

Teaching French in Primary schools: a preparation for future learning

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La Jolie Ronde

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching young children a new language is not just a question of teaching them new vocabulary in order to give them a head-start at Secondary level. As with any other area of the curriculum, language learning at Primary level has to be a preparation, a firm grounding for future learning. We need to provide children with tools which they can use to good effect for their course of study at Secondary school and beyond. Children must become accustomed to listening and attuned to different language sounds. They must also experience a variety of language-learning techniques. They should follow a programme which is suited to their age and uses methods appropriate to their level of development. The material must be accessible to all, providing opportunities for success at every level.

FIRST OF ALL, SOME USEFUL TIPS!

- One 30 to 45 minute lesson a week can be enough. However, the best way, if you are the class teacher, would be to introduce some French for 10 minutes or so every day, or, if you are a specialist teacher, 2/3 thirty minute sessions a week.
- Pronunciation must be correct and teachers should rely on tapes made by good native speakers.
- Provide ‘stepping stones’ to help the young learners to understand and use the words for themselves.
- Bring plenty of variety into your lessons. Avoid too much repetition of the same topic during a session.
- Introduce grammar in order to form good habits and strong foundations – but make it fun and enjoyable.
- Don’t forget the culture and geography. Try to make links between the 2 countries. Organise a French breakfast or a special

‘goûter’. Find correspondents.

- Use simple and user-friendly records of achievement as points of reference for assessing each child’s progress. Make the assessments enjoyable tasks.

STRUCTURE OF A LESSON

You may like to follow the suggested format below:

- A ‘warm-up’ to get everyone to step into the world of French. Lasting barely 5 minutes, the teacher, or chosen children, lead the class in recounting known finger-rhymes and songs (for the younger ones) and/or questions and answers on known topics/reciting or chanting numbers “tout bas, plus fort, lentement, plus vite”, etc. (for the older children). The warm-up is important whether you are running 1 or 2 sessions a week. It responds to a need from the children to repeat phrases – don’t be afraid to repeat things, the children love it! It also allows less confident children to conceal their fears and inhibitions and builds up confidence until they are ready to talk on their own. It also helps new pupils to become familiar with many phrases in an easy way. They will soon participate in the class and join in games.
- Introduce new items.
- Short activities to revise the most recent topics.
- A reading/copying/visual task as a reinforcement (for older children).
- Set listening/copying/word games task for homework.
- A song or favourite activity.
- A re-cap: What have we learned today?

The following gives an idea of the activities which might be undertaken by two different age groups working on the theme of The Body.

Key: T=Teacher, P=Pupil, Ps=Pupils.

SUGGESTIONS FOR YEAR 1/2 (see page 26)

Objectives: Different parts of the face. C’est...?

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Où est...? Colours. New song. Games. Making a mask.

- Warm-up. (Depending on previous experience, this could simply be chanting of some rhymes and numbers).
- Sing the action-song 'Bonjour, c'est moi!' (for parts of the face) – see words and music below. (Cat 2).
- Repeat the parts of the face – the children pointing to each one as they chant.
- T draws a face on the chalk board following Ps' instructions. T says "Fermez les yeux", T rubs out a feature. Ps say what's gone.
- "Dessinez-moi le..." (T restores feature) then progress to 2 features. Roles can be reversed, P taking the lead.
- Pretend to be getting washed. A T/P 'parent' gives reminders of bits missed – "et les oreilles!"
- Enlarge and cut out the template of the mask below (Cat 1). The children can then colour it. Once finished, the children could talk about their mask.
- Discuss the mask : "c'est la bouche?" "oui/non", "où est la bouche?" Ps point. "De quelle couleur est la bouche?"
- Number 'bumps' game: The children listen to a series of words. They must quickly get up/sit when they hear a number (for example). You could exchange numbers for parts of the face.
- 'Petits poissons', using numbers and catching 'fish' – a favourite game which the children love! Some children form a circle, holding hands in the air. They are the net. One or two stand outside the net. They are the fish. 'The net' decide on a number and start counting. The 'fish' pass in and out of the circle. When the chosen number is called, everyone forming the net drops their arms and some 'fish' are caught inside the circle/net.

Further activities on this topic might include:

- Follow instructions for drawing a face – *blindfold*.
- 'Follow my leader' – the class follows the instructions and example of the T/P "touchez la tête".
- Listening to the new song and pointing to each feature on the mask when heard.
- Combine with 'grand' and 'petit' to produce odd faces in drawing activities, recognition games etc.

SUGGESTIONS FOR YEAR 5/6 (see page 27)

Objectives: Creative use of language to communicate information about appearances. Bringing together and revising parts of the body, clothing, description, 'il/elle' distinction, adjectives, 'il porte', known questions and ordinal numbers. Reading practice.

- Warm-up.
- Revise parts of the body and play: 'Jacques a dit' (Simon says).

- Introduce the song 'Jacques a dit'. Ps can follow lyrics (see Cat 1 below).
- Team game. (Recognition of body parts) – name an item of clothing for each 'part of the body' card drawn at random or given by opposing team. Progress to active use of body vocabulary: name part of body associated with an item of clothing.
- Show 4 large pictures of people. "Qu'est-ce qu'il porte? Comment est-elle? Il a un grand nez? Qui est-ce?" T, then P. (Revise il/elle distinction, adjectives, il porte + clothes, known questions). Game of '20 questions' to find chosen person, in pairs/groups/class.
- Bus stop game, (see Cat 2). P communicates to a partner the order in which people are waiting at the bus-stop. One pupil has the queue illustrated, the other has individual people. You could enlarge and cut up the figures (see below). Distribute different 'queues' for more practice.
- Bring in variety and introduce a number game with 'loto' or '0's and 'X's, where each square is asked for by its number. (This can be as hard or easy as T, or P, chooses).
- T reads aloud a series of words. Ps try to recognise words of clothes (similar to Cat 3).
- Set a follow-up written exercise for homework, or ask the children to complete Cat 3. Circle all the words for clothes you can see.
- Sing and join in the aerobic "Boogie" song, - 'Je mets ma main en avant', hokey-cokey style. Even 'cool' Year 6 are willing participants in this favourite activity song.
- Reading comprehension: The scarecrow would like a change of clothes (see Cat 4).

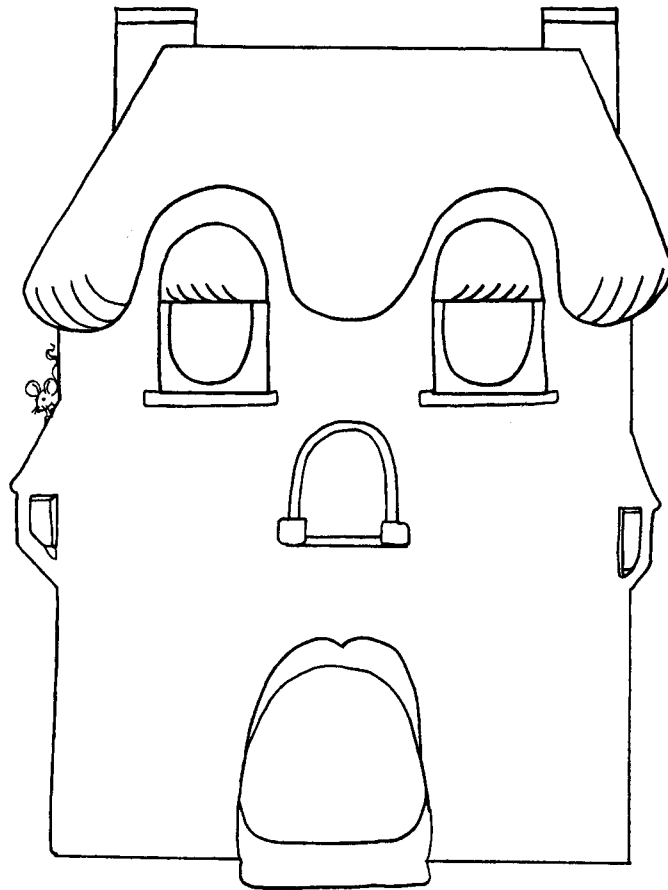
Further activities might include:

- Pupils writing their own lyrics to the 'Jacques a dit' song. They can either sing or tell their peers what to do.
- A game of Consequences. One group of Ps give drawing instructions and another group describe their results to the class.
- Disguised pupils act out a 'hold-up' sketch. The 'witnesses' give their description to build up a photofit picture of 'le voleur'.
- Photofit pictures posted in the room and descriptions of witness circulated. Who did which crime?
- Doctor's surgery: 'Ça ne va pas, docteur!' – acting!

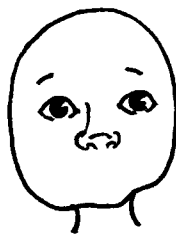
Pupils who follow an introduction to French at Primary level should have been using the language in pursuit of these sorts of enjoyable objectives and will feel confident with its different sounds and how they are written. They may have completed their own activity sheets, as a resource for further language learning and as a testament to their achievements. But most importantly, however, they will enter their Secondary school with a motivated, positive attitude towards foreign language learning – and that can be no bad thing!

"Even 'cool' Year 6 are willing participants in this favourite activity song"

Extracts from La Jolie Ronde Book 1A and Chante en Français. See suggestions for a year 1/2 class.



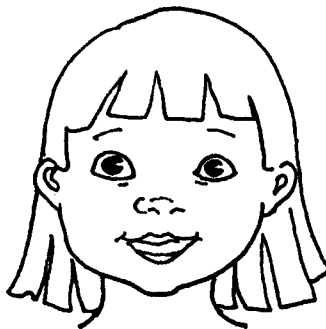
C'est moi!



Bonjour, bonjour, c'est moi, c'est moi.
Voici ma tête, bonjour c'est moi.



Voici ma tête.....mes yeux
et mon nez....et ma bouche
.....et mes oreilles



.....et mes cheveux...et mon cou.
Bonjour, c'est moi!



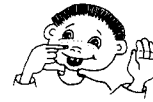
Bonjour! Bonjour! C'est moi! C'est moi! Voici ma tête. Bonjour, c'est moi!

Extracts from La Jolie Ronde Book 3A and Chante en Français. See suggestions for a year 5/6 class.

Jacques a dit!



Jacques a dit: Touche la main. Touche le pied, touche la tête. Jacques a dit: Touche le ventre!



Touche le nez.
Jacques a dit:
Touche les bras,

Touche les jambes,
Jacques a dit:
Touche le cou.



L'arrêt du bus. Joue avec ton partenaire.

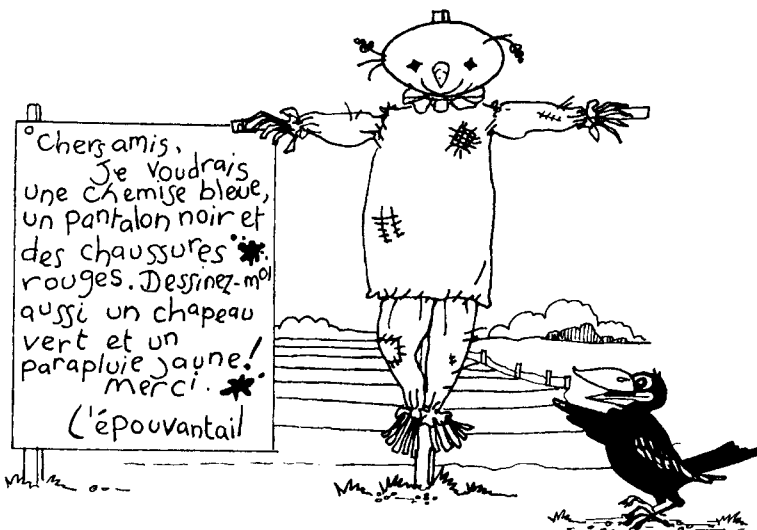


Entoure tous les noms de vêtements:

une pomme, un pull, des lunettes, une frite, une chaise,
un canard, un ours, une ceinture, un pied, un serpent,
un pantalon, une chaussure, une glace, un chapeau,
un gant, une glace, une écharpe, une cerise, un pyjama.



L'épouvantail voudrait changer de costume. Aide-le!



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