

**THE VALLEY OF THE  
FALLEN: A  
CONTROVERSIAL  
MONUMENT**



# THE VALLEY OF THE FALLEN: A CONTROVERSIAL MONUMENT

## Description

Students in this lesson will interpret written text in the target language regarding the controversy surrounding the Valley of the Fallen, compare and contrast both sides of the argument, then develop a logical argument as to whether Franco's remains should remain at the Valley or be moved to a different location. Students will then use debate structure and expressions to debate, in a formal setting, the future of Franco's remains.

## Subjects

Spanish

## Grade Level

11-12

## Duration

90 minutes

## Tour Links

- [The Valley of the Fallen, El Escorial](#)

## Essential Questions

- Should the remains of former dictator Francisco Franco be moved from the Valley of the Fallen, a site that, because of his presence, has come to be known as a symbol of fascism?
- How can debate structure and expressions be used to develop and implement a logical argument?

## Academic Summary

On April 1, 1939, the Nationalists entered the Spanish capital of Madrid and received the surrender of the Republican army. After nearly three years of conflict, the Spanish Civil War had been, for lack of better words, resolved. Emerging victorious was Francisco Franco, Generalísimo of the Nationalist faction. He immediately had the Spanish Parliament dissolved, and took over as dictator of Spain.

As a “national act of atonement”, Franco ordered the construction of the Valle de los Caídos (Valley of the Fallen) as a burial place for those who died “for Spain” during the Spanish Civil War. After over 18 years of construction, the monument was finally inaugurated on April 1, 1959. The finished memorial consists of a huge underground crypt hewn out of stone, which functions as a church maintained by Benedictine monks, and a 500-foot cross of concrete faced with stone.

Of all the remains in the Valley, only those of two people can be found inside the walls of the basilica today. One is José Antonio Primo de Rivera, founder of the Falange movement, who died on November 20, 1936. The other is Francisco Franco himself, who died exactly 39 years after, on November 20, 1975. Because of this coincidence, Franco supporters flock to the Valley on November 20 each year. To this day, fresh flowers can still be seen on Franco’s gravestone.

In October of 2007, the Franco Regime was formally condemned by the constitutional monarchy of Spain with what is known (in English) as the Historical Memory Law. This opened up discussion on the Valley of the Fallen, which had come to be known as a symbol of fascism. On November 29, 2011, the Expert Commission for the Future of the Valley of the Fallen was formed, with its main purpose being to advise the government on what to do with the memorial, specifically in regards to the remains of Franco.

What would the committee decide? Would Franco’s remains be moved to a different location, in an act of respect towards the fallen Republicans, some of which died constructing the monument? Or would the site be preserved as a museum, to warn future generations of the dangers of Fascism?

Students in this lesson will interpret written text in the target language regarding the controversy surrounding the Valley of the Fallen, compare and contrast both sides of the argument, then develop a logical argument as to whether Franco’s remains should remain at the Valley or be moved to a different location. Students will then use debate structure and expressions to debate, in a formal setting, the future of Franco’s remains.

## Objectives

1. Students will interpret written text in the target language regarding the controversy surrounding the Valley of the Fallen.
2. Students will compare and contrast two sides of an argument, using the target language.
3. Students will develop a logical argument as to whether Franco’s remains should remain at the Valley or be moved to a different location.
4. Students will use debate structure and expressions to debate, in a formal setting, the future of Franco’s remains.

## Materials

- *Fases de un debate / Expresiones útiles* Handout (double-sided)
- *Valle de los Caídos: Lado A* Handout (double-sided)
- *Valle de los Caídos: Lado B* Handout (double-sided)
- Spanish-English Dictionaries
- Highlighters

# Procedures

## I. Anticipatory Set (10 min)

- Present three different situations to the students: a toddler who has had his/her favorite toy taken by another child, a couple of teenage girls that are superfans of rival boy bands, and an athlete that does not agree with a referee's call. How might these people express themselves in the given situations?
- Class Discussion: Would a politician or national leader express themselves in this way? Why or why not? What are more appropriate and professional ways to express an opinion or have an argument? Brainstorm ideas on the board.

## II. Body of Lesson (70 min)

- Introduce the subject of formal debates. Some people debate for sport, others debate as a way of bringing attention to both sides of an issue. Some of the most famous debates are the U.S. presidential debates. This is an example of a type of debate that does not have an official winner, but is simply used to showcase two opposing opinions of the same topic.
- Debate Phases/Expressions: Debates are formal, and so have a specific order and structure of events. Pass out the *Fases de un debate / Expresiones útiles* handout. Review as a class and clarify information as needed.
- Explain to students that today in class they will be having a formal debate on an actual controversial issue. The class will be split into two sides- the Proposition and the Opposition. Each side will construct their argument as a group, then elect four speakers to represent them in the official debate.
- Before Debate Activity: Give half of the class the *Valle de los Caídos: Lado A* handout, and the other half the *Valle de los Caídos: Lado B* handout. Explain that each handout represents a different side of an issue that will be discussed in the debate. Give students time to read the handout and highlight any information they believe will be helpful in the debate. Afterwards, clarify what the Valley of the Fallen is, and how the issue at hand is whether to remove Franco's body from the site or let it remain. Be sure not to delve into too many details, as this is the purpose of the debate.
- Constructing the Argument: Split the receivers of each type of handout into two groups. There should now be four different groups: 1A, 2A, 1B and 2B. Combine groups 1A and 2B, and 2A and 1B. Now there should be two groups, both of which have experts from both sides of the issue. Label each group as Lado A or Lado B. Give students time to meet as a group, share what they have learned from their handout, construct an argument for their side, write cue cards and elect four speakers to represent them during the debate.
- The Debate: Have the eight speakers (four from each side) step forward with their *Fases de un debate / Expresiones útiles* handouts and debate whether Franco's body should remain at the Valley or be moved, using the debate structure reviewed previously.  
Suggestion: It would be helpful to have the Phases of Debate on the board or on a projector screen so that everyone can follow along with ease.

## III. Closure (10 min)

- Recap: In your opinion, do you believe that the Valley of the Fallen is a positive or negative symbol? Should Franco's body be moved? Take a class vote.
- Homework: The Valley of the Fallen is not the only controversial monument in existence. Research other controversial monuments from around the world.

Pick one and write two 5-7 sentence paragraphs about it (using the target language)- one from the standpoint that it is a positive symbol, and the other from the standpoint that it is a negative symbol.

## Extension

### On four: The Valley of the Fallen, El Escorial

In 2011, a committee was given five months to decide what to do with the Valley of the Fallen. Before this time, there were no plaques of commemoration for anyone other than Francisco Franco and José Antonio Primo de Rivera on site, and no information available for visitors regarding the site's history. Examine the site at the time of your trip. Does it appear that any measures have been taken to transform the monument from a glorification of the Franco regime to a historical place meant to educate people about the dangers of fascism?

## Web Links

- [passports.com/group\\_leaders/on\\_the\\_road/spain/valley\\_of\\_the\\_fallen](http://passports.com/group_leaders/on_the_road/spain/valley_of_the_fallen)  
“Valley of the Fallen” – an On the Road essay by Passports Educational Travel. Written from the viewpoint of a Passports courier.
- [passports.com/group\\_leaders/on\\_the\\_road/spain/historical\\_sketch](http://passports.com/group_leaders/on_the_road/spain/historical_sketch)  
“Spain: Historical Sketch” – an On the Road essay by Passports Educational Travel. Written from the viewpoint of a Passports courier. A brief history of Spain, from its origin until the Spanish Civil War.
- [passports.com/group\\_leaders/on\\_the\\_road/spain/country\\_profile](http://passports.com/group_leaders/on_the_road/spain/country_profile)  
“Country Profile: Spain” – an On the Road essay by Passports Educational Travel. Written from the viewpoint of a Passports courier. An overview of Spanish culture – including food, art and architecture – plus a brief historical sketch of the country.
- [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-14189534](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-14189534)  
“Fate of Franco’s Valley of Fallen reopens Spain wounds” by Sarah Rainsford – BBC, July 2011. Article written at the time a committee was appointed to make changes to the Valley of the Fallen.
- [www.nytimes.com/2011/06/22/world/europe/22iht-spain22.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/22/world/europe/22iht-spain22.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)  
“Spain Examines Future of Fascist Monument, and Franco’s Remains” by Raphael Minder – The New York Times, June 2011. Article examines the challenges faced by the committee, as well as explores possible changes that could be made to the controversial monument.
- [elpais.com/elpais/2011/06/12/inenglish/1307856044\\_850210.html](http://elpais.com/elpais/2011/06/12/inenglish/1307856044_850210.html)  
“A valley for all of the fallen?” by Natalia Junquera – El País, 2011. Article explores the controversy surrounding the monument, and includes a “What would you do with the Valley?” feature, which showcases local opinions about what should be done with the Valley in the future.
- [www.theguardian.com/world/2008/jul/07/spain](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/jul/07/spain)  
“Spain: Anger over republicans buried in Franco’s tomb” by Graham Keeley – The Guardian, 2008. Article includes anecdotes about relatives of the fallen who demand the return of the remains of their loved ones from the Valley.
- [www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=120251938](http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=120251938)  
“Spain To Uncover Past in ‘Valley of the Fallen’” by Jerome Socolovsky – NPR, 2009. Article covers the then recent vote to identify the remains of thousands of casualties from the Spanish Civil War at the Valley.



## Key Terms

- **adecuado, -a** adequate
- **asegurar** to assure
- **el castigo** punishment
- **estar sujeto a** to be subject to
- **funcionar** to function
- **la garantía** guarantee
- **la (in)justicia** (in)justice
- **el juicio** judgment
- **juzgar** to judge
- **maltratar** to mistreat
- **mundial** worldwide
- **obligar** to force
- **la paz** peace
- **la prensa** the press
- **proponer** to propose, to suggest
- **la propuesta** proposal
- **el punto de vista** point of view
- **satisfactorio, -a** satisfactory
- **sufrir** to suffer
- **la tolerancia** tolerance
- **tratar** to treat
- **el valor** value
- **violar** to violate
- **votar** to vote
  
- **ambos** both
- **ante** before, in the presence of
- **de ese modo** in that way
- **de modo que** so, so that
- **en cuanto a** with respect to
- **la falta de** lack of
- **llegar a** to reach, to get to
- **por un lado** on the one hand
- **por otro lado** on the other hand





