

French Lessons Based on Renoir's *Le Déjeuner des Canotiers (Luncheon of the Boating Party)*

Designed by a French Teacher

French students explore Renoir's *Luncheon of the Boating Party* as a work of art and as an example of French culture in the 1870s. Students collaborate to create a *tableau vivant* (living painting) of *Luncheon of the Boating Party*, including a mural background based on the Maison Fournaise setting. Each student adopts a costumed pose of a single character depicted in the painting. Students research the painting's participants to create a written interview to be performed in class. Teaching Kit primary sources and worksheets augment vocabulary development, grammar, and punctuation.

Length

16 classes, 40 minutes each

Grade Level

French One

Materials

Chairs, tables, glassware, wine bottles, menus, hats, costumes, stuffed animals, mural paper, oil pastels, tempera, facial makeup.

Curriculum Connections

Foreign Language, Language Arts, Social Studies, Technology, Theater, Visual Arts

National Standards of Learning

FL 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

LA 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 11

SS 1, 3, 4, 8, 9

TE 3, 5

TH 1, 3, 5, 7

VA 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

Objectives

Students will:

- Summarize the impact of the railway and Industrial Revolution on Parisian life and French art.
- Discuss critically the development of weekend leisure along the Seine river.
- Research individual biographies of *Luncheon of the Boating Party* participants to understand the different social classes and professions.
- Describe and dramatize the relationship between Renoir and his friends.
- Expand French vocabulary and attain a fluency of oral expression through the interview technique.
- Discuss the socio-cultural context of language.
- Employ basic impressionist techniques in oil pastel to create a mural-size backdrop for a class *tableau vivant*.
- Analyze *Luncheon of the Boating Party* during a visit to The Phillips Collection.

Kit Resources

- Character biographies, Tab 3—Who's in the Painting
- Primary Source 22, *Bal des Canotiers* (the boaters' dance) poster
- Primary Source 23, Railroad map of Paris and its surroundings
- Primary Source 24, *Chatou, Perspective of the Bridge*
- Primary Source 34, Hotel and restaurant bill from the Maison Fournaise
- Worksheet 2, *Luncheon of the Boating Party* Character Interview
- Worksheet 3, *Luncheon of the Boating Party* Quick Quiz!
- Handout 1, Fun Places along the River Seine
- Handout 3, French-English Vocabulary

Step-by-Step Teaching Unit

Step 1: Introduction

Students are introduced to the following aspects of Renoir's *Luncheon of the Boating Party*: subject matter, the concept of railway travel, and plein air painting. The class discusses the relationships of participants in *Luncheon of the Boating Party* and the concept of a *fête galante*. Each student chooses a character from the painting through random selection.

Step 2: Research

Students study the cultural context of suburban leisure in 1870s France, looking at various primary sources in the Teaching Kit. Students map leisure spots along the Seine river that were reachable by train. Students make mini-posters

Step 2.



based on the poster *Bal des Canotiers* (the boaters' dance) (Primary Source 22), studying the poster's French vocabulary and grammar.

Step 3: Continue Research

Students read Tab 3—Who's in the Painting for information on their character and conduct additional internet research to learn more.

Step 4: Conduct Initial Interviews

Students are divided into pairs to conduct French interviews between members of *Luncheon of the Boating Party*. A French bingo game is used as an introduction to the Maison Fournaise, the location of Renoir's painting.

Step 5: Tableau Vivant Activity

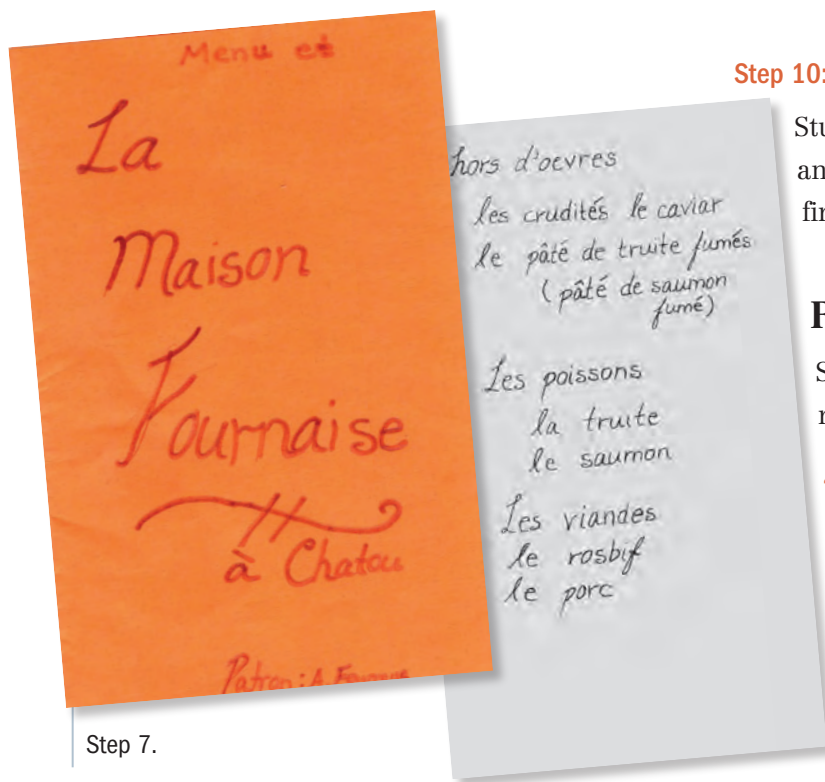
Students discuss the concept of a *tableau vivant* (living painting). Students receive a lesson about impressionist style and technique from the school's art teacher. Students create a backdrop for the *tableau vivant* based on *Luncheon of the Boating Party*.

Step 6: Vocabulary Review

Students hone new vocabulary learned through the *Luncheon of the Boating Party* unit and take

Step 5.





Step 7.

related vocabulary quiz (Worksheet 2, *Luncheon of the Boating Party* Quick Quiz!). Students practice their interview scripts with the teacher.

Step 7: Menu Design

To further study Renoir's world and enhance vocabulary and grammar, students research and design their own menus for the Maison Fournaise restaurant.

Step 8: Final Interviews

Students conduct final interviews acting as a journalist-interviewer for their partner.

Interviews illustrate the importance of the railway in facilitating the concept of *le week-end*, the Seine river, and their characters' relationships to Renoir. Students rehearse the *tableau vivant*.

Step 9: Performance of the *Tableau Vivant*

Tableau vivant is performed for school audience. Students take final written quiz.

Step 10: Visit The Phillips Collection

Students visit The Phillips Collection and analyze *Luncheon of the Boating Party* firsthand.

Rubric

Students were graded on the following rubric using a point system:

4. Students exceeded expectations in the *tableau vivant* performance. Theatrical interpretation of their character was outstanding and demonstrated an understanding of the character. Oral fluency in French interview answers was outstanding. Questions asked in English were clear and well spoken. Students

produced creative and clear menus and posters based on primary sources in fluent French without mistakes.

3. Students interpreted character accurately in the *tableau vivant*. Oral fluency in French was read accurately but without expression. Students created French menus and posters of the era without grammatical errors.

Step 8.



2. During the *tableau vivant*, answers in French were presented with some mistakes and but were essentially comprehensible. Students produced posters and menus that were legible and had minimal grammatical mistakes.

1. Students provided minimal effort in portraying character. Oral fluency in French was not demonstrated and included frequent mistakes. Students produced posters and menus that were difficult to comprehend and contained many grammatical errors.

Assessment

Formal: Students are able to speak clearly, accurately, and fluently in French and in English to convey the key facts about their character in *Luncheon of the Boating Party*.

Two vocabulary quizzes demonstrate expanded French vocabulary to include Renoir's world.

Informal: Teacher observes students' appreciation of concepts of impressionism and the relationships of *Luncheon of the Boating Party* individuals to Renoir.

Documentation

Digital photographs and video were used to document student work and process.

Impact—Lessons Learned at the National Cathedral School

The *tableau vivant* Teaching Unit had a very positive effect on the fifth-grade French students at NCS. The students gained a new interest in impressionism and they enjoyed portraying the characters in the painting. The interview technique enhanced their oral fluency in French as well as their ability to work with a partner. Although some students have great difficulty in pronunciation and accent in French, even these shy students were eager to participate in the *tableau vivant* and worked diligently on proper pronunciation for their interview. It seemed that taking on the role of a character, and pretending to be someone else helped them speak French with fewer inhibitions. Creating an impressionistic background for their *tableau vivant* gave students another creative way to engage with the art and increased their enthusiasm for the project.