

A Legend: How One Man Started the Longest War in History

Author's Statement

This essay was written for Intermediate Spanish taught by Professor Felipe Gomez, as an analysis of the impact of sharing history across generations on a region's culture and specifically focuses on the role of Don Pelayo in Asturian culture. This piece explains the history of the Iberian Peninsula prior to the Reconquista, particularly disputes over the land by different communities. Then it synthesizes different versions of the myth of Don Pelayo and his personal connection to the start of the Reconquista and his role in the Battle of Covadonga. This piece concludes with an analysis of an interview of an Asturian and his perspective on how the myth is shared through the educational system and culture of the community. Through this piece, I aimed to demonstrate how there are various interpretations of historical events by including both the Christian and Muslim viewpoints of the Reconquista in the eighth century. It is crucial to approach history through a critical lens. Otherwise, the perceived heroes in history by the majority may overtake, and sometimes replace, stories of the minority.

I chose to research this moment in history because I visited Asturias and saw firsthand Don Pelayo's statue and his engravings on the sidewalks. It was clear to see the centuries-long impact one individual had on an entire region. This assignment challenged me to interview a member of the community to gain a greater insight into the impact of the legend on people in Asturias today. The outcomes of this conversation and my research demonstrate the importance of listening to all sides of history to preserve different identities and learn about different cultural perspectives.

- Mirren Hibbert