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Work Out

French

GCSE

E. J. Neather

with

Isabelle Rodrigues

Editorial Consultant

BETTY PARR

M
MACMILLAN

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Contents

Series Editor's Preface	vii
Author's Preface	ix
How to Use this Book	ix
Acknowledgements	xii
Organisations Responsible for Examinations at 16+	xiii
 PART I TEACHING UNITS	 1
Prélude — Un Échange Scolaire	3
P.1 Préparatifs de Voyage	3
P.2 Le Voyage de Retour	10
P.3 Vocabulary and Explanations	16
P.4 Speaking Activities	17
1 Le Monde du Travail — La Ferme	19
1.1 La Vie Changeante du Cultivateur	19
1.2 Dialogue	22
2 Le Monde du Travail — L'Industrie	24
2.1 Les Emplois Perdus	24
2.2 Dialogue	27
3 Voyager en France — Un Peu de Tourisme	29
3.1 Un Voyage en Autocar	29
3.2 Dialogue	33
4 Voyager en France — La Normandie	35
4.1 Une Visite en Normandie	35
4.2 Dialogue	38
5 Voyager en France — La Ville de Paris	41
5.1 Paris — Quelques Incidents de sa Longue Histoire	41
5.2 Dialogue	46
6 Voyager en France — Les Transports	49
6.1 Ce Métro Qui Marche Tout Seul	49
6.2 Un Moyen de Transport Révolutionnaire — Le TGV	52
6.3 Dialogue	55

7	Société Française – Les Français Qui Achètent	58
7.1	Les Français, Comment Dépensent-ils Leur Argent?	58
7.2	Consommateurs – Informez-vous d’Abord	61
7.3	Dialogue	63
8	Société Française – Les Jeunes	66
8.1	Le Petit Prince et le Renard	66
8.2	La Jeunesse Française	69
8.3	Dialogue	71
9	Société Française – La Cuisine	74
9.1	Les Français et Leur Cuisine	74
9.2	Recette – Le Poulet « Bonne Femme »	77
9.3	Dialogue	80
10	Société Française – Sports et Loisirs	82
10.1	Le Sport en France – Une Discipline Mineure	82
10.2	Bateau sur Eau	85
10.3	Dialogue	87
11	Société Française – Cinéma et Télévision	90
11.1	Le Cinéma en France	90
11.2	Les Jeunes Téléspectateurs	92
11.3	Dialogue	95
12	Société Française – L’Enseignement	97
12.1	Enseignement Privé et Enseignement Public	97
12.2	Que Pourrait-on Faire pour Améliorer l’Enseignement Français?	101
12.3	Dialogue	103
13	Un Peu d’Histoire – La France Libre et la Libération	106
13.1	La Libération de Paris	106
13.2	De Gaulle et la France Libre	108
13.3	Dialogue	111
14	Un Peu d’Histoire – Les Événements de Mai ’68	113
14.1	Mai 1968 – Le Désarroi Gouvernemental	113
14.2	Une Révolution Impossible	115
14.3	Dialogue	116
PART II REFERENCE SECTION		119
Key to Questions and Exercises and Sample Material		121
Grammar Summary		149
Table of Contents		149
Index to Grammar Summary		182
Guide to Pronunciation		188
PART III THE GCSE EXAMINATIONS		193
1	Schemes of Examination for the GCSE	195
2	Types of Test	196
3	Topics and Settings	197
4	Sample Materials	198
5	Preparing for the Examination	205
Bibliography and Sources of Information		208

Series Editor's Preface

This new series has been planned for older teenagers and adults who have a knowledge of spoken and written French, and who wish to become more proficient in the language, and better informed about present-day France and the French people. The book and its accompanying cassette should help students, working with or without a teacher, to attain a standard broadly similar to that required for a good grade in the GCSE examination.

The course has two main objectives. The first is to provide a lively and coherent programme, in which the study of authentic materials will give an insight into different aspects of French life, and also serve as a basis for learning the language in a realistic context. The second aim is to give special help to students preparing for the GCSE, by offering them sustained practice in all the language-skills and in using them in the practical ways likely to consolidate progress and bring success in the examination. It is believed that this course demonstrates that these two objectives are entirely compatible.

Work Out French GCSE has certain distinctive features which should help students to devise a learning strategy that suits their needs and capacity. All the teaching, including the grammatical explanations and exercises, is based on carefully graded texts and recorded dialogues, which exemplify the correct use of written and spoken French, and illustrate various elements of grammar and syntax. The latter are then clearly explained and subsequently practised in graded exercises for which a key is provided. Every care has been taken to use the language in sensible situations, avoiding as far as possible the pointless statements so often evoked by ill-judged questions in work-books. There is a substantial grammar summary, in which the basic structures of the language are illustrated by examples quoted from the texts or dialogues, so that theory is always associated with use in a familiar context. This mode of work should assist students of widely different levels of ability, if they study the course thoughtfully and follow the useful advice given in the author's preface, which provides a full and clear account of the contents of the book and cassette, and suggests ways of using them effectively.

It is hoped that this stimulating and well-planned course may bring success and satisfaction to all who use it intelligently.

B. Parr

Author's Preface

As has already been made clear in the series editor's preface, this book is intended for adults and older teenagers with some knowledge of written and spoken French, and a wish to improve their command of the language to a standard sufficient for a good grade in the GCSE examination.

Although a primary aim of the book, with its accompanying cassette, is to provide a complete revision programme for the examination, which may be used by the student alone or with a teacher, it is also intended that language should be presented in a real context, and not in the isolated and artificial sentences which often serve as a basis for examination preparation. In addition to a 'real' language context, the subject matter of the chapters is also authentic, and offers reading passages and dialogues which are concerned with issues in current French society, or in the immediate past. In this way the book seeks to achieve a high level of performance in all the language skills, and, at the same time, inform readers about aspects of French life and give some of the flavour of reading newspapers and magazines and hearing real conversations.

The GCSE examination groups have a variety of requirements as regards both the types of test and content in the examination. It would be difficult for any one book to claim that it offered specific preparation for all the groups. What can be claimed, however, is that this book offers a sound basis in all the language skills, and will help to bring students up to a level of performance where they may confidently tackle the tests offered by an examination. In terms of the actual examination requirements, these are set out in one section of the book, together with some sample materials, and many of the exercises are modelled on common forms of test, such as reading and listening comprehension, letter-writing, multiple choice, role play, etc.

In the ways explained above, it is hoped that the twin aims of language improvement based on the living language and practice in specific examination skills are both met. The following section gives more detail about the organisation of the book and suggests ways of working with it.

How to Use this Book

The book is organised as follows: The Prelude introduces a number of topics and a variety of exercises, in a sequence which follows two pupils on an exchange visit; Chapters 1–5 contain a single reading text and a dialogue; Chapters 6–14 contain two reading texts and a dialogue. The texts are authentic ones, taken from French newspaper and magazine sources with only limited adaptation. In terms of difficulty, there is a progression through the book, although all the texts aim at a measure of authenticity and do not distort the language for the sake of a particular grammatical point or area of vocabulary.

There follows an extensive reference section containing a key to all exercises in the book; a grammar reference section with all examples drawn from texts in the book; and a guide to pronunciation.

Finally, there is a section devoted to the specific demands of the examinations at GCSE level.

Accompanying the book is a cassette containing all the dialogues in the book, and the guide to pronunciation.

It is expected that students will normally work through the book, although it is quite possible, if practice in reading and writing a particular grammatical point is required, for a chapter to be taken out of sequence. Start first with the reading text, and try to understand as much as possible before turning to the exercises or the vocabulary. Texts which at first sight may seem difficult will appear less so if you consider the clues given in the introductory English paragraph, and if you try to deduce the meaning of unknown words and phrases from the context of the passage. When first encountering an unknown text in a foreign language, the learner may be baffled by apparent difficulties which can disappear when the context is used to help understanding. Above all, do not be put off by one particular word which is unfamiliar, and do not feel that you should know every word in the passage before you have a fair understanding.

Having made your own first effort to understand the text, try the section A exercises. These are exercises designed to help your comprehension or your deduction of the meaning of words. Try these exercises before looking at the vocabulary (cover the page if you are tempted to look!) and treat this whole process as one of detection and deduction. These are important skills to develop in any work with a foreign language. Check your answers with the ones given in the key, and then study the vocabulary and lists of expressions. The vocabulary is selective and you may need to use a dictionary for unknown words which do not appear. A good deal of information is given here, so that you should be able to unravel any problems which you have not managed to solve for yourself.

The section B exercises are intended to provide intensive work on particular grammatical points. Of course, texts of an authentic kind such as are found in this book contain a wide range of grammatical features, and the technique here is to choose texts which highlight particular features, such as a tense or a part of speech, and then to help the student to understand the use of that feature from the context and to practise it in exercises based on that context. The student is referred to particular paragraphs of the grammar reference section, which should be studied in conjunction with the text and the exercises. The detailed index following the grammar section is an important aid for the student, as it provides cross-references between the texts and the reference section. If the student, for example, feels uncertain about the demonstrative adjective, it will be found listed both under its grammatical name and under the French forms *ce*, *cet*, *cette*, *ces*, and you will find references to the texts where it occurs and the relevant paragraph of the grammatical reference section.

The final part of each chapter is the dialogue and associated exercises. It is important that the dialogue should first be listened to on the tape, before the written text is studied. The first exercise after the dialogue should be used, rather as in an examination, to test your listening skill. The dialogues are all written to tie up with the preceding text(s), so they contain much of the same vocabulary and more examples of the relevant grammatical points. Besides offering practice in listening comprehension, a test of growing importance in examinations, the exercises move on to provide the chance of building your own dialogues, participating in rôle play and letter-writing, thereby developing skills for both the oral and written parts of the examination.

There is no easy way of acquiring competence in a foreign language, and no certain path to examination success, but this book offers the student a chance to achieve both aims as well as learning a good deal about contemporary France in the process.

Exeter, 1987

E. J. N.

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