

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

FRENCH CULTURE IN THE CARIBBEAN: D'IBERVILLE

This lesson can be used in conjunction with a unit on Western hemisphere Franco-phone culture and history targeting intermediate- or advanced-level of French. Students will become acquainted with the corsair Pierre LeMoynes d'Iberville and his historical importance to Quebec, Louisiana, and the Caribbean. They will also become familiar with d'Iberville's last battle on the island of Nevis using the authentic text of his *Relation de la prise et capitulation de Nièves*. Students will study pirates and freebooters from an historical perspective and will become familiar with their military contribution to naval battles. As grammar activities, students will practice *passé simple* in a mechanical exercise and will write a creative, communicative essay distinguishing between *imparfait* and *passé composé/passé simple*. This lesson may be spread out over more than one day.

Preparation

Download the five excerpts of the *Relation* text [www.frenchteachers.org/bulletin/francophonie/relation.pdf]. The Articles of Capitulation should be saved for in-class discussion after the reading activity. Assign approximately four students per excerpt. On each excerpt of the *Relation* text, insert an underline blank after each *passé simple* verb.

- Print off excerpts so each student will have a copy of the assigned excerpt.
- Download pictures of d'Iberville, the Caribbean islands and Nevis, pirates, etc., from the Internet. Make transparencies or use the images for a PowerPoint presentation.
- Prepare pre-reading matching or true/false quiz to hand out to students.
- Print out questions on the excerpts [www.frenchteachers.org].

Presentation

Make a brief presentation to introduce the unit to students. Provide a brief biography and factual information about d'Iberville, emphasizing his importance to Quebec, Louisiana, and the Caribbean. Explain the scope of his activities and introduce specialized naval vocabulary. Give background information on pirates and freebooters. Mention that spelling in the text is old-fashioned and variable. For an in-depth account of d'Iberville's life, the following biography is recommended: Crouse, Nellis M. *Lemoynes d'Iberville: Soldier of New France*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001. ISBN 0-8071-2700-0.

Pre-reading

Activate background knowledge. Have

students write two questions about any aspect of the topic that they are curious about which they will then ask the class. As students ask their questions, the class brainstorm for answers, guessing at the correct responses.

True/False quiz. Pass out a brief list of naval vocabulary and give students a quiz or convert the naval vocabulary list into a matching exercise.

Some Naval Vocabulary

une anse	une petite baie peu profonde
appareiller	sortir du port
à la remorque	traîner derrière un bateau
un bâtiment	un grand navire avec des canons
un brigantin	un bateau assez petit avec deux mâts
une chaloupe	un petit bateau pour transporter des gens et des choses
en panne	faire serrer les voiles pour que le navire ne bouge pas
mouiller	mettre l'ancre dans l'eau
réduit, redoute	un endroit dans une fortification où les défenseurs peuvent se cacher pour la sécurité

Sample true/false quiz to reinforce the vocabulary:

- _____ Quand un navire est en panne, il voyage très vite.
- _____ Dans un bateau qui est à la remorque, tout le monde est triste.
- _____ Une tour dans un fort où tout le monde est sûr est une redoute.
- _____ Une anse se trouve près de la côte d'une île.
- _____ Une chaloupe est plus grande qu'un brigantin.
- _____ Au moment où le navire appareille, le capitaine donne ordre de mouiller.

Group Work

Divide class into groups of four to work on project. Give each group an excerpt of the *Relation*. Have students read the excerpts and put them into modern French using the key below. Then have students write the verbs in *passé composé* in the blanks. (This could be assigned as homework. Have students read and study their excerpt).

Key: 17th century French to 21st century French Transformation Tools

1. $y = i = j$ – They are all interchangeable.
2. extra "s" – Remove the "s" and replace it with an accent [était = était]

3. capitalization – Often different from modern French and very inconsistent
4. imparfait endings – "ois" becomes "ais."
5. é = er = ez = es – They are all interchangeable, sometimes with or without accents.

Follow-up

The next day, students form groups and work together to answer questions (see below) about their excerpt. In chronological order, one student from each group reports back to the class, giving their answers. Alternate in-class activity: each group is given a transparency with a blank outline of the island of Nevis on it. Students try to recreate the activities of the battle of Nevis by drawing what happened on the transparency. When the groups are ready, one student from each group reports back to the class. Stack outlines on overhead projector one by one to track the progress of the events.

Discussion

Engage the class in discussion based upon the Articles of Capitulation incorporating the themes of peace, racism, slavery, imperialism, class structure, etc. Expand discussion to incorporate d'Iberville's capacity for military strategy, his skilled leadership, his importance to Quebec, France, and Louisiana.

Writing Activity

Either individually or as a group activity, students write a creative essay imagining that (a) they are Louis XIV who has received the *Relation* as a battle report from d'Iberville. The essay can be in the form of a letter to his Minister of the Navy, Pontchartrain, expressing the king's reaction to the *Relation*, indicating questions that he may have, laying out future plans for the island of Nevis since it is now in French control, and speculating about how the British are handling/coping with their loss, or (b) they are a freebooter who has participated in the campaign. Describe d'Iberville, the battle experience, the booty, the English, etc., from a freebooter's perspective. Students should write in the past tense, using *imparfait* and *passé composé/passé simple*.

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Relation – "The Preparation"—Excerpt #1 Questions

1. What precaution does d'Iberville take to help ensure the safety of the expedition?
2. In the second paragraph, what sailing technique does d'Iberville use and why?

3. Why does d'Iberville head for the large plain?
4. What did d'Iberville order the *Flibustiers* to do? At what time? Why was that time chosen?
5. What is *la descente*?
6. What happened near Antigua on April 1?

Relation – “Battle Plan”—Excerpt #2 Questions

1. Where did d'Iberville order M. de Sérigny to go and why?
2. What did d'Iberville order M. du Coudray to do and why?
3. What was M. le Chevalier de Gabaret ordered to do?
4. Where did the British on Nevis go? What was it that they did not see?
5. How did d'Iberville find a good spot to disembark his troops?
6. D'Iberville led his troops personally when they disembarked onto Nevis. Why was this important in the eyes of his soldiers?

Relation – “Engagement with the Enemy” – Excerpt #3 Questions

1. What happened when d'Iberville arrived at the Bourg?
2. What was M. Duderon's very important function regarding *Forte de la Pointe*?
3. What happened to the *Flibustiers* who were marching on the right?
4. What did the *Flibustiers* see that M. de Saint-André did not see?
5. What major leader did the British lose that day?
6. What were the French troops able to do to the British troops that the British dreaded?
7. Where did the English hide, and what benefit did d'Iberville provide for his soldiers?

Relation – “Capitulation” – Excerpt #4 Questions

1. What was M. de Martinet's mission? What did the English do when they saw him?
2. What is the *yack*? What did the ships in the harbor do?
3. What was the purpose of all of d'Iberville's instructions to the various groups of soldiers?
4. Where were the English hiding? What does d'Iberville do to take care of his troops?
5. What did d'Iberville think of the British demands on the first Articles of Capitulation?
6. How did d'Iberville “convince” the British to accept his demands?

Relation – “After the Capitulation” – Excerpt #5 Questions

1. What did d'Iberville do to the prisoners immediately after signing the surrender?