

L'Afrique francophone

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The continuing impact of French colonization and liberation of Africa as seen through studies of African history, art and literature as well as contemporary music: A unit designed for French students of intermediate proficiency and above

Detailed unit description

All lessons for this unit were planned around the following content objective: students will analyze orally, in writing and through artistic expression the impact of France's colonial past in Africa on contemporary African nations and on modern French society through the study of: 1) a contemporary song by the French-Algerian group "Zebda", 2) several examples of "*négritude*" poetry by various African authors, 3) an excerpt from Cheik Kane's novel *Aventure Ambiguë* (or another novel) and 4) contemporary paintings by various West African artists. Linguistically, the objective for this unit is for students to communicate analytically, critically and comparatively while discussing a variety of cultural products. These objectives are tied to the National Standards for the teaching of Foreign Languages published by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages as well as the content standards for History/Social Science (in California). In this unit, we address all five core national standards for language learning (published by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages): Communication, Culture (which includes histories of the target language countries), Comparisons, Community and Connections. While the standards of Communication and Culture are fairly clear, the remaining three standards require some elaboration. "Comparisons" refers to comparing French language to the primary language and using that comparison to enhance one's proficiency. It also ties into the Cultures standard by encouraging an open dialogue in which facets of target language cultures are compared to each other or to American culture. In this unit, "Community" refers to the fact that the students are now part of a global community of French speakers, and as such they have access to products and information that are not available to monolingual English

speakers. Finally, in this unit, "Connections" refers to the extensive integration of other academic disciplines in the course of this unit: literature and literary analysis, history, art and music all play an integral part of the unit. In fact, throughout the unit, students will also engage in the following academic standards (beyond world languages):

Language Arts Standards:

Reading Comprehension 2.2: Analyze the way in which clarity of meaning is affected by [...] repetition of main ideas, syntax and word choice; 2.5: Analyze an author's implicit and explicit philosophical assumptions and beliefs about a subject.

Narrative analysis of grade-level appropriate text 3.2: Analyze the way in which the theme or meaning of a selection represents a view or comment on life, using textual evidence to support the claim. 3.7: Analyze recognized works of world literature from a variety of authors. 3.7 B: Relate literary works and authors to the major themes and issues of their eras. 3.7 C: Evaluate the philosophical, political, religious, ethical, and social influences of the historical period that shaped the characters, plots, and settings.

Writing 2.2: response to literature (a.: demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the significant ideas in works or passages; b.: analyze the use of imagery, language, universal themes, and unique aspects of the text)

Writing 2.4: Write historical investigation reports: (a.: use exposition, narration, description, argumentation, exposition, or some combination of rhetorical strategies to support the main proposition).

California history standards:

Chronological and Spatial Thinking (K-12)--

Historical Interpretation (K-12);

10.4—Students analyze patterns of global change in the era of New Imperialism in [...] Africa;

10.10—Students analyze the instances of nation-building in [...] Africa).

In addition, this unit will also engage students in National History Standard 1C: Students will analyze why some African countries achieved independence through constitutional devolution of power and others as a result of armed revolution.

In order to complete this 7-day unit, the following materials will be necessary:

- unit timeline
- copies of song "*Double Peine*"
- CD of song "*Double Peine*"
- access to the internet for historical research
- List of links to help students start their research
- copies of *négritude* poems
- copy of excerpt from a francophone African novel
- examples of paintings from artists in Western Africa
- graphic organizer on which students will record their findings
- materials for constructing exhibits

Day-by-day lesson plans

Days 1 and 2

Specific concept to be covered: setting stage for unit, begin research on history of colonial and post-colonial francophone Africa.

Content Objectives:

French: Culture (ACTFL standard 2.1, 2.2) Connections (ACTFL standard 5.1) Students will make connections to another discipline (visual and performing arts and history)

History: Students will (by end of unit) describe economic and social problems that new states faced in the 1960s and 1970s and analyze why military regimes or one-party states replaced parliamentary-style governments throughout much of Africa (national history standard 1C).

Language Objectives: Communication (ACTFL standard 1.1, 1.2) Students will demonstrate understanding of meaning and use of complex pronouns (through activity with song).

Communication and Cultures (ACTFL standards 1.3, 2.1): students will analyze continuing impact in France of 19th-century colonization of Africa as indicated by the lyrics of the song *“Double Peine”*. Please note that this objective merely starts on day 1 with the presentation of the song. Evidence that students have met all of the objectives will not be available until the end of the unit when the museum has been created.

Materials, handouts: Zebda CD, copies of the cloze activity based on the song *“Double Peine”*, computer lab, list of useful links.

Instructional Strategies: In order to set the stage for this unit, open with a contemporary song French song (I suggest the song above, but you may know others). Students complete a selective cloze activity while listening to the song: the copies the students receive have certain words missing. These words are not randomly selected, but rather are predetermined to coincide with their most recent units of linguistic study (for example, relative pronouns), thereby building on their prior knowledge and encouraging them to use their knowledge while working with an authentic document. Regardless of the song selected it must address the theme of this new unit. After students complete the cloze activity, debrief first in pairs, then in whole group. Teachers may choose to follow this activity with a Bloom’s taxonomy comprehension group activity (to further enhance student comprehension of the song).

At this point, students receive two things: their essay assignment and accompanying rubric (this is an analysis of how the song fits into the unit and is due at the culmination of the unit—they may find the Bloom’s taxonomy activity helpful) and their country assignments for historical research. The teacher should provide a list of countries from which students could select, but allow students to choose the country they would most like to research. In this way, the teacher encourages some personal investment in the research because students select countries that most interest them. Students receive guidelines instructing them to search only for key events during the colonial and postcolonial periods. Teachers may want to establish a small

list of links for each country on their own website or on the school's website to facilitate the search. Teachers need to consider whether or not they will provide (or allow) links that are in English so that students may benefit from the use of their stronger (if not native) language when conducting the research. Obviously, if English links are allowed, students would not be required to remain on that page, and most will start at that page and then expand their search. When this happens they often find themselves on French language sites, and they can scan those sites for the information they need.

Assessment techniques: All assessment at this point is informal and on-going. First, teachers assess students' general understanding of the song, and its structure in particular during the debriefing and (if applicable) Bloom's taxonomy activity. As for the historical research, teachers need to circulate constantly to monitor the students' progress and answer any questions they have. Teachers may want to provide a graphic organizer on which students record their research findings in order to help them organize these findings. On Day 3 (see below), one can to informally assess their understanding of the material, and their ability to articulate that understanding during the round table discussion.

Day 3

Specific concept to be covered: historical patterns in colonial and post-colonial francophone Africa.

Content Objectives:

French: Culture (ACTFL standard 2.1, 2.2) Comparisons (ACTFL standard 3.1) Connections (ACTFL standard 5.1): students will make connections to another discipline (history). Some students also touch on Communities (ACTFL standard 4.1): students will use their knowledge as part of the French-speaking community to gain access to information that would otherwise be unavailable to them.

Language Objectives (National): Communication (ACTFL standards 1.2 and 1.3) Students will present information to a target audience. Students will discuss and compare information. Students will express themselves orally and in writing.

Materials, handouts: Students will provide all necessary materials for the in-class portion of the lesson. For homework, they will need the excerpt of Cheik Kane's novel *Aventure Ambiguë*, or another piece of francophone African literature which they will read and to which they will write a written response.

Instructional Strategies: This period is spent in a round-table discussion (in French) of the similarities and differences between the colonization and liberation of the countries studied. Teachers facilitate the discussion by first asking a student volunteer to share some of the key events in the history of "her" country. Once the student has finished, teachers should ask other students to share how that first country's experience was similar to or different from the experiences of the population of the countries they had each studied. This continues until each student has presented the key events of his or her country. At this point, the stage is set for a comparison of the experiences of the colonized African populations and those of the African American slaves in the United States. Finally, at the end of the lesson, the class reviews as a large group by listing on the board the most important similarities and differences the students had identified between the colonial and post-colonial histories of the countries studied. For homework, assign an essay topic based upon the Kane (or other) reading (write the topic using language from the Language Arts and History standards).

Assessment techniques: Informally assess the students' understanding of the information being presented by their peers by monitoring their contributions to the round table discussion and the T-chart. Reassess their understanding by reviewing with the whole class at the end of the period. Student essays on their reading of Kane's excerpt will provide more formal assessment of both reading comprehension and writing.

Days 4 and 5

Specific concept to be covered: *négritude* poetry

Content Objectives:

French: Culture (ACTFL standards 2.1, 2.2). Comparisons (ACTFL standard 3.1): Students will compare aspects of the target language to their own (in this case, poetic elements). Community (ACTFL standard 4.1): students will use their knowledge as French speakers to gain access to information that would otherwise be unavailable to them. Connections (ACTFL standard 5.1): students will make connections to another discipline (English/Language Arts).

History: Students will recognize the relationships among the various parts of a nation's cultural life; students will recognize that literature and art shape and reflect the inner life of a people (California History-Social Science Framework, cultural literacy).

Language Objectives: Communication (ACTFL standards 1.2 and 1.3) Students will present information to a target audience. Students will discuss and compare information.

Materials, handouts: Copies of *négritude* poems

Instructional Strategies: When students arrive on day four, they will each randomly select a poem from a "secret" container. This is the poem he or she will analyze for the next part of the unit. Next, facilitate a discussion in French of the key terms related to poetry (the names of the rhyme schemes, and various necessary words). For this discussion, teachers will need to engage their prior knowledge from their English classes (in which they already analyze poetry) and have students share their ideas in French (with teacher guidance). After discussing the necessary vocabulary, students read their poem silently. When all students have finished, facilitate a modified popcorn reading in which each student selects the line or verse of the poem he or she finds most interesting/powerful and have them share that with the class. Teachers may want to encourage students to express why they selected that part to share. When all students have had time to share, students begin analyzing their poems. Although each student will have a different poem, and they will each prepare their own presentation of the poem to the class, allow them to work together to discuss any features with which they want help (vocabulary, symbolism, etc.). On Day five, students present their poems to the class: first with a dramatic reading, followed by an explanation of new vocabulary, an analysis of the poem's meaning, and concluding with a second reading.

Assessment techniques: Because we want to encourage students in their initial attempts to present literary analyses in French, teachers may want to limit assessments to informal as they monitor the students' understanding of the poems as they present their analyses to the class. Teachers may also note any grammar and vocabulary errors that made their speech less comprehensible and model more correct forms without overtly correcting the student. When necessary, teachers may add some additional detail to their descriptions in order to ensure that all students have an understanding that will allow them to proceed to the next and final stage of the unit. After all of the presentations, discuss some recurring grammatical and syntax errors that occurred during the presentations without singling out any students. Some teachers may prefer to design a rubric for the poetry presentation and treat it as a formal assessment. This is a matter of individual choice.

For homework on day 5, students will individually create collages representing the themes the poems had in common and the historical information presented relating to the impact of colonization on the peoples of Africa. This is an excellent evaluation tool because it allows students to demonstrate their knowledge regardless of their linguistic limitations. This is also a good time to remind them that all of the information acquired during this unit would help them to draft their essays about the song presented on the first day.

Days 6 and 7

Specific concept to be covered: Relationship between history and the arts (literary and visual)

Content Objectives:

French: Culture (ACTFL standards 2.1, 2.2) Comparisons (ACTFL standard 3.1) Students will compare African painters to their better-known European counterparts. Connections (ACTFL standard 5.1): Students will make connections to another discipline (visual and performing arts).

History: Students will draw comparisons across eras and regions in order to define enduring issues as well as large-scale or long-term developments that transcend regional and temporal boundaries (national history standard 3).

Language Objectives: Communication (ACTFL standards 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3) Students will demonstrate their understanding of the impact of Africa's colonial past through collages. Students will discuss and compare information orally and in writing. Students will analyze the continuing impact of African colonization on modern society (including but not limited to French society) as evidenced through poetry, art and music.

Materials, handouts: examples of African paintings ranging from just after liberation to the present day

Instructional Strategies: Prior to the start of class, hang African paintings all around the room. When the students arrive, collect their collages and hang them with the paintings (you want their art to have the same importance as that of the professional artists). Students then receive a handout with the directions for the day's activities and the teacher orally explains what they are to do. They have two tasks to accomplish, both in French and both in pairs. First, they are to choose a collage (other than their own) and analyze it by identifying historical elements present in the collage and any visuals that represent the themes of the poems presented in class on the previous day. They will record their information on the appropriate side of the handout. Next, the pairs are to select one African painting to accompany each of the poems the class studied and justify their choice. The handout includes a table with space for them to record their choices and their explanations. The remainder of the period on day six is spent with the students circulating about the room analyzing either the paintings or the collages. At the end of class, reminded students that they will be creating a museum about francophone Africa and that they now have several materials to assist them in organizing their thoughts and creating their exhibits: the table as well as the collage analysis they completed in class, the Bloom's taxonomy of the song, and their notes from the history presentations and poem analyses activities. If time allows, it would be helpful to have the class create semantic webs of the unit information so that they can refer to these webs when designing their exhibits. When they arrive on the final day, do a think-pair-share activity about the significance of the song that opened the unit. After that discussion, ask students to share what they had noticed in their peers' collages. Ask the "artist"

of each collage to express what he or she was trying to say with the collage. Proceed to a four corners activity in which students share their interpretations of the paintings and which paintings they selected to accompany each poem. Debrief the remarks on the four corners posters.

Because this is subjective, there is no right or wrong answer as long as students can justify their choice. Remind students to use the day's activities to help them as they create their exhibits.

Assessment techniques:

Formal: Student-created museum, including exhibits on African history, literature, art and music, as well as exhibits of student-created art, literature and music inspired by their studies. Each exhibit will be accompanied by student-written narratives in French explaining the exhibit and its relevance to the various themes the students studied. This museum will be exhibited at the Alliance Française de Sacramento and may be exhibited at the Sacramento County Fair (with bilingual narratives).

In addition there are several less formal assessments on the final day as teachers monitor their comprehension of the varied materials to which they had been exposed as they discussed the literary excerpt, paintings, the relationships they perceived between the paintings and the poems, the collages they created, the collages their peers created, and finally the historical elements that tied all of this together.

Appendix

Activities to get language learners “into” content (adapted from Wink, 2000)

1. **Popcorn reading:** Students are broken into groups and given assigned reading. Each student reads entire reading silently and then chooses his or her favorite (most compelling, most interesting) section. When all students in the group have finished, each student reads her or his chosen section aloud to the group. Students may choose to explain their choices and groups are encouraged to discuss each student’s selection. The activity is complete when each student has had a chance to share his or her section.
2. **Think-Pair-Share:** Students are broken into pairs (but could also be done in small groups) and given assigned reading or topic for discussion. Teacher then directs students to silently compose their thoughts on the reading or topic. After a set amount of time, students share their thoughts with their partners or small groups. Finally, students may elect to share their thoughts and observations with the class.
3. **Dialogue Journals:** Students are directed to write in a private journal for a certain amount of time. Teachers may or may not choose to suggest a topic. After students have finished, they exchange journals with a partner and the partner reads the entry and then writes a response. Teachers may choose to collect and read the journals (in which case, they should write a response also), but they should not correct the journals for linguistic accuracy.
4. **Bloom’s Taxonomy as a reading activity:** Students assigned reading (to be read silently and then are broken into six groups, each group representing one level of Bloom’s taxonomy. The students then work to apply that level of the taxonomy to the reading and share their efforts with the class.
5. **Four Corners:** Tape blank butcher paper to each of the four corners and give each group of students a different color marker to use (no two groups should have the same color). Teachers may choose to provide a different question relating to the topic of study at the top of each piece of butcher paper, or teachers may allow students to generate

both the questions and the answers. Regardless of the method, the members of the group circulate and add contributions to each piece of butcher paper until all groups have answered all questions on each sheet. The sheets can then be used as the basis of discussion.

- 6. The Messenger and the Scribe:** Students are put into pairs. One member is the messenger, the other is the scribe. Several copies of the assigned reading are taped around the room. The messenger goes to one of the copies, reads a portion of it and then runs back to her or his partner to share what it said. The partner is responsible for recording the information exactly as it is reported to him/her. Once one pair has finished, the activity stops and that pair reads what they have written. The class helps to correct or fill in any erroneous/missing information.