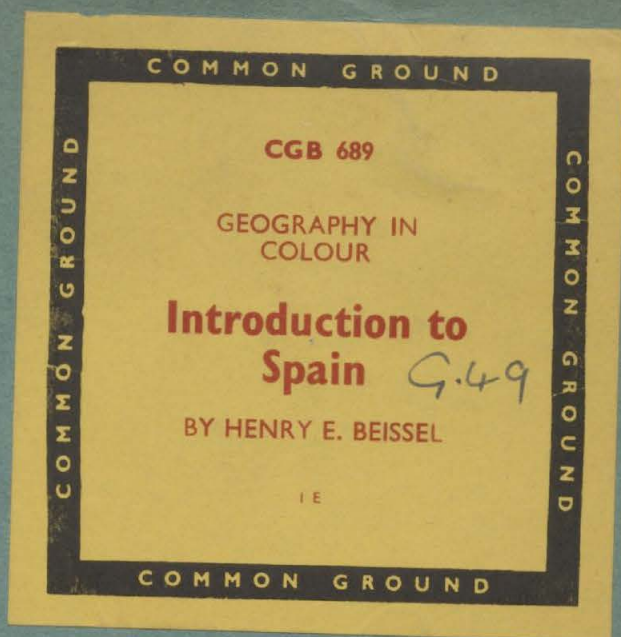


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Geography in Colour

INTRODUCTION TO SPAIN

by Henry E. Beissel

Published by Common Ground (1951) Limited
44 Fulham Road, London SW3

All the photographs in this strip were taken by the Author, to whom the Publishers' thanks are due.

First published 1955
Reprinted 1956, 1960

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INTRODUCTION

Spain is situated on the trapezium-shaped Iberian peninsula of which she takes up almost 85%, the rest belonging to Portugal. Spain is the third largest country in Europe (after Russia and France) covering an area of 196,700 square miles. Her boundaries to the north are France and the Cantabrian Sea, to the west the Atlantic Ocean and Portugal, to the east the Mediterranean Sea, and to the south both the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, uniting as they do in the Strait of Gibraltar.

The topography of Spain is characterised by a highly complex system of mountain ranges which run from one end of the country to the other and cover four-fifths of its surface area. Some of the more important of these are the Cantabrian Cordillera stretching from east to west across the north of the peninsula; the Pyrenees reaching from the Bay of Biscay to the Mediterranean; the central mountain system, aptly called the backbone of Spain, the Toledo Mountain range; and in the south the immense Sierra Nevada containing the highest peaks (Mulhacen 11,417ft) of the entire peninsula. The heart of Spain is occupied by a vast plateau - the Central Meseta - more than 2,000ft high, upon which is built the country's capital, Madrid.

The irregular topographical structure of Spain makes it difficult to generalise about her climate. However, very roughly we may distinguish between four climatic zones:

- 1) in the north both summer and winter are of fairly moderate temperatures, with heavy precipitation decreasing gradually southwards;
- 2) along the Mediterranean coast winters are mild, and summers long and hot;
- 3) central Spain has cold, often long winters and hot, relatively dry summers;
- 4) in the south summers are generally very hot, with temperatures above 100°F, and very dry. The winters of Andalusia are extremely mild, and snowless.

It must be remembered that this scheme of zones is merely an approximation since the climate is very much influenced by local phenomena, such as altitude and the sea.

Being an integral part of the topography, geology and climate, Spain's soil and its produce show as much variety. In the north, a combination of good soil and much humidity produces luscious greenery with extensive forests, mainly of oaks, chestnuts, beeches and the central-European coniferous trees, while the rocky lands of part of central Spain (New Castile in particular) are barren and austere. A fertile belt extends along the Mediterranean coast where, favoured by the sunny climate, palms, evergreens, cypress and cork trees grow, and in the regions of Valencia and Murcia the 'fruit garden of Spain' flourishes, producing oranges, lemons, figs, olives, sugar cane and even bananas and rice. Southern Spain (Andalusia) can boast fertile soil, and here are found extensive wheatfields, vineyards and olive orchards. Again it must be emphasised that local variances are frequent. Just as one encounters fertile valleys and vineyards in the hostile country of New Castile, there are barren stretches of rocky ground in Andalusia.

Spain is not an industrial nation. What relatively little industry exists is concentrated in the Basque provinces (mainly depending on the iron ore found there), with its centre at Bilbao, and in Catalonia (notably textile), centred at the important Mediterranean port of Barcelona. Spain leads in the production of lead and mercury, and mention must also be made of the well-known coppermines of Rio Tinto, in the south-west near Huelva. Other, smaller industries are scattered throughout the country, some applying inherited crafts, such as the Toledo gold industry and the ceramics factories of Seville and Valencia, but most of them depending entirely on local agricultural produce and stock raising. Most notable amongst the latter are the canning of fruit, vegetables and fish, and the production of oil, wine and brandy.

In our technical age an agricultural country like Spain cannot attain wealth, particularly where forced for lack of machinery to employ out-dated methods of tilling the soil: in many places this is still done with wooden plough and mule. If Spain was once the richest country in the world it is now, as a result of devastating wars and of

short-sighted exploitation, probably one of the poorest. The small-scale industries employ relatively few people and wages are comparatively low, with the standard of living appreciably higher in the more industrialised north than in the south. Many of the peasants subsist on farming for their own use exclusively, battling with inadequate equipment against the often sterile soil. The 'middle class' of the population, enjoying a reasonable standard of living, is small in numbers, and is found only in urban centres like Madrid, Valencia, or Zaragoza, while thousands of people, mostly gipsies, wander across the country with mule and cart, and usually have large families. Many people live in caves dug into the ground, or hewn out of the rock; others dwell in houses unfit or dangerous for human habitation. The present government has taken steps designed to dispose of this historical inheritance of misery through such schemes as new irrigation systems, modern housing projects, hydro-electric power plants and social benefits in industry, but all of this is too recent to have made itself felt extensively.

For all his lack of material wealth, the Spaniard is rich in an innate happiness and vitality so typical of the Latin temperament. Singing and dancing are part of his daily life, and there are at different times of the year in the different parts of Spain hundreds of gay festivals, some of which have become world famous, such as the fallas of Valencia, the Seville Fair, the Pamplona bull-fights, and Holy Week. The colourful dresses worn to these festive occasions vary regionally as pronouncedly as does the rich folk-lore kept alive through centuries by the simple people of the land. Contrast, for example, the exquisite poetry of Basque choir singing with the passion of Andalusia's flamenco music, strongly influenced by Moorish modes; or the Asturian bagpipes and tambourines with the Andalusian guitar and castanets.

This emphatic regional variance of cultural-folkloric pattern is in keeping with the make-up of the 30,000,000 inhabitants of Spain. They are a people who have emerged out of the clash and fusion of many different races, a development which must be traced along the course of Spain's tempestuous history, in the invasions, occupations, liberations, conquests and reconquests, that involve the Celts, Iberians, the Phoenicians and the Greeks, the Carthaginians, Romans,

Vandals, Visigoths, Berbers, and Moors, to mention the most important ones. All of them have left their mark, not only in the form of the romantic castles and numerous historical ruins found throughout the country and in the fascinating collections of the museums, but also in the very blood of the Spanish people, their customs and idioms. These traits can be found in the friendly talkative character of the Andalusian, as well as in the dignity and hospitality of the people of Castile. They are evident in Castilian Spanish, the official language of Spain, just as much as in the Galician or Catalanian idioms, or, most startlingly, in Basque, a language totally unrelated to either Spanish or any other Indo-Germanic language, and still spoken by the Basques in the north, a people whose origins are yet unknown.

Such is the diversity of Spanish life that to try to present it on a filmstrip of twenty-five colour transparencies would be ludicrous. No more is attempted here than to introduce the student to Spain, and provide, perhaps, a basis for a more thorough study of this fascinating country south of the Pyrenees.

NOTES ON PICTURES

Note: it is regretted that as the pictures are reproduced from 35mm colour transparencies it has not been possible to number them on the strip.

1 Mediterranean entrance

Spain is virtually cut off from the rest of Europe by a natural barrier, the Pyrenees, a mountain range, 270 miles long, whose snow-covered peaks rise above the height of 11,000ft (Los Posets, 11,043ft; Altreto, 11,165ft). Although there are passes crossing the mountains at various points, these are quite difficult for railway and motor traffic so that entrance into Spain is most convenient either along the Basque coast or through the Mediterranean coastal plain. This picture was taken along the eastern access and shows the snow-covered peaks of the Pyrenees towering above a typical Mediterranean village amidst extensive vineyards, evidence of the mild climate prevailing on this coast.

2 At home in historical ruins, Catalonia

Throughout the country there is a wealth of historical ruins from Arab fortresses to Roman aqueducts. Here a poor peasant from Andalusia, who emigrated to the more prosperous and highly developed region of Catalonia, has made his home in one of the remains of some historic castle or fort of this north-eastern border province, having whitewashed the walls of the old turret like the houses of his people of the sun-baked south.

Compare the rich-looking soil in this picture with the barren ground of Picture 14.

3 San Sebastian

San Sebastian is the gateway to Spain west of the Pyrenees. It is the capital of Gipúzcoa, one of the three Basque provinces, and lies on the coast of the Cantabrian Sea about ten miles south of the French border. It is a clean modern city of 140,000 inhabitants, with a decidedly European atmosphere. Its beautiful situation where the Pyrenees meet

the Bay of Biscay, and its excellent shell-shaped beach (La Concha), have made it a renowned holiday resort for tourists from all over the world. This view of San Sebastian is taken from Monte Igueldo (426ft) and shows the bay of La Concha with the Island of Santa Clara.

4 Basque fishermen

The fine stalwart Basque sailors in their bright blue drill clothes are an attractive sight in the many small fishing villages along the Biscay coast. The picture shows the crew of a small fishing vessel enjoying their lunch after a plentiful catch of tunny out in the Bay of Biscay, which is famous for its many sudden and violent storms.

The most reliable catch in the spring is anchovy, and at the height of the season the heavily laden boats put into harbour with full loads of the shining silver threads of this small fish. In the summer the tense hunt for tunny fish begins. There are ten to fourteen men in each small, motored seacraft. They leave long before sunrise to gain the open sea, and as the first light dawns all eyes stare intensely upon the waters until a swarm of the hungry, leaping tunny fish is sighted. The Basque sailors employ a Japanese method of fishing, introduced only of late, whereby they fish the tunny with rod and live bait. During the season both tunny and anchovy are caught in such abundant quantities as to exceed the demand of the home market, so that much of it is canned and exported.

5 Basque peasant with oxen

Like the fishermen in Picture 4, this Basque peasant wears blue drill clothes and is of the tall broad stature that differs so much from the short Latin type predominant in Spain. Like them, too, he is wearing a beret, a most practical form of headgear now popular in many parts of the world, but known as the Basque beret.

Oxen and cows are familiar beasts of toil in the northern provinces, usually biscuit-coloured and often dappled in light brown. Note the intense green of the pasture in the background. Frequent rainfall and good soil produce a wealth

of vegetation, including the deciduous trees known in more northern countries and the characteristic undergrowth of bracken, nettles and long grasses.

6 The fortress of Sagunto, Valencia

Since the earliest days of history, the east coast of Spain has been alternately the scene of invasion and of peaceful colonisation by all the powerful nations that successively dominated the Mediterranean. Sagunto is a most impressive landmark. The castle, shown here, stands on a hill above the town, (Picture 7), as a reminder of Iberian, Roman, Moorish, and medieval power and glory, war and peace; within its battlements it shelters ruins of all these civilisations, including a temple of Diana and an Arab chapel.

7 The town of Sagunto

Below the fortress huddles the town of Sagunto, a tangle of narrow streets. It was founded by the Iberians, but was given its name (Saguntum) during the second Punic war by the Roman generals Publio and Scipio, who recaptured it in 214 BC from Hannibal. The clay roof-tiles evidence the hand of Arab builders.

Today Sagunto has a population of 21,000, and is the centre of rich orange and olive orchards, with important blast furnaces nearby.

8 Orange harvest, Valencia

The agricultural land of the province of Valencia is the richest in the peninsula, and this region is called the Garden of Spain (la Huerta de España). There are paddy fields where rice is cultivated, and thousands of orange, almond and olive orchards. In good years it is possible to gather three harvests of market crops. Much of the inexhaustible agricultural prosperity of the Valencian land is due to the system of irrigation canals introduced by the Arabs.

The picture shows a group of the colourful peasant girls who pick the orange harvest.

9 The fallas of Valencia

The feast of St Joseph, the patron saint of carpenters, is a unique and exciting event celebrated annually at Valencia in mid-March. The festival lasts for a whole week, in the middle of which, in the course of one night, the 'fallas' are erected, huge structures of papier-mache and wood, caricaturing or satyrising familiar local or national life. These fallas have their origin in the carpenters spring-cleaning their workshops, when they used to burn the waste timber in the street. At some time or other in the past, one carpenter must have constructed a figure out of the waste wood before burning it. Others followed his example. Competition started and the fallas grew bigger and bigger, until today some of them are the size of a four storey house, and they no longer have any connection with the spring-cleaning of workshops. Neighbours get together, or any social or industrial group, to raise the necessary funds for their own falla, mostly by collections and raffles. Professional artists and craftsmen are employed to create these magnificent constructions, poets are hired to write explanatory 'librettos', and their work often displays brilliant wit, imagination and ingenuity. At the end of the week, at midnight, all the fallas are simultaneously set alight and, accompanied by spectacular fireworks, they burn to the ground, sometimes endangering nearby houses. The picture shows one of the 1955 fallas, which pokes fun at the Football League racket. Soccer is a sport as popular in Spain as it is in England, and the League is represented by a pampered cow, comfortably settled on a football; her silver milk flows freely to enrich the impressarios and businessmen who promote the games.

10 Valencian brass band

The week of the Valencian fallas (see Picture 9) is filled with concerts, bull-fights and dances. We see here a group of competitors in a concourse of brass bands held in the bull-ring during the festival. The people of Valencia are very fond of brass bands, and this is unusual in Spain, where most of the people of the southern provinces perform their folk-music to guitars or mandolines, and those of the north to bagpipes or flutes.

11 'Cave-dwellers', Valencia

These two women mending clothes, their heads protected from the sun by pieces of cloth, are sitting in front of a cave, one of a whole complex of caves dug into the clay soil at Paterna, near the centre of the ceramics industry of Valencia. This is a sight quite common in Spain, but perhaps more typical of the south, where the housing shortage is graver and poverty more pronounced, and where the hot climate more readily allows such an existence. Note that the 'door' to this underground dwelling is a rush screen, and that there is no glass in the windows.

12 Village in New Castile

New Castile lies on the Central Meseta (see the Introduction) in the heart of Spain, on heights between 2,000 and 3,000ft. The winters in this region are bitterly cold, while summers are torrid. The modern way of life has scarcely penetrated the remote sierras, where peasants wrest a meagre living from the naked soil, with methods as old as their civilisation. They live in villages and cultivate the surrounding lands, which are divided into small strips and subdivided by each inheritance. Poverty makes the peasants attempt to till even the hard stony ground on hilly slopes. One finds many old ruins like the picturesque castle of Cañete (150 miles east of Madrid) in this picture, a relic of the centuries of warfare between the Moors and the Christians. The dilapidated houses cling to the hillside below the fort. There is no sanitation or plumbing in the houses and water has to be fetched from the village fountain; there is electricity for lighting only.

13 Peasant loading donkey, Castile

This and the two following pictures were taken at Salvacañete, a village not far from Cañete (Picture 12), and typical of life in the sierras of Castile. Here the peasants keep their domestic animals in stables which are part of their dwellings, and one of them is seen loading the great panniers on the donkey's back with dung used to fertilise the soil. There is an enormous waste of time travelling to and from the fields, since a man's strips of land may be scattered

over a number of miles on account of the continuous subdivision with each inheritance.

The men wear black suits of a very durable corduroy. The women also wear black, for they rigorously observe mourning periods, and since families are mostly large they are always mourning some relative and thus they wear black for the greater part of their lives. This custom has been kept alive in a country where the climate would seem to demand garments that reflect the heat, and not those that absorb it.

Note the crude stony walls of the houses shown here.

14 Shepherd boy with flock, Castile

There are about 40,000,000 head of livestock in Spain, half of which are sheep, the other half divided almost equally between cattle, pigs, and goats. While the cattle prefer the more humid climate of the north-west, sheep and goats seem content on the dry, naked grounds of the Castilian sierra. The herds are mostly small, so that they are easily guarded by the very young, and it is not uncommon for boys of eight years old to begin their lives as wage-earners by tending a flock of sheep. In the summer they spend two or three days at a time in the mountains with the animals, keeping on the move with them in search of fresh pastures, and at night enclosing them in rough folds high in the hills, only returning to the village for the bread and home-cured sausage that is the staple diet of these peasants. The boy in this picture is thirteen and he has tended his father's flock for the last five years.

It is partly this necessity for the young people to take on the responsibility of adults that stands in the way of education. Many boys and girls never go to school in their lives, material circumstances being such that without their help the parents could never maintain a family. Thus many Spanish children simply have not the time to go to school, and it is, perhaps, for this reason that attendance is not compulsory. As a consequence there are many illiterate people in Spain.

15 Family picnic, Castile

It is only in the early spring before the start of the growing season, which keeps practically every member of the family working from before sunrise until after sunset, that the folk of the sierra find time for a Sunday or feast-day country outing. Here we find them relaxing by a little stream, complete with guitars and gathered around a paella, a popular Spanish dish made with a basis of rice, which they cook on an open fire. Everyone dips into the large, flat pan in which the dish is cooked and, since no meal in Spain is complete without wine, the bota (literally a 'boot'), made of goatskin, is passed round. The bota is in common usage all over Spain; the method of drinking from it consists in the drinker's pressing the flexible skin of the wine-filled bota and directing the stream of wine issuing from the small spout on top into his mouth without touching the spout with his lips. (See the woman in the blue-green jumper at the back of the circle). This is a most practical, hygienic method of drinking but one which demands some skill and practice. Note that the leaves are not yet on the trees - the time is late March - and observe the barren rocky ground.

16 The bulls of San Isidro

The only serious challenge to the supreme popularity of bull-fighting as Spain's national spectacle has come in recent years from a growing enthusiasm for Football League games. However, vast sums of money are still expended yearly on the corridas de toros (bull-fights), and there is seldom a corrida that does not sell out the seating capacity of the ring. Bull-fights are not as gory and savage as they were a generation back. The matador has to please his public with his grace and skilful technique as well as with his daring, for most Spaniards that attend corridas are connoisseurs of bull-fighting. The breeding of thoroughbred stock for these spectacles is a large and profitable undertaking, and many thousands of acres of Spanish soil are given up to the rearing of these beasts. The picture shows prize bulls in the corral of a former royal park on the outskirts of Madrid awaiting their turn in the bull-fights of the feast of San Isidro. This festival lasts a whole week and is one of the few occasions when bulls are open to public inspection before the fight.

17 Puerta del Sol, Madrid

Madrid; the capital of Spain, is situated on the banks of the river Manzanares in the exact geographical centre of the peninsula. Originally it was an Arab fortress, and it remained a small unimportant town in the province of Toledo until Philip II (1556-98) made it the capital of the country because of its strategic position. Today Madrid has a population of 1,700,000 and is Spain's largest city. Puerta del Sol is the city's main square, on which converge most of the thoroughfares, and it has the same associations for any Spaniard as Picadilly has for the Englishman. Puerta del Sol was at one time the centre of the city's business life but this has now shifted to the more modern Gran Via.

18 Royal Palace, Madrid

The building of the present Royal Palace was begun during the reign of Philip V (1700-46) on the site of the former Moorish alcazar (citadel), which was destroyed by a great fire in 1734. It is an impressive building on rectangular foundations and mainly the work of Sacchetti.

The last king of Spain to inhabit the palace was Alfonso XIII, who abdicated in the bloodless revolution of 1931. The picture shows the large royal courtyard. General Franco (the present chief of the Spanish State), whose armies defeated those of the elected government at the end of three years of civil war in 1939, rides in the carriage in the foreground, while in the left background can be seen his personal guard, picked mounted troops from Spanish Morocco. Franco is being taken to his own residence in the Pardo Palace on the outskirts of Madrid, after he has presided at a State ceremony in the Royal Palace on the occasion of the presenting of his credentials by the Irish ambassador.

19 Toledo

Toledo is a town of 50,000 inhabitants built on a hill 1,500ft above sea level; below it flows the river Tagus.

Its history reflects that of all of Spain. It was founded by the Iberians, and then conquered successively by the Romans, in 190 BC (who named it Toletum), by the Visigoths, by the Moslem general Tarik-ben-Zeyad in 711, and by Alfonso VI of Castile in 1085. It was here that an Arab prince buried alive 400 noblemen in the basement of his palace to avenge an insult to his daughter. Toledo was always the cultural and business centre of the region, and Alfonso VI made it the capital of the kingdom of Castile. Although many different cultures have left their imprint on the town, with its narrow streets it is more Arab in style and atmosphere than any other town in Spain. In the picture, the two buildings towering above the chaos of whitewashed houses are the ruins of the famous alcazar, and the cathedral (which is the second largest Gothic cathedral in Spain).

Toledo is most famous for the fine craftsmanship of its gold industry.

This picture might be compared with El Greco's painting of Toledo, which was his home.

20 Windmill of La Mancha

The southern part of the Central Meseta is called La Mancha. Once the mills of the windswept plains of this region ground the wheat of Castile. Though many of them are no longer in use, they have become somewhat of a symbol of Spain through the associations with the great Spanish classic, Don Quixote de la Mancha by Miguel de Cervantes, the story of a mad nobleman who lived in a dreamworld of knight-errantry and who, in one episode, imagining the whirling sails of the windmills of La Mancha to be the menacing arms of giants, did battle against them with his lance, with disastrous results.

Near the site of the mill in this picture is a region famous for its table wines, with its centre at Valdepeñas.

21 Patio de los Leones, Alhambra, Granada

Perhaps the most famous of all the historical buildings in

Spain is the Alhambra in Granada. Built during the fourteenth century, the grace and splendour of this Arab palace is overwhelming. The picture shows the Patio de los Leones (Court of the Lions), so called because of the fountain at its centre which rests upon the stone figures of twelve lions. Observe the magnificent capitals and the delicacy of the lacework arches, part of the porticos made up of 128 white marble columns encompassing the patio.

22 Fishing at Conil, Andalusia

This photo was taken on the southern Atlantic coast of Spain at Conil, a small fishing village about twenty miles east of Cadiz. We see the fishermen pulling in the javega, an ancient and primitive method of fishing where a rope is attached to each end of the net, and, leaving the end of one rope on shore, a small crew rows about one mile out into the sea. Casting out the net as they go along, and describing a half circle, they return to shore with the end of the other rope. To pull in the net takes between ten and twenty men on each rope, and the whole operation lasts about three hours. Those depending entirely on fishing for their livelihood are poor, particularly since half of the money for each catch goes to the owner of the net, usually some rich man in one of the nearby towns (Cadiz, Jerez or Seville). Old men and children alike take part in the operation. Notice the beautiful sandy beach.

23 Making rope, Andalusia

Because of the climate, much of the social life in Spain and many other activities are carried on out-of-doors, particularly in the south. Here we find people making rope for the fishing nets by the shore of Conil (see Picture 22), using primitive equipment for twisting the threads, which are suspended between ordinary chairs. The cactus hedge is typical of Andalusia.

24 The Seville Fair parade

One of the most beautiful and famous of Spanish festivals is the great spring Fair in Seville. The real business

of the week is a cattle fair, and buyers and sellers meet every day to trade in all manner of livestock. During the week of the fair the whole of the populace and an immense number of visitors enjoy the gaiety, music and colour of traditional Andalusian life. The women wear the brightly coloured, frilled costumes of southern dancers and the young men the classic riding habits of the Andalusian ranches. There is a vast encampment of tents and pavilions where people gather to play, sing and dance the sevillanas, offer hospitality to their friends, or rest from the tiring business of touring the fair. At midday, picturesquely dressed riders exercise the thoroughbred horses in a parade along the avenues of the fairground, each with his girl mounted behind the saddle, one hand clasping the horse's tail, the other around her partner's waist. This daily parade is a very 'democratic' affair where royalty, financiers, filmstars join in by the side of country farmers, cowboys and peasants. Open carriages drawn by richly caparisoned mules or horses are very popular, the women draping their wide skirts over the sides of these carriages, as in this picture. The dancing and music continue late into the night, and each afternoon crowds throng to the bull-ring for some of the most famous corridos in Spain.

25 Sevillanas in Maria Luisa Park, Seville

At any time of the day during the fair you may see groups of young people stop spontaneously in the streets of Seville or in the park to dance sevillanas, accompanied only by the rhythm of handclaps and castanets, and by the voices of their companions. The sevillana is a local variety of the seguidilla, a rapid dance in 3/8 time performed by two partners, who in the execution of their steps and turns frequently change positions. Characteristic of the dance are the swaying hips and graceful movement of arms. Note how the steps of the dance spread the curving frills of the skirts. The movement is helped by the stiffly starched lace petticoats which support the wide hem so that it sways alluringly in movement, whether walking or dancing.

In this picture a group of ordinary young people are dancing the four verses of the lively sevillana by one of the many beautiful tiled fountains in the Maria Luisa Park in Seville.

Other Common Ground filmstrips include:

Geography in Colour

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