A. PREHISTORY.
It is the period of History that began when humans first appeared and finished when they learned to read and write. They wore animal skins and slept in caves. The learned to use fire to keep warm, cook and give light at night. The first humans were nomads. They hunted, fished and collected plants and fruit. Later, they stopped moving around and built settlements, villages and towns. At the end of Prehistory, they started building the first cities. They also started to exchange products. It was the beginning of trade.

B. ANCIENT HISTORY.

Phoenicians and Greeks
They were great merchants. First the Phoenicians and later the Greeks came to the Iberian Peninsula and established trading centres. The Greeks built buildings and sculptures, some of them were great writers and philosophers. They developed new ideas in science, religion and government. Democracy is a Greek word.

The Romans
They conquered many lands and made a great empire. The Iberian Peninsula was called Hispania. They spoke in Latin and followed the same laws. They built roads to connect all the cities they conquered to Rome and they also built aqueducts.

“The Roman Empire”
In 208 BC the Romans conquered the peninsula. The conquer of the Iberian Peninsula lasted for two hundred years. In the 19 BC they finally conquered the Iberian Peninsula. In this period of time the conquered areas were adapted to the Roman customs.

The language that was used was the Latin, Roman laws were introduced and the Christianity was the official religion.

Society was classified into two groups: the free men and the slaves. On the other hand, women could be free or could not.

The Middle Ages began in 476 A.D when the Visigoths invaded the Rome and the Roman Empire fall.
There were Christian Kingdoms in the north, nevertheless in the south there was a Muslim state called Al-Andalus.

C. MIDDLE AGES.

In the fifth century AD, the Visigoths, who were a Germanic tribe, invaded Hispania and they founded a kingdom. The capital of this kingdom was Toledo.

Three centuries later, the Muslims conquered this kingdom and most areas around it. They even conquered the Balearic islands. Muslims defeated the visigoths at the Battle of Guadalete in 711 A.D. All of their conquered territory was called al-Andalus and its capital was Córdoba. It became part of the caliphate. Al-Andalus became an emirate. It was governed by an emir who represented the caliph of Damascus but in 929 A.D., an emir called Abderramán III declared al-Andalus as an independent caliphate. It was called the Córdoba Caliphate. Years later al-Andalus was divided into small taifa kingdoms.

Muslims’ characteristics

The Muslims’ religion was the Islam. It is a religion which began on the Arabian Peninsula. Followers of this religion are called muslims. So they follow the teachings of the prophet Muhammed. They believe in one god called Allah and their sacred book which is the Quran.

It was a great Islamic civilization with its own laws, customs and art.

On the other hand, Muslims empires were called caliphates and each one was ruled by a caliph.

Regarding its art and learning, we could say that they built many beautiful buildings such as the Alhambra (Granada) and the Great Mosque (Córdoba). Córdoba had the world’s largest library and street lights and running water in the city.

Cities were ruled by a governor. He lived in a fortress called the alcazaba. Muslims were good traders and merchants. They traded with products such as gold, silk, leather goods and pottery and they bought and sold these products in the souk. Besides this, they raised animals and they carried out the irrigated farming.

The language they spoke was Arabic.

In al-Ándalus there were more groups of people such as the Christians and Jewish. Muslims considered non-Muslims to be equals and they gave them some basic rights:
Mozarabs and Jews could:

- Live where they wanted to.
- Practice their religion.
- Do any job, but they couldn’t have authority over a Muslim.
- Be part of society and culture.

Mozarabs and Jews had to:

- Pay special taxes.
- Wear a special badge.
- Obey Muslim laws.
- They couldn’t carry weapons.

On the other hand, the Christians lived in the northern part of the Peninsula. Don Pelayo, a Visigoth noble, was the leader of the Christians and he defeated the Muslims in the Battle of Covadonga. Later some Christian kingdoms were founded such as the kingdom of Asturias, the kingdom of León, the kingdom of Navarra, Castilla and Aragón.

**Christians’ characteristics**

The society in the Christian kingdoms was divided into three groups: the clergy, nobles and peasants.

Priests and monks were important people. The King ruled the country but the countryside was divided into smaller areas ruled by lords (nobles).

Each kingdom had its own language but all of them were similar to Latin. They were Galician, Spanish, Portuguese and Catalan.

They built many religious buildings such as monasteries and churches.

The trade was weak. Most of them were peasants and worked on the land growing crops and raising animals.

Besides there were artisans, blacksmiths, millers and soldiers who protected the lands.

**“The Reconquista”**

Between the 8th and the 15th centuries, the Christian kingdoms expanded in to the south conquering lands from al-Ándalus.

They decided to conquer al-Ándalus during this period because it was easier. Easier because al-Andalus has been divided into small taifas, making it easier to conquer them. They did it because those lands were theirs before Muslims conquered and because they needed more space in order to raise their animals and to grow their crops.
Important events:
- Alfonso VI conquered Toledo (1085) **King of Castilla and Leon.**
- Christians conquered Jaén in the Battle of Navas de Tolosa (1212).
- James I conquered the Balearic Islands and parts of Valencia (1229 and 1244) **King of Aragon.**
- Ferdinand III conquered Córdoba and Sevilla (1236 and 1248) **King of Castilla and Leon.**
- Christians conquered Granada, the last Muslim kingdom, in 1492.