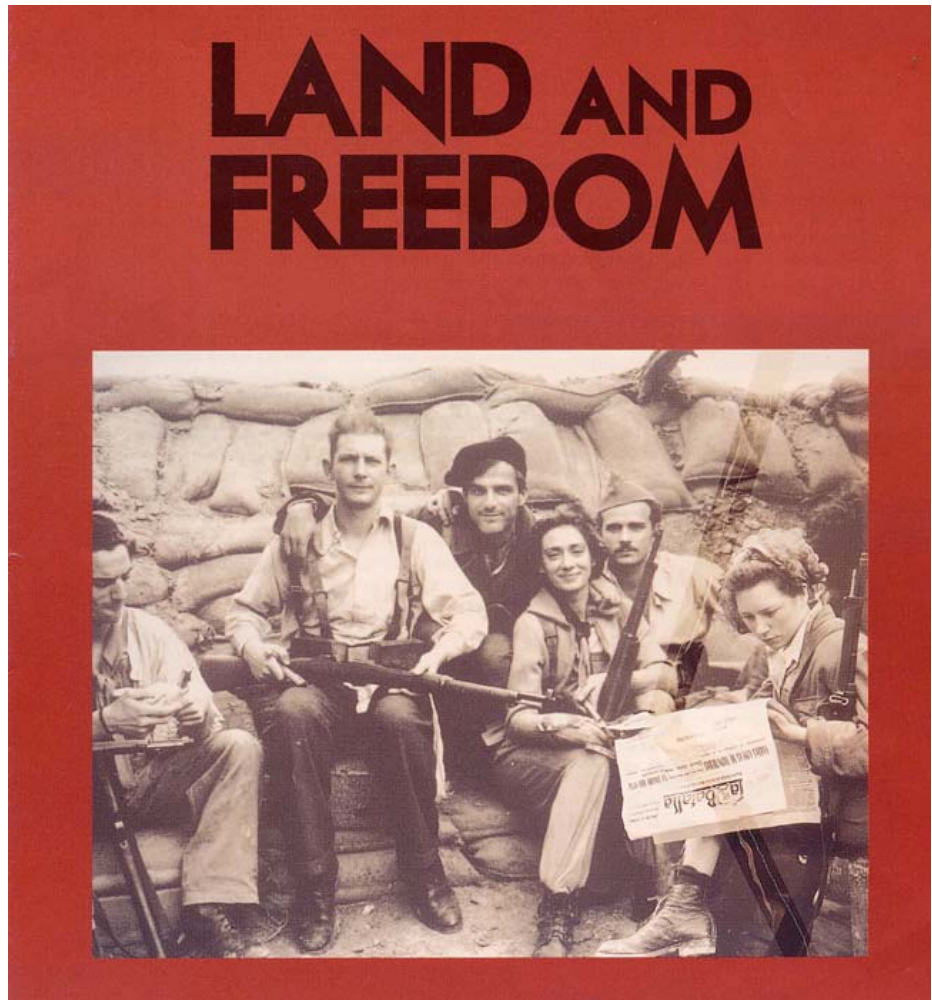


Teachers Notes

This film is about life in the forces which supported the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War. The story is told from the point of view of a volunteer from Liverpool. The director is Ken Loach and the screenwriter is Jim Allen. Both are experienced filmmakers of political vision and socialist commitment. GCSE and A Level History students of twentieth century history would find the film most relevant. It brings alive the pain and tragedy of the ideological struggles in Spain and the wider world in the first part of the twentieth century. GCSE and A Level Spanish students would find it of particular benefit because of the use of Spanish language and the film's insights into a deep and long-lasting wound in Spanish society. Students of A Level English and Art who are studying the 1930's would find it beneficial as so many leading intellectual figures became involved.



In 1936, a young unemployed Communist Party member, David Carr, decides to join in the struggle against fascism. On arrival in Spain he chances upon the Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista (POUM) a group of revolutionary communists. Oblivious to the internal politics, David believes that any anti-fascist group on the left must be alright to join. David gets sucked into the struggles between the various left-wing factions, His decision about which group holds the true torch of the revolution becomes a matter of life and death. He sees the various republican groups tear themselves apart rather than focus their attention on their real enemy, the Nationalists. Despite the pain, frustration and tragedy, David does not lose sight of his hopes and principles. The story of David Carr is unravelled by his granddaughter as she goes through his artefacts on his death.

The Making of the Film

Land and Freedom was filmed in the Maestrazgo - a highland area which spans the border of Aragon and Castellon. Location managers went to great lengths to find appropriate terrain and props. They interviewed dozens of veterans of the Civil War, and used historical consultants, to establish historical accuracy. Ken Loach's team have produced a film, rich in textual references which do not get in the way of the plot. Jim Allen, the screenwriter, saw his task as being "how to harness this important moment of history into the straight jacket of a film". He continues, "You have to be painstakingly accurate and have all your facts correct and at the same time make a very heavy subject entertaining." Since its release in 1995 it has been widely acclaimed, gaining 'Winner. International Critics' Prize (Shared)' and 'Ecumenical Jury Prize' at the Cannes Film Festival, 1995, In Spain the film has had glowing reviews and a generally positive response. "I was full of trepidation because they could see it as very cheeky to come over and take a piece of their history," Ken Loach says. "But it's not a private tragedy - history belongs to all of us. The only reason to make a historical piece is to say something about the present."

The Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939

The Spanish Civil War is a tragedy of immense proportions. Statistics are unreliable but in the region of 750,000 lost their lives. Spain had become polarised between those who wanted to create a modern, democratic society and those who feared such a move would destroy Spain.

Tensions grew as arguments over reform raged:

- A wish to give land to the landless peasants became an attack on the right to hold property
- A desire to improve the working conditions of the working classes was feared as increased costs could ruin industry.
- Autonomy to Catalonia might have meant that Spain was 'torn to tatters'.
- The removal of the privileges of the Church implied the de-Christianisation of Spain.
- Further democratic reform might play into the hands of the Communist Party.
- Reforming the officer corps of the Army might weaken Spanish order and strength.

Stereotypes became predominant - the left regarded all right-wing supporters as Fascists and the right regarded all democratic republicans as being dupes of the Communist Party and Marxist revolutionaries. When leading right-wing Army officers felt that democratic Spain was dissolving into chaos, they decided to restore order. This military intervention triggered the civil war and unleashed the forces of revolution both on the left and the right. Both sides were inundated with volunteers. A generous view would be to say, as the Anarchists said of the death of a rival Falangist leader, each volunteer was "a Spanish patriot in search of solutions for his country." The war was both a deeply Spanish affair and an international fore-runner of the Second World War. Spaniards, passionately divided by beliefs and circumstances, fought one another, and through that suffering the Spain of today was born. Volunteers from all over the world offered themselves in this struggle of ideologies. The Western democratic powers decided not to intervene whereas the dictators, Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin sent significant military help. Spain became a testing ground for tactics, hardware and the power of propaganda. The list of famous foreigners who participated in the war is long. Ernest Hemingway and George Orwell are perhaps the most famous. Other English speaking writers include W.H. Auden and Stephen Spender. André Malroux organised an air squadron. Willy Brandt reported for a Norwegian newspaper. Marshal Tito (Josip Broz) worked for the Communist Party in Paris, and Walter Ulbricht of East Germany and Togliatti of Italy were agents in Spain. The war ended in 1939 with the Nationalist groups gaining control of Spain under the leadership of General Franco.

How History Teachers Could Use the Film GCSE Level

Most twentieth century world syllabuses focus on the Spanish Civil War as a factor in the causes of the Second World War.

The film could be used to explore basic concepts such as fascism, socialism, communism, nationalism, anarchism and democracy.

The film's narrative is strong with plenty of action. Its characters are well-drawn, showing humour and emotion. Most GCSE students would be able to follow the film and it would bring to life the thoughts and feelings of young people in the 1930's thus making the ideological struggle which led to the 1939-1945 war more understandable.

A Level

Most A level questions focus on three main aspects of the Spanish Civil War.

- The internal history of Spain.
- The international dimension of the War.
- A comparison of Franco with Hitler and Mussolini.

The film would certainly enhance any student's understanding of:

- The issues at stake in the War.
- Why stable parliamentary government was so difficult to establish in Spain between 1919 and 1939.
- Reasons why the Republicans lost the war.
- Reasons why the Nationalists emerge victorious.
- Key concepts such as Stalinism and Fascism.

Describe the ways the representative of the Republicans encourages volunteers to come forward. Why does David Carr join up as a volunteer? How does the film portray military engagements throughout the war? What are the arguments for and against the collectivisation of the land as shown in the film? What are the arguments for and against the maintenance of the POUM militia vis-à-vis integration into the Popular Front?

- Why does David Carr leave the militia and then rejoin?
- David Carr at one point says, "The Fascists must be laughing their heads off." How does the film show republican forces unable to unite successfully against the Nationalists?
- How does the film portray the Nationalists?
- How does the film portray the Church?
- How are women portrayed in the film?
- Do you agree with Ken Loach when he says, "The Spanish Revolution was crushed through the international policy of the Russian Communist party at the time, with the help of the West which colluded with fascism in Spain"?
- Is the message of the film relevant to today?

A great strength of the film is that it will inspire some students to further knowledge and understanding of this period of history.

Activities

Role-plays could be set up where students act out the various tensions explored by the film. Particular issues could be:

- The question of collectivising or not.
- Remaining with the POUM or not.

Extension activities

- Find out about Miguel de Unamuno, rector of the University of Salamanca, and his views on the Spanish Civil War.
- Find out about the controversy of the bombing of Guernica and about Picasso's painting of this event.
- Find out more about General Franco. What was Spain's role in the Second World War? How was Spain governed until Franco's death in 1975?
- Find out more about the involvement of British citizens in the Civil War, (Hugh Thomas's book is an excellent departure point)

Books

The following is a small selection from the numerous books published about the Spanish Civil War.

The Spanish Civil War. Beevar, Antony (London 1982)

The Spanish Revolution: The Left and the Struggle for Power. Balfoten, Burnett (London 1979)

Spanish Labyrinth. Brenan, Gerald, (Cambridge 1943)

The Spanish Civil War. A History in Pictures. Corr, Raymond (Allen and Unwin 1986)

The Spanish Tragedy: The Civil War in Perspective. Carr, Raymond (London 1977)

The Assassination of Frederica Garcia Lorca. Gibson, Ian (Penguin 1984)

The Spanish Civil War. Mitchell, David (Granada 1982)

Homage to Catalonia, Orwell, George (London 1938)

Guernica! Guernical Southworth, Herbert (California 1977)

The Spanish Civil War. Thomas, Hugh (3rd Edition, Penguin 1977)

La Guerra civil española 50 años después. Tunon, Manuel de Lara et al (Madrid 1985)

Fiction/Poetry

For Whom the Bell Tolls. Hemingway, Ernest (New York 1940)

The Day of the Fox. Lewis, Norman (London 1957)

L'Espoir. Malroux, André (Paris 1938)

Seven Red Sundays, Sender, Roman (London 1936)

The Case of Comrade Tulayev. Serge, Victor. (London 1968)

Birth of Our Power. (London 1968)

Spanish Civil War Verse. (London 1980)

Biography/Travel

Spain: the Vital Years. Balm, Luis (London 1967)

As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning. A Rose in Winter. Lee, Laurie Iberia. Michener, James (Seeker and Warberg 1968)

Films

Blockade. Dir. William Dieterle, 1938, U.S.A.

Confidential Agent. Dir. Herman Shumlin, 1945, U.S.A.

The Good Fight. Dirs. Noel Buckner, Mary Dore, Sam Sills, 1983, U.S.A.

The Long Holidays of 1936. Dir. Jaime Camino, 1976, Spain

The Spirit of the Beehive. Dir. Victor Erice, 1973

Film and History Reading

Cinema and History: British Newsreels and the Spanish Civil War. Aldgate, A. (London, 1979)

Places to Visit

Archivo Ehistórico Militar, Madrid Valle de Los Codes, (Valley of the Fallen), near El Escorial, Madrid. Franco's gigantic memorial to the fighters from both sides of the Civil War.

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