

# Lesson Plan: Two Perspectives on the Spanish Civil War

## Advanced Social Studies

### Lesson Plan

Title	Two Perspectives on the Spanish Civil War
Subject	U.S. or European History
Grade(s)	11 or 12 – <i>Note: This lesson is oriented toward advanced learners, perhaps in an honors or Advanced Placement setting.</i>
Standards	<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1</a>
Keywords	Rise of fascism, Nazism, communism, anarchy
Essential questions	How do we decide who is on the right side of an armed conflict? How do we resolve competing loyalties? How do essays, editorials, magazine articles shape our view of the world? How does someone's personal belief system influence the "storyline" he or she adopts about a conflict?
Synopsis	American writer and poet Dorothy Parker, and British professor Allison Peers offered dramatically different perspectives on the Spanish Civil War. Peers believed that the fascist rebels would bring order amid chaos in Spain; Parker sympathized with supporters of the republic.
Standard Alignment(s) used	Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (reading history)
Recommended Teacher Background	
Connection to other disciplines	English Language Arts
Number of class periods	2

### Standards

Objectives	Standards addressed
Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.	<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1</a>

### Primary Sources

- Two documents (see appendix):

## Procedures

### Day One:

1. Lead-In/Hook (consider one or more of the following questions): How would you have felt about the rise of Nazism if you were living in the U.S. or Great Britain in 1936 (before World War II and before the Holocaust)? Would you have believed in 1936 that Nazism/fascism was a greater or lesser threat to the U.S. than communism? Where would you have acquired knowledge about world events related to either of these political systems?
2. Pre-assessment and activation of prior knowledge: What were the features of Hitler's racial nationalism? What were the features of Leninism/Stalinism? What was the reaction of governments (especially the U.S. and England) and peoples toward these systems? What was the Red Scare and how did it affect Americans' (and Europeans') views about communism and anarchism?
3. Step by Step:
  1. Introduce the Spanish Civil War, emphasizing the following:
    - By 1936, the existing republican government in Spain had initiated progressive political and economic reforms; thus, when war broke out the Spanish government (a.k.a. Republicans, Loyalists, Reds) was supported by socialists and communists throughout the world. It received military aid from the U.S.S.R.
    - The rebels (a.k.a. Nationalists, Fascists, Whites), led by Francisco Franco, sought to undo the reforms and return Spain to its conservative, socially stratified, Catholic roots. Franco was supported by many Catholics around the world; the rebels received military aid from Hitler and Mussolini.
  2. Question students on how people received news of the world in 1936. Possible answers are: newspapers (news as well as editorial pages), magazines, theater newsreels, word of mouth, first-hand accounts from travelers, etc. Discuss the pros and cons of these sources, i.e. which are the most or least reliable? Which are the most powerful in the formation of personal beliefs?
  3. Review relevant vocabulary from the Peers reading, including "anarcho-syndicalists"
4. Closure:
  - Ask students to consider an author's purpose in writing for an op-ed page in a newspaper? How might the purpose be different in writing for a magazine such as *The New Yorker*, *Vanity Fair*, or *Vogue*?
  - Ask students to read the Peers and Parker documents as homework.

### Day Two:

1. Lead-In/Hook: One way to talk about people's differences of opinion about a conflict is to say that people adhere to different "stories" about a conflict in which certain elements of the conflict are emphasized or de-emphasized. Thus, for some the most important storyline of the Spanish Civil War was the struggle between fascism (the Nationalists) and democracy (the Republicans). For others, it was civilized Christianity (the Nationalists) against godless Communism (the Republicans).

## 2. Step by Step:

- Divide students into discussion groups of four or five, with half the groups addressing the Peers questions and the other half considering the Parker questions.

- Peers:

1. What was Peers' desire for Spain?
2. What storyline was Peers adopting about the Spanish Civil War? Give two or three examples from the reading that support your conclusion.
3. What assumptions can you make about the author's views on politics or religion. Provide evidence from the reading.
4. It has been speculated that Peers was writing a draft (never published) for an op-ed ("opposite the editorial" – an opinion article written by someone not on the editorial staff of a newspaper) What was Peers' intent in writing this article? To what degree might he have influenced the storyline of other people?

- Parker:

1. What was Parker's desire for Spain?
2. What storyline was Parker adopting about the Spanish Civil War? Give two or three examples from the reading that support your conclusion.
3. What assumptions can you make about the author's views on politics or religion. Provide evidence from the reading.
4. What was Parker's intent in writing an article for *The New Yorker*? Did she have a different purpose than the writer of a news story or opinion article? Was her method more or less effective than the direct approach of an op-ed article?

- Whole-class discussion of similarities and differences in perspectives of the two authors.

3. Closure – Questions: Has your perspective changed? Does it seem more or less plausible that moderates could support fascism? Why? Had Peers, in adopting his "storyline," disregarded some of the darker elements of fascism, such as Hitler's racial views not yet fully realized?

**Differentiation** Rather than assigning both documents as homework, assign only the Parker article. On the second day, students in the small (heterogeneous) groups can read the Peers document aloud to each other. This benefits auditory learners and allows students with stronger vocabularies and comprehension to help others in the group.

## Assessment

Potential essay: Read the introduction and letter by Canute Frankson. What "storyline" was Frankson adopting about the Spanish Civil War? Cite specific examples from the text to support your conclusions. Also, what was Frankson's intention in writing the letter? Possible Rubric:

- Students should recognize that Frankson viewed the war as part of a worldwide struggle against Nazism, which he compared to the worst of American slavery.
- In keeping the theme of the lesson, students could say that Frankson's storyline was that of "democracy vs. fascism/Nazism."

- Frankson's intention was to justify his involvement in the war to a friend who either disagreed with his view of the war, or perhaps did not feel that 1) a European war was the business of a U.S. citizen, or 2) a "white" war was the business of an African-American struggling for civil rights at home.

## Appendix 1: Canute Frankson

Frankson was born in the Parish of St. Catherine, Old Harbor, Jamaica on April 13, 1890. In 1917, together with his wife, Rachel, he emigrated to Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania, where Frankson worked as a machinist. Frankson eventually settled in Detroit, where he worked in the auto industry. Frankson joined the Communist Party in 1934. He sailed for Europe aboard the Queen Mary on April 21, 1937. In Spain, skilled machinists were scarce and Frankson with his proven ability was rapidly promoted. He was appointed Head Mechanic at the International Garage in Albacete. Fellow International Garage veteran, Marion Noble, noted that Frankson's fluency in Spanish was a great asset and that many hours of his free time were spent teaching engine repair classes to young Spaniards. Frankson returned to the United States aboard the President Harding on September 24, 1938. Frankson was killed in an auto accident in either 1939 or 1940. **Citation:** Cary Nelson and Jefferson Hendricks, *Madrid 1937* (New York, 1996), pp. 33-35. *Excerpts from letter* Albacete, Spain July 6, 1937 My Dear Friend, I'm sure that by this time you are still waiting for a detailed explanation of what has this international struggle to do with my being here. Since this is a war between whites who for centuries have held us in slavery, and have heaped every kind of insult and abuse upon us, segregated and jim-crowed us; why I, a Negro who have fought through these years for the rights of my people, am here in Spain today? Because we are no longer an isolated minority group fighting hopelessly against an immense giant. Because, my dear, we have joined with, and become an active part of, a great progressive force on whose shoulders rests the responsibility of saving human civilization from the planned destruction of a small group of degenerates gone mad in their lust for power. Because if we crush Fascism here we'll save our people in America, and in other parts of the world from the vicious persecution, wholesale imprisonment, and slaughter which the Jewish people suffered and are suffering under Hitler's Fascist heels. All we have to do is to think of the lynching of our people. We can but look back at the pages of American history stained with the blood of Negroes; stink with the burning bodies of our people hanging from trees; bitter with the groans of our tortured loved ones from whose living bodies ears, fingers, toes have been cut for souvenirs, living bodies into which red-hot poker have been thrust. All because of a hate created in the minds of men and women by their masters who keep us all under their heels while they suck our blood, while they live in their bed of ease by exploiting us... ..We will crush them. We will build us a new society – a society of peace and plenty. There will be no color line, no jim-crow trains, no lynching. That is why, my dear, I'm here in Spain. On the battlefields of Spain we fight for the preservation of democracy. Here, we're laying the foundation for world peace, and for the liberation of my people, and of the human race. Here, where we're engaged in one of the most bitter struggles of human history, there is no color line, no discrimination, no race hatred. There's only one hate, and that is the hate for Fascism. We know why our enemies are. The Spanish people are very sympathetic towards us. They are lovely people. I'll tell you about them later... Don't think for one moment that the strain of this terrible war or the many miles between us has changed my feelings towards you. Our friendship has meant a great deal to me, and still means much to me. I appreciate it because it has always been a friendship of devoted and mutual interest. And I'll do whatever is within my power to maintain it. No one knows the time he'll die, even under the most favorable conditions. So I, a soldier in active service, must know far less about how far or how close is death. But as long as I hold out I'll keep you in touch with events. Sometimes when I go to the fronts the shells drop pretty close. Then I think it's only a matter of minutes. After I return here to the base I seem to see life from a new angle. Somehow it seems to be more beautiful. I'd think of you, home and all my friends, then get to working more feverishly than ever. Each of us must give all we have if this Fascist beast is to be destroyed. After this is over I hope to share my happiness with you... So long. Until some future date. One never knows when there'll be time to write. There's so much to do and so little time in which to do it. Love, Salud, Canute

## Appendix 2: Edgar Allison Peers

Edgar Allison Peers (1891–1952), a professor of Spanish at the University of Liverpool from 1920 until his death, was one of the founding fathers of Hispanic Studies in Great Britain. The son of a civil servant, Peers studied English and French at Cambridge; he was a self-taught Spanish speaker who began traveling to Spain at least once a year from 1920 on. As a high Anglican and political conservative, Peers deeply admired Spanish Catholicism. During the Spanish Civil War he sympathized with the military rebels; he later became disenchanted with Franco. As one of the most authoritative public spokesmen on the topic in both England and the United States, he published seven books and some fifty articles on current Spanish events between 1930 and the late 1940s, in addition to countless public speeches and scores of articles in the *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, which he founded. But at length, after a campaign of exactly three months, conducted with a deliberateness born of confidence and experience, General Franco's troops are knocking on the gates of Madrid and its early fall, whether with or without a struggle, seems certain. In Spain, where everything just now is of necessity either black or white, there will be intense exaltation and profound depression at the prospects of a nationalist dictatorship. Over here, the vast majority of sensible people are uninfluenced by Spanish party slogans: they desire, not the complete and overwhelming victory of one of the two ideals, but the return of peace to Spain, followed by an epoch of steady progress. Can it be said that peace and progress will be brought nearer by a victory for General Franco's forces? I hope and believe it can. As far as peace is concerned, it was clear from the beginning of the war that its sole chance lay in an insurgent triumph. [Next section is crossed out:] Was the Popular Front to win, the only possible result would be a long period of dissension, disruption and anarchy. To that everything pointed, when the Popular Front coalition was first made last February, for the purposes of the elections, its own members freely described it as unlikely to survive them. Though it held together during those anarchic months which followed ... When the rebels were beaten in Barcelona, a miniature picture was at once provided of the state of things we could expect if they were beaten in the whole of Spain: Anarchists, Communists, Syndicalists displaced in effect the existing Government and jostled each other in an undignified struggle for pre-eminence. Even under conditions of siege, as at Irún and San Sebastián, the two wings of the Popular Front fought each for its own way, and at Irún the quarrel was in the end brutally resolved by wholesale incendiarism and destruction. [end of struck out part.] One shudders to think what would have happened if these men had become the rulers of the new Spain. This is no mere question of party politics. The academic socialism of Don Fernando de los Ríos is one thing; the fierce Marxism of Maurín is quite another. The Anarcho-Syndicalists, had they come out on top of the *mêlée*, would have had no more respect for the doctrinaires of the Second Republic whom progressives in this country most generally follow than had these in 1931 for the leading figures of Primo de Rivera's dictatorship. Indeed, their way with them, if we may judge from their recent behaviour, would have been shorter and sharper still – assassination is so much more convenient a solution than imprisonment or exile! [Undated handwritten draft] With a victory of General Franco we may at least look for unity and pacification. The strict discipline inseparable from military rule may be irksome but most Spaniards will find it preferable to a new civil war or even to a *régime* of growing license into which the Second Republic was fast degenerating. All patriotic Spaniards willing to conform to the regime will find a home in Spain; those who have occupied themselves in supplanting their national flag by the red flag which has done duty for Socialism and Communism and the red-and-black flag of Anarchism can hardly complain if they are invited to look for homes in a country where one of these symbols reigns supreme. Once General Franco has subdued the whole of Spain he can probably be trusted to hold it in a state of tranquillity until passions have subsided and material progress has once more begun. But then – we shall be almost exactly where we were in 1923! We shall have passed from military dictatorship, through a socialistically inclined Republic, a state of chaos and a period of civil war, back to a military dictatorship again. Can that be the end? Is there no room for progress which goes deeper than the making of new roads and the attempt to make trains observe the hours of the time-tables? [added in brackets by EAP:] [If not new reaction absolutely inevitable.] Only hope in such a case is that the future rulers of Spain might realize that they cannot simply put back the clock and act as if it has never gone forward. While they will have no use for the destructive elements which endeavoured to ruin Spain by creating revolution within the Republic, they will surely respect the position of those who demand higher standards of wages for the agricultural worker, a permanent reform of the Civil Service, gradual introduction of women's suffrage and improved facilities for education. I do not say that all these things are desirable in Spain but say that they are things which Spaniards who wish for them have a perfect right to advocate by legitimate methods. I may be wrong, but I cannot believe that Spain's new rulers will wish to implant a dictatorship indefinitely. Even if they did, it would be preferable to indefinite

anarchism, but there are lessons to be learned from the fall of Primo de Rivera which stare the intelligent man in the face and I do not think that General Franco is lacking in intelligence. [Struck out:] At the very least, there is hope for Spain in the victory of a party whose battle-cry is "Up, Spain", who revere the traditions still held by a vast majority of the Spaniards and who have established peace and quietness in all the cities in which they have already triumphed.

### **Appendix 3: Dorothy Parker**

Dorothy Parker (August 22, 1893–June 7, 1967) was an American writer and poet, best known for her caustic wit, wisecracks, and sharp eye for 20th century urban foibles. She sold her first poem to *Vanity Fair* magazine in 1914 and some months later, she was hired as an editorial assistant for another Condé Nast magazine, *Vogue*. She moved to *Vanity Fair* as a staff writer following two years at *Vogue*. Her greatest period of productivity and success came in the next 15 years. In the 1920s alone she published some 300 poems and free verses in outlets including the aforementioned *Vanity Fair*, *Vogue*, "The Conning Tower" and *The New Yorker* along with *Life*, *McCall's* and *The New Republic*. Some of her most popular work was published in *The New Yorker* in the form of acerbic book reviews under the byline "Constant Reader." **Citation:** "Soldiers of the Republic", originally appeared in *The New Yorker* on February 5, 1938. This biography excerpt was taken from Wikipedia.