

European Influences on the American Home and Culture During the 19th and 20th Centuries

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There are few words in the English language that convey more sweetness to the heart of man than “Home.”

– E.C. Hussey, *Cottage Architecture of Victorian America*

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this unit is to exploit a different method in teaching French to middle school students, the majority of whom are bilingual in English and Spanish. Integrating the elements of architecture, technology, and art to unfold the European influences on the American home and culture was inspired by the wide variety of ethnic and cultural diversity in Houston’s landscape and architectural patterns. It has been developed for the learners of a foreign language to increase their awareness and appreciation of European culture, associating it with their own cultural heritage and becoming more confident in acquiring French, the language of world diplomacy.

The foreign language curriculum unit will be using observation, comparison, historical analysis and hands-on activities to broaden the students’ vision of the multi-ethnic world they live in and help them learn about the architectural patterns and the cultural diversity of the territory of their city and the country as a whole.

Historically, the variety of architectural style and designs of the American home was influenced by the various cultures of the European settlers. The first recorded white men who came to North America with the idea of staying were some French Huguenots in 1564. They built a triangular palisade, which they named Fort Caroline, on an island in the St. Johns River, in Florida. The island itself has washed away now.

The North American ethnic building traditions have always fascinated travelers and have inspired scholars to research and define America’s architectural roots. When the settlers arrived in the 17th century, they brought building techniques and forms from their homelands; however, prior to their arrival, the Native American people had been constructing buildings on this continent for thousands of years, all preceding English, Spanish, French, Dutch, German, Swiss, Irish, Russian, Belgian, Czech, Danish, Finnish, Norwegian, Swedish, and other European influences.

Colonial architecture was adapted to the landscape, the climate, and the availability of building materials. According to Edwin Tunis, a well-known artist, illustrator and muralist, once a settler had his own lot, the next step was to put a feasible house on it,

which meant he had to put the house together himself with what help he could get. Due to the lack of trained builders and artisans and the general poverty of the settlers, they had to cut the trees and shape the lumber before construction could begin.

Over the centuries after the European arrival, each of the European colonies in North America developed its own building tradition. Their transplanted European building traditions were gradually reshaped and redefined. They emerged as distinctly American building traditions by the early 19th century. The innovations in technology and the spread of railroads made possible the rapid growth of the Midwest and the West. Building parts, manufactured in the East, could be ordered from catalogs and shipped west by rail. By the late 19th and early 20th century, however, a preference for traditional English, French, and Spanish architectural structures was defined by a desire for historical forms that gave social status and family heritage.

The prominence of neo-classical architecture in America after 1860 can be credited to the influence of the École des Beaux-Arts, where both European and American architects were trained. École des Beaux-Arts, the French national school of fine arts in Paris, was founded in 1648 as the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture; however, its title was changed in 1793 when it merged with the Académie d'Architecture, founded in 1671. Students there are prepared through various courses to compete for the Prix de Rome, which provides admission to the Académie de France à Rome. Besides its extensive collection of plaster casts of antiquities, the École des Beaux-Arts is known for its superb collection of old master drawings and for its exhibitions.

Through a careful analysis of architectural designs, an understanding of the past can be attained, providing insight on contemporary architectural forms. Any study of the past is really an attempt to fully understand the present, particularly those forms that have been inherited from the past. Without research, we would be unable to understand the meaning or appreciate the existence of architectural forms. As the culture of a country matures, it accumulates art objects (*objets d'art*) that require preservation. An interest in historical forms is a sign of social wisdom, and it confirms a desire to preserve a cultural inheritance by fully understanding its meaning.

The evidence of the past made people realize the necessity of preserving their ethnicity in order to keep their ideals alive. By uncovering unknown facts about the past, one can also begin to more fully understand the related processes influencing individuals and social groups to create the forms that survive in historical records.

While many important early houses have been destroyed over the centuries, many others have survived almost intact. The preservation of many paintings, drawings, prints, and photographs of buildings makes an important contribution to American history, because behind every cabin, house, mansion or building, there is a story. According to an old Eastern European saying, "History is philosophy that teaches through examples, since without knowledge about the past, there is no future."

It is my belief that such a curriculum unit will enable young learners to be part of a storytelling journey in an architectural wonderland. They will find out that the world is a bigger place, stretching beyond their Houston neighborhood. In addition, it will broaden their knowledge of world cultures, housing, means of living, and languages. On their virtual sightseeing tour, they will visit famous art exhibits, festivals, fairs, and summer and winter resorts; they will listen to different folk music; and they will find recipes and discover the taste of savory dishes typical to European cultures.

Practically, the goals of the foreign language course are to identify the European influences throughout the past two centuries on the design of American homes and on making them unique spaces worthy of the phrase, "There's No Place Like Home." The teaching technique of comparison will serve not only as a stimulus for study based on similarities and differences, but will also facilitate the students' acquisition of basic French vocabulary and grammar.

Trends in the foreign language teaching profession tend to change over time, but they always seem to be the intellectual background for the educators' choices. The right approach depends on the strengths and the weaknesses of the existing program and, more importantly, on the level and interests of the young learners.

DISCUSSION OF UNIT

Since I am newly arrived from Europe, I have found the variety in building styles and cultural environment in Houston to be a particularly exciting topic. Many houses display very effectively the different owners' cultural roots. Some individuals have personalized their homes to reflect a unique blend of their own racial and cultural diversity, which reaches out to those of us from a foreign country of origin as if a friendly hand had been extended from the one who lives within.

Houston differs dramatically from any European city, where the architectural style and cultural layout of certain properties allows one to immediately identify what country or area one is visiting, as assuredly as a map. Moreover, Houston's environment is so diversified in some neighborhoods that one would never be able to determine the prevailing cultural group or ethnic makeup of the area from its appearance. Only the owner can know that the address of the house is consistent with its neighboring property, and the house next to it will be as different as the one before it. Such variety is tremendous, yet it still enables people to identify themselves as individuals of specific ethnic and cultural types.

Moreover, through the years the ethnic and cultural diversity has evolved into such a mixture of home design and landscape layouts that no one can be entirely sure what the dominating neighborhood ethnic theme is anymore. It would not be surprising to see an example of a Spanish patio surrounded by a small Japanese garden fenced by the nicest

Tudor brick building ever constructed outside of Manchester, England. Such diversity is appealing in finding out what is around this or that corner and discovering how the European architectural styles influenced the structural design of the “new world”.

It is easily understood why they say that America is a country of 290 million individuals with a common goal: to be as different as night from day or Asian from European. Who can fight another ethnicity if everyone on your block is different (a fact which clearly explains the presence of merging languages, cultures and architectural patterns)? If someone wants reassurance, he should look at his neighbor’s ranch style home, or at the patio home on the opposite side of the street, or at the one next to it—a bungalow style home. What a fascinating place to live in and experience people!

The principle in acquiring a foreign language is for the students to develop communication skills using different languages, comparisons, or influences of other cultures and community interactions. Since my students are also learning English, they will find out about the long-term effects one culture can have on another and will realize the influence that foreign languages had on English.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

The main idea of this unit is to enrich foreign language teaching and establish a visual mode of approach through geographical, historical, architectural, ethnological, and linguistic concepts of European influences on the American home and culture.

While foreign language study in the United States started as early as 1604 when missionaries taught French to the Indians, modern languages have been considered enriching, but have had no part in the heart of the curriculum. Of those who graduated from public high school, less than four percent had more than two years of foreign language study.

According to Rose Lee Hayden, “The United States can be characterized as the home of the brave and the land of the monolingual.” Representing the greatest blend of people made it imperative for language teaching to follow the ethnic background of the community. Yet, according to statistics there is a problem of quality. Tests show that only 17 percent of those who study a foreign language within the United States can speak, write, or read the language with ease, and of those who have studied abroad, 63 percent can speak, write or read with ease.

The methodology of comparison between languages and cultures with realistic interactions supported by pictures and illustrations of local and European individual homes, mansions, palaces, historic monuments, resorts, etc. will be very helpful to my students. My students are 97 percent Latin American, and it would be much easier for them to learn a language that belongs to the same language group as their mother-tongue; therefore, such a comparative study will help them to solve the culture puzzle.

By learning French, my students will be trained to recognize the conflicts that might occur in culturally different patterns of interaction. That will make them adapt new communication styles in cross-cultural situations, not only in the foreign language but in English and Spanish as well. It will make them understand the importance of acquiring accuracy of expression by knowing the language components, including grammar.

In addition, it will make them feel confident to practice their French outside the classroom, discovering that learning another foreign language is a valuable skill and enabling them to explore a *terra incognita* that could also be fun and make them feel special.

This curriculum unit is designed to reflect the merging of foreign languages and cultures as seen in the European influence on landscape design and home styles in America. It will also provide basic information to students of varying ages, enabling them to find their cultural and ethnic roots in their own surroundings.

The unit will compare geographical areas, architectural styles, languages, and cultures between cities in Europe and in the United States (for example, the city of Houston on the Gulf of Mexico and Marseille on the Mediterranean Sea). Maps of the two cities will show the differences and the similarities of the city plans, pictures of historic and architectural monuments will help the students to see the actual buildings and the people who live in that distant European city, and the students will realize that they have had a free trip, crossing the ocean and visiting a new world on the wings of their imagination.

Another topic idea is to have students locate major cities on a map of Europe and prepare a paper on geography, housing, sports, music, food, and recipes; learn greetings and numbers; and view a video on the culture of that country or region. Finally, students can write a compare-and-contrast paper or make a poster/travel brochure of a European city or country, comparing it to a state or city in the United States. In addition, the teaching technique of comparison might serve as a source of ideas for educators involved in the process of teaching a foreign language to mainly bilingual students.

BACKGROUND OF CLASSES

Jackson Middle School, where I teach French, is a typical neighborhood school in Houston Independent School District. It was built in the 1920s during the classical revival of architecture, which was predominant at that time for the design of school edifices and other public buildings that were supposed to mark the intellectual level of the districts they served.

Over the years the Jackson Middle School has evolved from a white school to an African-American school and finally today to a predominantly Hispanic one. The ethnicity of the approximately 1250 currently enrolled students is 97 percent Hispanic

and 3 percent African-American. Most of them are Mesoamerican in origin, and over 98 percent are LEP (Limited English Proficiency).

The average income of the area has declined during its transformation from mostly affluent whites to working class African-Americans to immigrant and migrant Hispanics today. Each group has begun in the Jackson Community and eventually educated themselves out of the neighborhood, which is the hope of the current residents as well.

There are also an impressive number of international teachers from almost 15 different countries in the world who are a colorful cultural addition to the faculty with many professional and artistic talents. The school administration is currently revitalizing and rejuvenating the curriculum from one of with a goal of meeting the state's standards to one aiming to exceed this basic performance model. This is all occurring in a minority school that has multiple barriers to overcome, due to the students' lack of understanding from culture to culture, teacher/student communication difficulties, parent/teacher language gaps, and low student skills in English, writing, etc. The administration and the teachers are able to attract different study groups from the school district itself and the surrounding universities to help improve the students' achievement.

The current student population is a bit more transitory than in previous years, with many students being migrant or new arrivals to this country, stopping here on the way to their final destinations. A great deal of the school's programs and budget is centered on helping these students achieve their maximum potential in the shortest time possible.

The parents and the businesses in the area are returning to support the school. They are there to establish the school as the center of their community and identity. They want their neighborhood school and its students to project a level of commitment and concern for the area and its residences as high as their own. The reemergence of the community's association with the school should force the school to identify itself again as an outstanding connecting institution it was at the beginning of the last century, when it was first built.

TEACHING TECHNIQUES

As a teacher of foreign language, other than English, my participation in developing a curriculum unit will certainly be beneficial, both for the foreign language teachers and for students at the 6th, 7th and 8th grade levels.

It is an honor for a foreign language teacher to be part of the world of HTI educators striving for excellence. Furthermore, creating a curriculum unit that will take the students on a storytelling architectural journey will certainly inspire them to learn more about the particular neighborhood they live in, becoming a part of this melting pot known as America.

My aspiration is to teach my students to be proud and have understanding about the influences and the mores of the different groups and cultures they belong to, making this amazing nation so unique. I think the young learners will find it interesting that a neighborhood can consist of so many ethnically diverse, multilingual people who still speak primarily English and view baseball and football as the national sport.

The U.S. is made up of so many different ethnic groups that people are sometimes not completely aware of their own culture. However, learning a foreign culture is a challenge; it takes time and patience, just like learning a language does. Likewise, culture learning takes months and even years. Understanding how people think and behave is a challenging task.

As a result of my many years teaching foreign language, it is my belief that a successful teaching methodology must find the strongest link between *goals* and *objectives* by presenting them to the different levels of learners in a very accessible and intriguing way. Undoubtedly, it requires in the first place an educator to enjoy the learners and the process of teaching. But most importantly, by trusting his or her natural instincts, a teacher should be able to avoid discipline management issues and be in control of “the audience” by keeping them focused and interested.

In introducing the students to a world of over 250 million people who communicate in French, I would like to take them on a fascinating architectural expedition through historic homes, temples and public buildings. That will certainly motivate them to learn some common words and expressions with correct pronunciation and to be an active part of the new process of gaining knowledge in a foreign language that happens to be the third one for them.

Teaching a foreign or second language has never been easy for various reasons, but we all agree what foreign language experts say: “We remember 10 percent of what we read, 20 percent of what we hear, 30 percent of what we see, 50 percent of what we see and hear, 70 percent of what we discuss with others, 80 percent of what we experience by doing, and 95 percent of what we teach to others.”

UNIT BACKGROUND

In acquiring a foreign language, the primary focus is on the students developing and incorporating communication skills by using comparisons of different languages, influences of other cultures, and community interactions. In addition, students will learn about the lasting effects of European influence on American home design. Since they are also learning English, they will realize the influence that foreign languages have had on English.

This curriculum unit will compare geographical areas and architectural styles in Houston, Marseille, Washington, D.C., and Paris with their architectural monuments,

governmental buildings, and attractive tourist cities. Some other cities might also be included. For instance, New Orleans—reflecting both French and Spanish influences—and Provincetown near Cape Cod, could be compared with Venice and Amsterdam.

Fulfilling these goals would teach my students, who are of a foreign background, more about American culture, history, and traditions. Furthermore, some of the examples will expand beyond French architecture to include vocabulary and touch on the aspects of American culture which were influenced by European and international cultures.

The unit, entitled “European Influences on the American Home and Culture,” may raise the question of whether this topic is appropriate to teach a foreign language class and how exactly it would suit the French language setting. Before the actual teaching process, the three most important tasks to keep in mind will be: a) to set the stage for the foreign language goals according to the students’ needs, b) to adjust the broad information that has been gathered already to fit the existing teaching materials, and c) to choose the compatible level of information related to the topic.

Besides the textbook material, the young learners will gladly listen to a story giving them knowledge about historical facts and personalities. It will diversify the lesson, motivating them to learn faster and easier even when it comes to vocabulary or grammar.

The unit will elaborate on European contributions to the development of American domestic architecture in the 19th century, including pioneer rectangular cabins with *pavilion* roofs (patterned after the houses of Quebec) and the adaptation of the traditional French *colombage* method of framing. *Colombage* involves combining clay, lime, and a binder such as Spanish moss or vegetable fiber into what is known as *bousillage*. This is then used as a substitute for stone.

Through detailed stories and readings, the students will have a better vision of the European presence and its influence on the American style of life and culture. They will find details about the particular architectural techniques that were used by European settlers during the Colonial period and in later centuries. The students will be on a remarkable field trip through American history in search of the great architects and leaders who built this country.

Only in New Orleans, where the French government sent skilled architects and engineers, did buildings approach the sophistication of architecture in France. Along the southern Mississippi River and near the town of St. Louis (in what is now Missouri), French settlers built wooden houses fronted or surrounded by porches called *galeries*. Southern landowners later transformed this idea of a large sheltering porch into the two-story Grecian *colonnade* (a row of columns with a roof), resulting in the familiar image of a Southern plantation mansion.

The short Spanish domination of Florida was also marked by complex structures, including the fort at St. Augustine (1672). The Spanish presence was more permanent in the American Southwest, where settlers borrowed extensively from Native American techniques for adobe construction. Mexican baroque details and church forms appeared in a new and simpler exterior, as in the Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California missions. The Dutch, who settled in New Amsterdam (now New York City), were traders for the most part, and examples of their residential work can be seen throughout the Hudson River Valley.

The English settlements were of two basic types: the small town in the North and the large plantation in the South. In New England, settlers erected wood houses with high brick chimney stacks of late Gothic inspiration. In the South, brick took over wood as the most fashionable building material. The classicism of 18th-century English architecture was almost immediately reflected in the colonies, as in the official buildings of Williamsburg, Va. or the Pennsylvania Statehouse in Philadelphia (1731). During that time the growing prosperity and commerce brought well-trained artisans, and English architectural books became available. However, pioneer building techniques continued on the Western frontier where settlers often built cabins of logs or later even of sod.

In New Sweden on the Delaware River, Swedish settlers introduced log construction based on familiar vernacular methods back home. With trees so abundant in America, German and Scotch-Irish arrivals picked up this building type—the log cabin—and took it westward, where they settled. The Swedes also introduced a form of gambrel roof—a roof with two slopes, the lower steeper than the upper. The English, who assumed control of New Sweden in 1682, borrowed this roof shape for their buildings.

In the Dutch colonies that stretched up along the Hudson River, brick construction predominated in the towns. Narrow brick houses presented steep, stepped gables (a triangular end of a roof) to the street. Dutch gables were edged on the sides with steps. None of these houses survived. In the farmlands of northeastern New Jersey and on Long Island, a different house type predominated, probably introduced by Flemish settlers. These broad houses had an entrance in the middle of the long side and sweeping roofs that extended out to shelter the entry door.

By the start of the 18th century, all the colonies along the Atlantic seaboard had come under English control, and a more uniform culture began to develop. Architecture in the English colonies also underwent a dramatic change, moving away from ethnic vernacular traditions toward a stylish emulation of the fashionable architectural details used for public buildings and country houses in Britain in the late 1700s. The wealthiest colonists hoped to demonstrate that they were every bit as cultivated as their countrymen and countrywomen in England. Because trained architects were extremely rare in the colonies, educated gentlemen acquired libraries of current books on architecture and trained themselves in matters of design.

Although not normally thought of as an architect, Founding Father George Washington was a highly knowledgeable, self-educated architectural designer. Washington's great wealth as a Virginia planter enabled him to acquire books and to add to Mount Vernon, the plantation house he inherited from his brother. First refurbished in 1757 and 1758 and then nearly doubled in size in a second phase of building from 1773 to 1776, the remodeled Mount Vernon incorporated details from several popular architectural books. In the last major change, made after the Revolutionary War, Washington added a broad portico (1784-1787) overlooking the lawn toward the Potomac River. Despite his political differences with Britain, Washington nonetheless based his striking portico on one published in English architect Batty Langley's work *The City and Country Builder and Workman's Treasury of Designs* (1740).

In the New England states, designers of residential architecture emphasized strong abstract geometries and the proportions and placement of windows, but showed great restraint in their use of classical ornament. Founding Father Thomas Jefferson of Virginia took a very different view, however: he detested Georgian architecture, which he associated with colonial rule. Jefferson criticized the magisterial buildings of Williamsburg, Virginia, formerly the colonial capital. For his own plantation house (1770), Jefferson left the English colonial practice of putting plantation houses on the banks of major rivers and instead placed his on the top of a small mountain. He adopted an Italian name, Monticello, for the estate. Although contemporary English books inspired his earliest sketches for the new house, he gradually turned to the work of 16th-century Italian architect Andrea Palladio. Palladian aspects of his completed initial design include the building's symmetry, with two wings extending from a central structure. Its large front porch had a pediment and Roman Doric columns.

Over the years, Jefferson constantly modified the house as he learned more. Soon after the American Revolution, Jefferson was appointed American diplomatic representative to the French court, and he delighted in seeing the latest in French progressive architecture in and around Paris. The single-story Hôtel de Salm in Paris greatly impressed Jefferson, and he later remodeled Monticello to make it appear more emphatically one-story and to give it a low Roman dome like that of the hôtel. While in Paris, Jefferson also took note of a recent French book that showed the restored Maison Carrée, an ancient Roman temple in the town of Nîmes in southern France. When friends in Virginia who knew of his passion for architecture asked Jefferson to design the new state capitol for Virginia in 1785, he was pleased to help. The Virginia capital had shifted from Williamsburg to Richmond. Jefferson hoped to design three adjoining buildings to house the three branches of state government, but he was instructed to squeeze all the operations into one building. He took as his model the Maison Carrée, which was considered one of the most beautiful ancient buildings. Jefferson selected it not only for its simplicity of form, however, but also because it symbolized for him the pure architecture of Republican Rome, before the extremes of the Roman Empire.

Jefferson sent drawings and a model of the new capitol from France back to Virginia to guide construction. The Virginia State Capitol (1785-1788) became the first building since ancient times to be based directly on an ancient classical example. This revival, known as neoclassicism, swept Europe and America until the early to mid-1800s and even today influences the design of public and governmental buildings.

A lot more examples could be given about governmental buildings, cathedrals, and universities around the country. One of the students' assignments will be to provide such readings and share them in class. For the purpose they will have to go to the school computer lab and do research. The story they are going to present in front of the class will be graded based on the level of achievement and the quality of research. Those readings will help the students to better focus on the material that is being taught and will enable them to demonstrate to themselves, their peers, and their teacher their responsibility and preparedness in submitting their projects.

To facilitate comparison of European with American architectural styles, the students will be provided with American and international magazines, posters, reference books, photocopies of historic homes, drawings of colonial town-houses, certain American homes listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and possibly CDs, slides and video tapes of palaces and historic homes in Europe. The students will be asked to find the similarities that influenced the merging of European architecture, construction technologies, language, and culture in American home design and social space.

The objective of the curriculum unit is to cultivate the students by giving them long-term assignments, encouraging them to research and find information on different European countries of their choice. There will be a proposed list of French- and Spanish-speaking countries in Europe and Latin America, and a list of topics on which to write, along with a schedule for their presentations.

My plan is to enhance the teaching process and allow the students to use their creativity in preparing the studied material for implementation in the classroom. They will have scheduled time at the school computer labs for detailed research using CD-ROMs, vocabulary lists, and online generating tools. The expected results will be enrichment of the general and specific students' knowledge, as well as sustainable educational technology.

As a matter of fact, the following simple rules describing the meaning of a foreign language curriculum could help immensely in the construction of the perfect lesson plan. The first things a foreign teacher should ask himself/herself are: 1. "What are the students expected to know at the end of the course?" 2. "What will be taught during the course?" 3. "When is it to be taught and at what rate of progress for the different levels?" 4. "How is it to be taught?" and 5. "How is it going to be evaluated?" Above all, the goals and objectives of a foreign language curriculum used by the teachers should articulate the

instructional guidelines for a commitment to teaching approaches designed to support and enhance the students' learning process.

This foreign language course unit will be an opportunity for my students to learn more about their American historical heritage through architecture, technology, and art, and will allow them to learn how different European cultures influenced the design and construction of the American home during the 19th and 20th centuries.

LESSON PLANS

Lesson Plan 1

Grade level

Sixth, Seventh and Eighth

Subject

Foreign language/French

Duration

2-3 segments of approx. 60 min

Description

Introducing French vocabulary of fifteen or more countries, famous cities, nationalities, architectural landmarks, ancient palaces, or natural wonders found around the French- and the English-speaking world.

Objectives

1. Students will learn the names of the countries and cities, and will become familiar with the architectural landmarks vocabulary. The teacher will introduce male/female gender of nouns and proper names and use definite articles in front of the names of countries. Examples:

| | |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Féminin (f.) | Masculin (m.) |
| la France (France) | le Brésil (Brazil) |
| l'Angleterre (England) | les Etats-Unis (United States) |
| la Belgique (Belgium) | le Japon (Japan) |
| l'Espagne (Spain) | le Mexique (Mexico) |
| l'Italie (Italy) | le Portugal (Portugal) |
| la Suède (Sweden) | le Maroc (Morocco) |
2. Students will print out maps in color and create posters with annotated images of the studied material.
3. Students will present the posters or postcards to the class.

Materials

- Big size world map or a globe
- French textbooks
- Internet access to web sites from bibliography
- Poster boards
- Paper markers
- Images from travel magazines
- Scissors
- Glue or tape

Procedures

1. Show students a map of the world and start presenting the different French-, Spanish-, or English-speaking countries. Explain how far the continents and countries extend and how they vary in their histories, cultures, economies, industry, architecture, standards of living, and climate.
2. Tell the students that they will be creating a poster that will focus on two or more European and American historical cities (for example: Paris and Washington, D.C.) and show buildings with brief annotations. Explain to them the way to appreciate diversity by spotlighting the natural and cultural treasures of a country. Direct their attention to the historical buildings of Petit Palais and Grand Palais in Paris, The Louvre Museum, and the famous landmarks the Eiffel Tower, Champs Elysées, and Montmartre. Ask them to compare these with the Capitol Building and the White House in Washington, D.C.
3. Ask the students to work in teams by selecting their own partners. Let them choose a team representative to print out some maps and pictures of ancient palaces, landmarks, architectural monuments, or natural wonders that would be used for the posters. A list of suggested countries may be written on the board with names of major cities, places, and architectural monuments. For example:
 - Paris, capital of France: la Tour Eiffel, l’Arc de Triomphe, Le Musée du Louvre;
 - Washington, D.C., capital of the United States: The White House, The Capitol, the Washington Memorial;
 - Brazilia, capital of Brazil: with modern design and architecture;
 - Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: major city, popular tourist location.
4. After students have selected their city or architectural landmark, ask them for their choices of topics. Encourage them to work together, and point out the different aspects of the chosen sites, with their differences and similarities.
5. Throughout several class segments (and extended into a homework assignment), ask the students to research their sites, record facts, and select several images to illustrate their topics. All images should have a few sentences of explanation in French and English. This should reveal interesting facts about the sites and how important they are to the people of the region. Have students create a poster, which could be a drawing or any other type, according to their vision. The

- teacher's guidance should help the students stick to the main idea. This will help them elaborate on the subject and acquire skills using their creative thinking.
6. During the next class segment, the teams should complete their work.
 7. Each student should be given three to four minutes to present the poster he/she has worked on.
 8. All posters should be left on display in the classroom after presentation.
 9. The teacher should give a grade after the completion of the project on the poster.

Discussion Questions

1. Choose a historical, cultural, or natural site;
2. If the student could visit one of the sites discussed in class, which would he chose?
3. Ask the students to choose what natural or cultural treasures in the United States they would show to reveal the country's geography, history, or culture if they had to show them to students from France, Brazil, or Japan.

Evaluation

Use a three-point rubric to assess how well the students do the research, or use an evaluation form to grade them. Supply the evaluation sheet to the students.

Lesson Plan # 2

Grade levels

Sixth, Seventh and Eighth

Subject

Foreign language/French

Duration

10-15 segments of approx. 15 min

Description

Creating individual vocabularies, introducing French words to be compared with their English equivalents, and looking for phonetic and spelling similarities related to the American home and general architectural terms.

Objectives

1. Students will acquire and memorize the vocabulary.
2. Students should keep an alphabetized list of all new words with definitions in a separate folder.
3. Students will learn to take down the new vocabulary for the day with definite and indefinite articles for both female and male nouns.
4. On the blackboard, the instructor should write a sample alphabetized list of words related to an architectural landmark or a private home.

Example:

Vocabulaire des mots français

A

appartement (m.) – apartment

architecture (f.) - architecture

B

balustrade (f.) – balustrade, railing

banc (m.) – bench

brique (f.) – brick

barrière (f.) - barrier

basin (m.) – basin

baril (m.) - barrel

boutique (f.) – boutique, a small shop selling gifts or clothing

C

cabane (f.) - cabin

café (m.) – a coffeehouse, a small restaurant

cheminée (f.) - chimney

clinique (f.) – a clinic, connected to a hospital

colonnade (f.) – colonnade

colonie (f.) – colony, settlement

colonne (f.) – column

couche (f.) – couch

F

façade (f.) - façade

fabrique (f.) - factory

four (m.) – furnace, oven

H

hutte (f.) – hut

L

lavabo (m.) - lavatory

maçon – mason, brick layer

maison (f.) – mansion

P

palisade (f.) – palisade

5. The same pattern will be followed for all the units in the textbook, adding up the new words in alphabetical order.
6. On a regular basis during the semester, the students will be asked to bring their folders in order to be graded according to the accuracy of the French spelling and the definition in English.

Evaluation

On every occasion during the class segments, the students will be tested verbally in order to check the level of their vocabulary acquisition. Most of the homework assignments

will involve asking them to memorize a very short verse or a proverb usually quoted at the end of the French textbook.

Lesson plan # 3

Grade level

Sixth, Seventh and Eighth

Subject

Foreign Language/French

Duration

2-3 segments of approx. 60 min

Description

After reviewing many pictures of houses and sources of information related to the topic of the curriculum unit, the students will be asked to draw an American or a European family house. In this particular case it will be recommended that the assignments be individualized.

Materials

- French textbooks
- French vocabulary books
- Different color paper
- Paper markers
- Color crayons
- Maps
- Images from architectural books and magazines
- Scissors
- Glue or tape

Objectives

Students will:

1. Draw a family house with the floor plans typical to an American or a European city.
2. Use vocabulary related to the parts of the house to prepare tags.
un appartement(m.) - an apartment une maison - a house
l'appartement - the apartment la maison - the house
un toit (m.) - a roof une cuisine (f.) - a kitchen
le toit (m.) - the roof la cuisine (f.) - the kitchen
3. Use given examples on the board or ask the students to use their French vocabulary books for the purpose of correct spelling. The list with the names of

the family members should be optional in case the students would like to put down their names on the tags.

Les Membres de la famille (Family Members)

| Féminin (f.) | Masculin (m.) |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| une cousine (a female cousin) | un cousin (a male cousin) |
| la cousine (the female cousin) | le cousin (the male cousin) |
| une fille (a daughter) | un fils (a son) |
| la fille (daughter) | le fils (the son) |
| une mère (a mother) | un père (a father) |
| la mere (the mother) | le père (the father) |

4. Mark down each room in the house with a tag in French and English.
5. Put down family members and relatives names on the tags for the occupancy of the different rooms in the house.
6. Print out maps and flags, cut out landscape settings to situate around the house, and design and create the poster, putting signs in French and English on the house plan, using vocabulary from the studied material.
7. Present the design of the family house in front of the class. The students may be asked to act during the presentation, pretending to be real estate agents, architects, designers, engineers, prosperous businessmen/women, etc. in order to make the exercise more colorful.

Procedures

1. Show the students house designs from different periods and locations, from French-, Spanish-, or English-speaking countries and diverse standards of living, fashion styles, cuisine, music, languages in order to give them the necessary information and prepare them for the assignment they will be required to work on.
2. Ask the students to draw a European house design, the best they could ever imagine. The students should be helped to elaborate on the main idea, using pictures from architectural magazines, books and creative thinking.
3. During the next class segment, they will be asked to complete their work. At the end, each student will be given four to five minutes to present his/her design.
4. All drawings will be displayed in the classroom after the presentation.
5. If some of the students' work excels in quality and content, arrangements will be made through art teachers for the drawings to be displayed in the school or to be presented at a regional or city student exhibition.

Evaluation

1. Use points to assess how well the students made the designs.
2. Grade the drawing.
3. Choose the best works to be exhibited in the school or in a district city hall.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

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Includes bibliographical references and various maps of the early history of Texas Hispanic Americans, Texas history guidebooks, missions, Texas discovery and exploration maps.

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Surveys of the nation's schools' and colleges' education in foreign languages.

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Groups of students may travel to Europe together through this site.

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<<http://www.myswitzerland.com>>.
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