

Songs Without Borders: Learning French through Song-Writing

Teaching Handbook for KS3 levels



Baudelaire Song Project



Contents

Preface	2
Introduction	3
1- Warm up activities	6
1.1 Count, Clap, Snap	6
1.2 Sing the C Major scale in French	6
1.3 Rhythmic orchestra	7
1.4 French tongue twisters (<i>les virelangues</i>)	7
1.5 Crescendo/Decrescendo	7
2- What is song writing?	8
2.1 Listening Activity	8
WORKSHEET 1	10
WORKSHEET 2	11
2.2 What is the song writing process?	12
2.3 Forming the music groups	15
3. Language and Music	16
3.1 The French Voice	16
3.2 Intonations and Rhythms	17
WORKSHEET 3	18-19
3.3 French rhymes	20
WORKSHEET 4	21
WORKSHEET 5	22
4- Creative Writing: Writing the Lyrics	23
4.1 Reading comprehension through grammar	23
4.2 Identify meaningful themes	24
WORKSHEET 6	25
4.3 Writing the lyrics	26
WORKSHEET 7	27
5.1- Composing Music (I)	28
WORKSHEET 8	30
5.2- Composing Music (II)	31
6- Explore Further: Music and Digital Tools	32
6.1 Searching the database	32
6.2 Song viewers	33
Resources and links	34



Preface

This book comes from a series of six French song writing workshops held at the University of Birmingham School for KS3 students (Year 7, Year 8, Year 9) from February to May 2018. Three groups were formed and each group composed one song using entirely French or mixing French and English.

The workshops were organised by the Baudelaire Song Project (AHRC-funded, 2015-2019) led by Professor Helen Abbott at the University of Birmingham. The workshops were designed and delivered by Research Associate Dr Nina Rolland, Music facilitator Dr Elizabeth Stafford (<https://musiceducationolutions.co.uk>), with the help of three undergraduate students from the University of Birmingham: Phoebe, Lily, Charlotte.

We would like to thank Clare Haley, MFL teacher and subject leader at the University of Birmingham School, for making these workshops possible and for her patience and availability. Finally, these activities would not have been possible without the participation of KS3 students who all played the game and produced great songs!





Introduction

- **Who is this activity book for?**

Bringing text and music together is a great springboard for developing language skills. For this reason, the Baudelaire Song Project has developed a handbook for KS3 French language teachers, whatever their knowledge of music might be. The activities offered in this handbook aim to consolidate French learning through music-based activities and particularly through song writing. This handbook emanates from a series of workshops organised by the Baudelaire Song Project between February and May 2018 at the University of Birmingham School, a secondary mixed free school. While the activities have been designed for KS3 students (the workshops included students from Year 7, Year 8, and Year 9), they can easily be adapted to different levels.

The Baudelaire Song Project (AHRC-funded project, 2015-2019) has collated thousands of song settings of Charles Baudelaire's poetry. The variety of songs collected in our database – covering 40 musical styles and 25 languages – proves the inspirational power of Baudelaire's poetry and the infinite possibilities to play with poetic language and music. It is this rich and playful connection between text and music that this handbook wishes to transmit. As a hybrid form between text and music, song writing is an ideal support to learn a language insofar as it draws on the four language skills (listening, reading, writing, speaking). Students do not need to be musicians for these activities, but the activities can be adapted to all levels of musicianship.

Starting with a poem in French and a recent song setting of this poem, students will progressively compose their own songs in small groups. The creation of songs includes writing lyrics entirely in French or mixing French and English lines, finding a song structure, composing the vocal melody of their songs, and composing the instrumental accompaniment if they have musical skills, or alternatively using an existing accompaniment. The activities of this handbook follow a progression from listening (understanding), to replicating (gaining confidence), and creating (collaborating). The activities aim to reinforce language and cultural skills by boosting confidence, creativity, adaptability, and collaboration.

Listening → replicating → creating: The *Songs Without Borders Teaching Handbook* is designed to develop linguistic, musical, and cultural competences. The critical engagement with music and words will help students to stimulate creative expression. The poem 'A une Malabaraise' by Charles Baudelaire and its song setting by the Belgian band Exsangue (2016) will be used as a starting point. As this poem deals with questions of multiculturalism and immigration, it will be a rich support for thinking about these themes as it will allow learners to engage with them in a creative way. Working in small groups, students will compose their own songs and find their own musical style. The activities will help to:

- Revise French grammatical points
- Analyse and improve French pronunciation through rhymes and music
- Engage with the concept of multiculturalism
- Evaluate a song through listening activities
- Compose a song using French and English words



- **How to use this book?**

The handbook can be used in several ways: 1- from beginning to end as a block of activities; 2- by choosing a couple of activities as ‘one-off’ lessons; 3- by choosing activities and re-modelling them to complement existing lessons.

1- If the handbook is used as a whole, it is recommended to follow the suggested progression as each activity builds on the previous one and logically leads to the creation of a song. The handbook follows a progression from reading and listening comprehension to creating and performing in order to cover all four language skills. If used as a whole, these activities are ideal for enrichment blocks or end of year projects. As an indication, the workshops we organised at the University of Birmingham School were held during an enrichment block over 6 weeks (one hour per week). We recommend to deliver the sessions in continuous weeks as much as possible (once a week if spread over several weeks or over two half days if condensed) and to try to avoid too many breaks between them (for example try to avoid to schedule weekly sessions with long term breaks in the middle) otherwise students might need time to remember what they produced and the creative process might be disrupted.

2- If activities are used as one-off lessons, durations are indicated for each activity.

3- The worksheets can easily be re-modelled on the Word document to complement existing lessons. Each activity has been conceived to suit KS3 curricula in both French and Music but can be adapted to more advanced levels.

The activities can be used in a variety of ways to suit all musical abilities. If students will play their own instruments, it should be kept in mind while forming the groups which student can play which instruments so that each group is even.

- **Aims and Learning outcomes:**

Throughout these song writing activities, students will:

- Understand and respond to language in a song
- Revise French grammatical points
- Improve French pronunciation
- Develop confidence in speaking French

- Evaluate a song through listening activities
- Develop bilingual links
- Engage with multicultural as well as universal themes
- Enhance performance skills in French and English
- Engage with literature and music via creative group work



- **Space, Equipment, and Staffing**

The first set of activities (Activity 1 to 4) can be done in one classroom with the entire group of students. Music composing activities (Activity 5) would be more productive if the groups are in different rooms where they can practise and develop their songs.

Audio equipment is necessary for most of the activities, particularly to play and analyse the song setting of Baudelaire's 'A une Malabaraise' (Activity 2), and to play the accompaniments if they are needed (Activity 5). If students are musicians they can bring their musical instruments (guitar, violin, clarinet, etc.) only for the music composing activities (Activities 4.3 and 5), otherwise they might want to use their instruments right away for activities that do not need instruments. Similarly, if the school has musical instruments available, they can be used for the last activities. It would be good to have a recording device (or simply a phone) for the last sessions to record students' performances.

One class teacher can lead the first activities for the entire group (for a class of 30), but one more member of staff might be needed when students split into groups for their music-composing sessions (for example another teacher, a teaching assistant, a community musician, an older student, etc.).

- **Students with SEN and/or disabilities**

Music-based activities to learn languages are very inclusive of students with special educational needs or disabilities. Some activities might need a few adjustments but because most of them are group activities, all students can participate in their own way. During our series of workshops at the University of Birmingham School, one student had a rare condition which included hearing impairment. She was very motivated and her contribution to the group was considerable, it included creating lyrics in French, playing percussions, and singing. Many of our activities use a multi-sensory approach helping to maintain an inclusive environment.

This activity book is available both as a PDF and as a WORD document so that teachers can freely adapt the worksheets to their classes. Worksheets are also available on a separate Word document to be printed as a student booklet.



1- WARM UP ACTIVITIES

Before starting each activity you can choose one of the following warm up activities (they all last around 5 minutes).

1.1 Count, Clap, Snap

Students stand up and form a circle (if there is enough space in the classroom). They all count together in French from 1 to 15 several times. The first time they say all the number. The second time number 5 is replaced by a finger snap. The third time number 5 is replaced by a snap and number 10 by a hand clap. The fourth time number 5 is replaced by a snap, number 10 by a clap, and number 15 by a right foot tap on the floor. The fifth time only even numbers can be replaced by snaps.

1.2 Sing the C Major scale in French

Students stand up and sing the scale in French (it helps if there is a small keyboard to play it on first) going up and down. The second time they can replace the notes by numbers. The third time they can only sing to 5.

The diagram illustrates the C Major scale in French with musical notation and arrows showing the sequence of notes and numbers. It is divided into three parts:

- Top part:** Shows the C Major scale in French: DO RE MI FA SOL LA SI DO. The notes are written on a musical staff. Two blue arrows point upwards from the first note (DO) to the eighth note (SI), and two blue arrows point downwards from the eighth note (SI) to the first note (DO).
- Middle part:** Shows the C Major scale in French: UN DEUX TROIS QUATRE CINQ SIX SEPT HUIT. The notes are written on a musical staff. Two blue arrows point upwards from the first note (UN) to the eighth note (HUIT), and two blue arrows point downwards from the eighth note (HUIT) to the first note (UN).
- Bottom part:** Shows the C Major scale in French: 1 2 3 4 5. The notes are written on a musical staff. Two blue arrows point upwards from the first note (1) to the fifth note (5), and two blue arrows point downwards from the fifth note (5) to the first note (1).



1.3 Rhythmic orchestra

All students stand up and play this rhythm: 1- tap on the lap, 2- clap hands, 3- snap fingers, 4- snap fingers. They do it several times until they all play at the same tempo. One person (it can be the teacher) says 'Bon-jour' on the two snaps, then say the name of one student on the two next snaps.

The student does the same and say the name of another student. Speakers can only say 'Bon-jour' and the name of a student on the snaps, if they miss a round they have to wait for the snaps to speak.

1.4 French tongue twisters (*les virelangues*)

Students repeat after the teacher:

- As-tu été à Tahiti?
- Un chasseur sachant chasser doit savoir chasser sans son chien.
- Il reste treize fraises fraîches.
- Un tigre, deux tigres, trois tigres.
- Trois tortues trottaient sur des trottoirs très étroits.
- Combien sont ces six saucissons-ci ? Ces six saucissons-ci sont six sous.

1.5 Crescendo/Decrescendo

Students sing all together 'Frère Jacques' ; the teacher (or a student) give indication on how loud or low to sing it. Gestures should be clear so that students understand how low to sing (until whispering), and how loud to be.

Frère Jacques,
Dormez-vous ?
Sonnez les matines !
Ding, daing, dong !



2- WHAT IS SONG WRITING?

Total duration: 50-55 minutes

This section aims to introduce students to the song writing process. They will listen to a French song, try to evaluate the song (instruments, song structure, atmosphere) and identify some French words. They will think of how text and music are related when creating a song, and what the different steps of song writing are. This should help them to prepare the composition of their own songs later on. They will also form their groups at the end of this session.

Listening to the music of the song first and describing the instruments, melodies, and general atmosphere of the song, should help students to feel comfortable before approaching the text in French. Envisioning language through sounds and music before looking into its structure and the meaning of words can help to remove learning apprehension and to familiarise students with the language in a playful way. It is therefore important to introduce them to the written poem only later on (2.2).

By forming groups at the end of the session, students will get to work in collaboration for the following activities, in order to see how it is to work as a music band.

Warm up (5 minutes):

Choose a warm up from the previous chapter. It is important to start with a musical warm up to catch the students' attention and to get them used to the idea that French and music are connected.

Duration: 20 minutes

Material: Audio + worksheets 1& 2

Learning Objectives:

- Evaluating a song
- Identify the expressive use of instruments
- Ability to describe music
- Understanding authentic French

2.1 Listening Activity

This section consists of several listening exercises using the song 'A une Malabaraise' by Belgian band Exsanguie (www.facebook.com/exsanguie.music) released in 2016. The song is a folk/chanson/pop/rock setting of Charles Baudelaire's poem 'A une Malabaraise' ('To a Malabar woman') written in 1840. The song can be listened to on Bandcamp, on Spotify, or on YouTube:

<https://exsanguie.bandcamp.com/track/a-une-malabaraise>

<https://open.spotify.com/album/5XmqYtjw1qAoBNY5OShJLe>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yrRJ0aqhmDU>



Teaching guidance

The worksheets are on the following pages.

- **WORKSHEET 1** (p.10): Only play half of the song (no more than 2 minutes). This should be enough to give the students an idea of the atmosphere and genre of the song.

- **WORKSHEET 2** (p.11):

Play the whole song.

What instruments can you hear? guitar, double bass (students might simply answer 'string instrument'), female voice (mezzo-soprano). There are no percussions in this song, but the guitar and the bass are used as rhythmic instruments.

Does the singing start straight away? No, there is a short guitar introduction.

What changes in the middle of the song? The band plays with crescendos and decrescendos to structure their songs; they play with softer and louder sounds but the tempo remains the same throughout the song.

Is there a refrain? Yes, although only sung twice towards the end of the song: 'Pourquoi, l'heureuse enfant...'. The original poem does not have stanzas (see text p.13), it is the instrumental accompaniment and the alternation between *forte* and *mezzo forte* nuances that structures the song.

How does the song end? There is a brief coda with the guitar and the bass.

What is the genre of the song? The band defines themselves as belonging to the 'chanson française' genre, we could also say that this song is folk and pop.

Play the song one more time.

Some words in French students might identify (see text p.13): pieds, mains, blanche, yeux, pays, le matin, bananes, le soir, toujours, pourquoi, enfant, France, parfum, brouillards.



Worksheet 1

Listen to the first half of the song 'A une Malabaraise' by Belgian band Exsangue (2016).

A central orange circle contains the text: "How does the song make you feel? Circle some words and complete the list." Surrounding this central circle are six smaller orange thought bubbles, each connected to the center by a trail of three smaller circles. The bubbles contain the following text: "Reflective", "Happy", "Calm", "Sad", and two bubbles containing ".....".

What does the song make you think about?

(circle the appropriate words and complete the list)

Travel

Home

.....

.....

Friends

Nature

.....

Adventure



Worksheet 2: Evaluating Music

Listen to the full song 'A une Malabaraise' by Belgian band Exsangue, and try to identify the musical instruments, the structure of the song, and the genre.

What instruments can you hear at the start of the song (introduction)?

.....



Does the singing start straight away?

What changes in the middle of the song?

MELODY

LOUDER (crescendo)/SOFTER (decrescendo)

FASTER/SLOWER

Is there a refrain?

How does the song end (Coda)?

.....

Listen to the full song one more time and write down any French words you understand.



2.2 What is the song writing process?

This brief section aims to have a class discussion on what the steps to compose a song are, but also to introduce the poetry of Charles Baudelaire. The poem on page 13 (and the translation on page 14) will be used again in another session.



Duration: 15 minutes

Material: Poem

Learning Objectives:

- Becoming familiar with the idea of song writing as creative writing
- Thinking about the intonation and the melody of a language
- Discovering canonical French poetry

Teaching guidance

→ Class discussion:

- What do you think the song writing process is (in general)? What are the different ways to create a song (lyrics first, music first, singing melody first, rhythmic instruments first? Everything at the same time?)
- Does the song writing process differ between musical genres? Is it the same for rock, hip hop, folk music?
- You can introduce them to the idea of *chanter en yaourt* ('singing in yogurt' = singing meaningless vocables): a lot of musicians sing meaningless words and sounds in order to find a vocal melody where proper lyrics can then be placed on, it is similar to scatting in jazz music. You can ask your students to try to produce a sentence that sounds French but does not use any real French words; you can ask them 'How does French sound to you? How would you imitate it?' This can help to think about the intonation and accentuation in French, which helps to improve pronunciation.
 - 'A une Malabaraise': the song by Exsangue is a music setting of a poem by Charles Baudelaire. Therefore, the lyrics came first in the creative process and the band had to adapt their music composition to the lyrics.
- What are the advantages and disadvantages to use a poem as lyrics of a song?
- Ask them to look at (rather than read in details) the general shape of the poem. Do we see stanzas? Verses and a chorus? How can we move from a long poem to song lyrics (students might think of how musicians can repeat or omit lines or stanzas to give shape to the song)?

Info: Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) was a Parisian poet famous for his collection of poems Les Fleurs du Mal published in 1857. He was taken to court and fined for offences against public morality for this book. His image as a rebellious poet as well the universal themes developed in his poems (love, melancholy, death, etc.) inspired hundreds of musicians to compose songs in different styles (from classical music, to chanson, via death metal). Thousands of songs have been composed using his poetry as lyrics.



A une Malabaraise

Charles Baudelaire

1840

Tes pieds sont aussi fins que tes mains, et ta hanche
Est large à faire envie à la plus belle blanche;
À l'artiste pensif ton corps est doux et cher;
Tes grands yeux de velours sont plus noirs que ta chair.
Aux pays chauds et bleus où ton Dieu t'a fait naître,
Ta tâche est d'allumer la pipe de ton maître,
De pourvoir les flacons d'eaux fraîches et d'odeurs,
De chasser loin du lit les moustiques rôdeurs,
Et, dès que le matin fait chanter les platanes,
D'acheter au bazar ananas et bananes.
Tout le jour, où tu veux, tu mènes tes pieds nus,
Et fredonnes tout bas de vieux airs inconnus;
Et quand descend le soir au manteau d'écarlate,
Tu poses doucement ton corps sur une natte,
Où tes rêves flottants sont pleins de colibris,
Et toujours, comme toi, gracieux et fleuris.
Pourquoi, l'heureuse enfant, veux-tu voir notre France,
Ce pays trop peuplé que fauche la souffrance,
Et, confiant ta vie aux bras forts des marins,
Faire de grands adieux à tes chers tamarins?
Toi, vêtue à moitié de mousselines frêles,
Frissonnante là-bas sous la neige et les grêles,
Comme tu pleureras tes loisirs doux et francs
Si, le corset brutal emprisonnant tes flancs
Il te fallait glaner ton souper dans nos fanges
Et vendre le parfum de tes charmes étranges,
Oeil pensif, et suivant, dans nos sales brouillards,
Des cocotiers absents les fantômes épars!





To a Malabar Woman

Your feet are as slender as your hands and your hips
Are broad; they'd make the fairest white woman jealous;
To the pensive artist your body's sweet and dear;
Your wide, velvety eyes are darker than your skin.
In the hot blue country where your God had you born
It is your task to light the pipe of your master,
To keep the flasks filled with cool water and perfumes,
To drive far from his bed the roving mosquitoes,
And as soon as morning makes the plane-trees sing, to
Buy pineapples and bananas at the bazaar.
All day long your bare feet follow your whims,
And, very low, you hum old, unknown melodies;
And when evening in his scarlet cloak descends,
You stretch out quietly upon a mat and there
Your drifting dreams are full of humming-birds and are
Like you, always pleasant and adorned with flowers.
Why, happy child, do you wish to see France,
That over-peopled country which suffering mows down,
And entrusting your life to the strong arms of sailors,
Bid a last farewell to your dear tamarinds?
You, half-dressed in filmy muslins,
Shivering over there in the snow and the hail,
How you would weep for your free, pleasant leisure, if,
With a brutal corset imprisoning your flanks,
You had to glean your supper in our muddy streets
And sell the fragrance of your exotic charms,
With pensive eye, following in our dirty fogs
The sprawling phantoms of the absent coco palms!

— William Aggeler, *The Flowers of Evil* (Fresno, CA: Academy Library Guild, 1954)

Info: the prevailing theme of voyage that we find in Baudelaire's poetry was inspired by his journey to the Indian Ocean. In June 1841, Baudelaire boarded the Paquebot des Mers du Sud thanks to the arrangements of his stepfather, the Général Aupick, who wanted to pull young Charles away from his idleness. The ship departed from Bordeaux and was supposed to reach India but Baudelaire did not sail any further than Mauritius. The mystery around the circumstances of Baudelaire's return to France adds to the poet's mystified account of his journey and the imagery he used in poems such as 'L'Albatros' or 'A une Malabaraise'.



2.3 Forming the music groups

Students should not be more than 5 per group. Teachers can decide if they let them form their own groups or give some guidelines (for example per Year group if mixed-age class). For our workshops at the University of Birmingham School, 16 students were involved in the six-week enrichment block, and groups were formed according to age: one Year 7 group, one Year 8 group, and one Year 9 group. Luckily all students were musicians and had a variety of skills in each group. We had to find compromises when students of the same group wanted to play the same instruments. The earliest they can decide who plays what, the better. If students are not musicians, they will use a set accompaniment (we will come back to this later); it is important to tell them that they will have to sing or rap their song even if they cannot play instruments. In this way, it might be good to make sure at least one student per group is comfortable singing and can lead/encourage the others to do so.

Duration: 15 minutes

Material: Small balls/rubbers (one per group if possible)

Learning Objectives:

- Learning to collaborate for a creative ending
- Learning to make compromises and to adapt

Once the groups are formed they can sit together and do this exercise to learn to collaborate and to listen to each other.

The ‘Conductor exercise’: One member of the group, the conductor, takes a small ball (or rubber), throws it in the air (not too high). The other members have to clap their hands at the exact moment the object comes back down in the conductor’s hands, all the members have to be perfectly synchronized! The conductor can do it a couple of times and throw at different heights. Each member of the group does it.

This could be a good way to see who can ‘lead’ the band, for examples who can give the cues when starting to sing and to perform at a later stage.

Ask them to find **a name for the band**. This will already create some bonds between the members and trigger creative imagery.

If they are musicians, they can decide what will be the role of each member (1 singer, several singers? 1 percussionist, several percussionists? etc.). They can also start discussing what musical styles they are interested in (and if they envision their song as pop, rap, *a capella*, etc.).



3- LANGUAGE AND MUSIC

Total duration: 45-50 minutes

Music and language are closely related. In this section we will see how music can help us learn a language and how speaking a foreign language can help us better understand music. This section aims to highlight the links between listening to music and listening to new sounds in a foreign language. The aim is to make students play with French sounds and intonation in order to trigger creativity around the language, that they will have to use when writing their own lyrics later on. Playing with the sounds of the language will also show them that French is not that scary!

Although the introduction of the session can be done for the whole class, remember that students are supposed to work in their own groups from now on, every time there is an exercise.

Warm up (5 minutes):

Do not forget to start each new session with a warm up. Choose a warm up from the first chapter. It is important to start with a musical warm up to catch the students' attention and to get them used to the idea that French and music are connected.

3.1 The French Voice

→ Class discussion

The teacher slowly pronounces these sentences (extracted from another poem by Baudelaire, 'La Voix'):

'I love so tenderly the desert and the sea'

'j'aime si tendrement le désert et la mer'

Ask you students what the differences are when you say these words in English and in French (not in meaning, just in the phonetic/melody/intonation). They might notice that not only the pronunciation but also the pitch of your voice slightly changes, as well as the muscles of the lower face.

This is something to remember when they will sing their songs. No matter what singing voice they use (chest voice, head voice, high notes, low notes, rap), there will be a difference in the placement of the tongue/muscles/ when they sing in French and in English, which can be a way to be more creative

Duration: 5 minutes

Material: None

Learning

Objectives:

- Identify French sounds
- Improve pronunciation
- Discover how we can play with language

Info: Did you know that when we speak another language, our voice changes as well, not the just words but the way we say them? The pitch of the voice might change, as well as the movements of the mouth, the placement of the tongue, and even of the lower face muscles. You can encourage your students to pay attention to these differences at home: next time they learn a new word in French, they can practise the pronunciation/articulation in front of a mirror, say it in English and in French, they will see the difference!



3.2 Intonations and Rhythms

This activity aims to revise the conjugation of the verb ‘aimer’ and to learn phonetic structures in French, more particularly about intonation and stress. Each group is asked to produce three sentences following the model ‘j’aime le désert et la mer’ and using different pronouns. Teachers can adapt this exercise to different levels in order to revise a specific grammar point: the verb ‘aimer’ could be conjugated in the present, future, *passé composé*, etc., the nouns could be related to a vocabulary list recently seen or to revise masculine and feminine nouns in French. The idea is to link grammar revision with sound plays. When students will compose their music later on, they will remember that the rhythm of the song does not only come from the instruments but also from the words they sing or rap.

Teaching guidance

Take a few of minutes to revise the rules (and exceptions) of the grammar points you want them to revise.

It is important that they keep their written work for future activities as they will use them when writing lyrics. They can hand the sentences in to the teacher at the end of the class, or one student of the group can be responsible for keeping the material.

Duration: 15 minutes

Material: Worksheet 3

Learning Objectives:

- Revise conjugation of the verb ‘aimer’
- Revise vocabulary
- Improve pronunciation
- Discover how we can play with phonetic structures

Info: French is one of the few languages (with Korean for example) that have a predictable stress pattern. In French the stress is on the last syllable (when the word does not end with an ‘e’: ‘broccoli’) and on the penultimate syllable (when the word ends with an ‘e’: ‘chaussure). However, this might change with some regional accents.

In order to ‘sound’ French, students can follow these rules: stress the last syllable and give the same amount of time to each syllable. However, when they sing or rap in a creative way: everything is possible!



Worksheet 3: Intonation, stress, and rhythm

Write 3 sentences and play with the pronunciation and rhythm of the sentences.

A- Write down 3 sentences following the structure of the sentence 'j'aime le désert et la mer':
Pronoun + aimer (conjugated in the present tense) + article (le, la les) + noun + et + article (le, la , les) + noun.

Use a different pronoun for each sentence (je, tu, il/elle/on, nous, vous, ils/elles).

1- _____

2- _____

3- _____

B- Intonation: In speaking French, the voice intonation goes down in a declarative sentence: 'j'aime le désert et la mer'. And up, in an interrogative sentence: 'j'aime le désert et la mer?'. Re-write your sentences below. Read your sentences out loud in your group and change the intonation: going down and monotonous if there is a full stop at the end; going down and over-articulated if there is an exclamation point; going up if there is a question mark.

1- _____ .

2- _____ !

3- _____ ?



C- Stress and rhythm: You can play around the **stress** of a word or syllable. Usually in French the stress is on the final syllable: 'j'**aime**' (just like the letter M), 'le **désert**' (there is a pronunciation difference between 'dessert' and 'désert', do you know it?), 'la **mer**'. When you sing (and even more so if you decide to rap) you can stress any syllable to give rhythm to your words: 'j'**aime**', 'le **désert**', '**LA** mer'.

1- Each member of the group choose one of the sentences you wrote and read it out loud by stressing some random syllables.

2- Add a beat: one member of the group quietly taps a regular beat on the table with a pen (like a metronome, but not too fast) while someone else reads one of the above sentences out loud by trying to place the words either on the beat or outside the beat. You can say some words slowly and some other rapidly, but always pay attention to the beat and try to play around it! Rotate in the group, everyone should participate!





3.3 French rhymes

Duration: 20 minutes

Material:
Worksheets 4 & 5

Learning Objectives:

- Improve French pronunciation
- Learn about French rhymes
- Revise vocabulary
- Make phonetic associations between written and spoken

With this activity, students will learn about French rhymes and improve their pronunciation by working on their reading and speaking skills. Because not all the letters of a word are pronounced in French, it makes it sometimes difficult to remember the pronunciation of letters, syllables, and words; different spellings can have identical sounds. Looking at what rhymes in French will improve the phonetic understanding in French.

Teaching guidance

This activity is divided in 3 steps:

- With Worksheet 4 on the next page (one worksheet per group is enough, teachers need to cut each word and mix them in advance for each group), students have to identify and group together French rhyming words.

- With Worksheet 5, they have to complete their lists by thinking of any other French words they know that might rhyme with the given words.

- Finally, they have to identify rhymes in the poem 'A une Malabaraise' (p.13) by Baudelaire and write down sounds that do not

figure on Worksheet 4. Teachers can ask them where the rhymes are in the poem and if rhymes can be organised differently in a poem or in a song.

Info: Common rhyme schemes in French are: rimes plates or rimes suivies (AABB), rimes croisées (ABAB), rimes embrassées (ABBA), and rimes tripartites (AABCCB).

If only one sound rhymes between two words (for example a single vowel), it is called une rime pauvre, if there are two sounds it is une rime suffisante, and three sounds it is une rime riche.

Another way to play with sounds within sentences: alliterations (repetition of consonants) and assonances (repetition of vowels).



Worksheet 4: French rhyming words: Which words rhyme?

voyager	La beauté	chanter
Hier	La mère	L'hiver
plaire	La pluie	minuit
Le voyage	Le paysage	La plage
La peur	Le coeur	L'heure
La journée	parler	jouer
Le pain	demain	Le matin



Worksheet 5: French rhyming words: Find more rhyming words.

Try to think of more words in French rhyming with these sounds.

/e/ (like **chanter**):

/ɛʀ/ (like **mère**):

/aʒ/ (like **voyage**):

/œʀ/ (like **soeur**):

/ɛ̃/ (like **demain**):

Look at the poem 'A une Malabaraise':

- Where are the rhymes placed in the poem?

- Are there any rhyming sounds that we have not seen above?



4- CREATIVE WRITING: WRITING LYRICS

Total duration: 50-55 minutes

This section is dedicated to writing the song lyrics. Using the poem ‘A une Malabaraise’ as a support, students will be guided to find a main theme, to create their lyrics, and their song structure. Students will find inspiration in the poem to write their own lyrics. Several transitional exercises are offered and should facilitate the writing process. The exercises include grammar revision so that students can lean on what they already know to compose their songs. Grammar points are suggested but teachers can use other grammar points in lines with their curriculum.

Students can write their songs entirely in French, or both in French and in English. The lyrics do not have to be long, they can rely on repetitions and variations. As an indication, the lyrics composed by the University of Birmingham School were between 8 and 10 lines long across the three groups. Students do not need their instruments (if they want to bring them) for the first part of this activity but can use them as soon as they have an idea of what their song will be about in order to try lyrics and music together.

Warm up (5 minutes):

Do not forget to start each new session with a warm up. Choose a warm up from the first chapter. It is important to start with a musical warm up to catch the students’ attention and to get them used to the idea that French and music are connected. If students bring their instruments for this session, you can ask a few students (guitarists, flutists, clarinetists, saxophonists, etc.) to play a major scale (for example C Major) and ask the class to repeat (sing) after them.

4.1 Reading comprehension through grammar

Duration: 15 minutes

Material: Poem

Learning Objectives:

- Grammar revisions in French
- Reading comprehension

For this exercise, students will need the poem ‘A une Malabaraise’ by Baudelaire in French (p.13). Teachers can choose ONE of the following options to revise or decide to focus on something else more in line with the curriculum:

→ Underline the definite and Indefinite ARTICLES in the poem (le, la, l’, les, un, une, des). What are these articles in front of? What is their role?

→ Underline the POSSESSIVE ADJECTIVES in the poem (mon, ma, mes, ton, ta, tes, etc.). Explain them.

→ Underline as many VERBS as you can and explain their conjugations.



4.2 Identify meaningful themes

Duration: 10 minutes

Material: Poem + Worksheet 6

Learning Objectives:

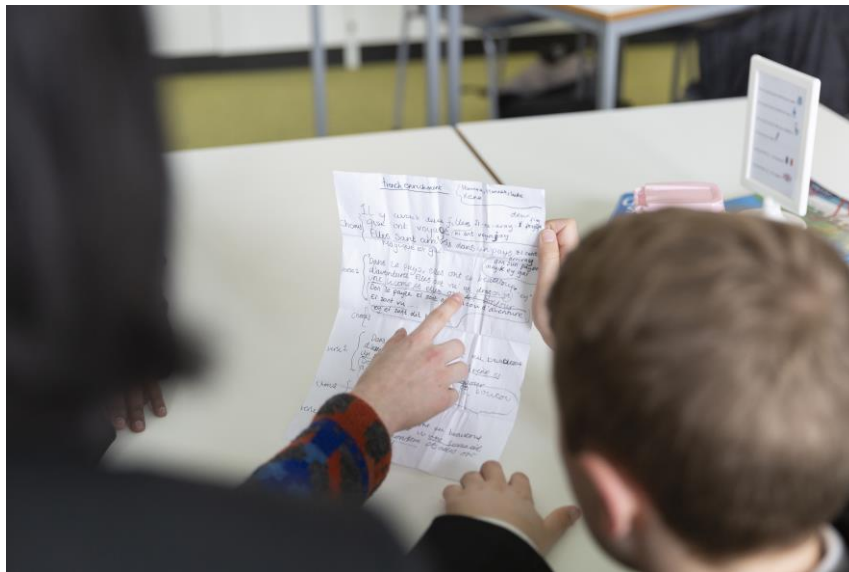
- Evaluating meaning and music
- Discussing topical issues
- Collaborating

Based on the previous exercise, the rhyming exercises, and the very first activity on evaluating the song settings of ‘A une Malabaraise’ by Exsangue, students should be able to understand 3 or 4 themes dealt with in the poem. Out of these themes, each group will agree on one, which will be their starting point to write lyrics.

Teaching guidance

Possible themes to write down on Worksheet 6 are: love, travel, adventure, multiculturalism, ocean, exoticism, the body, food, nature, etc.

Once students have found a few themes in their own groups, gather all the class together and write down all the themes so that students have a variety of topics to choose from.





Worksheet 6: Finding your song theme and title

What is the poem/song about?

From the words you just underlined, the rhymes you found, and the song setting you listened to, what do you think this poem is about? Write down at least four themes.

In your group choose one of the above themes. Your song will be around this theme, think about a title for your song based on that theme.

Discuss what musical style would be suitable for this theme and how the music could illustrate it (high pitch/low pitch vocal melody, rap lyrics, rhythms, etc.)

Theme of your song: _____

Title of your song: _____

Musical style: _____



4.3 Writing the lyrics

Duration: 20 minutes

Material: Worksheet 7 + music instruments (optional)

Learning

Objectives:

- Writing skills
- Develop song writing skills
- Collaborate as a group on a project

With the 3 sentences they wrote in section 3.2 (based on the line ‘j’aime le désert et la mer’), the rhyming words they have seen in section 3.3, and the theme they have agreed to write on, students should have enough material to get started and to overcome writer’s block.

Students will choose the structure of their songs: how many verses and choruses? All in French or alternating French and English verses? If students decide to use both English and French, it would be easier to write one verse fully in French and another in English, or verses in French and the chorus in English (or vice versa), instead of alternating lines in French and in English, in order to be able to use rhymes.

Once students have the structure of their song and a few lines they can start thinking about the music if they have their own instruments and start playing if they know an easy chord progression; otherwise the next section will be dedicated to music composing (for students having instruments and for students without instruments).

Teaching guidance

It would be good to have at least one helper (a teaching assistant for example) to assist the main teacher in checking the progress of each group and make sure at the end of the activity each group has a clear idea of their song story, a song structure, and a few lines. It is important that each member of the groups participates and writes down at least one line.

Teachers can take 5 minutes at the end of the class to ask each group to present the title and topic of their songs to the rest of the class.

Extra help: If students still struggle to write their lyrics after using Worksheet 7, they can play ‘Le cadavre exquis’ (exquisite corpse): in each group, one student writes a noun (with the determiner), second student a verb, third student an adverb, fourth student a complement (a noun) without showing what they are writing. Full sentences are revealed at the end. Bearing the main theme in mind, this should create surrealist sentences that can be tweaked later.



Worksheet 7: Writing lyrics

Theme of your song: _____

Title of your song: _____

Write 3 keywords in French and 3 keywords in English associated with your theme:

Re-write the 3 sentences done on Worksheet 3 and try to adjust them to your theme (you might need to change the nouns):

Pick at least 4 rhyming words seen on Worksheets 4 and 5 that suit your theme and try to integrate them to full sentences in French that can help develop your story:

Song structure: Are any of the above sentences suitable for the chorus? Could you repeat a sentence to create your chorus? If yes, which sentence: _____

How many verses does your song have? Are all the verses in French or some in English?

Write down all the lyrics you have so far in a structured way:



5.1- COMPOSING MUSIC (I)

Total duration: 50-55 minutes

Warm up (5 minutes):

If students bring their instruments for this session, you can ask a few students (guitarists, pianists, flutists, clarinetists, saxophonists, etc.) to play a major scale (for example C Major) and ask the class to repeat (sing) after them.

This is the stage where students can put their lyrics with the music and hear their compositions. Depending on the students' musical abilities and the material available, three options are possible; teachers can choose one the following options:

Duration: 45 minutes

Material:
Worksheets 7 & 8 + music instruments (optional) or laptops/tablets (optional)

Learning Objectives:

- Music composition
- Performing vocal melodies
- Develop song writing skills
- Collaborate as a group on a project

Option A with instruments: If students have their own instruments, or if school can provide some instruments (guitar, keyboard, drum kit). Students can play their own music.

In case they need help, they can start with an easy chord progression:

C – G – Am – F

And a basic percussion rhythm in 2/4: (1) bass drum – (and) hi hat – (2) snare drum – (and) hi hat

Option B with or without instruments:

Students can use online instrumental loops for their entire songs if they do not have music instruments or use the loops as a basis and play over them (particularly if they do not have a rhythm section but have other instruments such as the flute, the clarinet, etc.).

In order to use the online loops, laptops (or tablets) and speakers for each group will be necessary.

Examples of loops can be found on YouTube:

Rock/ballad: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dno0r9EUBEQ>

Hip hop beat: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xCA5DbmRdXk>

Funk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=taSbUdL75Pw>

Option C without instruments (and without accompaniment, *a capella*): If students do not have instruments and struggle to come up with a vocal melody, they can use the vocal melody of a pop song they like and use their lyrics instead of the existing song lyrics. For example, they can sing their own lyrics on the melody of Pharrell Williams' 'Happy'.

Teaching guidance



If teachers choose option A, they can start by playing a video clip by the band Axis of Awesome showing the variety of songs that can be played with four chords only which can help them to find inspiration:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oOIdewpCfZQ>

Whether the groups use instruments or not, they will need some space to compose and rehearse. Ideally groups would be in different rooms, or alternate in the same room between the ones 'writing' and the ones 'playing'.

If students use instruments, these should be set up in advance to avoid wasting too much time at the beginning of the session.

Teachers should ensure each member of the groups have a musical role (which instruments they play, if they all sing at the same time or alternate, etc.). If they play their instruments it should be agreed beforehand who plays what.

One member of the group should be responsible for giving cues and signals to start the song, signal changes, and stop the song. Usually it is the percussionist/drummer but it can be anyone. If no instruments are used it would be good if someone snaps their fingers before starting to give the tempo of the song.

Worksheet 8 can guide students in their composition but they do not have to follow each step in the given order, however they should write down their song structure, chords, lyrics changes, to keep a record of their song.

Teachers will need the help of another member of staff (teaching assistant, student helper, music facilitator, etc.) to regulate the compositions.





Worksheet 8: Composing music and improvising

First you should have the basis of your musical composition (a simple chord progression, a simple loop accompaniment, only vocals) whether you use instruments or not (this should be agreed with your teacher).

Write down your musical basis (for example chords progression, style of the online accompaniment, style of the vocals, etc.):

Once you have your musical basis try to improvise a vocal melody (or a rapping flow) over the music without lyrics.

Little by little you can add your lyrics and refine them at the same time to make sure they fit the musical composition. Keep in mind the variations seen previously that you can have on pronunciation/articulation, rhythm and repetitions.

Write down your refined lyrics with musical indications to help you remember how and when to sing them (chords, notes, verses, chorus, instrumental introduction, bridges, coda, etc.):



5.2- COMPOSING MUSIC (II)

Total duration: 50-55 minutes

This is the final session; students should finish their entire songs and perform it in front of the class at the end of the session (teachers can record them with a recording device or a phone).

In their groups students should refine their songs (lyrics and music) and rehearse it several times to make sure they are ready to perform in front of the class.

Rehearsing in different rooms would help to work faster and to concentrate. If they use instruments, it would be good if they can be set up in advance of the session.

Songs do not need to be too long, students can use repetitions and interludes within their songs.

Duration: 40 minutes to finalise the songs and 15 minutes to perform them.

Material: Worksheet 8 + music instruments (optional) or laptops/tablets (optional)

Learning Objectives:

- Music composition
- Performing vocal melodies
- Develop song writing skills
- Collaborate as a group on a project



Comments: We would love to hear how it went: send us any feedback you may have and the audio files of the songs!

info@baudelaire song.org



6- EXPLORE FURTHER: MUSIC AND DIGITAL TOOLS

The Baudelaire Song Project has developed digital methods to collect and analyse song settings of Baudelaire's poetry. The digital tools are available on the project website for everyone to explore French poetry and music. The following activities can be 'extra' activities to learn more about French poetry and song settings. It can help to develop students' digital competence and to get them interested in French literature and music in an innovative way.

The database is also a great resource for teachers to find song settings of Baudelaire's poem. They can apply some of the previous activities to different poems (for example to revise some grammar points if they find other poems more suitable to their curriculum). They can also use our Spotify playlists to ask their students to compare various song settings of the same poem.

6.1 Searching the database

Duration: 30 minutes

Material: Baudelaire Song Project website: Database

Learning Objectives:

- Writing skills
- Develop song writing skills
- Collaborate as a group on a project

The Baudelaire Song Project has collated thousands of song settings of Charles Baudelaire's poetry, in 25 different languages, and 40 different musical styles.

<https://www.baudelairesong.org/search/>

→ Ask students to search song settings of specific poems, and to give a presentation on a chosen setting in front of the class.

a- How many song settings of the following poems are in the database: 'L'Invitation au voyage', 'L'Albatros', 'A une Malabaraise', 'Le Coucher du Soleil Romantique'?

b- What is the poem that has been set to music the most?

c- What are the poems that have been the least set to music? Name at least 4 poems.

d- Choose one of the poems mentioned in question 'a' and one of its song settings. Listen to the song setting on Spotify and give a short presentation including these questions:

What French words used in the poem do you already know? Based on these words, try to find one of the main themes of the poem.

What is the poem about? (the poem and its translation can be found on <https://fleursdumal.org/>)

What is the musical genre of the song setting you chose?

What aspects of the poem does the song setting lean on?

How would you describe the music of the song?



Do you think it is a good song setting? Why?

6.2 Song viewers

Duration: 30 minutes

Material: Baudelaire Song Project website: Song Viewers

Learning Objectives:

- Writing skills
- Develop song writing skills
- Collaborate as a group on a project

The Baudelaire Song Project has developed song viewers to visualise analysis of audio files in order to understand what happens to a poem structurally when it is set to music.

https://www.baudelaire.org/search/Song_Viewers

→ Ask your students to compare 3 song settings of the poem 'L'Invitation au voyage' in 3 different musical genres.

a- Read the poem 'L'Invitation au voyage' and underline any words you know in French. Based on these words what do you think the poem is about (Love? Travel? Dream? Reality? Beauty?).

b- Look at the waveforms in the three song viewers. How are they different? What do you think it means about the songs?

c- Listen to the songs on Spotify. Which one do you prefer, why? Which one is a good illustration of the poem, why?

d- Look at the Song Viewers again. The short horizontal lines correspond to the lines of the poem (if they are grey it means that they were not used in the song setting, if they are black it means that some lines of the poem were repeated), the longer horizontal lines correspond to the stanzas, the vertical lines correspond to the words.

- Are the 3 song settings using the whole poems or are some songs omitting some lines?
- Some words (vertical lines) are higher than others, this is because their sung duration is longer. Which words are sung for a longer time in each poem? Are the 3 settings giving more duration to the same words?

L'Invitation au voyage

Henri Duparc

Composed between 1870 and 1911.

Urtext

Mon enfant, ma soeur,
Songe à la douceur
D'aller là-bas vivre ensemble!
Aimer à loisir,
Aimer et mourir

Translation

My child, my sister,
Think of the rapture
Of living together there!
Of loving at will,
Of loving till death

Stanzas

Lines

Words

Move the slider to navigate in the song

Time: 0.0s Stanza: Line Word Phrase: Mon enfant, ma soeur, |

Position



Resources and links

Cranmer David, and Clément Laroy, *Musical Openings: Using Music in the Language Classroom* (Pilgrims Longman Resource Books, 1993)

Patel Aniruddh D., *Music, Language, and the Brain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010)

Zaraysky Susanna, *Language Is Music: Over 100 Fun & Easy Tips to Learn Foreign Languages* (Cupertino, CA: Kaleidomundi, 2014)

Baudelaire Song Project Website:

- Database: <https://www.baudelairesong.org/search/>

- Song Viewers: https://www.baudelairesong.org/search/Song_Viewers

- Spotify Playlists:

<https://open.spotify.com/user/thebaudelaireproject/playlist/2xyjAKUvudP6Hyo0O1jmT4?si=upDk-jbsSFmnzOcYaQjdcQ>

<https://open.spotify.com/user/thebaudelaireproject/playlist/2R3Rj2v3F53v1M4zX9orj6?si=hUJQeob5RciG8nRykm79tw>

All poems of *Les Fleurs du Mal* with translations:

<https://fleursdumal.org/>

Songs Without Borders
Learning French through Song-Writing
Teaching Handbook for KS3

The Baudelaire Song Project presents this resources book for KS3 teachers of French. Music based activities are offered in order to teach French in an interactive and creative way. The activities can be delivered as part of an enrichment block (for 6 hours that can be delivered at once or in several sessions) or end of year projects. Teachers can follow the suggested progression guiding students to compose their own songs in French but they can also use the activities as one-off lessons to complement their teaching. An extra activity based on poetry and digital tools is suggested at the end of the book.