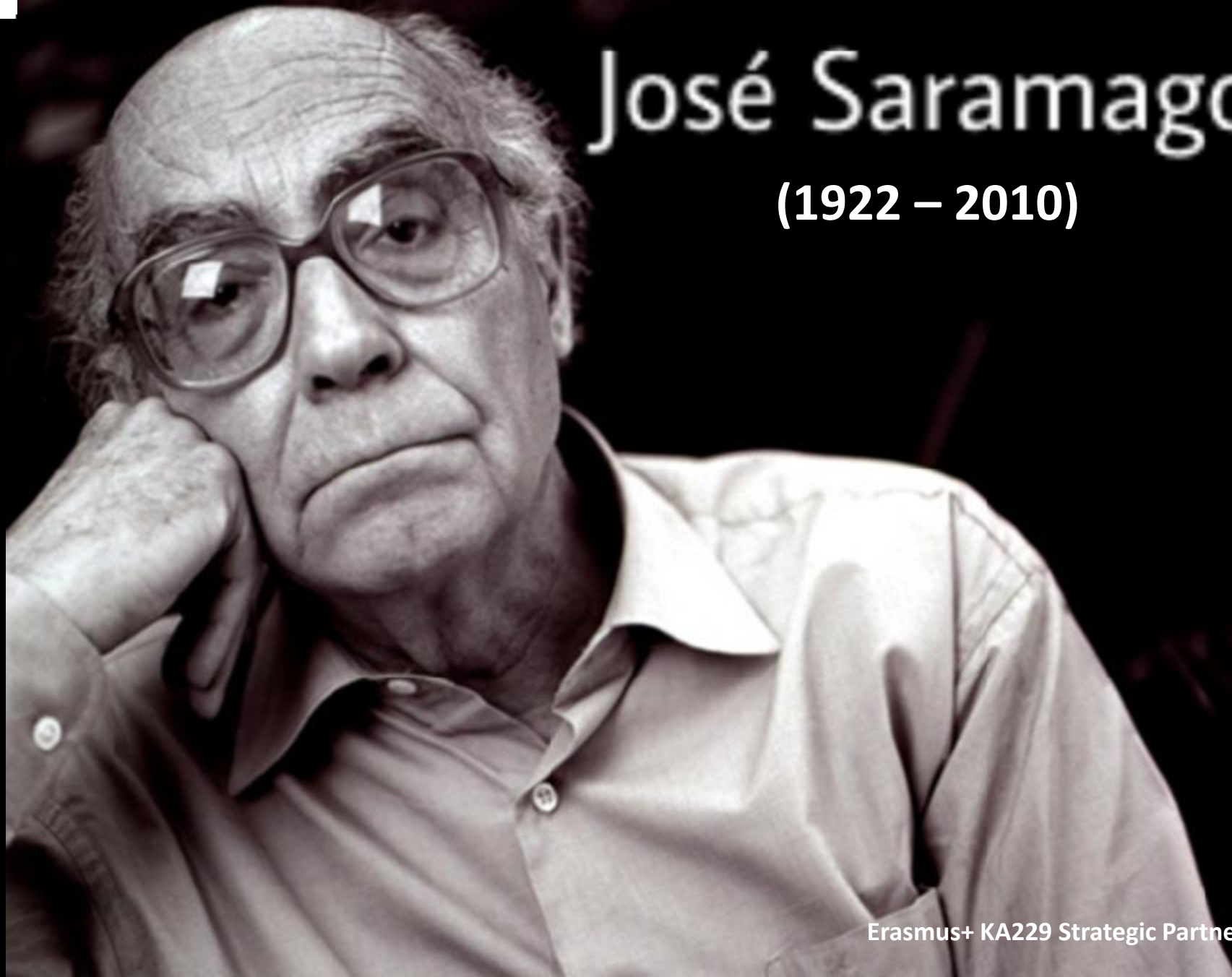




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# José Saramago

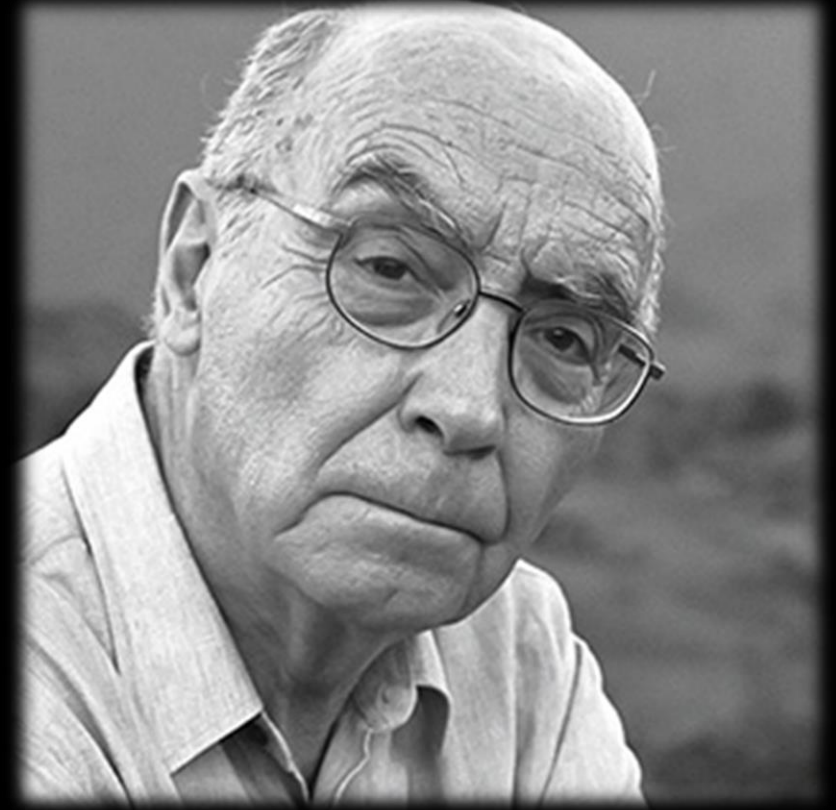
(1922 – 2010)



# Who was José Saramago?

José Saramago was the first Portuguese-language writer to win the Nobel Prize.

He was a novelist, a playwright, a poet and a short story writer.



# The life of José Saramago

## (Part 1)



The son and grandson of peasants, José Saramago was born in Azinhaga, a village in Ribatejo, on November 16th, 1922.

His parents migrated to Lisbon when he was almost two years old.

During several years he spent his holidays in his hometown with his mother's parents.

# The life of José Saramago

## (Part 2)

Although he was a good student, due to economic difficulties, he went to a technical school where he learnt to be a mechanic, his first job.

Though technically oriented, the syllabus of that school included, besides French, a literature subject.

When he was working as a mechanic he started to frequent, in its evening opening hours, a public library in Lisbon. And it was there, with no help or guidance except curiosity and the will to learn, that his taste for reading developed and was refined.

After holding several other jobs such as a draughtsman, a health and welfare officer and a translator, he became an editor and a journalist.

# The life of José Saramago

## (Part 3)

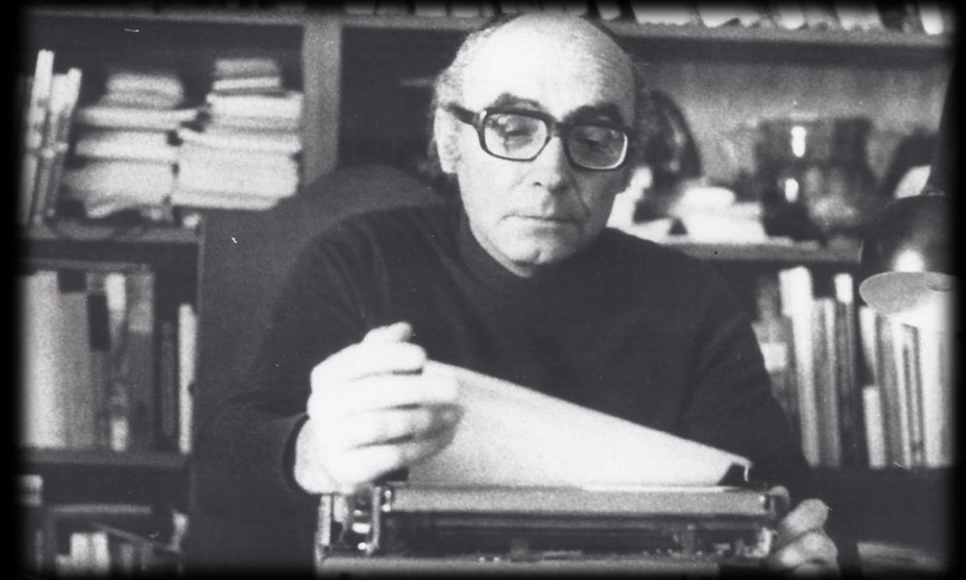
From 1976, due to being unemployed and to political issues, he became a member of the Portuguese Communist Party since 1969, he began to live only from his literary work, first as a translator, then as an author.

He belonged to the first Board of the Portuguese Writers' Association and he was, from 1985 to 1994, the president of the General Assembly of the Portuguese Authors' Society.

In February 1993, in consequence of the Portuguese government censorship of *The Gospel According to Jesus Christ* (1991), vetoing its presentation for the European Literary Prize, he and his wife, Pilar del R o, decided to move to the island of Lanzarote, in the Canary Islands (Spain), where he died on June 18th, 2010 (aged 87).

# José Saramago's best-known works:

- - "Memorial do Convento" (1982; "Memoirs of the Convent"; Eng. trans. *Baltasar and Blimunda*);
- - "O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis" (1984; The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis);
- - A jangada de pedra (1986; The Stone Raft; film 2002);
- - "O Evangelho Segundo Jesus Cristo" (1991; The Gospel according to Jesus Christ);
- - "Ensaio sobre A Cegueira" (1995; Essay on Blindness; Eng. trans. *Blindness*; film 2008)





# José Saramago's Portuguese awards



- Prize of the Association of Portuguese Critics;
- City of Lisbon Prize;
- Municipality of Lisbon Prize;
- Portuguese PEN Club Prize (twice);
- Literary Prize Municipality of Lisbon, Critics' Prize;
- Dom Dinis Prize, from Casa de Mateus Foundation;
- Grand Prize of Novel and Novel, from Portuguese Writers Association;
- Literary Life Prize, from Portuguese Writers Association;
- Grand Prize of Theatre, from Portuguese Writers Association;
- Consecration Prize, from Portuguese Authors Society;
- Luís de Camões Prize.

# José Saramago's International awards

Italy:

- The Grinzane-Cavour Prize; Ennio Flaiano International Prize; Brancati Prize (Zafferana); Mondello International Prize; Scanno-University Gabriele d'Annunzio Prize and the Penne-Mosca Prize.

England:

- The Independent Foreign Fiction Award.

Spain:

- Rosalía de Castro Prize; European Communication Prize Jordi Xifra Heras and the Canarias International Prize.

But the most significant award was the Nobel Prize for Literature, in 1998.



# José Saramago's writing style

- metaphors and allegories based in realist settings;
- characters named only by their social position or job;
- long and uninterrupted sentences that last for paragraphs or even pages;
- only commas and periods to punctuate sentences (There are no hyphens, semicolons or quotation marks);
- commas before capital letters to separate sentences.

# Curiosities

He was registered as João de Sousa Saramago, but Saramago wasn't his family's surname. It was a nickname by which his father's family was known in the village. *Saramago* is a wild herbaceous plant, whose leaves in those times served as nourishment for the poor.

He was born on 16th November 1922, but he was only registered two days later so his family wouldn't be fined for not having registered his birth at due time.

In 1999 the biennial Prémio Literário José Saramago (José Saramago Literary Prize) was established in his honour to award young authors writing in Portuguese.

In June 2007, the writer founded *The José Saramago Foundation*. Its main institutional principles are to defend and spread the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the promotion of culture in Portugal as well as in all the countries, and particular concerns about environmentalism. It is a cultural private institution located in the Casa dos Bicos, in Lisbon (Portugal) with a smaller branch in Azinhaga do Ribatejo.

Maria Cordeiro & Tomás Cordeiro

Catarina Bernardo; Dalila Bichão; Irene Morais; Margarida Felisberto; João Vaz

# *The Tale of the Unknown Island*

José Saramago

**A new cover by Manuel Lobão**

