

Bringing the Standards for Foreign Language Learning into the classroom by presenting *Souvenirs de Paris: a Cabaret*

Cosima Hasenstein,
St. Thomas More High School,
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The idea of having a cabaret at school may seem frivolous to the administration. However, by using the following reasoning, you prove to the administration that in your role as teacher/impresario you include important principles of foreign language instruction into your lesson plan.

The arguments are as follows:

1. The French chanson and cabaret theme is developed through a Thematic Unit.
2. The Standards for Foreign Language Learning are incorporated into the Thematic Unit.

I. Developing a Thematic Unit

Thematic Units are helpful in organizing lesson plans around topics from target cultures, such as poems and chansons. When creating a unit, the following resources should be considered:

- textbook
- curriculum previously developed or adapted
- supplementary materials
- available technology
- student profile
- community resources
- colleagues as resources

Unit outline for the Cabaret theme:

1. Historical facts about France during and after WWII
 - Internet research
 - Claudia Hommel's study guide section: "A Brief History of France"
 - A Semantic Web using students' previous knowledge
2. The French Chanson as related to the above mentioned time period
 - Textbook (En Voyage, Glencoe French III)
 - Hommel's study guide and CD
 - Songs by Edith Piaf and Yves Montand
 - What is a Cabaret?
 - Hommel's study guide notes
 - Internet research
 - Post-performance activities
 - write a critique about the show
 - write poems related to current issues
 - perform a classroom cabaret

Reference: "Bringing the Standards into the Classroom : A Teacher's Guide"
National K-12 Foreign Language Resource Center

II. Relating the Standards for Learning of French to the Cabaret

COMMUNICATION

Communicate in French

Standard 1.1: Students discuss in French the lyrics to selected chansons. They share previous knowledge and express feelings and opinions.

Standard 1.2: Students understand and interpret the language by listening to the songs and reading the lyrics.

Standard 1.3: Students write advertisements, posters, and critiques based on the show.

CULTURES

Gain Knowledge and Understanding of the French Culture

Standard 2.1: Students become familiar with life in Post World War II France

Standard 2.2: Students understand the relationship between the time period and the themes of the chansons

CONNECTIONS

Connect with Other Disciplines and Acquire Information

Standard 3.1: Students further their knowledge of world history (France), music (the French chanson and its interpreters), and art (the cabaret)

COMPARISONS

Develop Insight into the Nature of Language and Culture

Standard 4.1: Students recognize in the lyrics French words and expressions which have been adapted into the English language

Standard 4.2: Students watch parts of the movies "An American in Paris" or "Funny Face" for an American view of living in Paris

COMMUNITIES

Participate in the French-speaking communities

Standard 5.1: Students invite faculty, students, and people from the community to the school for an evening at the cabaret

Standard 5.2: Students show excitement by using the French language and cultural knowledge outside the classroom

Getting everyone involved at St. Thomas More High School

My approach to bringing the Cabaret to a Catholic High School:

1. Contact with the administration
 - being excited about the opportunity to incorporate Arts in Education
 - explaining the importance of linking teaching to the National Standards
 - having a vision of funding possibilities
2. Classroom

I developed a Thematic Unit according to the above explained outline which was applicable to students in French I, II, and III.
3. French Club

The cabaret project became a major challenge for the French Club members. They were busy creating

 - flyers, invitations, tickets
 - decorations for the cafeteria which was transformed into "our" cabaret room
 - table settings

They were

 - ticket sellers and collectors
 - waiters and waitresses
 - bilingual emcees
4. Parents
 - One Mom was in charge to coordinate all parent volunteers
 - Parents donated French pastries and a variety of drinks
 - They helped setting up the buffet and supervised the student waiters
5. The school community
 - Art Club students created "old-fashioned" looking posters
 - School newspaper students wrote articles and conducted interviews
 - Speech and drama students helped with the lighting and sound system
6. Funding sources
 - Cooperation with the local Arts Council to share travel costs
 - Donations from parents
 - PTC money
 - French Club money

The final product "une soirée au cabaret" was a full success. The audience enjoyed the ambience we created and the quality of the show. The best part for me as teacher was to see my students being excited about French and being actively involved in the learning. They had a first hand cultural experience in their hometown, in their own school.