

A Cajun Folktale and Zydeco

Classroom at a Glance

Teacher:	Paris Granville
Language:	French
Grade:	8
School:	Pleasant Hill Middle School, Pleasant Hill, California
Lesson Date:	January 13
Class Size:	22
Schedule:	80 minutes every other day

Video Summary

In this lesson, students learn about music and storytelling in the Cajun culture. They begin by comparing Louisiana and California life. Ms. Granville then introduces new vocabulary about agriculture while retelling a traditional Cajun folktale. Next, the students re-enact the story in groups, then use a story map to review elements of the folktale. Ms. Granville concludes the lesson with an introduction to zydeco music, including an opportunity for students to play authentic instruments.

Standards Addressed

- Communication: Interpersonal, Interpretive
- Cultures: Practices, Products
- Connections: Making Connections

Read about these standards at the end of this lesson.

Key Terms

- authentic materials
- backward planning
- story map
- Venn diagram

Definitions for these terms can be found in the Glossary located in the Appendix.

Class Profile

“In middle school, we have to constantly think about engaging and motivating students. I could have just shown them pictures of the musical instruments, but I think it’s really important to bring in real instruments that they can touch. Having the sound, the touch, the visual, ties all those senses together, and the more senses that are involved in the lesson, the more they’re going to retain.” —Paris Granville

School Profile

Paris Granville teaches seventh- and eighth-grade French at Pleasant Hill Middle School in Pleasant Hill, California, a suburb of San Francisco. Approximately 850 students in grades 6–8 attend the school. Students can take French or Spanish as an elective in sixth grade, which the majority of students choose to do. Subsequent placement in higher-level seventh- and eighth-grade French or Spanish is based on teacher recommendations.

Lesson Design

Paris Granville refers to the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning, the California State Frameworks, and the ACTFL Performance Guidelines when designing her lessons (see Resources). For each unit, she begins with the district curriculum objectives and determines the students’ final performance or product and how it will be measured. She then works backward to plan the individual lessons and make connections to the standards. This ensures that the lesson objectives mirror the assessment, and that individual activities lead to the intended outcomes. To prepare students for final assessments, Ms. Granville conducts multiple informal assessments throughout the unit, giving students a chance to practice the skills that will be examined later.

The Lesson

In this lesson, students learned about aspects of the Cajun culture in Louisiana. The lesson was part of the Francophone Vacation Destinations unit, in which students learned about different cultures through traditional folktales or stories. They began by studying nearby French-speaking regions (in Canada and the U.S.), then moved to francophone countries in the Caribbean, the Pacific, Europe, Africa, and the Middle East.

When appropriate, Ms. Granville incorporates technology into her lessons. The animation feature allows her to introduce new action verbs entirely in French. Ms. Granville also gives her students the option to use PowerPoint in their project presentations, and makes her animated presentation (with added narration) available to students who were absent.

Year at a Glance

Francophone Vacation Destinations

- **Focus on 10 countries on 6 continents, and read a folktale or story from each one**
- **Leisure activities; Food; Geography; Cultural or religious traditions**

Solving Mysteries

- Murder mystery simulation (A crocodile is found dead; students try to learn who did it and how)
- Getting and obtaining information; Asking questions

Getting Around the City

- Directions; Places in the city; Stores

Paris

- Places to visit in Paris; Metro system

Clothing and Shopping

- Students present a fashion show and give impromptu descriptions of what models are wearing

Restaurant and Traditional

Six-Course Meal

- Vocabulary and basic etiquette for ordering and eating a traditional six-course meal

Handcrafted Bookmaking

- Students write and illustrate a children’s book, then read it to a young child

Class Profile, cont'd.

Key Teaching Strategies

- **Creating Cultural Experiences:** The teacher designs activities in which students can see, hear, or touch a cultural artifact, create their own cultural artifact, and/or observe or engage in cultural practices in or beyond the classroom. These direct or simulated experiences lead students to discover the perspectives of the culture being studied.
- **Facilitating Listening to Authentic Texts:** The teacher helps students understand authentic oral texts, using a sequential approach that includes activities for prelistening, listening for main ideas, and listening for further understanding.
- **Storytelling:** The teacher communicates the meaning of a story by paraphrasing the text in the target language and showing its illustrations, while frequently checking for learner comprehension and reaction.
- **Student Grouping:** The teacher designs activities that allow students to engage in multiple types of interactions, including working with partners, in small groups, and as a whole class.

Analyze the Video

As you reflect on these questions, write down your responses or discuss them as a group.

Before You Watch

Respond to the following questions:

- What particular challenges does block scheduling present to middle school teachers and students?
- What instructional advantages does the literary genre of folktales offer?
- What are the benefits of teaching about a variety of cultures in which the target language is spoken?
- What makes technology central to instruction rather than peripheral to it?

Watch the Video

As you watch “A Cajun Folktale and Zydeco,” take notes on Ms. Granville’s instructional strategies, particularly how she groups students for activities and integrates technology into her lesson. Write down what you find interesting, surprising, or especially important about the teaching and learning in this lesson.

Reflect on the Video

Review your notes, and then respond to the following questions:

- How does Ms. Granville balance full-class, group, and partner work?
- What routines has Ms. Granville established for a smooth transition from group work to whole-class discussions?
- What products and practices of Cajun culture are integrated into the lesson? How does Ms. Granville lead students to think about the cultural perspectives?

Analyze the Video, cont'd.

- How does playing zydeco instruments contribute to students' understanding of the music?
- What student habits are promoted through Ms. Granville's closing routine?
- How does Ms. Granville assess students during the lesson? Why is this important to do? (For a sample interpersonal assessment from Ms. Granville's class, see the Assessment Strategies materials in the Appendix.)

Look Closer

Take a second look at Ms. Granville's class to focus on specific teaching strategies. Use the video images below to locate where to begin viewing.



Video Segment: Telling the Story

You'll find this segment approximately 9 minutes and 30 seconds after the video starts. Watch for about 4 minutes and 30 seconds.

After some preparatory activities, Ms. Granville tells the students a Cajun folktale.

- What story elements does Ms. Granville establish through her retelling? What language elements (vocabulary or grammar) does she establish?
- What tools and strategies does Ms. Granville use to make the story comprehensible?
- What enables Ms. Granville to use words such as *tubercule* and *mangeable* and maintain student comprehension?
- How does Ms. Granville verify that students are following the story?



Video Segment: Mapping the Story

You'll find this segment approximately 16 minutes and 30 seconds after the video starts. Watch for about 4 minutes.

In groups of six, students organize the story's main elements and vocabulary on a story map, then share their work in a class discussion.

- How does the story map lead to interpretive communication?
- How does the story map help students develop written language?
- How does Ms. Granville focus on a grammatical concept without detracting from the story?
- What observations can you make about student interactions during group work? About Ms. Granville's interactions with students during the full-class discussion?

Connect to Your Teaching

Reflect on Your Practice

As you reflect on these questions, write down your responses or discuss them as a group.

- What technology do you routinely use in your classroom? What special units have you designed that rely on technological support? What opportunities are there in your school for finding support for and collaborating on technological presentations?
- How do you engage students with art forms from other cultures?
- What opportunities do you present to students to learn about the variety of cultures in which your target language is spoken?

Watch Other Videos

Watch other videos in the *Teaching Foreign Languages K–12* library for more examples of teaching methodologies like those you’ve just seen. Note: All videos in this series are subtitled in English.

“Russian Cities, Russian Stories” (Russian) illustrates a reading-to-writing strategy used with folktales, and “Routes to Culture” (Spanish) shows students experiencing culture through authentic musical instruments and traditional music.

Put It Into Practice

Try these ideas in your classroom.

- Collaborate with language arts teachers at your school to develop graphic organizers that can be used in both languages. This will help students see that interpreting texts is the same regardless of the language. Ms. Granville used the popular language arts strategy of story mapping (problem/action/resolution) to focus on key vocabulary and spelling and to push students’ language and thinking skills to a higher level. For more advanced students, work with English literature teachers to create more sophisticated organizers that focus on story elements such as plot, conflict, and dénouement.
- Share folktales with students to give them cultural perspectives while teaching new vocabulary and reinforcing key grammatical structures. Ms. Granville’s story contained references to agriculture (often a topic in folktales), colloquial language (*patate*), a realistic situation using past-tense actions, and a moral that reflected on the characters valued or mocked in Cajun culture. Because many folktales are written in a traditional language style that can be hard for students to read, you might need to retell them, as Ms. Granville did, in ways that make them comprehensible to students. (This is perfectly appropriate, since folktales began as an oral genre.) Save the presentation elements as a set so that you can reuse them in subsequent years or with students at other levels.

Resources

Lesson Materials

Zydeco, Buckwheat. *Zydeco Boogaloo*. Courtesy of Rounder Records. www.rounder.com

Chenier, Clifton. *Zydeco Sont Pas Salé*. Tradition Music Co. (BMI), administered by Bug Music Co. www.arhoolie.com

The Potato*

A worksheet that gave students information and language exercises using the topic of the potato (includes English translation)

Story Map*

A worksheet that students used to review and draw meaning from the Cajun folktale (includes English translation)

* These lesson materials can be found in the Appendix.

Curriculum References

ACTFL K–12 Performance Guidelines

<http://www.actfl.org>

California Department of Education Foreign Language Curriculum Frameworks

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/cfir/fl/>

Paris Granville's Recommendations

Web Resources:

Language Shaping Solutions

<http://www.languageshaping.com/resources.htm>

Resources for French and Spanish teachers

Print Resources:

Wiggins, Grant, and Jay McTighe. *Understanding by Design*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1998.

Standards

National Standards for Foreign Language Learning

Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century defines what students should know and be able to do in foreign language education. This lesson correlates to the following standards:

Communication: Communicate in Languages Other Than English

Standard 1.1: Interpersonal Communication

Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions.

Standard 1.2: Interpretive Communication

Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics.

Cultures: Gain Knowledge and Understanding of Other Cultures

Standard 2.1: Practices of Culture

Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied.

Standard 2.2: Products of Culture

Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied.

Connections: Connect With Other Disciplines and Acquire Information

Standard 3.1: Making Connections

Students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language.

Notes
