



Lesson Plan 1b: Spain & Catalonia – A Thematic Introduction to Dalí

In this lesson, students first watch the *Get Surreal with Salvador Dalí* video which familiarizes them with Dalí and Surrealism and why the two are significant (more of this will be developed in Lessons 2 & 3). More importantly for this lesson, however, students begin placing the artist in very specific historical and cultural contexts. They identify on maps where Dalí grew up, traveled and lived, they explain why he moved when and where he did, and then they read a short essay on Catalan and Spanish cultures. For homework—or for further discussion if there is time in class—students are asked to identify similarities between their own cultures and the Catalan culture they learned about in class.

MATERIALS & RESOURCES

- *Get Surreal with Salvador Dalí*.
- World Map
- Map of Spain
- Copies of Essay, “Catalonia: A Long History of Independence”

ACTIVITY

1. Post-Movie Discussion (In-class)

Salvador Dalí was one of the most flamboyant, memorable characters of the Twentieth Century, so it shouldn't be difficult for your students to remember who he is. Ask your students to name some of the more memorable aspects of Dalí's character as the movie presents them: the flying moustache, outrageous accents, pictures of Dalí with bread on his head, etc. Dalí's own craziness bridges nicely to the apparent craziness of Surrealism, so ask your students to remember a bit of what Surrealism is like and what it stems from: dreams, the imagination, the unconscious, juxtaposition of unlike images, etc. The following lessons—and the tour—will return to these subjects in more depth so it's not important to go into great detail here.

Most importantly for this lesson is to ask your students where Dalí grew up and where he traveled and lived throughout his lifetime. Using the world map and map of Spain, locate these places and discuss why Dalí lived or moved there. Sometimes he moved because of a war, sometimes to meet other artists, sometimes to go to school, sometimes to sell his work. Then, consulting the Dalí Chronology, locate on the map other significant places in Dalí's career and explore why they were significant too.

2. Reading & Writing (In-class or as homework)

Read the following essay about Catalonia, Salvador Dalí's homeland in Spain. Then think of as many things that the United States—or your state, or your homeland, or your family, etc.—have in common with Catalonia. Make a list of these things on a separate sheet of paper and explain your reasoning.

Catalonia: A Long History of Independence

It's not too surprising to discover that Salvador Dalí – the most famous of the Surrealist painters and an unforgettable personality – comes from the country of Spain. Perhaps more than any other country in Europe, Spain is a nation of individualists. From the Basques to the Galicians, Spaniards are very serious about their independence, and their devotion to this ideal has produced a culture made of many cultures and a country rich in diversity that has nourished some of the Western world's most imaginative and unique artists.

If Spain is the most individualist nation in Europe, then Catalonia is perhaps the most individualist region of Spain. Located in Spain's far Northeast corner, at the foot of the Pyrenees mountain range near the French border, the province of Catalonia has a long history of independence. It took 200 years for the mighty Roman Empire to conquer this region—long after it had conquered many other parts of Europe—and Catalonia later refused to bow to the ruling Moor government for nearly seven hundred years. In the Thirty Years War (1618-1648), Catalonia rose against Spain's Prince Philip IV, and in the War of the Spanish Succession it sided against Prince Philip V. Even as recently as 1931, Catalans declared themselves to be independent from the rest of Spain. Indeed, many people think that Dalí's imprisonment in 1924 had less to do with his own actions and more to do with his father's political views which called for a totally independent Catalonia.

For many years, the rugged landscape of this part of Spain made it difficult to get in and out of Catalonia. The mountain roads were high and treacherous, and the nearby waters of the Mediterranean Sea had currents that were dangerous to sailors. Because of this, and because of their fierce independence, Catalonia developed a culture different from the rest of the country. Seven million people in Catalonia speak their own language called Catalan, which is related more to French than to Spanish. Books, newspapers, web sites, and road-signs are printed in Catalan, and Catalan is spoken on half of all radio and TV programs. Every year, 6,000 new book titles are printed in the Catalan language—more than the entire countries of Norway or Israel print in their own languages! Today there is even a move to make Catalan—and not Spanish—the only official language in the province's government and schools (even though most people in Catalonia can speak Spanish as well).

Catalonia has its own traditional dance called the Sardana of Catalunya, which is still performed on the streets and squares of Catalonia's capital Barcelona, and Catalonia has nourished many avant-garde or “cutting edge” artists, especially in the twentieth century. In addition to Salvador Dalí, Catalonia is a homeland of painters Pablo Picasso and Joan Miró, experimental filmmaker Luis Buñuel, and architect Antoni Gaudí. While no one can deny the individual genius of these men, their identity as Catalonians is no accident: imaginative and independent artists from an independent province in a nation whose culture and history has been similarly shaped by these very same ideals.

A DALI GEOGRAPHIC CHRONOLOGY

1904 Salvador Dalí born in Figueres, Spain, in the province of Catalonia.

1922 Dalí's paintings are shown in Barcelona, Spain.

- Dalí attends art school in Madrid, Spain.
- 1924** Dalí is accused of “subversion” and imprisoned in Girona, Spain.
Actually, this is a warning to Dalí’s father who was a political radical.
- 1929** Dalí takes trip to Paris, France, to meet other Surrealist artists.
- 1930** Dalí and Gala settle in Port Lligat, Spain.
- 1934** Dalí and Gala make their first trip to New York City.
- 1936** Dalí leaves Spain due to the Spanish Civil War and moves to Paris, France.
Dalí wears diving suit while delivering lecture in London, England.
- 1938** Briefly visits Spain after Spanish Civil War.
- 1939** Designs exhibit for New York World’s Fair.
- 1940** Dalí and Gala flee from France in face of German occupation.
Dalí and Gala take the S.S. Excambion from Lisbon, Portugal, to the U.S.
- 1940-48** Dalí and Gala live in the United States (New York, Virginia, California)
- 1948** Dalí and Gala move back to Port Lligat, Spain.
- 1954** Dalí’s art exhibited in Rome, Venice and Milan, Italy.
- 1955** Exhibitions in Belgium.
- 1960** Exhibitions in London, England.
- 1964** Exhibitions in Tokyo, Japan.
- 1974** Dalí Museum opens in Figueres, Spain (Teatro Museo Dalí)
- 1982** Salvador Dalí Museum opens in St. Petersburg, Florida.
- 1989** Dalí dies in Figueres, Spain