

Interpreting *La Belle et la Bête*

Classroom at a Glance

Teacher:	Michel Pasquier
Language:	French IV
Grade:	11
School:	Herricks High School, New Hyde Park, New York
Lesson Date:	February 27
Class Size:	23
Schedule:	43 minutes daily

Video Summary

In this lesson, students discuss the classic 1946 film *La Belle et la Bête*, written and directed by Jean Cocteau. The film is an adaptation of the traditional children's story *Beauty and the Beast*. Having seen most of the film, students compare it to the original story. Then, after watching the film's conclusion, they discuss the movie's symbolism and deeper meaning.

Standards Addressed

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

Read about these standards at the end of this lesson.

Key Terms

- authentic materials
- negotiation of meaning
- proficiency level
- thematic units

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

Class Profile

"I think from experience, I have come to realize that, short of being in the country, a film portrays the language in the most perspective. It's physical; every aspect is represented." —Michel Pasquier

School Profile

Michel Pasquier teaches French I–IV at Herricks High School in New Hyde Park, New York. Located on Long Island about 20 miles from Manhattan, New Hyde Park's 25,000 residents are mostly professionals. The town is culturally diverse and includes a large Asian immigrant population. Approximately 53 percent of the school's 1,270 students speak languages other than English at home, and over 40 languages are spoken in the district. The curriculum emphasizes college preparation.

Lesson Design

Mr. Pasquier designed his film-based curriculum using the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning and with approval from the curriculum council. Because he is Herricks's only French teacher, his goal was to keep students interested in studying French as they advanced through the high school program. He recognizes students' interest in films, verse, and song, and each year revises the course in part based on input from students in the previous year. "It's important that students know that this class is a work in progress, and they can have an impact on how it's changing," he says, "and that they should want to be part of it." Many of Mr. Pasquier's students continue studying French past the mandated three years.

Mr. Pasquier draws on his background in graphic arts and his interest in film to design his lessons and select relevant materials. He begins by choosing themes that are important to him and that concern life choices. Next, he picks specific subjects within those themes that would interest a college-bound teenager. He then selects the films, poems, and songs that relate to those subjects. French IV covers 10 films organized along five themes (two films per theme), accompanied by text and exercises for each theme.

The Lesson

Prior to the videotaped lesson, the class spent four to five periods preparing to view the film. They read the original *Beauty and the Beast* story by Charles Perrault, listened to a rap song about the story, and compared the story to the English-language Disney film version. The lesson stressed an understanding of different tenses, particularly the past tense, but the grammar was never separated from discussions about the story. Next, the class spent three periods viewing the Cocteau adaptation, concluding with the discussion seen in the video. At the end of the unit, students listened to Philip Glass's *Beauty and the Beast* opera, and also watched the Disney film.

Year at a Glance

Unit 1

- Opera: *Notre dame de Paris*, Luc Plamondon, Richard Cocciante
- **Film: *La belle et la bête*, Jean Cocteau, 1946**
- Text: *Notre dame de Paris*, lyrics
- Text: *La belle et la bête*, Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont
- Text: *La belle et la bête*, Kim Humpherville, film review

Unit 2

- Film: *Indochine*, Régis Wargnier, 1992
- Film: *Chocolat*, Claire Denis, 1988
- Text: *Je vous remercie, mon dieu*, Bernard Dadie
- Text: *Dans tes yeux*, Bernard Dadie

Unit 3

- Film: *Manon des sources*, Claude Berri, 1986
- Text: *L'Arlesienne*, Alphonse Daudet (1840–1897)

Unit 4

- Film: *La fracture du myocarde*, Jacques Fansten, 1990
- Film: *Ponette*, Jacques Doillon, 1996
- Text: *Le pouvoir aux enfants*, Pierre Daninos
- Text: *Enfance*, Nathalie Sarraute

Unit 5

- Film: *Toto le héros*, Jaco van Dormael, 1991
- Film: *Le huitième jour*, Jaco van Dormael, 1996
- Text: *Le horla*, Guy de Maupassant

Class Profile, cont'd.

Key Teaching Strategies

- Comparing Genres Across Media: The teacher creates lessons in which students compare themes or specific works as they are rendered in film, literature, music, art, or other media.
- Critical and Abstract Thinking: The teacher creates activities that get students to analyze and discuss abstract concepts such as symbolism, aesthetics, or ethics.
- Interpreting Film: The teacher designs activities in which students preview, interpret, and discuss full-length films or film clips.

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:

- How would you organize the teaching of a full-length film or literary work in your class?
- How do you strike a balance between students' ability to interpret and think about abstract topics and their level of expressive language?
- What is the teacher's role when working with a challenging film or literary work?

Watch the Video

As you watch "Interpreting *La Belle et la Bête*," take notes on Mr. Pasquier's instructional strategies, particularly how he helps students interpret and discuss challenging materials. Write down what you find interesting, surprising, or especially important about the teaching and learning in this lesson.

Reflect on the Video

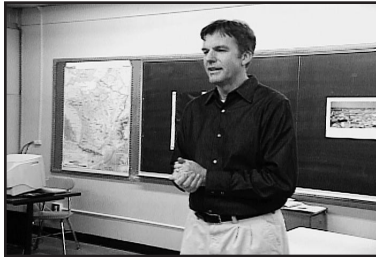
Review your notes, and then respond to the following questions:

- What steps has Mr. Pasquier designed for this lesson? Trace the activities from the students' perspective.
- Which parts of the lesson provide for student interaction?
- Which parts of the lesson require more teacher input to negotiate meaning and raise the level of discussion?

Analyze the Video, cont'd.

Look Closer

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



Video Segment: Comparing a Story and Its Film Adaptation

You'll find this segment approximately 4 minutes and 30 seconds after the video starts. Watch for about 2 minutes and 30 seconds.

Students discuss the differences between the original story and Cocteau's film adaptation.

- What aspects of the story and the film are students comparing?
- Which of the students' statements are based on fact, and which are opinion?
- How does Mr. Pasquier facilitate a group discussion?



Video Segment: Experiencing the Dénouement

You'll find this segment approximately 10 minutes and 30 seconds after the video starts. Watch for about 2 minutes and 30 seconds.

The class watches the rest of the film.

- How does Mr. Pasquier prepare students to view the last segment of the film?
- How do students react while watching the classic black-and-white film?

Analyze the Video, cont'd.



Video Segment: Interpreting Symbols

You'll find this segment approximately 20 minutes and 30 seconds after the video starts. Watch for about 3 minutes.

The class discusses the use of symbols in the film.

- How does Mr. Pasquier organize students for their conversation about the symbols?
- Observe students' oral proficiency during this group work: Do students communicate primarily using sentences, both compound and complex (intermediate performance)? Do any students go beyond that?
- When do students' answers reflect that they are operating at a concrete level? At an abstract level?

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 issues must you address when planning to work with a feature-length film?
- How do you maintain student interest while breaking the film into teachable segments?
- What activities would you design that allow students not only to discuss the film with one another but to reflect on its deeper meaning—an exercise for which they may not have a sufficient vocabulary?
- How do you manage teacher talk so that you stretch students' language and thinking?
- On what do you base your choice of which cultural text (literature, film, music, art) to teach: your interests, your students' interests, important texts in the target culture, or something else?

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.

"Interpreting Picasso's *Guernica*" (Spanish) and "Music and Manuscripts" (Latin) illustrate the use of different media in a language lesson.

Connect to Your Teaching, cont'd.

Put It Into Practice

Try these ideas in your classroom.

- Authentic materials can expand the topics that students can discuss and develop their growth in the three communicative modes. These materials can also help students in advanced classes move beyond talking about themselves to talking about other people, places, events, and ideas. When students interpret a film, for example, they draw on language that they heard in the context of actual communication on screen. This language helps them develop more proficient interpersonal communication.
- When having students interpret a film, be the expert who guides the use of language, depth of content, and abstract explorations. Elaborate, clarify, or question students' responses to expose them to language at a higher level than their own. For example, Mr. Pasquier designed a series of activities in which students talk with one another for part of the time and then work with him as he expands their understanding and models the next levels of proficiency. On some occasions, only you as the teacher can negotiate meaning. Take the opportunity to speak as an expert and help students move from their existing level of proficiency to the next higher one.
- When showing a feature film, divide it into segments to maintain student interest while providing ample opportunity for students to demonstrate understanding at a factual and interpretive level. Most films have natural breaks in the action, allowing you to pause for discussion. Others may require more creative cutting. You can then design activities for individual segments as you would for shorter interpretive tasks: previewing to determine the main idea; working with details; and summarizing and follow-up work. Additionally, find activities to make a transition from one segment to the next. For example, to prepare students for viewing the conclusion to *La Belle et la Bête*, Mr. Pasquier had students compare the film to the original story. They brought many details together, and then voiced their expectations about the ending.
- To select a film that meets your level of instruction, consider your objectives. For example, to address culture, show a film set in the target culture or one focusing on literature or history. In this situation, you may want to show a film that is subtitled or dubbed. To focus on interpretive communication, plan the lesson as you would any other reading or listening task: Include previewing exercises, activities that help students get the main ideas, and activities that allow them to learn language and content from the clip. Whether you watch the complete film or an excerpt depends on your available time, student interest, and the subject matter of the film. Foreign films are typically unrated and may have scenes that would not be suitable for viewing in some classrooms.

Resources

Lesson Materials

La Belle et la Bête Activity*

A description of how student groups were organized for the film discussion

Menu: Le Chateau de la Bête*

A list of questions used by students to discuss the film (includes English translation)

Beauty and the Beast (English subtitles). Directed by Jean Cocteau. 93 min. Home Vision Entertainment, 1946. Videocassette.

Beauty and the Beast—Criterion Collection (Restored Edition, English subtitles). Directed by Jean Cocteau. 93 min. Home Vision Entertainment, 1946. DVD. (Contains many extras, including the original Philip Glass opera)

* These lesson materials can be found in the Appendix.

Curriculum References

New York State Education Department: Standards and Information About Learning Languages Other Than English
<http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/lote.html>

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.

Standard 3.2: Acquiring Information

Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures.