



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
2005 Volume I: Stories around the World in Film and Literature

---

## **Explorastories: CMTs, the Cinema, and the 5Cs of Foreign Language Learning**

Curriculum Unit 05.01.10  
by Crecia C. Swaim

### **Rationale**

---

I teach French at Betsy Ross Arts Magnet School, a New Haven middle school. It is a wonderful, creative environment in which students truly learn, grow, and thrive, utilizing and expanding on their strengths as they stretch and strengthen all their capabilities. I find that at times this enriching environment can be unwittingly compromised by the necessity to fulfill all of the city- and state- mandated testing requirements, which now include pre-testing, pilot-testing, practice-testing, and post-testing. Although I understand the intentions behind the testing, I fear that it may in fact do our students more of a disservice than a service. I believe that over-testing disrupts the consistency of the school day too often, and that it also obscures the potential enjoyment factor of learning.

For instance, as an adult, I often "demonstrate a critical stance," (a skill assessed by the Connecticut Mastery Test, or CMT); I just prefer to call it articulating my beliefs, or expressing my opinion. Although our students certainly *have* opinions, they often have trouble articulating and supporting them. As a teacher, I believe it is my duty to find a way to show my students that this skill has a healthy life above and beyond tests, and to treat them to an example of what that life might look and feel like.

The National Standards of Foreign Language Learning urge educators to promote what they call the 5Cs: Cultures, Connections (among disciplines), Comparisons (between cultures), Communication, and Communities. I have designed this unit to reflect these goals at the same time as it reinforces English language thinking and writing skills. (1) The reading comprehension strands New Haven students struggled most with on the CMT in recent years are *Forming an Initial Understanding* and *Demonstrating a Critical Stance*. As a French teacher I act as a support to the test preparation process; in that role I am afforded the opportunity to choose alternate sources for analysis that bring to life the sights and sounds of the Francophone world. It is my responsibility to be creative in choosing sources that meet my students' needs, in terms of cultural content-learning, while guiding analysis that will further develop the critical thinking and writing skills they very much need to develop in order to be successful students, learners, and thinkers. Film is a familiar mechanism for reflecting and disseminating culture, imparting and exploring cultural values and norms in an aesthetically rich way. It provides multiple opportunities for students to craft meaning, and as such, film is an ideal bridge between the fascination of the unknown and the requirements of state and federal

learning goals.

## Introduction

---

I propose a two-part unit that will help my middle-school students succeed on the state-required testing battery, the Connecticut Mastery Test, while absorbing French culture. Although mastery tests vary by state, the skills required by the Connecticut test will certainly prove important and applicable to curriculums across the country.(2) To spice things up a bit, we will explore the idea of film as a visual text, thereby expanding the notion of what a text is, and of what is "worthy" of analyzing. Students will come to understand that analysis can be a natural part of any personal conversation, apart from any test. I will create pre- and post- tests which are in line with the local movement of data collection, to reflect progress and to drive instruction. Assessment will integrate individual writing assignments into a persuasive essay on a proposed topic. As a culminating project, students will participate in a series of simulated "café discussions" on education as it is portrayed in the films explored.

This unit will explore two films written and directed by François Truffaut.(3) They both address universal aspects of childhood, while introducing visual and thematic elements of French culture. They should provide ample occasions for students to draw comparisons and to make contrasts, both between films as well as from our culture to the ones portrayed. The first film we will view is *L'Argent de poche*, 1976 (105 minutes). Although it is now 30 years old, the characters and their exploits will draw students in and keep them wondering what will happen next. With this film students will practice the skill of forming an initial understanding through writing responses to the film that show basic aspects of theme, character, and plot. Next we will view *L'Enfant sauvage*, 1970 (83 minutes). It was made over 35 years ago, and it takes place about 200 years in the past, at the very beginning of the 19th century. With this film students will practice demonstrating a critical stance through writing responses to the film that examine the purpose and effectiveness of the filmmaker, as determined by student interpretation. Here students will also make predictions about what will happen next; since we have documentation concerning the title character's life, I will be able to give them factual information to validate their predictions and to discuss the logic of the predictions. It is important to note here that even if a prediction did not actually "come true," that doesn't mean it wasn't a good prediction! The order in which the films are viewed is important; on its own, students might have a difficult time relating to the characters in *L'Enfant sauvage*, but after experiencing the more accessible lives of children in *L'Argent de poche*, this should be easier for them. *L'Enfant sauvage* lends itself well to the task of demonstrating a critical stance, as its story is extraordinary, and its themes provoking; *L'Argent de poche*, on the other hand, has a more familiar story that begs to be used to help teach and practice the skill of forming an initial understanding.

Although this unit may be taught according to any useful timeframe, I suggest that it be broken up into two sub-units, with each sub-unit lasting about 2 months, being taught once a week, preferably on Fridays; this should give the unit the flavor of a treat while practicing necessary skills. I like the idea of spreading this out over a period of time because it will develop long-term thinking skills. In particular I want students to learn the value of immediate written reflection to keep memories fresh for a non-immediate use.

## Opportunities for Student Identification

---

Although both films have children for main characters, my students may not initially see many opportunities for identification. The time periods are not contemporary, the towns don't look like our city, or even our suburbs, the cobblestones and winding alleys of the little town of Thiers are nothing like the streets of our area, the clothes are "corny" (as are the hairdos), and everyone is white (except for one Asian woman and young girl in *L'Argent de Poche*)! In the past I have stayed away from films like these precisely because I feared that my students would have a hard time seeing past the differences to all the similarities. That is why I have spent time showing them other faces and places of the Francophone world first.(4) Showing the diversity within the French-speaking world, as well as the universality of human emotion across cultures, has primed my students to see these French places and people without judgment, which is increasingly more difficult in light of today's strong political opinions concerning France. Another way in which many students will find opportunity for identification is in the discussion of Truffaut's birth and troublesome, semi-neglected youth; I write about it in fairly great detail in the next section, establishing for students the filmmaker as a real person with familiar obstacles.

### François Truffaut, Early Life

---

Truffaut is celebrated for making films about adolescence and its difficulties with beauty and clarity. He is known to draw from his own troubled youth, which is important to share with students. Although we surely need to show students examples of good behavior and what is proper, it is equally important that we show them examples of people who weren't the best examples to follow when they were young, but who went on to work hard and become successful, presumably by doing the right thing. Our children need to know that it is never too late to succeed, and that people do grow and develop at their own rate, the best way they know how. François Truffaut is an excellent example of a child who had great difficulty at home and in school, yet grew up to become a successful, (self-) educated adult. He helps us consider how one's family situation can contribute to one's delinquency, as well as how ingesting, responding to, and ultimately creating art, can serve as a means of escaping, and a method of coping with, adversity.

François Truffaut was born on February 6, 1932, the illegitimate child of Janine de Monferrand; he never knew his biological father.(5) Just before he turned two years old, François's mother married a man named Roland Truffaut, who adopted the boy; François grew up believing Roland was his biological father. For the first three years of his life, François lived with a wet nurse and did not see his mother very frequently. Before François' third birthday the couple had a child of their own, who died after two months. This upset the couple so much that they went to see François even more rarely, and François began to waste away, growing thinner and sicker from neglect. It was at this time that Janine's mother, Geneviève de Monferrand, decided to take François into her home. He was so sick and undernourished, it seemed to be a matter of life or death.

François did pretty well living with his grandparents; although his grandfather was very strict, his grandmother was more nurturing. He read a *lot*, something he had done and would continue to do with passion for the rest of his life. Because he was still so small, he was nicknamed *Papillon* and *Farfadet* ( *Butterfly* and *Elf* ). In 1939, when François was seven years old, France entered World War II. That year he lived in Brittany and attended

school there; he also picked up some bad behaviors that he brought back to Paris the following year. Over the next several years, his behavior became more and more problematic, both in and out of school. He did not pay attention to his lessons, disrespected his teachers, skipped school, lied, and started stealing.

When François was ten years old, his grandmother died, and his parents were finally forced to take the child into their home. François' mother was especially unhappy about this, and quarreled with him often. Although François always suspected he might be adopted, he had thought his mother was the adoptive parent. When he was twelve years old, he found out that he was adopted by Roland, not Janine. Somehow, this further alienated him from his mother, and brought him closer to his father.

Although the family moved several times after this, François continued to sleep in the entryway on a make-shift bed, as he never had his own room; he always felt like an imposition, especially to his mother. He was left home alone a lot, since he did not share the family enthusiasm for hiking (that was how Janine and Roland had met.) At the end of his first year living with his parents, François was doing so poorly that he spent the next several years in and out of different schools, getting into trouble with his good friend Robert. Neither boy had a strong family life, so they created their own little family, and became intensely loyal to each other. He continued to follow a pattern of rebellion and escapism; reading and watching movies were a frequent manner of escape for him. In his first film, *Les 400 Coups (The 400 Blows)*, you can see much of his youth in the youth of the main character Antoine.(6)

At the age of fourteen, François began to work. He gave his earnings to his parents, who would give him back a third of it, for pocket money. This was post-war France, Paris was being rebuilt, and François was ready to work. He also saw many films during these adolescent years; he is quoted as saying he saw three films a day and read three books a week. Not bad for a juvenile delinquent! François and his friends started up a Film Club, but could not pay all the costs of it. He got into huge debt, which his father paid off, after forcing him to admit, in writing, to everything he owed and everything he had stolen. Although François promised to change his ways, he continued to accumulate debt, and his father brought him to the police station, with the signed confession of debts and thefts, and asked that they send him to a detention center, which was legal according to French Civil Code.(7) From here, François became even more alienated from his family. After he served his time, the psychologist there helped connect François with André Bazin, a celebrated French filmmaker who would become a father figure to Truffaut, and would help him (slowly, and with many mistakes along the way) transition into the film world as an adult and a successful filmmaker.(8)

## L'Argent de poche

---

*L'Argent de poche*, released in 1976, tells the stories of a community of children and their families in a small town in the center of France. It is an episodic film; it portrays episodes, or small sequences, in several intertwined characters' lives. Although it is a work of fiction, many scenes were inspired by real life.(9) It begins with the town's children running through the streets and alleys to school, immediately letting the viewer in on the small-town communal aspect of these children's lives. They are amazing embodiments of the playful idiosyncrasies of youth, at the same time as they exhibit distinctive individual personalities; the film paints their lives in charming little vignettes. The scenes in this film are memorable, the French is simple and spoken clearly.(10)

The film boasts several Truffaut family cameos. François Truffaut as Martine's father; his younger daughter Eva as the girl in the green dress to go to the movies with Brouillard and Patrick; and his older daughter Laura as Madeleine Doinel, the mother of the whistling boy in the film news short. Also of note, the Asian mother in the film is the film's make-up girl; I am guessing that the girl playing her daughter is her real daughter. The boy Patrick is played by the son of one of Truffaut's friends (Claude de Givray). This film is fabulous for children; however, there are several scenes that you may choose to skip over or otherwise edit by covering the subtitles or the screen. Please see Appendix B for a list of those moments that may be questionable to some audiences, including the nature of the scenes and where they occur.

### **Forming an Initial Understanding of *L'Argent de Poche***

According to the CMT reading comprehension strand, *Forming an Initial Understanding* is defined as demonstrating "a basic understanding" of the text's general content. In this unit we are using film as visual text. Students need to be able to pick out the basic themes and actions of a story in order to effectively summarize it; to identify or infer important characters, settings, problems, events, relationships, and details within a film; and to use context clues to determine meanings of unknown or multiple-meaning words, or figurative language. Although in the scheme of things this seems like a relatively simple task, many students struggle with it. This sub-unit is designed to model these skills.

In the following section, I have used CMT guideline questions to create response questions that are engineered to the details of *L'Argent de poche*. (11) These questions get to the heart of the desired CMT skill development at the same time as they get to the heart of the nuances of the film. For the first four questions, I have provided a list of answer components (labeled AC), to model types of examples from the film that would answer the question. Handing out pre-viewing question sheets is often helpful for students, and you may be as blatant as listing the questions you want answered or as subtle as asking students to "look out for" certain elements you'd like them to be able to write about after viewing. Following the initial four questions are thirty-two more questions which can be used to guide not only lessons and assignments, but also the course of the unit. Scoring rubrics can be found at the CT State Department of Education website.

Q: Based on the opening scene, when all the children are running to school, draw a picture of what you think the town looks like, or how it might be laid out. Explain your drawing with details from the film.

AC: Details include the curving turns of the roads and alleyways, steep slopes, windy, steep staircases, long, thin alleyways, old stone buildings, wrought iron railings. Students cross an old-looking bridge, everything is pretty old-looking. It seems like people live up high, and school and commerce are lower down the hill (where Julien lives.) (12)

Q: Describe Mlle. Petit's teaching style. Do you agree or disagree with it? Why?

AC: She has students memorize scenes, is stern and exacting with them, drills dates and events or occurrences; she is fast-paced, firm, and demanding. Sometimes she is insulting to students, although she seems to do it to show she expects students to do as they should.

Q: Does the general meaning of the phrase "pocket money" fit the story? Use information in the film to support your answer.

AC: Children in the film talk about their own pocket money, or allowance; what they choose to spend it on

varies by child. Demousseau buys books, yet does not do well in school; the De Luca boys spend their pocket money on candy and the pool. Whether or not a character has pocket money seems to define him; or conversely, whether or not a character has pocket money, they are all part of the same world and so all equal. Pocket money is that little bit of money you've got on you for day-to-day expenses; it can represent the stuff of daily life, clearly represented in the film, or it can represent a freedom from the pains and obligations of daily life, a whimsy so often replaced by responsibility as the child transitions into adulthood.

Q: The film title's literal English translation is "Pocket Money," but the American version is called "Small Change." Does this change the meaning of the film? If so, how?

AC: Small change implies something of little value or importance, whereas pocket money implies that although it may not be much, it's a little something extra. You are given pocket money, but are left with small change. For an American, the difference in word choice could change the meaning considerably. I am not certain if Truffaut preferred one interpretation over the other, although from his background, he may have meant the interpretation concerning small change more, since sometimes the children in the film seem to be treated like small change by their parents.

Q: Compare and contrast your daily trip to school with that of the children in the film.

Q: Why do you think that Brouillard refuses to put emotion into his recitation of Harpagnan's scene in *L'Avare* until the teacher leaves the room?

Q: Why do you think Mademoiselle Petit got so upset with Brouillard for his lackluster recitation, when other students recited in much the same way?

Q: What would you do if you were a principal of a school, and Welfare sent a child to your school during the last weeks of school? Explain your answer, using information from the film to support your answer.

Q: Do you think there is a connection between the scene the students are reciting, which begins "Thieves, Assassins, Murderers, Justice," and Julien's arrival to the school? Use information from the film to explain your answer.

Q: What can you deduce about Julien from the following conversation?

Brouillard: "Do you live around here?"

Julien: "I live in the Mureaux."

Brouillard: "That's not a housing area."

Julien: "Is that so? Well, I live there."

Q: Write a BRIEF paragraph summarizing the character of Julien Leclou.

Q: Why does Julien ask an older boy what was on television the night before?

Q: What did Julien throw in the gutter? Why?

Q: When Mlle. Petit wakes Julien up in the middle of a lesson, she scolds him and says: "Julien, you look completely haggard. I'm sure you don't even know what that means." What do *you* think she means by that

last statement?

Q: Why do you think the filmmaker included the scene when Gregory makes a mess with the groceries and starts to play with a hammer, in the Richer apartment?

Q: In the scene when Gregory falls out the window, Truffaut has said that he was trying to show the way children bounce back from life easier than adults. Do you think that scene was successful? Why or why not?

Q: When Mme. Richer tells the story of Gregory's fall to her husband, he asks why none of the people watching tried to stop him. She replies that everyone was helpless. What do you think about that? Explain your answer using examples from the film.

Q: Mme. Richer says that kids are much tougher than adults are. Do you agree with her? Why or why not?

Q: Why do you think there are so many shots of windows and doors and the outsides of buildings in this film? Explain your answer.

Q: Why do you think the song in the film says that "children are bored on Sundays?" Use examples from the film to support your answer.

Q: Why do you think the song in the film says that "parents are bored on Sundays?" Use examples from the film to support your answer.

Q: Are Julien and Patrick friends? Why or why not? (Does the fact that Julien steals the hood ornament from the car Patrick is washing affect your response?)

Q: What do you think Sylvie meant when she said "Everyone looked at me" after she used the megaphone to tell the neighbors she was hungry?

Q: Who goes to the movies in the film? What do you think that means?

Q: The woman who runs the daycare center where Gregory goes says that children annoy her because "they always do what they shouldn't." Then she says "but I have a sense of duty." What does she mean by that? What do you think about that?

Q: Why do you think Patrick eats so much when he has dinner at Laurent Riffle's house?

Q: M. Richer says that because the De Luca brothers bought toy guns with money that was not theirs, then the toys are not theirs, and must be returned. Do you agree? Why?

Q: Why does Patrick buy roses for Mme. Riffle?

Q: When the police inspector asks Mlle. Petit if she noticed anything wrong with Julien, she bursts into tears. Why? What do you think of her reaction?

Q: Richer tells Petit that she should not feel guilty that she didn't realize what was happening with Julien, that he "made a point of covering up his home life." What do you think about that?

Q: What do you think of the frank way M. Richer tells the students about what has happened to Julien and what will become of him?



Q: M. Richer says: "An unhappy adult can start again from scratch. But an unhappy child is helpless." Do you agree with him? Why or why not?

Q: What are two types of unhappiness shown in the film? *Attention*: That's two different *types*, not instances, of unhappiness. What is the difference between the two?

Q: "Some of us who've had a difficult childhood are better equipped for adult life than those who were over-protected with love." Do you agree with Monsieur Richer here? Why or why not?

Q: Give a brief summary of who Martine and Patrick are, how they met, how they could have known each other before that point, and what you think of it all.

Q: Next year the school is going co-ed. What do you think will change? What will remain the same? What do you think this means for education?

For a lesson stressing the connection between character's names, faces, and characteristics, see *Lesson Plan 2 - The characters of **L'Argent de Poche***.

## L'Enfant sauvage

---

*L'Enfant Sauvage*, released in 1970, is based on a true story that occurred in the early 1800's.<sup>(13)</sup> In 1798, in the forest of south-central France, someone discovered a naked boy who seemed to behave more like an animal than a boy. He was dirty, he did not speak but grunted, he walked hunched over, and he actually seemed to run or gallop more than walk. He became a subject of much curiosity, and after being held in a barn in the country, then a police station nearby, was placed at the Institute for Deaf-Mutes in Paris. At the Institute, it was soon decided (by the "educated men" of the facility, in particular the well-respected doctor Pinel) that the boy was truly wild, that he could not learn; it was even generally agreed upon that he had been "retarded" from birth, and that his parents had left him for dead in the woods. Pinel wanted to transfer the boy to a mental institution. A young doctor, named Itard, became very interested in the boy and his progress, and he convinced Pinel let him work with the boy. Itard began to feel that the boy would progress better in a different setting, and so sought and was granted permission to move the boy to his own home in the suburbs of Paris, where Itard's housekeeper, Madame Guérin would watch over him. The film details the efforts and techniques Itard uses to teach the boy, who will come to be known as Victor. Truffaut makes his major acting debut here as Dr. Itard. Although the film ends before this point, we know that Dr. Itard stopped working with Victor in 1806, yet the boy remained under the care of Madame Guérin until his death, in 1828. He was about forty years old.

### Demonstrating a Critical Stance with L'Enfant sauvage

According to the CMT reading comprehension strand, *Demonstrating a Critical Stance* is defined as the ability to elaborate on a text and make judgments about that text's quality and themes. Again, in this unit we are using film as visual text. Students need to be able to use information from the film to make a prediction based on what is seen; to analyze the filmmaker's craft, including use of dialogue and mise-en-scène; to evaluate explicit and implicit information and themes within a film; to select, synthesize, and/or use relevant



information within a film to include in a response to or extension of the work; and to demonstrate awareness of values, customs, ethics, and beliefs included in a film.

Just as in the previous section on *Forming an Initial Understanding* , I have used the guideline questions provided by the CT State Department of Education to create response questions that are engineered to the details of this film, *L'Enfant sauvage* . That website may also be visited for scoring rubrics. For the first five questions, I have provided sample answers (labeled SA) that show different ways a student might approach the question. I have given, for the seventeen questions that follow, a list of answer components (labeled AC), to model types of details from the film that would answer the question. The final three questions serve as further guides. With all of the following questions, **be sure** to add a sentence asking the student to use information from the film to support/explain the answer; I have eliminated it here to prevent redundancy.

Q: Why does the filmmaker begin the film with an introduction plate stating that this is a true story? Does knowing this change your experience of viewing the story?

S.A: The film shows something very much out of the ordinary. The "wild child" will not seem real or true to many viewers, and the importance of this story lies in the fact that it *is* true, that there was a boy with no name found in the woods who seemed more like an animal than a child, and who was treated very poorly by the people looking after him, until Dr. Itard believed that the boy could be educated, or at least trained. If the filmmaker didn't start the film with a statement about the story's truth, the viewer could very easily forget that it *is* based on truth, and would therefore not be able to identify as much with the boy.

Q: The filmmaker opens many scenes by iris-ing out, and closes many scenes by iris-ing in. Does this filming technique pull the viewer into the story or put distance between the viewer and the story?(14)

S.A: I think that the technique of iris-ing in and out serves to both pull the viewer into the film, and then to distance him from the story. First, the viewer is pulled in because the story is opened up to him, literally. The iris out is like an invitation to watch. Then at the end of the scene the closing of the iris alienates the viewer; it feels almost like looking through a peep-hole, like this is intimate information that should not be seen, that was shared when it should not have been. Nowhere is that feeling stronger than in the final shot of Victor when he has just returned home after running away, and Dr. Itard says that they will resume their studies tomorrow. The look on Victor's face is very hard to read, it seems to be a combination of acceptance, disappointment, fear, fatigue, and anticipation. The look is so complex, and the camera lingers on it, and closes down to it, so that one is reminded that the only reason we have been able to watch this story is because people felt like Victor was less than human, and so was meant to be observed, studied. We forget and then remember that Victor is just a little boy, who we want to watch but who also deserves some privacy. (Another good shot is the iris in to Victor, perched high up in the tree at the end of the opening sequence.)

Q: Write one FACT and one OPINION from the scene when the boy was being chased by the hunters and attacked by the dogs. Explain your reasons for each choice.

S.A: One fact in the scene when the wild boy was attacked by the hunting dogs is that the boy fights back. We see him struggling and trying to pry the dog's mouth open so that he may free his arm. That the boy killed the dog, I consider an opinion. I *think* that the boy killed the dog, because it *looks* like the dog is dead, and it *sounds* like the other dogs are howling as if he is dead; though it may be *likely* that the dog is dead, we don't actually see that the boy has killed the dog.

Q: Using information from the film, explain whether or not you think we will find out how the boy ended up in

the forest.

S.A: I don't think we will find out how the boy ended up in the forest because the boy was so young when it probably happened that he would not remember, and any one who would leave him, either to die or to fend for himself, would probably not come forward about it. Although the person might come forward if he/she thought that all the publicity about the boy would lead to monetary compensation. People like Dr. Pinel think that the answer is self-evident, that he was clearly abandoned to die, which means that few if any people will even try or hope for an answer. These odds make an answer very unlikely.

Q: How does the filmmaker show the way people can be fascinated by the unfortunate, and what does he seem to say about that?

S.A: When groups of people go to see the "wild boy" at the Institute for the Deaf and Mute, the caretaker there leads people as if they are about to witness a circus attraction, saying "This way to the wild boy." Everyone is staring, poking, asking questions. One woman says that she would have brought her kids if she had known how "bestly" he was going to be. By showing these blatant comments, paired with the exaggerated expressions on the people's faces, I think the filmmaker is trying to show the absurdity of the way these people are acting towards and treating the young boy. The vulgarity of the Parisian "fancy people" (as the caretaker calls them) is very apparent, and in juxtaposition to the "vulgarity" of the boy, it makes a statement of irony about what and who is really vulgar.

Q: How does the filmmaker show that the "wild boy" is like other boys?

A.C: In uncomfortable situations, he is quieter and calmer with someone he knows; his face shows fear when he is afraid (like when the dogs were chasing him) and confusion when he is confused (like when Dr. Itard tells him he got the problem wrong when he knows it is right.) He likes to play (once he learns what it is to play), he likes to be active, he doesn't like to do schoolwork all day long, and he enjoys both verbal and material praise for doing a job well.

Q: How does the filmmaker show that Dr. Itard has good teaching methods?

A.C: In the scene where the boy is looking at himself in the mirror and hasn't grasped the concept of the mirror yet, Dr. Itard takes an apple and holds it behind the boy, and moves it around so that the boy soon figures out to look behind him. Dr. Itard definitely takes advantage of teachable moments though he could stand to let the boy rest more.

Q: How does the filmmaker show that the boy has developed, in part, like an animal?

A.C: The way he pants, grunts, walks, pats at things, devours food, sleeps under the bed (not on it), buries himself in the leaf pile at the Institute for the Deaf and Mute, bites when he is afraid, can take extreme temperature.

Q: How do you think Dr. Itard feels about the boy and how he is treated by people? OR: Dr. Pinel thinks that the boy was abandoned because he was abnormal, and Dr. Itard thinks he is now abnormal because he was abandoned. What do you think? Use information from the film as well as personal opinion to explain your answer.

A.C: When Dr. Pinel says that the boy is lower than an animal, Itard says: "That's just the point. Animals are cared for, trained." Pinel asks if he really thinks the boy *can be* trained. Itard says: "I don't know. But it's

useless to bring him from the forest and lock him up as if he were being punished for disappointing the Parisians." Further along in the conversation Pinel calls the boy an idiot, and Itard says he disagrees, that he thinks the boy has just "had the misfortune of spending 6,7,8 years in the forest absolutely alone."

Q: How does the filmmaker show the process the boy has to go through to assimilate into society? OR: How does the filmmaker show the changes the boy has to go through to become a part of society?

A.C: Victor gets his nails cut, his hair cut; he bathes, wears clothes, learns to choose clothes because they are warm, wears shoes, learns to walk upright, eats at the table, with utensils. Itard expresses awe that everything the boy is doing, it is for the first time.

Q: How does the filmmaker show us that Victor is getting tired of working all the time?

A.C: He gets distracted, he doesn't complete the tasks successfully, his "rages" increase, he throws things, he refuses to continue.

Q: Describe why learning how to play with Matthew and the wheelbarrow may have affected Victor's learning progress.

A.C: Learning to play taught Victor about pleasure, which made him tire of work all the time. OR: Learning to play expanded Victor's social learning, and helped him progress developmentally. OR: Learning to play helped Victor develop a release from all of the work and helped him to develop coping strategies.

Q: Write one FACT and one OPINION from the scene when Dr. Itard locks up the milk, waiting for Victor to ask for it by name.

A.C: Some facts are that Victor wants milk; that Dr. Itard wants him to ask for it; that Victor bangs his head against the cabinet; that Victor does not ask for the milk by name. Some opinions are that Dr. Itard is cruel; that he means well; that Victor is lazy; that Victor doesn't want to push himself; that Victor doesn't understand what Dr. Itard wants.

Q: Imagine that you are going to give a talk to your classmates about teaching someone how to speak. Write two important details from the film that you would include in your speech.

A.C. Speaking into the flame to demonstrate the different ways words come out, speaking in front of the mirror to demonstrate the different ways of moving facial muscles, placing fingers against my throat and the throat of someone saying the sound properly, so that I may mimic that feeling, showing how hearing needs to be developed, with the drum exercise where Victor, blindfolded, has to repeat the different sounds Dr. Itard makes with different instruments and manners of using them. Dr. Itard uses unconventional methods to model the conventions of communication he wants Victor to learn.

Q: Why does the filmmaker have Madame Guérin tell Dr. Itard that Victor's tantrums are his fault?

A.C: Itard makes Victor work all day, he has turned all of Victor's pleasures into learning exercises, she says Victor works ten times more than a normal child. The filmmaker wants the viewer to understand that everyone needs rest, that learning takes time, and especially, that children with learning difficulties and disabilities have to work much harder to progress, so you need to alter your idea of what constitutes progress, because expecting too much too soon can shut the whole process down.

Q: Why does the filmmaker show the scene of Victor playing in the rain?

A.C: He loves water, from when he would lap it up in the forest to when he broke free to lap it up on the way to Paris, to when Itard observed that he loved drinking it. The scene represents a pure pleasure for Victor, one that Dr. Itard has not taken and made into a learning exercise. I think it also represents the joy that can be found in something that is not "normal." Most people come in from the rain, and most things he likes to do, if they haven't been turned into education, have been taken from him altogether in the name of assimilation. This scene shows that maybe what is normal is not what is best; nowhere in the film does any character show joy to anywhere near the degree Victor does here.

Q: Why do you think Victor started crying when Dr. Itard yelled at him and said that he regretted knowing him?

A.C: Although Victor can not understand the words, he can understand the tone of voice and the sentiments behind the words. He could tell he was getting scolded when he was just trying to have some fun in the middle of his work, and it made him feel badly.

Q: How does the filmmaker show a difference between intelligence and understanding?

A.C: Dr. Itard thinks it is important that Victor learn to ask for the milk *before* he receives it. When Victor says it after receiving the milk, Dr. Itard views it merely as an expression of pleasure at having received the milk. Itard says that saying it before would show that Victor understood the use of words, the role of communication, because he would know that if he wanted *milk*, he had to ask for *milk*. When Itard writes Victor's name on the chalkboard, he doesn't understand that the name represents himself, although he clearly responds to his name when it is spoken. Dr. Itard comments that although Victor does not understand, he is intelligent. He invents a chalkholder, which shows great problem-solving skill, and he figures out tricks to complete the tasks Itard sets out for him successfully, through pattern instead of through comprehension.

Q: How does the filmmaker show the relationship between Itard and Victor, concerning praise?

A.C: Itard praises Victor in a very reserved manner. He does not smile when he praises him, his voice is even-toned. Victor keeps looking up at him, in hopes of something more. We are led to believe that he is hoping for Itard to give him praise in the manner that Madame Guérin gives it to him, with warmth in her voice, a big smile on her face, and by bestowing caring touches on his face and head. When Itard does this just a little bit, by lightly stroking Victor's hair after he invents the chalkholder, Victor smiles.

Q: Write one FACT and one OPINION from the scene when Dr. Itard punishes Victor for a job well-done.

A.C: Some facts are that Dr. Itard does it to teach Victor a sense of justice; that Victor will not go willingly into the closet; that Victor protests. Some opinions are that this was either a good or bad method to accomplish the goal, and that Victor is mad at Itard for it.

Q: Why do you think the filmmaker often shoots Victor through or next to windows?

A.C: To express the idea of being caged; to show Victor always looking out, away, towards what he knew, to show a sense of longing; to show that there is always the possibility of escape, but that he does not choose to pursue it (until he feels abandoned by Dr. Itard when he does not let him go along with him to the doctor's office).

Q: What would have happened if Dr. Itard had not gone to the doctor that day?

A.C: Victor probably would not have run away. We might not have seen how much Dr. Itard meant to Victor. Until this moment, we know that Victor looks to Itard for approval or reward for jobs well-done. We also know that he looks to Madame Guérin for comfort and a sense of calm. But here we see a more complex relationship with Dr. Itard. If Victor had not run away, we would not have seen him come back, which shows a decision to undergo all the work, to be a part of this quasi-family, or at least to accept it.

Q: Describe what would have happened if Dr. Itard had not received permission to move the boy to his home in the outskirts of Paris.

Q: When Victor returns home after running away, Dr. Itard ruffles his hair, says he is glad that Victor is back, and then says: "Tomorrow we'll resume our lessons."

Using information from the film, explain what you think will happen tomorrow. {If necessary, one of the following prompts may be added to the question: Will Itard try a different approach or continue along the same as usual? Will Victor take his studies more seriously or continue to rebel? What (if anything) has Dr. Itard learned? And Victor?}

Q: Using information from the film, explain whether or not you think Victor will learn to speak

## Pre-test/Post-test

---

New Haven has begun to focus on data collection as a means of driving instruction within its schools. A fundamental aspect of this data collection is the pre-test/post-test. Students take a pre-test before learning a particular task or skill, to assess prior knowledge in terms of strengths and weaknesses in the skill. The results from the pre-test determine which areas need more consideration, and which require less. After a brief meeting with each student in which we discuss the areas of strength and weakness in each response, I will collect the pre-test assignment. At the end of the sub-unit, each student will answer the same question again, and both the pre- and post-test assignment will be returned. Students will use these to self-assess their own progress by writing a brief paragraph delineating what growth is demonstrated from pre- to post-test. This will be considered alongside my rubric assessment of each question.

### Forming an Initial Understanding and L'Argent de poche

It is sometimes difficult to determine a questioning angle that adequately assesses initial understanding, yet will also be able to reflect worthwhile progress at the end of a particular unit. I find the opening sequence of *L'Argent de poche*, in which the children are running to school, to be a wonderful foundation for pre/post-test questioning. I will show students the opening sequence, and each will choose, from the following short list of questions based on that scene, the pre/post-test question he or she will answer.

- *What do you learn about character and setting in the opening scene?*
- *What do you think the filmmaker means by the title of the film?*
- *From the opening scene, do you expect this film to reflect more similarities or differences*

*between a child's life in Thiers, France and a child's life in New Haven, Connecticut? (For the post-test question here you would simply replace the words *do you expect* with *does* .)*

For another variation of Pre- and Post-Testing for this film, see *Lesson Plan 1 -Pre-Test/Post-Test/Post-Post-Test - L'Argent de poche* .

### **Demonstrating a Critical Stance and L'Enfant sauvage**

With *L'Enfant sauvage* , just as with the previous film, I will center the pre/post-test questions around the opening sequence of the film which, in this case, is when the "wild child" is discovered in the forest and hunted down by the townspeople. Alternately, you could show the movie trailer, included on the DVD, and craft questions that would determine what the trailer advertises the movie to be about, and, with the post-test, if it was successful and/or accurate.

- *Is the character of the "wild boy," as he is shown in the opening scene, believable to you? Use information from the film to support your answer.*
- *Imagine you are going to give a talk to your classmates about children who are different. Write **two important** ideas from the film that you would include.*
- *Using details from the opening sequence, write a scene that you think might appear in the film.*
- *Using information from the opening sequence, explain what you think the boy might be like when he grows up.*
- *Using information from the opening sequence, explain the difference between intelligence and understanding. (The post-test question could ask for information from the whole film instead of just the opening sequence.)*

## **The Persuasive Essay and Café Conversations**

---

Both films address processes of education. Encouraging students to think about methods of education allows them to develop a greater capacity for higher order thinking skills, lighting the way towards metacognition. The final persuasive essay is a fine opportunity to synthesize learning and thinking from both films on the topic of education. Again, please see the CT State Department of Education website for scoring rubrics. I will have students choose from the following prompts:

· *You are going to be an exchange student next year at the school in Thiers from **L'Argent de poche*** . Decide whether or not you want to go, based on the school scenes you saw in the film. Write to convince your family of your position.

· *You have just heard about the discovery of a boy much like Victor in the beginning of **L'Enfant sauvage*** . There is debate over whether the boy will be placed in a school or sent to a mental institution; decide where you think he should go. Using information from the film, write to convince an average person you've just met of your position.

· *Your school principal has retired, and the new principal is looking to change the way classes are conducted. Using information from both films, as well as personal experience, decide how you think your French class should be conducted. Write to convince your new principal.*

In preparation for the culminating project, each student will study his/her own persuasive essay on education. Students will be encouraged to review and organize all their writing assignments completed over the course of the unit, to reacquaint themselves with all the aspects of the films. Students may prepare alone or with a partner, unless they lose the privilege by not using work time wisely. The culminating project will be a series of simulated café conversation in which students will discuss the views on education that they developed during the course of the unit. For a complete description of how the café conversations will work, see *Lesson Plan 3 - Culminating Project/Café Conversations* .

## Lesson Plans

---

### Lesson Plan 1 - Pre-Test/Post-Test/Post-Post-Test - L'Argent de poche

Duration: One 50-minute class period.

Objectives: Students will establish previous knowledge of a subject (children and school in France), practice taking notes without looking at them (so focus stays on the film), form an initial understanding of a film and of the place and people it represents, write about that initial understanding, and participate in a class discussion.

Materials: Film ( *L'Argent de poche* ), paper, pencils, discussion and pre-test questions.

Do Now! / Faites Maintenant! Assignment: Write down everything you know, and everything you think you know, about school and children in France.

Initiation: Briefly discuss student responses to the Do Now! assignment, writing each response on chart paper with a blue marker (it is easier on the eyes than other colors, and is good to use for a quantity of writing when you want to add variety to written work). As we elicit responses, students may challenge the accuracy of the responses; if a student convinces the class that something is inaccurate, we will put a red squiggly line through it (I find squiggles less accusatory than regular strikethroughs!) If more than one student has a particular response, we will put orange stars next to the entry.



Activity Summarize what we think we know (from *Initiation* ). Instruct students to watch the opening sequence of the film to gather more information. The opening sequence runs from 2:38-5:25. Tell students to watch carefully, and to take notes while **not looking** at the paper. They will have an opportunity to watch again; the focus here is on extracting information from the film, and practicing the skill of taking notes while paying attention to the thing being noted, in this case, a film. After viewing the scene, but before discussing observations, have students complete this Pre-Test writing response: *What do you learn about character and setting in the opening scene? While students are waiting for everyone to finish, they may try to decipher and rewrite their notes, or free-write about what they have seen so far. Then I will ask questions about the opening of the film and chart student answers. How are the children dressed? What does the town look like? What do you notice about the town? About the streets? About the children? How do the children go to school? What does the way they go to school tell you? What does each thing you notice tell you? Most things in a film are there for a reason, what do you think the reasons are?* Next, re-watch the scene, with students only taking note of something that has not yet been shared, to see if they notice other aspects of the film.

Closure: Ask each student to choose the three most important, impressive, or surprising things learned through today's observations and discussions. Have students write them down for a "ticket to leave," but share as many orally as possible (using this opportunity to check for understanding with less-talkative students.)

## **Lesson Plan 2 - The characters of L'Argent de Poche**

**Duration:** One 50-minute class period

**Objectives:** Students will demonstrate comprehension of characters and plot, and will associate names with faces, character traits, and occurrences in the film.

**Materials:** The list of characters and defining characteristics located in Appendix C, in whole form, and divided onto index card as indicated in the "Pre-Class Preparation" section of this lesson plan, character-name index cards, character-picture cards.

**Pre-Class Preparation:** Using the "List of Characters and Defining Characteristics" located in Appendix C, choose the traits of each character you'd most like your students to be able to identify. On index cards, write one to two sentences, in English (or French if advanced), describing the character. Example: *I used my father's megaphone to tell my neighbors that I was hungry. They sent me food using ropes and baskets.* On another card, you could write a different fact about Sylvie, for instance: *I have two fish named Plic and Ploc .* For each card, be sure that you make a separate name card ( *Sylvie* ) and picture card. Picture cards can be made using film stills recorded and then loaded into a computer video-processing program, which will allow you to capture the image you want, which you can then print. Print one large (8x10) image of each character, and mount it on its own half sheet of chart paper, for the second activity. Also write each description sentence and each character name on a different self-stick removeable note sheet, split up between two different-colored pads, for the same activity.

**Do Now! / Faites Maintenant! Assignment:** Name as many characters as you can from *L'Argent de poche* , and include as much information as you can about each character.

**Initiation:** Ask students the following questions: *Who was your favorite character in the film? Why? Who was your least favorite character in the film? Why? Which character do you identify most with? Which character did*

*you feel the most sympathy for?*

Activity 1: On one table, spread out the name cards, on another, the picture cards. Pick a description card and read it. Toss a bean-bag animal used to choose students (mine is a *Monsieur Heureux* doll from the Mister Men book series.) The chosen student needs to find the name and picture cards that match the description. Ask the class if the student is correct (*Est-ce qu'il est correct, oui ou non?*) Once the class determines that the response is correct (or provides the correct response, as well as a fact about the character incorrectly named), the student who just answered passes *Monsieur Heureux* to a new student. The next description is read, etc.

Activity 2: After students seem confident with the previous activity, and they have had ample time to review character connections, we will move to a more active and competitive version of the activity. Hang the half sheets of chart paper with the character pictures on the board. Students will form two teams, and will line up in an order determined by the members of each team. Each team has its own description pad. Students always begin with the description pad face-down, and must place it face down before going to the board (students will be directed back to the pad if it is knocked down or haphazardly placed.) I will count to *trois*, and then the competing member of each team turns the pad over, tears his/her sheet off, places the pad face down again, goes to the board, sticks the sheet to the corresponding character picture, and returns to his/her team as quickly as possible, slapping hands with the next teammate before that teammate can begin his/her turn. When one team completes its entire pad, play stops, the other team gives its uncompleted pad to the teacher. Each team gets one point for a correctly-placed sheet, loses one point for an incorrectly-placed sheet. Whatever sheets remain from the team that didn't finish become "lightening round" questions. Beginning with the next person in line on the team that didn't finish (named *Alain* here), ask one of the questions and wait five seconds for a response (worth one point). If *Alain* answers correctly, the next question goes to the next team, for five points; if *Alain* does not answer correctly, the other team has three seconds to respond to his question, for one point. If that person gets it correct, his/her team gets the next question, if not, then the next question goes to the next player on *Alain's* team. Whichever team has the most points after the lightening round is the winning team, and gets five points to add to any quiz grade (or two points for any test, or one homework assignment credit).

Closure: Ask students the following question, substituting different character's names: *What can you tell me about X?*

### **Lesson Plan 3 - Culminating Project/Café Conversations - Education in L'Argent de Poche and L'Enfant Sauvage**

**Duration:** One 50-minute class period

**Objectives:** Students will demonstrate understanding of plot and themes of both films studied, and will communicate a critical stance on the topic of education, using experiences from the films and from their own lives.

**Materials:** Tablecloths, menu board, waitress apron and order pad, Orangina™, Coca-cola™, plain croissants, some pain au chocolat, some ham croissants, paper plates, cups, flatware, and napkins, discussion questions, timer.

**Pre-Class Preparation:** In addition to buying the items listed above, the desks will need to be organized into

different clusters – one four-person cluster, and several two- and three- person clusters. Tables will be covered with tablecloths, and any other decoration you choose to add to make the scene more café-like will need to be attended to.

**Do Now! / Faites Maintenant! Assignment:** Find a seat at any table you choose. From the menu board (and based on what you already told me you'd want) write down the food and beverage you will order, so that you are ready when the *serveuse* comes around. Café conversation may be of a personal nature until all your classmates are served. Remember, café-goers want to hear their own conversation, not yours!

**Initiation:** I will play *serveuse* and ask students what they would like, recycling old French café vocabulary. When everyone is served I will announce the procedure for the conversations, which follows.

**Activity:** A question will be asked, and each table will have seven minutes to discuss the different viewpoints each member has on the question, trying to persuade each other while still *listening* to and respecting each other! Students will switch tables twice, so that each student will have sat with three different people or groups. At every bell, each student will quickly find a table where there is at least one person that he/she has not yet spoken with. Each student may sit at the four-person table only once. Each set of tables will have a button at one seat; the person sitting there will be the person who initiates the conversation. This activity may prove difficult, and will probably get off to a rough start. At the middle school level, some students have a hard time speaking up, others have a hard time letting others speak, and some have a hard time allowing for alternate points of view. Let them work it out, and be there to guide them. I will be "clearing tables" at this point, and so will be able to stay and listen in without hovering over them. When necessary, I will guide students to have a more equal discussion, or to get back to the task. Resistant students should be prompted to participate, and very resistant students should be pulled from the activity to either clear tables and then write a letter explaining the reasons behind the resistance or to just write the letter.

**Closure:** Ask students what they thought about the process - what worked and why, what could have worked better, and why.

## Appendix A -Foreign Language Standards

---

The New Haven Foreign Language Program endorses the "5 Cs" of the Major Goals in the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning. They are: **Communication** (to communicate in languages other than English), **Cultures** (to gain knowledge and understanding of other cultures), **Connections** (to connect with other disciplines and acquire information), **Comparisons** (to develop insight into the nature of language and Culture), and **Communities** (to participate in multilingual communities at home and around the world).

The discussions and guiding questions of this unit revolve strongly around 3 of the 5 C's, Cultures, Connections (among disciplines), and Comparisons (between cultures). We will discuss Communication as we listen to the different accents and ways of speaking we will hear in the films, as well as when we discuss the methods of teaching communication Dr. Itard does and does not attempt with Victor in *L'Enfant Sauvage* ; most conspicuously absent is the use of the sign language that all the deaf students in the facility where he predominantly lived were using. If scheduling allows, I would like to incorporate Communities into this unit by having students perform selected scenes to fifth grade students, followed by a discussion of what seems to be

happening, based on tone of voice, body language, and cognate recognition.

## Appendix B - List of Potentially Questionable Moments in L'Argent de poche

---

The following is a list of those moments that may be questionable to some audiences. Take this list as you wish. 8:14-8:25 - Negativity and cursing, children; 21:36-21:47 - Voyeurism and full frontal female nudity; 24:50 - Cursing, mother to child; 34:56 - Cursing, child; 53:51-56:13 - Sexual content, including talk of masturbation and genitalia; 1:02:10 - Cursing; 1:14:40 - Racial comment that needs to be explained as a function of its social context; 1:17:18 - child refers to "porno"; 1:23:05-1:23:53 - Explicit breast-feeding; 1:26:15 -1:26:30 - student trying to pass for older, prostitutes (although not explicitly stated); 1:29:23 - boys in underwear for medical exam; 1:32:59 - Explicit cursing, mother to police.

## Appendix C - List of Characters and Defining Characteristics in L'Argent de poche

---

**Martine** has long hair. She writes a postcard to her cousin, **Raoul Briquet**, that is read to the class. Her father is played by **François Truffaut**. She goes to summer camp and meets **Patrick Demousseau** there. She kisses Patrick in a scene that really happened to Truffaut when he was about twelve years old.

**Raoul Briquet** receives a postcard from his cousin **Martine** that is read to the class.

**Laurent Riffle** is the son of a hairdresser and his mom helps run the shop.

**Mathieu** and **Franck De Luca** are brothers. They spend their money on candy and the swimming pool. They try to sell this year's school books, before the end of the school year, at the pawn shop. They send food to **Sylvie** when she is left alone at home. They somehow get money that is not theirs to buy a bunch of toy guns to give to their friends, and are forced to give them all back when they get busted.

**Patrick Demousseau** is always wearing a purple shirt; lives alone with and cares for his handicapped father. In class, he is often unprepared, in one scene he was actually "saved by the bell!" He didn't have his book to do his recitation homework, but after five minutes of in-class preparation he did pretty well. He is polite and seems to want to do the right thing. He has a good memory (he remembered the whole shopping list his father wanted him to get) but doesn't do much school work. He loves to read, and spends his pocket money on books. Patrick befriends **Julien**. He washes cars on Sunday to make some extra money. He goes to the movies with **Brouillard** and two girls Brouillard invites, but is too shy to try to kiss either one. He goes to summer camp, meets **Martine**, and they kiss.

**Mademoiselle Petit** is the female teacher in the film. She is strict, has high expectations of her students, and has students memorize a lot (plays, dates and facts.) She is not very nice to **Julien** when he joins her class, and she feels guilty for it when it is discovered that he is abused at home.

**Julien Leclou** is called a welfare-child in the film. He arrives at school in mid-June, lives in a shack in a non-

housing area, and gets locked out of the house a lot. He gets his books thrown out the window at him when he asks for them, gets rid of dishes that were broken at home, and tells **Patrick** that he got locked out of the house and then gets called inside. He asks an older boy (from a different school) what was on television the previous night so that he can talk about it with classmates and no one will know he has no television. He steals a compass to pawn for cash and combs the amusement park after hours for lost money and items. He sneaks a friend into the theater so that they can both go. He lives with his mother and grandmother and is verbally and physically abused by one or both of them, which gets uncovered when Julien refuses to undress for a school physical examination.

**Brouillard** is actually named Bruno Rouillard in the cast list. Brouillard means fog or haze in French, so perhaps it is a nickname. He refuses to put emotion into his recitation until the teacher is out of the room, when he does he comic version. He likes to "pick up" girls, and convinces **Patrick** to try it with him. He ends up putting his arms around both girls they take to the movies when Patrick proves shy.

**Sylvie** is the young girl who, after school, flirts with one of the **De Luca** brothers, who later says she lives in a trash can. Sylvie has two fish named Plic and Ploc. When her father tries to identify which is which, it is difficult to tell whether she keeps changing the story or he can't keep them straight. She is excited when her father says they are all going to eat at a restaurant, so she decides to clean up her wooly elephant pocket book with some water from her fish bowl and a scrub brush. Much to her dismay, her parents tell her that she can't talk it to dinner since it is old and ratty. She insists on taking it, and won't even accept one of Mom's nice pocketbooks as a replacement. Her father threatens to leave her at home if she doesn't take the other bag, and she says I'm staying here (or rather, it's all the same to me/ça m'est égal.) After one last chance, they lock her in and leave. She takes her father's work megaphone (he's the Chief of Police) and yells into the courtyard of her building complex that she is hungry. The neighbors send her food through an improvised pulley system.

**Richard Golfier** is asked by **Gregory's** mom to walk her son home; the boys visit **Monsieur Richer** , who has just moved into their apartment building. Golfier is sitting with his father at an outdoor café on Sunday. He is the boy who the **De Luca** brothers convince to pay them his barbershop money, and instead they cut his hair themselves. Golfier does not tell his father that he didn't go to the barbershop, so **Monsieur Golfier** storms into the shop and yells at **Monsieur Riffle** until they figure out what happened.

**Monsieur Richer** is the male teacher in the film. He and his pregnant wife move into the same apartment building as **Gregory** and **Golfier** . He forgets to leave his keys for the movers, so his wife has to come to school to pick them up; he kisses his wife goodbye behind the frosted glass window of the classroom door. His wife, **Lydie** , has a baby named **Thomas** (like *tomate* , as the children say!) towards the end of the film.

**Gregory** is the young boy in the red overalls who gets walked home by **Golfier** and meets the **Richers**. He is raised by a single mother. He carries bread upstairs by dragging it on the ground, then runs into the Richer apartment the following day and makes a mess with the groceries his mother just bought and the Richers' hammer. His mother leaves him home alone while she goes to look for her lost wallet, during which time he tries to catch his cat Minou and hug her, but chases her out the window instead and ends up falling out the 9th floor window, only to bounce up, unharmed. **Gregory's mother** works at the cinema.

Inconsequential characters: **Fougerie** is late for class; **Privadier** gives an uninspired recitation of the scene from Molière's *L'Avare* ; **Froment** has puffy eyes, wears a drab green button-up, and keeps saying "I don't know" when asked about the recitation assignment; **Fayet** wears a black and white striped shirt; **Hurbagnac** wears a yellow t-shirt. **Gardaret** is asked by Mlle. Petit to take over the class when she is called out.

## Resources

---

Corrigan, Timothy and Patricia White. *The Film Experience: An Introduction*. Boston: Bedford/ St. Martin's, 2004. Comprehensive text on film concepts and techniques.

De Baecque, Antoine and Serge Toubiana. *Truffaut*. Trans. Catherine Temerson. California: University of California Press, 1999. Excellent biography of Truffaut, with great information about the two films of this unit, as well as about Truffaut's troubled youth. This book really brings the person behind the films to life.

Gerstein, Mordicai. *The Wild Boy: Based on a True Story of the Wild Boy of Aveyron*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998. Written for children ages 4-8, it is interesting to compare and contrast what is included and omitted in this story as opposed to the film version and the intellectual account of the "Wild Boy of Aveyron".

Insdorf, Annette. *François Truffaut*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989. A well-respected biography of Truffaut, who thought well of the author, as evidenced in letters written to her, published in his book of letters, *Correspondence*.

Jacob, Gilles and Claude de Givray. *François Truffaut: Correspondence 1945-1984*. New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000. An enjoyable and comprehensive collection of letters written by Truffaut, covering a wide array of areas, including small mention of the two films of this unit. In particular p. 125 has a paragraph about *Les 400 Coups* that would be good to share with students, as it depicts the relationship between home and school; and pp. 177-179, which is a letter to Alfred Hitchcock pitching a project to him. It is a great example of going after what you want, and how writing can help you get it.

Pascal, Michel and Serge Toubiana. *François Truffaut: Portraits volés*, (88 minutes) 1993. Documentary film on Truffaut; it should be used to show clips of Truffaut, to show what he looked like "in person," and how he felt about filmmaking.

Philibert, Nicholas. *Être et avoir*, (104 minutes) 2002. This film is a modern-day documentary filmed in the same area as *L'Argent de poche*. It follows a teacher and his different-aged students in a one-room elementary schoolhouse. It would be a nice way to show an update of the Truffaut film while looking at an actual documentary. It does move slowly, so teachers may want to show clips only. The language is not very crisp here, so it is not a great way to showcase language.

Shattuck, Roger. *The Forbidden Experiment: The Story of the Wild Boy of Aveyron*. New York: Kodansha America, Inc., 1994. A cultural and historical exploration of the story behind *L'Enfant Sauvage*, an excellent source for socio-historical context as well as information from Itard's papers, and the entirety of Victor's story.

Truffaut, François. *L'Argent de poche*, (105 minutes) 1976.

Truffaut, François. *L'Enfant sauvage*, (83 minutes) 1970.

## Web Resources

---

Association Française pour l'Histoire de la Justice. <http://www.afhj.fr/ressources/french-code-civil.pdf>. PDF file on the origins and advances of the French Civil Code that allowed Truffaut's father to have the police put him in a detention center when he was sixteen years old.



Aveyron Tourisme, Site Officiel. <http://www.tourisme-aveyron.com>. Bilingual website with tourist information about the region in which *l'enfant sauvage* was originally found.

CT State Department of Education, CAPT Generation Two Handbook, Part II: Response to Literature.

[http://www.state.ct.us/sde/dtl/curriculum/captread/rcpt\\_7-12.pdf](http://www.state.ct.us/sde/dtl/curriculum/captread/rcpt_7-12.pdf). Excellent resource for information on Response to Literature, including scoring rubrics.

CT State Department of Education, CMT Third Generation Language Arts Handbook, Part II: Reading Comprehension Sample Items.

<http://www.state.ct.us/sde/dtl/curriculum>

[/cmt3la/currla\\_publicmt3.htm](/cmt3la/currla_publicmt3.htm). All information on CMT skills comes from this site. My Response to Literature questions are modeled after the sample questions on this site.

CT State Department of Education, CMT Third Generation Language Arts Handbook, Part II: Direct Assessment of Writing Sample Items. [http://www.state.ct.us/sde/dtl/curriculum/cmt3la/cmtla3\\_125144.pdf](http://www.state.ct.us/sde/dtl/curriculum/cmt3la/cmtla3_125144.pdf). Persuasive writing prompts modeled after prompts on this site. Includes scoring rubrics.

DVD Beaver. <http://www.dvdbeaver.com/film/DVDCompare6/smallchange.htm>. Great film stills from *Small Change*.

FilmsdeFrance. [http://frenchfilms.topcities.com/index3.html#http://frenchfilms.topcities.com/nf\\_truffaut.html](http://frenchfilms.topcities.com/index3.html#http://frenchfilms.topcities.com/nf_truffaut.html). This website claims to be dedicated to "promoting France's rich legacy of film, from all periods and genres." It is a great resource for basics on French films, and this address gives a detailed biography and filmography for Truffaut.

Internet Movie Database. [www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com). Excellent, comprehensive film reference site.

MetroActive Movies. <http://www.metroactive.com/papers/sonoma/06.10.99/truffaut1-9923.html>. This is from a San Francisco Bay Area arts and entertainment newspaper. The articles are well-written, the information is well-presented, and I like the voice of what I read. Not necessarily an objective source and should be considered in that light.

New Haven Public Schools. <http://www.nhps.net/curriculum/html/ForLang-5-8.asp>. New Haven Foreign Language Standards website.

NY Times. <http://www.nytimes.com/1976/10/01/movies/761001change.html>. *New York Times* movie review of "Small Change."

Portail Centre France Auvergne. <http://www.auvergne-centrefrance.com/geotouring/>

[Villages/pdd/theirs/theirs.htm](http://www.villagespdd/theirs/theirs.htm). Tourist information about the town in *L'Argent de Poche*.

## Endnotes

---

1. For details concerning the National Standards as they are addressed in this unit, please see Appendix A.
2. For information on the CMT, please visit the CT State Department of Education CMT website, at: [http://www.state.ct.us/sde/dtl/curriculum/cmt3la/currla\\_publicmt3.htm](http://www.state.ct.us/sde/dtl/curriculum/cmt3la/currla_publicmt3.htm).
3. *L'Argent de poche* was written by Truffaut and Suzanne Schiffman; *L'Enfant sauvage* by Truffaut and Jean Gruault, with writing credits also going to Dr. Itard for his extensive original documentation.



4. See my 2003 YNHTI Unit, "Cultural Snapshots: Reflections and Illuminations of Francophone Cultures."
5. All biographical information on Truffaut was found in de Baecque's excellent biography, *Truffaut* .
6. For more details of Truffaut's youth that he considered troublesome, see a personal letter he wrote to his father later in life, in de Baecque, pp. 140-141.
7. See <http://www.afhj.fr/ressources/french-code-civil.pdf> for information on the French Civil Code.
8. Between release from the detention center and Truffaut's career as a film critic, he joined and then deserted the army. Although this is important to Truffaut's life, I think it would be too much information for my middle school students at this time, as we would need to devote much time to the idea of desertion and its implications. See de Baecque, pp. 58-69 for more information.
9. See de Baecque, pp. 322-324 for details on the conception and creation of the film.
10. In English, *argent de poche* means *pocket money* , but the American version of the film is called, "Small Change," because "Pocket Money" was already used for the title of a 1972 Paul Newman film (See NY Times film review listed in Resources.)
11. See the CT State Department of Education website for sample CMT questions according to strand.
12. At 1:23:02 there is good shot that shows how the town is built into the mountainside.
13. See de Baecque, pp. 260-265 for information on the research Truffaut put into the preparation for the film. See Shattuck, pp.208-214 for a look at the differences between the film and reality.
14. See Corrigan and White, p. 86, for definitions of irising in and out.

---

<https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu>

©2019 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University

For terms of use visit <https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/terms>