

Preparing to present to one's colleagues is an exhilarating experience, especially when one is working on behalf of what one loves and holds dear—the promotion of the French language and the subsequent appreciation of the multiculturalism that French language learning affords.

To this end, I have been appointed Co-Chair of the Commission for the Promotion of French at the University Level, to serve along with Joyce Beckwith, who represents the K-12 Level and serves the organization as the Regional Representative from New England.

If you would like to join our team, we would be delighted to have you serve in a common effort, an effort of solidarity (*solidaire pas solitaire*), to promote French at the 2010 AATF Convention in Philadelphia through the medium of film.

Before the AATF Convention

I would suggest to those interested in joining our session:

- See if there is still space on the program to submit a proposal [abrake@siu.edu].
- Establish a daily timetable and begin to prepare for your presentation at least four or five weeks in advance of the convention.
- Set reasonable goals.
- Own a copy of the film you intend to present.
- Read as much as you can about the film in advance, using resources on the Internet, articles from J-STOR and Project Muse, and by ordering articles and books through Interlibrary Loan or through your local public library.
- See the film over and over again. Keep a journal and write your impressions in it as you analyze the film in all its aspects. Look for strands in the film, threads that hold the film together, that make it tightly knit; note how one scene ties to the next, similar to the making of a quilt, where each thread contributes to its final pattern.
- Invite others to view the film before you present; invite students who are around for the summer, close friends and family members, and ask them to comment on the films after a viewing. Enter into the world of the filmmaker and appreciate his or her vision. Make friends with the film just as you would make friends with a good book.
- Create a handout for conference attendees that will include activities, exercises, and suggestions that would interest colleagues at secondary schools and in the university setting. Provide a list of helpful activities (see activities

listed below) and a selection of practical exercises to elicit class discussion. You may wish to use your booklet during a future National French Week or wait until spring 2010 for Springtime Festivals in the secondary schools and International Days on university campuses.

- Present before a small group before you present at the conference. The small audience could include friends, family, and summer school students. Their feedback will prove invaluable and will allow you the opportunity to make emendations before the meeting.

After the AATF Convention

Suggested activities at the secondary school level for the films *Jean de Florette* and *Manon des Sources*

- Bring red carnations to school, French Club activity, or Honor Society activity and share with a friend for French Week or a French Winter or Spring Festival
- Learn more about the films' music, Verdi's "La Forza del destino." Work with the music department and arrange to have a student performance of this captivating musical piece.
- Map-making: create a map of Aubagne and the area of Les Bastides and Crespin. Situate the different springs at Les Plantiers and on the property of Les Romarins.
- Organize a game of *boules* at your school and invite a high school nearby to participate.
- Serve *café* and *calissons* (a specialty of Aix-en-Provence) for a festive *goûter*. Suggest a *Provençal* menu in the school cafeteria, for example, *bouillabaisse* or *ratatouille* and a green salad with vinaigrette (olive trees abound in Provence).
- Recreate a mini-*Provençal* market place with *santons*, lavender soaps, and table linens that typify Provence.
- Introduce students to *Provençal* vocabulary as this regional language, *occitan* or *provençal*, is experiencing a revival and is being taught as a language option in the French schools of Provence.

Suggested activities at the university level for the films *Jean de Florette* and *Manon des Sources*

Interdisciplinary approach: Host a Guest Lecture series.

- "how to grow carnations" with a guest lecturer from the Department of Applied and Natural Sciences;
- "rabbit breeding" with a guest lecturer

from the Department of Applied and Natural Sciences;

- "the music of Verdi and Verdi's "La Forza del destino" with guest lecturer from the Music Department;
- "*pastis*, *boules*, and *ratatouille*" with a guest lecture from a colleague in the Foreign Language Department;
- "*Félibrige* and the regional movement in Provence for a revival of Provençal" with a guest lecturer from the History Department;
- "Artists working in Provence: Van Gogh, Cezanne, Renoir, Gauguin, Matisse, Chagall" with a guest lecturer from the Art History Department.

There are so many ways to promote French through film and educators each draw upon their individual strengths and talents in this endeavor. Teachers are known to be naturally creative and resourceful, especially Foreign Language Teachers, who must rely upon their own initiative to teach in new and exciting ways, all the while constrained by ever-tightening budgets.

Suggested activities that bring in the community

- Involve your school or your university with the local community in planning a community or neighborhood film festival. The local or the neighborhood library could assist you in organizing a film festival of two or three consecutive nights.
- Publicize the event in the local newspaper and invite the community to attend.
- The night (s) of the festival, serve up French roast coffee and *calissons d'Aix* immediately after the film (donated through the generosity of the French Club or the high school or university Honor Society) and host a brief fifteen minute discussion that is certain to be animated.
- Seek funding for a grant. There are many avenues to seek funding for a film festival. One way is to consult the French Embassy Web site where you may access a *Tournées Festival Grant* notice.

The choice of a film is paramount. I chose the Claude Berri films, *Jean de Florette* and *Manon des sources*, because of my fondness for Provence and my wish to share a culturally rich moment, Berri's long and lingering gaze upon rural Provence in the 1930s. Marcel Pagnol wrote the novels that Claude Berri interpreted in film. Since the films are set in the countryside, the spectator marvels from moment to moment at the beauty of the Provençal landscape. The films, artistically and thematically rich, can

be valuable teaching tools for French teachers at both the high school and university levels.

First, the films define an historical moment. Second, they comprise a cultural artifact. For many Americans, Provence is a *lieu privilégié*, warm and welcoming, care-free and full of gaiety. The films convey the richness of Provence, the melodic regional accent with expressions like *zou*, and *adessias*; the rich ochres, the warm yellows, the vibrant blues, the deep reds that make up the palette of Provence burst upon scene after scene with vibrancy. Everywhere, too, is the scent of carnations, of olive groves, the taste of *pastis* or of the rich red earth. The sound of water dripping from a worn faucet, the tune of a lone harmonica, or the haunting melody of Verdi, murmurs softly the sound of music close to the Provencal soil. The films are as sensually evocative of a nostalgic past as they are timeless in their sweeping epic breadth and tragic depiction of greed, revenge, and retribution.

As Americans we are so eager for a happy ending, where all the loose threads tie up neatly. We seek out the exit door at the cinema, bundled up in our coziness, in our predictable happy endings. Sometimes we must allow our students the discomfort of an unhappy ending as is the case in *Jean de Florette* with the tragic loss of its hero, the ever -optimistic Jean. The happy ending in *Manon des sources* is a small recompense for the tragic events of Ugolin's suicide and Papet's decision to die. The French cinema is not always *la vie en rose*.

When we as educators promote French through film, we teach cultural differences; we teach openness and tolerance to others' notions of how to live or others' ideas on how to make movies— this is our task. Our students need to appreciate that America is a grand and beautiful country, but that there are other ways to live besides our own, other cultures to appreciate. We must convey the beauty of otherness to our students.

When the AATF session ended this past year and attendees walked away with their packets, I had a sense of completing the task I had set out to do— to share two great films with my colleagues, who like myself, have a vested interest in our profession and in young people. I came away from the session gratified that I had prepared something useful for others to take home and a sense of elation that the session was well-received, and that fellow teachers were very interested in exploring the use of film in their classrooms, not just as a supplement to a textbook, but as a valuable teaching tool in itself.

The AATF, now in existence for over three quarters of a century, remains an established organization, full of enthusiasm for the promotion of French. I would issue a warm invitation to the membership at large to join us, Joyce Beckwith, Co-Chair of the Commission and myself, at the convention in Philadelphia and share with the membership your passion for your favorite film. We would welcome your contributions. *Merci. À la prochaine.*

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