad, a main course, and dessert. For dinner, people eat salads and sandwiches.

Each region in Spain has a different kind of food. People by the sea usually serve seafood. People in central Spain often eat beans, lentils, lamb, and pork. The Spanish enjoy *gazpacho* in the warm months. Gazpacho is a cold soup made with tomatoes and other vegetables.

Tapas

Tapas are finger foods. They might be olives, nuts, or meats and can be eaten cold or hot. People serve shrimp and squid along the Spanish coasts, while people serve sausages inland.

Tapas include a variety of bite-size appetizers. The word *tapa* means “lid” in Spanish.





Antoni Gaudí designed this remarkable church, which stands in Barcelona, Spain. Construction began in 1882 and still continues.

Conclusion

Spain's story is important to all of us. The Spanish people love their rich history. They are proud of the **cultural** contributions they have made to the world and the artists and builders that have made Spain so special.

There is no other country like Spain. From its breathtaking land to its fun fiestas, Spain helps make our world a more interesting place to live in.



Population: 48,146,134

Land: 498,980 sq km (310,052 sq. mi.)

Capital City: Madrid

Primary Language: Castilian Spanish
(74% of population)

Primary Religion: Roman Catholic

Name of Currency: euro



Source: Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook (2015)

Glossary

cultural (<i>adj.</i>)	of or relating to the beliefs, customs, language, or arts of a particular group of people (p. 14)
industry (<i>n.</i>)	a group of businesses that sell or create the same product or services (p. 6)
monarchy (<i>n.</i>)	a government ruled by a single, nonelected person, such as a king or queen (p. 11)
peninsula (<i>n.</i>)	a long piece of land almost completely surrounded by water (p. 4)
plateau (<i>n.</i>)	a large raised area of flat land (p. 5)
region (<i>n.</i>)	a specific place, location, or area (p. 7)
security (<i>n.</i>)	the state of being protected from danger, loss, or threat (p. 7)
strait (<i>n.</i>)	a narrow passage of water connecting two large areas of water (p. 4)
tourism (<i>n.</i>)	the business of providing services for people who travel for pleasure (p. 6)

Spain

A Reading A-Z Level T Leveled Book

Word Count: 1047

Connections

Writing

Imagine opening a restaurant in a region of Spain. Think about the foods that are common in the area. Use information from the book and outside resources to create a menu for your restaurant.

Social Studies

Make a travel brochure for Spain. Include information about its history, sites tourists should visit, and other interesting facts about the country.



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