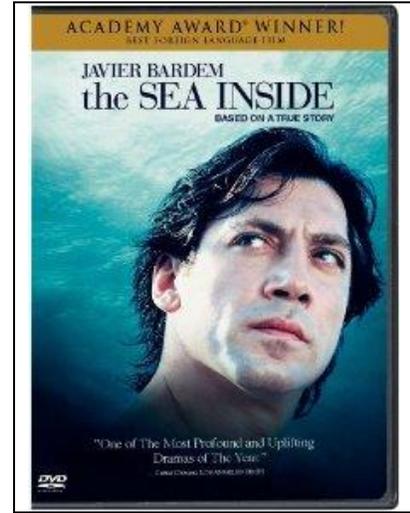


The Sea Inside

Ramón Sampedro was a fisherman from Galicia, Spain, who became a quadriplegic in a diving accident at the age of 25 in 1968, which paralyzed him from the neck down, and fought for his right to an assisted suicide for the next 29 years.

His argument hinged on the fact that he was sure of his decision to die. However, owing to his paralysis, he was physically unable to commit suicide without help. He argued that suicide was a right that he was being denied, and he sought legal advice concerning his right to receive assistance to end his life, first in the courts of Spain, where his case attracted country-wide attention. Eventually, his fight became known worldwide.



Sampedro died in January 1998 in Spain from potassium cyanide poisoning.

A Spanish television station days later broadcasted a homemade video that showed the bedridden Mr. Sampedro saying farewell into the camera and then drinking cyanide-laced water through a straw.

"When I drink this, I will have renounced the most humiliating of slaveries: being a live head stuck to a dead body," Mr. Sampedro, 55, says on the video, just before turning his head to the left to sip from the straw.

He wanted the video to be seen by officials to prove that he drank the poison voluntarily and so that the still-unidentified person who placed it beside his bed would not be prosecuted.

A close friend of Ramón's, Ramona Maneiro, was arrested and charged with assisting his suicide but was released due to lack of evidence. She was a close friend and bedside attendant of his. Assisting a suicide can be punished by 10 years in prison in Spain, which is heavily dominated by the Catholic Church. The Spanish Parliament has rejected a bill put forward by leftist parties to legalize assisted suicide.

In 2005, after the statute of limitations had expired, Maneiro admitted to providing Sampedro with a cyanide-laced drink and a straw. She said, "I did it for love. I was his hands. I did what he asked."

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9RIz3ZmYBcY&feature=related>

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Please answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper in complete sentences after watching the film and doing some research online about the case of Ramón Sampedro.

1. What happened to Ramón that caused him to be bedridden? What specifically was his injury?
2. Why didn't he commit suicide if he didn't want to live anymore? Explain.
3. From the film, summarize the discussion Ramón has with the priest. What was the argument of each person in this exchange?
4. The film shows that Ramón can still contribute to society, from being able to write through a devised contraption to his infectious personality. Does this mean he should stay alive?
5. Specifically explain how Sampedro died? Was it with the help of anyone?
6. For what purpose was his death videotaped? Explain.
7. Explain the following quote by Sampedro before his death, "I have renounced the most humiliating of slaveries: being a live head stuck to a dead body."
8. Who was Ramona Maneiro and what was her role in the life and death of Ramón Sampedro?
9. In Spain, what is the legal status of assisted suicide? What role does the Catholic Church play in this?
10. If you were Ramona Maneiro or Ramón's family, would you have helped him end his life, even if it was illegal? Explain.
11. If you were Ramón, would you want to end your life? Explain.