UNIT 4:
AL-ANDALUS
1. What are we going to learn?

For almost 800 years, from 711 to 1492, Muslim rulers controlled parts of the Iberian Peninsula. This had a huge impact on its history and culture.

In this chapter we will learn about:

- what happened to the Iberian Peninsula after the fall of the Western Roman Empire
  - the Muslim conquest
- life under Muslim rule in Al-Andalus
2. THE VISIGOTHS

THE VISIGOTHS IN HISPANIA

- The Visigoths were a Germanic tribe from eastern Europe. In 410 they invaded Rome, under their leader Alaric. Nevertheless, they became allies of the Romans. They established a kingdom in the Roman province of Gaul (France). Their capital city was Touluse.

- Next the Visigoths attacked and defeated the Germanic tribes in the Iberian Peninsula: the Vandals, the Alans and the Suevi. This gave them control of most of the Iberian Peninsula, as well as the south of France.

- This only lasted for a short time: in 507 the Franks forced them out of Gaul. Now the Visigoths only controlled the Iberian Peninsula, which they called Hispania.

- In 589, King Reccared converted the Visigoths to Roman Catholicism. They now recognized the pope as the leader of the Christian Church.
Situación del Reino Visigodo en el año 569
3. THE MUSLIMS INVASION OF HISPANIA

- In 711, the Umayyad general Tariq ibn Ziyad crossed the Strait of Gibraltar with a small army of Berbers and Arabs. There were internal conflicts in Hispania, so some Visigoths also supported Tariq. At the battle of Guadalete, he defeated the Visigoth army. Roderic, the Visigoth king, was killed.

- The Emir of North Africa Musa bin Nusayr al-Balawi now came with more soldiers. Together, Tariq and Musa conquered most of Hispania quite easily. The Muslims called the area that they had conquered Al-Andalus.

- The history of Al-Andalus can be divided into five periods. These are shown on the timeline on the next page.
The conquest of Al-Andalus was very fast due to:

- The Visigothic kingdom was not united and its king had little power.
- Muslims were very fast.
- The pacts of the Muslims with the local people, which allowed them to keep their religion.
- In just 5 years, Muslims occupied almost the entire Iberian Peninsula.
- The Muslims were stopped in two battles:
  - Covadonga (722, Asturias), his hero was Don Pelayo
  - Poitiers (732, Francia)
- The history of Al-Andalus can be divided into 5 periods, which you can see in the following timeline.
4. TIMELINE OF AL-ANDALUS

**DEPENDENT EMIRATE**
- 711-14: The Muslim army conquers most of Hispania
- 750: The Abbasids overthrow the last Umayyad caliph in Damascus

**INDEPENDENT EMIRATE**
- 929: Emir Abd ar-Rahman III declares himself Caliph of Córdoba
- 756: The Umayyad prince Abd ar-Rahman I defeats the governor of Al-Andalus, and becomes Emir of Córdoba
- 1031: The Caliphate disintegrates into several smaller kingdoms called Taifas
- 1085: The Christians take Toledo
- 1086: The Almoravids defeat the Christians at the battle of Sagrajas
- 1147: The Almohads take control

**CALIPHATE OF CÓRDOBA**
- 800: The Emirate of Córdoba is governed by the Umayyad dynasty
- 900: It is independent from the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad
- 1100: The Emirate becomes more prosperous
- 1212: The Christian kings defeat the Almohads at the battle of Navas de Tolosa. Afterwards, the Christians soon take cities in Andalusia like Jaén, Córdoba and Seville

**TAIFAS AND NORTH AFRICAN RULERS**
- 929: Emir Abd ar-Rahman III declares himself Caliph of Córdoba
- 1085: The Christians take Toledo
- 1086: The Almoravids defeat the Christians at the battle of Sagrajas
- 1147: The Almohads take control

**KINGDOM OF GRANADA**
- 1492: Isabella and Ferdinand conquer Granada. Boabdil is the last Muslim king in Al-Andalus
- Granada is the only Muslim kingdom left in the Iberian Peninsula. It covers the modern provinces of Málaga, Granada and Almería
- Granada is ruled by the Nasrid Dynasty
- Many Muslims leave other parts of the peninsula and go to the kingdom of Granada
- The kingdom is prosperous, but its army is weak. This means that it has to pay tribute to the Kingdom of Castile
Los Reinos Nazarí, imagen extraída de Wikipedia
Ejercicios en la libreta:

Para la próxima clase hay que traer los apuntes en tu libreta junto con el eje cronológico.
REMEMBER THIS VOCABULARY:

- **Emir:** Person in charge of a region, like a governor.
- **Emirate:** the area controlled by an emir.
- **Caliph:** Muslim political and religious leader.
- **Caliphate:** the area ruled by caliph. A caliphate contained several emirates.
- **Vizier:** Ministers.
- **Coras:** Al-Andalus was divided in this provinces.
- **Vali:** Governor in charge of a province
5. Society in Al-Andalus

• Hispania had a diverse population before the Muslim invasion in 711. Although the rulers were Visigoths, most ordinary people were the descendants of Roman citizens. There was also a big Jewish community.

• In the beginning, the Muslim rulers treated the Christians and Jews quite well, so most of them stayed in Al-Andalus. Most of the time everyone lived together peacefully, but sometimes there were conflicts. The conflicts were not just between Muslims and Christians: sometimes the Berbers rebelled against the Arabs.

• Later, the Almoravids and Almohads were less tolerant of non-Muslims, so under their rule many Christians and Jews escaped to the Christian kingdoms in the north.
5.1 SOCIETY IN AL-ANDALUS

**ARABS:** There were not many Arabs, but they had the most privileges. They were given the best land. The Muslim leaders were mainly Arabs.

**BERBERS:** Most of the ordinary soldiers were Berbers from North Africa. There were more Berbers. They were the majority of the population in Al-Andalus, but the Arabs considered them second-rate Muslims.

**MULADIES:** Christian converts to Islam. Many people converted, so they eventually became the majority of the population. Some people converted because Muslims paid less taxes than non-Muslims.

**MOZARABS:** Christians. At first some Christians had important jobs in the government, but gradually they lost influence. The religious opening allowed them to exist in Al-Andalus.

**JEWS:** Many Jews were merchants, and they played an important role in the economy of Al-Andalus. They lived in secluded neighborhoods (Jewish quarters).
6. THE ECONOMY OF AL-ANDALUS

• **AGRICULTURE:** The Muslims grew crops like olives, sugar cane, rice, wheat, citrus fruits, apricots, grapes and cotton. The climate was dry, so they needed good irrigation. They built channels to carry the water to the fields, and they put waterwheels in the rivers. This made agriculture much more productive.
• **TRADE:** The Muslim world extended from the Iberian Peninsula to India, and merchants travelled all around it, buying and selling products. Al-Andalus exported silk and copper, and imported slaves and gold.

• In cities like Córdoba, Seville and Zaragoza it was even possible to buy ceramics made in China.

• The Muslims used gold and silver coins called dinars (top) and dirhams (bottom).

• **ARTISANS:** The Muslims brought many new technologies with them, like production of silk. Artisans also made high-quality ceramics, weapons and jewellery.
• **THE SILK INDUSTRY:** Silk was a luxury item in the Middle Ages, and only rich people could afford it. The Arabs were experts at making silk, and brought their knowledge with them to Al-Andalus. Soon the high-quality silk from Granada became an important export product. during the Nasrid period, one of the main reasons for Granada’s wealth was its silk industry.

• Silk comes from silk worms, which will only eat mulberry leaves. The climate of the Alpujarras, near Granada, was perfect for mulberry trees, so Granada became the centre of the silk industry.

• Did you know? Muslim men are not allowed to wear silk, because it is considered to be too feminine.
The Emirs and caliphs of Córdoba encouraged learning and culture. They supported the world of letters, philosophy, poetry, music, medicine, science and astronomy. In most of Europe, many of the discoveries of the Ancient Greeks had been forgotten, but in Córdoba there was a library with 400,000 books, including translations of Ancient Greek texts. Most monasteries in Western Europe only had a few hundred books, so scholars from all over Europe visited Córdoba.
LA FILOSOFÍA: when Christian thought reigned in Europe, Al-Andalus introduced the Greek philosophy of Plato and Aristotle. It starts the thinking of "rationalism" that defended that the truth can only be known through rationing and thought, and not only through religious faith. His featured character was:

- **AVERROES (1126-1198):** Averroes was the greatest philosopher of Al-Andalus. His most famous books are his commentaries on the works of the Greek philosophers Aristotle and Plato. They were later translated into Latin, which helped to spread Classical culture to Western Europe. Averroes wasn’t just a philosopher: he also wrote books about theology, mathematics, physics, medicine, astronomy and geography.
THE SCIENCES: when Europe was behind in feudalism, in Al-Andalus the greatest scientific innovations of the Middle Ages were developed. Thanks to their contact with India, they brought items such as paper or gunpowder, which reached Europe through Al-Andalus. The Andalusians were the first to develop the astrolabe, the compass or nautical maps.

With regard to medicine, while Europe was mired in plague, Andalusians developed “preventive medicine” to avoid contagion. Andalusian doctors were famous and wrote the main medical treatises of the Middle Ages. His featured character was:
MAIMÓNIDES (1135-1204): The Jewish philosopher Maimónides was born in Córdoba during the Almoravid period. He wrote many books on medicine and philosophy. When the Almohads conquered Córdoba in 1148, Jews had to choose between converting to Islam death, or exile. For the next ten years, Maimónides’ family kept moving from one place to another in the south of Spain, trying to escape the Almohads. Eventually the moved to Egypt, where Maimónides became the sultan’s doctor.
Ejercicios en la libreta:

Para la próxima clase hay que traer los apuntes en tu libreta junto con el eje cronológico.
Most people in Al-Andalus lived in the countryside. However, the Muslims improved irrigation, and this made agriculture much more productive. Now farmers produced more food than they needed for themselves, and so fewer people needed to work in the countryside. The number of artisans increased, and the cities grew quickly.

The old Roman cities in Iberian Peninsula had become less important during the Visigothic period, and many of them were in ruins. The Muslims built new cities on top of them. Córdoba, the capital of Al-Andalus, became one of the biggest and most important cities in the world.
8.1 A CITY IN AL-ANDALUS

Narrow, winding streets: The Christians normally lived in the same areas as the Muslims and the Jews lived in a separate district.

Hammam: Public baths were men and women went separately.

Mezquita: Se encontraba siempre en el centro de la ciudad.

Main square: people went to the main square to meet friends.

The souk: (market) was where people came to do business.

Alcázar: (fortress) was in a high place on the edge of the town, and this was where the government officials lived.

The gates: were closed at night.

Thick walls: protected the city.

Alhóndigas: Warehouses where the merchants stored their products.

Imagen extraída de Linguaframe
• **An Andalus house:** Most people in the cities of Al-Andalus lived in small houses on narrow streets. On the outside, the houses were very plain, as the main focus of the house was the central patio (right). There were more windows facing inwards than outwards: this gave protection and privacy. There was very little furniture in the houses. People sat on the floor, on carpets or on cushions, and they had small, low tables. Water and olive oil were stored in big jars.
9. ARCHITECTURE

Many great buildings were constructed in Al-Andalus, in a style that combined Visigothic and Islamic influences. The Muslims used everyday materials like bricks, plaster and tiles, but their buildings were beautifully decorated. Here are some of the decorative features they used.

- **The horseshoe arch:** was first used by the Visigoths, but it is one of the typical features of Moorish architecture (the architecture of Al-Andalus).

- **Multifoil arches:** consist of a series of semi-circles, joined together to make a single arch.

- **Mocárabes:** Some people think the stalactite design is supposed to remind people of the cave where Muhammad received the Koran.
**Decoration:** Muslims are not allowed to show humans or animals in their art, so they decorated their buildings with geometric patterns, vegetal patterns and Arabic calligraphy.

**Brightly-coloured tiles:** were especially used to decorate the bottom part of walls. The tiles were normally blue, green, black or yellow.
• They were also great craftsmen.

• Of course, never forget that there is no Muslim sculpture. Arabs do not decorate with human or animal figures. That is why the "fountain of the lions" of the Alhambra is so well known and important, because it is a Muslim fountain with sculptures of lions, something unprecedented in Muslim art.
9.1 The Great Mosque of Córdoba
(8th - 10th century)

This was the main mosque in Córdoba, which was gradually made bigger as the population of Córdoba increased. It was built on the site of a Roman temple and a Christian church. When the Christian kings took control of Córdoba they added many new features. The building is now the city’s cathedral. The rook of the prayer hall is supported by columns made of jasper, onyx, marble, and granite. The double arches above the columns were a new idea to make the ceiling higher.
The Nasrid kingdom in Granada was politically weak, but it produced some of the greatest Moorish architecture in Al-Andalus. It was influenced both by earlier Islamic architecture and by the Christian kingdoms. The most famous example of Nasrid architecture is the Alhambra in Granada.

Water was used to make the palaces feel cooler. The water was also symbolic in various ways. Firstly, water purifies and gives life. Secondly, the beautiful reflections show the surrounding buildings moving (this symbolises the belief that only Allah is unchanging).
9.3 Medina Azahara

Its name means "the shining city" and it is the palatine city that Caliph Abderramán III ordered to be built. Legend tells it was a city built as a tribute to his favorite woman: Azahara. Due to the uneven terrain, the city is built on three terraces: the first with the caliph's residence, the second for the official area of the viziers, administrative offices and gardens, and the third, with the city and the mosque.
Ejercicio en el blog:

Para la fecha que indique la profesora, hay que realizar el siguiente ejercicio en el blog:

- Investiga en internet y publica una entrada hablando sobre la mezquita de Córdoba o Medina Azahara.

**Recuerda:** Adjunta imágenes para que quede el blog completo y elegante y no olvides mencionar las fuentes.
Ejercicios en la libreta:

Para la próxima clase hay que traer los apuntes en tu libreta junto con el eje cronológico.
Glossary

http://www.students.linguaframe.com/gh2-audio-glossary

alcázar, alhóndigas, arab, berber, caliph, caliphate, emir, emirate, hammam, medina, mozarabs, muladies, souk, taifas, visigoths, Black death, moriscos, mozarabs, taifas
El texto de los siguientes apuntes ha sido realizado con un total fin educativo y no lucrativo. Las imágenes extraídas para su elaboración han sido recopiladas de webs de internet mencionadas, y en su mayoría de Wikipedia. En el caso que reconociera alguna imagen como suya y tuviera copyright, por favor, hágalo saber a leccionesdehistoria@gmail.com y ésta será retirada lo más breve posible.